

**PE1678/HH**

Scottish Government submission of 30 October 2019

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” (Scottish Natural Heritage, 2008). The Committee asked in particular for the Scottish Government’s views on what role it can play in addressing some of the concerns raised during the evidence session of 26 September 2019.

You asked about the need to promote the work of countryside rangers, particularly amongst local authorities, so that it is better understood, including the extent to which it contributes to the delivery of outcomes across a number of policy areas. The Scottish Government fully acknowledges the important role played by countryside rangers in Scotland and the Minister for Rural Affairs and the Natural Environment, Mairi Gougeon MSP, wrote to the Petitioner on 24 September 2019, stating that she would be very happy to discuss with Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA) ways in which she might help raise the profile of the profession. The Minister looks forward to hearing further from SCRA on this matter.

We are also thinking about other ways in which the important role of countryside rangers in Scotland might be better recognised, including considering the feasibility of including ranger service provision as part of a wider exercise looking at service delivery in support of access to and the enjoyment of Scotland’s countryside.

On establishing a strategic and unified vision for rangers in Scotland through the introduction of a new national framework, at its meeting of 26 September the Committee heard about Scottish Natural Heritage’s (SNH) ongoing development of a new policy statement on countryside rangers in Scotland to 2030 for which SNH is currently encouraging input from all of the relevant stakeholders. We look forward to the conclusion of this process.

We have noted the findings of the Glover review for a new England-wide ranger service.

Finally, the petitioner has made repeated calls for 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. We consider that the process supporting the development of the new SNH policy statement to 2030 will address this.