

**PE1678/Z**

Scottish Government submission of 27 November 2019

Thank you for your further request of 30 October 2018 on behalf of the Public Petitions Committee for views on Petition 1678 (National strategic framework for Countryside Ranger Services in Scotland) following your previous request of 6 February 2018 (answered on 1 March).

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 the concerns highlighted in the evidence session of 25 October 2018 and through written submissions, and to set out its position and understanding of who is responsible for delivering and reporting on ranger services across Scotland.

Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) provides direct funding for a number of community, voluntary and private Countryside Rangers. Other bodies such as the National Park Authorities, Forest Enterprise Scotland and the National Trust for Scotland strongly support Scotland's Ranger Service.

The Scottish Government continues to believe that the delivery of local authority duties should be delegated at a local level where possible, one example being the introduction of participatory budgeting. Against this background, and as stated in our previous submission on this Petition, local government funding is now distributed directly by means of a block grant, with individual local authorities able to allocate the totality of their resources as they see fit, once they have met their statutory obligations.

In the evidence session of 25 October 2018, SNH stated that they have historically run monitoring exercises to request reports on the provision of Ranger Services by local authorities. While the Scottish Government acknowledges such returns are useful in providing information on the provision of Scotland's Ranger Services, there is no statutory obligation for local authorities to respond to such an exercise and Ranger Services may now be delivered in different ways and with different priorities. However, I do wish to stress that the Scottish Government continues to recognise the value in the service provided by Scotland's Countryside Rangers.