

11 March 2020

People and Places Activity Team
Scottish Natural Heritage
Great Glen House
Leachkin Road
Inverness IV3 8NW

Dear Sir or Madam

Response to consultation on ‘Rangering in Scotland’

Thank you for the opportunity of commenting on the draft policy on ‘Rangering in Scotland’. Ramblers Scotland is the representative body for walkers in Scotland, recognised by **sportscotland** as a governing body of sport. We help everyone, across Scotland, enjoy walking and protect the places we love to walk. We are a membership organisation with 54 local walking groups in Scotland, running 3,500 group walks a year which are led and organised by 1,200 volunteers.

We are very supportive and appreciative of the work carried out by rangers in connecting people with nature, and many of our groups have specifically worked with rangers in various local activities, such as creating and maintaining paths, as well as enjoying walks led by rangers. We are pleased to see SNH is focussing on the value of rangers in this position statement, and it is a welcome update to the 2008 policy.

While we support much of the content of the policy we will focus below on several aspects which we feel are worth further consideration:

- Title ‘Rangering in Scotland’ – we suggest that this should revert to the previous 2008 document’s title ‘Rangers in Scotland’. We feel there is a danger that by trying to encompass all the activities that can be carried out in this area, this could potentially undermine the status and role of rangers as skilled, trained professionals. Rangers clearly have a role in coordinating and managing others who carry out related activities, such as junior rangers and volunteers, and all this work is very important for a whole variety of reasons. However, we believe that by widening the scope of this position statement it runs the risk of undervaluing the status and role of rangers who are already facing threats in terms of funding and reduced numbers.
- Delivering government objectives - the first paragraph references a range of government policy objectives which ranger services help to deliver. This is a very important point, and yet many ranger services are still being cut. We therefore suggest that there is more emphasis given to these policy areas, perhaps with a separate box listing the influence that rangers can have and their important role in supporting the government’s own outcomes. This would perhaps help to underline their role to those who are less aware of what rangers do.
- Environmental education – the document suggests that rangers are helping to support teachers to take learning outdoors. Our understanding is that the majority of teachers rely on rangers to deliver outdoor education as they don’t have the relevant knowledge themselves to do so. If ranger services don’t exist in that area then the teachers are

having to deliver this outdoor learning themselves, without the added value that a ranger can bring and potentially leaving young people without that high quality experience and understanding of the outdoors. This risk could be highlighted in the statement to demonstrate the important need for rangers' continued involvement in formal education.

- Impact of rangers – previously when SNH directly funded the ranger service, this national oversight led to a consistency of approach as well as control over funding. In addition, the national reporting structure that went alongside that funding has been lost. As a result there is a danger of a fragmentation of services and it is also very difficult to demonstrate the impact of the ranger service and make the case to government about their important role when funding decisions are being made. It would therefore be useful to consider how this data on ranger activities can be gathered to create a national impact report on a regular basis.

We hope the comments above are useful and would be happy to discuss them further.

Yours faithfully

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