

PE1678/V

The National Trust for Scotland submission of 13 March 2018

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) is supportive of the petitioners request to see further implementation of the recommendations contained within the publication *Rangers in Scotland* (SNH 2008). The value we place on this is as much in what Rangers do as the institution of the service or the brand they represent.

The role of Ranger is an important one within NTS. Its fundamental purpose; to help protect nature and engage people in the countryside to support their safety, learning and enjoyment reflects a key aspect of the Trust's core mission.

The Trust currently employs 40 Rangers across Scotland. In addition to this we have another 10 posts that include aspects of the Ranger role but are not branded as such. We make reference to our Ranger Service on our website <https://www.nts.org.uk/what-we-do/countryside-and-wildlife/countryside-rangers>. Our Rangers provide a vital service for nature and people at our properties, operating at the front line and sometimes undertaking important less prominent roles in planning, monitoring and research. Where the role combines a wide range of these functions and incorporates a strong element of public engagement our staff are called Rangers.

The Trust sees the value, from a public awareness and understanding perspective, in promoting the concept and brand of 'the Ranger'. However, the functions of a Ranger which are varied in type and emphasis can be delivered (in part) by other members of staff or volunteers whose job title reflects this broader role (eg. Ecologist). Community engagement is also seen as a critical aspect of public engagement and job titles may reflect this emphasis, albeit duties may be similar to that of a traditional Ranger.

The key point is that the functions undertaken by Rangers and others are what require investment – and added value might be created by coordination and sharing of ideas. For that part the strategy should be supported. NTS, like many countryside managers have seen direct support from public funding sources for the Ranger function diminish and this has led to a direct reduction in the extent of the services we are able to provide. The fact we still employ 40 Rangers is testament to our commitment to their function.

Whilst we think the core function of the Ranger is enduring and as valuable as ever the funding landscape has changed significantly since 2008. This petition has served as a very timely reminder of the role that many organisations play in helping to connect people with nature, informing and educating, protecting and managing our countryside. NTS therefore supports the idea of revisiting the strategy in order to ensure our Rangers, working alongside others, are adequately supported and the necessary institutional frameworks are in place – not least the commitment from Local Authorities. A renewed and revised strategy will have more impact.

We hope this submission helps the Committee to come to a decision that ultimately leads to ensuring the future of Ranger services in Scotland flourish.