

**PE1678/O**

Scottish Government submission of 1 March 2018

Thank you for your request of 6 February 2018 for views on Petition 1678 (National strategic framework for Countryside Ranger Services in Scotland). This petition calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to implement the strategic framework for the network of Countryside Ranger Services set out in the document Rangers in Scotland (SNH 2008). The Committee asked in particular for the Scottish Government's views about how it perceives the importance of a national ranger service, and whether it recognises the petitioner's description of changes as a consequence of decisions taken in 2009.

The Scottish Government recognises the importance of the service provided by Scotland's Countryside Rangers. They are a valuable asset, undertaking functions and tasks that help to deliver a range of environmental, social and economic benefits, such as promoting the health and well-being agenda and implementing the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy. This is, of course, a view shared by Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) as the lead national body for Countryside Rangers in Scotland.

While SNH continues to provide direct funding for a considerable number of community, voluntary and private rangers, the funding model for public-sector ranger services changed significantly in 2009 following the Concordat agreed between the Scottish Government and the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) in 2007. The funding that was previously distributed by SNH is now included in the annual local government finance settlements. It is the responsibility of individual local authorities to manage their own budgets and to allocate the financial resources available to them on the basis of local needs and priorities.