

## PE1678/EE

Petitioner submission of 23 August 2019

Quote: welcomed by SCRA from PE1678/CC COSLA submission in supporting for Scottish Rangers “COSLA recognises the valuable and unique contribution that Scotland's Countryside Rangers make to the protection and promotion of the natural environment through enjoyment of individuals and communities”.

### Introduction

Throughout the time that the Petitions Committee has been considering our petition, SCRA has:

- Attended all meetings of the Petitions Committee that have taken evidence on our petition.
- Conducted important research on the national situation. (loss of posts; use of the national badge)
- Reviewed documents that evidence SNH's increasing disengagement from grant-aiding, advocacy and monitoring responsibilities.
- Met with key people to discuss the issues. Christina McKelvie MSP, Minister for Older people and Equalities and the sponsor of our Petition; Mairi Gougeon, MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment; SNH Chair, Mike Cantley and SNH Chief Executive, Francesca Osowaska ; Robert Nicol, COSLA, Dr Deborah Long, Chief Officer, Scottish Environment LINK.
- Presented the results of our research and an update on the progress of the Petition process to the Ranger Development Partnership and to SCRA members.

### Next Steps

As a result of these actions we have concluded that our priority is that **the Scottish Government convenes a limited-life independent expert group to review the key issues and propose a way forward that results in a sustainable model for the delivery of a national Ranger Service for the people of Scotland.**

Its remit would be to make recommendations to the Scottish Government about:

- Who takes responsibility for policy, identifying national priorities, delivery standards, monitoring and reporting as part of a national network of Countryside Ranger Services?
- How these Services are funded, taking account particularly of the funding anomalies that currently exist between Local Authority Services and Government Agency Services (including SNH's NNR staff and Forest and Land Scotland Rangers) and between the two National Parks?

As well as representatives of SNH, SCRA and COSLA those invited to join the expert group should cover a range of interests, including experience of managing different types of Ranger Services (public, private and third sectors); experience of natural heritage management, education and health, to reflect the breadth of Rangers delivery Representatives of the “customers” of Ranger Services e.g. Ramblers Association, could also be usefully included

The Chair should be independent of the main contributors.

### **The Consequences of Leaving the Status Quo**

- Loss of cost effective Services that have a 50 year track record of delivering high quality, locally relevant services to local communities and to visitors to Scotland; and that are responsive to changing priorities e.g. the growth of Ranger programme targeted at public health and wellbeing; focus on social deprivation.
- Waste of the investment of substantial public funding that have been invested in Ranger posts and the places where they work, such as the 36 Country and 3 Regional Parks
- Deterioration of the quality of the environments that Rangers care for and the connection of local communities to these treasured places
- Loss of jobs in fragile small rural and remote communities that are proportionately as serious of loss of jobs when businesses go into receivership
- Ongoing problems of work-related stress among our members.

Against this background, SCRA seeks to achieve a clear national perspective for Rangering in Scotland over the next 10 years. Building on a revised and updated 2008 “Rangers in Scotland” document setting out specific key roles for Rangers in the delivery of a wide range of benefits and providing the strategic context and direction within which Ranger Services **can be developed** and managed effectively to meet local needs within the framework of national priorities established by the Scottish Government.