



Ranger Service Strategy 2013 -2016



***From mountain to sea,
connecting people with place***

1. INTRODUCTION

From mountain to sea, Aberdeenshire boasts a rich and valuable resource in its natural heritage. Award winning beaches, wildlife sites of international interest, local and national nature reserves and a diverse timeline of cultural heritage assets to share and manage sustainably.

Identifiable by the national ranger logo, the Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service provides the welcome to Aberdeenshire's outdoors. The Rangers work wherever people engage with the environment, whether that is in Aberdeenshire's rural, urban, coastal, inland or upland settings. The Rangers are highly knowledgeable about Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage and the sustainable management of Aberdeenshire resources and are imaginative and effective communicators able to share this knowledge with residents and visitors.

Following an internal service review in 2012, it was agreed that a Ranger Service Strategy was required to provide a framework for the future delivery of the Ranger Service to reflect changed staffing levels and new staff roles. This Strategy shows where the Ranger Service Objectives clearly deliver or contribute to Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire's Priorities and provides a structured approach to service delivery.

2. SCOPE OF STRATEGY

The strategy is primarily an Aberdeenshire Council working document to help manage and deliver key priorities of the Ranger Service. The Strategy also provides opportunities to improve efficiency, participation and collaboration with key stakeholders and partners and embed best practice in the delivery of the Ranger Service.

The strategy provides a structured approach to service delivery for the next 3 years. Through the period of the strategy there will be a requirement to consider the challenges of our changing environment and changing needs of our present and potential user groups. To reflect these changes and challenges, an Annual Action Plan will be prepared which will provide detailed actions on the delivery of the strategy and will reflect new and emerging priorities.

3. ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL RANGER SERVICE VISION

It is Aberdeenshire Council's vision to be the best area and the best council in Scotland

It is the vision of the Ranger Service that the benefits gained from Aberdeenshire's unique environment should be available to those who live, work and visit Aberdeenshire, and that the value of these resources and the need to protect and enhance them for future generations through sustainable management is understood.

This vision for the Ranger Service can be summarised as:

"From mountain to sea, connecting people with place"

4. ABERDEENSHIRE COUNCIL RANGER SERVICE - RESOURCES

Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service is part of the Specialist Services Team within Infrastructure Services. The Ranger Team comprises six (fte equivalent) Rangers, one (fte) Bennachie Centre Warden and one (0.5fte) cleaner at the Bennachie Centre. The team is line managed by a (0.6fte) Ranger Co-ordinator. The Marr Area Ranger post is partly grant funded by the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

The Ranger Service has a base in each of the administrative areas and is therefore ideally placed to work with residents and visitors to engage them directly in the local environment.

The Bennachie Centre attracts over 35,000 visitors each year and is the base for the Garioch Area Ranger and provides an educational resource for the whole of Aberdeenshire. The Wardens manage the day to day operation of the building and its resources on behalf of the Bennachie Centre Trust.

5. POLICY CONTEXT – *The Golden Thread*

5.1 National Outcomes

The Scottish Government has 16 National Outcomes which it seeks to achieve to make Scotland a better place to live and a more prosperous and successful country. The Ranger Service particularly contributes to six National Outcomes:

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
- Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed
- We live longer, healthier lives
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others
- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations
- Our public services are high quality

5.2 National Ranger Aims

Scottish Natural Heritage has identified three broad aims common to all Ranger Services. The Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service follows the three common aims:-

- To provide a warm welcome and provide support to help people enjoy the outdoors.
- To increase awareness, understanding, care and responsible use of the natural and cultural heritage.
- To support the sustainable management and use of the outdoors to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives.

5.3 Aberdeenshire Community Plan

The Ranger Service contributes to the delivery of the 4 themes of the Community Plan and particularly 8 priorities to deliver them:

Community Wellbeing

- People in Aberdeenshire have access to recreational opportunities in well-maintained public spaces
- People with disabilities or who are vulnerable are supported and included
- Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported
- Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland

Jobs and the Economy

- To be a key visitor destination in Scotland

Lifelong Learning

- Improved attainment and achieving for all
- Every young person in Aberdeenshire is valued and supported to achieve their potential and is ready for employment and adult life

Sustainable Development

- Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations

5.4 Aberdeenshire Council Plan (Strategic Priorities)

The Ranger Service particularly contributes to 11 Strategic Priorities as identified under the 4 Core Outcomes for Aberdeenshire:

Lifelong Learning

- Improve early years opportunities
- Improve opportunities to achieve and attain
- Preparing for life and work
- Enhance community learning and participation
- Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities

Strong & Sustainable Communities

- Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment

Caring for Communities

- Providing quality public space

Public Sector Excellence

- Effective resource and asset Management
- Excellent communication, performance and improvement
- A focus on the customer
- The best workforce

5.5 Infrastructure Service Plan

The Ranger Service particularly contributes to two Service Objectives;

- Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations.
- Work with other public bodies, private and voluntary sector partners to continually improve the quality, efficiency and level of services provided to all stakeholders to demonstrate best value.

6. RANGER STRATEGY OBJECTIVES

Ranger Strategy Objectives have been drawn together to reflect the above policies. The Strategy Objectives provides a common framework for a customer and performance focussed service which works in partnership with stakeholders to deliver a quality, efficient service which provides best value.

The Annual Action Plan, Appendix 1, provides the detailed actions the service will take to achieve the strategy objectives and indicate how the core outcomes of the service will be measured. Area Rangers will use the strategy and the action plan to develop individual annual work programmes which will reflect the specific natural and cultural heritage needs and aspirations of their area.

Ranger Service Objective 1

To provide an Annual Programme of Guided Walks and Events

How will we deliver this?

- Devise and deliver a co-ordinated programme of guided walks and events
- Target a wide range of audiences, including working with less advantaged groups
- Deliver events in partnership with other organisations
- Target events to support local or national festivals
- Target events to support National or Aberdeenshire initiatives
- Deliver volunteer conservation days
- Seek customer feedback on guided walks and events

Why these actions?

- Raised awareness, understanding and enjoyment of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage
- New visitors to Aberdeenshire's countryside
- Enhanced community learning and development
- Promotion of wildlife, tourism and health
- Improved access to sport and cultural activities
- Promote inclusiveness
- Participants inspired to get involved in conservation volunteering
- Improved customer focussed service delivery

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	2
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	2
Our public services are high quality	
We live longer, healthier lives	2
Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed	1
We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations	3
Aberdeenshire Community Plan	
People in Aberdeenshire have access to recreational opportunities in well-maintained public spaces	3
People with disabilities or who are vulnerable are supported and included	2
Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported	1
Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland	2
To be a key visitor destination in Scotland	3
Improved attaining and achievement for all	
Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations	3
Strategic Priorities	
Improve opportunities to achieve and attain	
Preparing for life and work	1
Enhance community learning and participation	3
Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities	3
The best workforce	
Effective resource and asset management	
Improve early year opportunities	2
Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment	3
Providing quality public space	2
A focus on the customer	2
Excellent communication, performance and improvement	2
Infrastructure Services Plan	
Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations	3
Work with other public bodies, private and voluntary sector partners to continually improve the quality, efficiency and level of services provided to all stakeholders to demonstrate best value.	3

Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 2

To Provide Environmental Education for Schools and Groups

How will we deliver this?

- Deliver sessions to support schools in the delivery of outdoor learning in the Curriculum for Excellence
- Deliver session to support a wide variety of youth groups, particularly working with less engaged groups
- Target groups to support local or national festivals and initiatives
- Support delivery of John Muir Awards
- Seek customer feedback on Environmental Education Sessions

Why these actions?

- School children and groups encouraged to explore their local natural and cultural heritage through positive outdoor play and learning experience
- Raised awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage
- Young people using the outdoors to apply their natural, emotional, social and physical skills to pursue a healthy lifestyle
- Promote inclusiveness and achievements through learning for young people
- Improved early years opportunities
- Improved customer focussed delivery

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	3
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	2
Our public services are high quality	
We live longer, healthier lives	3
Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed	3
We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations	3
Aberdeenshire Community Plan	
People in Aberdeenshire have access to recreational opportunities in well-maintained public spaces	1
People with disabilities or who are vulnerable are supported and included	2
Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported	3
Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland	
To be a key visitor destination in Scotland	
Improved attainment and achievement for all	3
Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations	3
Strategic Priorities	
Improve opportunities to achieve and attain	3
Preparing for life and work	3
Enhance community learning and participation	3
Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities	3
The best workforce	
Effective resource and asset management	
Improve early year opportunities	3
Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment	3
Providing quality public space	
A focus on the customer	2
Excellent communication, performance and improvement	2
Infrastructure Services Plan	
Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations	3
Work with other public bodies, private and voluntary sector partners to continually improve the quality, efficiency and level of services provided to all stakeholders to demonstrate best value.	3

Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 3

To Provide Professional Development Workshops and Materials for Education Providers

How will we deliver this?

- In partnership with Education Learning and Leisure staff, deliver training sessions for teachers and education providers to share knowledge, skills and experiences of outdoor learning opportunities
- Deliver co-ordinated local training sessions for cluster groups to reflect outdoor learning priorities and local needs
- Review, update and provide information and guidance on resources available to Education Providers
- Provide customer feedback on Environmental Education Training

Why these actions?

- Teachers and Education Providers feel confident to deliver certain outdoor learning activities themselves
- Raised awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage
- Improved delivery of Outdoor Learning across Aberdeenshire in partnership with other Services and Education Providers
- Increased participation in outdoor activities
- Improved customer focussed delivery

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	3
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	2
Our public services are high quality	1
We live longer, healthier lives	3
Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed	3
We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations	3
Aberdeenshire Community Plan	
People in Aberdeenshire have access to recreational opportunities in well-maintained public spaces	
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Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported	3
Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland	
To be a key visitor destination in Scotland	
Improved attainment and achievement for all	3
Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations	3
Strategic Priorities	
Improve opportunities to achieve and attain	3
Preparing for life and work	3
Enhance community learning and participation	3
Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities	3
The best workforce	1
Effective resource and asset management	1
Improve early year opportunities	3
Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment	3
Providing quality public space	
A focus on the customer	2
Excellent communication, performance and improvement	2
Infrastructure Services Plan	
Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations	3
Work with other public bodies, private and voluntary sector partners to continually improve the quality, efficiency and level of services provided to all stakeholders to demonstrate best value.	3

Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 4

To Engage with the Local Community and Partners

How will we deliver this?

- Engage, support and empower communities and partners in the promotion and sustainable management of local sites
- Support local communities and partners in projects that achieve sustainability, protect the environment and conserve and enhance biodiversity
- Target community groups which supports local initiatives or priorities, particularly concentrating on less advantaged groups
- Compile and deliver a series of presentations and events to engage with individual groups and communities who cannot access mainstream events
- Deliver volunteer conservation days
- Seek customer feedback on projects

Why these actions?

- Raised awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage at a local level
- Increased partnership working targeted at priority community groups
- Enhance community learning and development
- Improved approach to community engagement which promotes successful achieving communities with the confidence to tackle things that matter to them
- Improved customer focussed service delivery
- Strengthen the local economy and local communities through contributions of volunteers
- Participants inspired to get involved in conservation volunteering

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	2
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	3
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Aberdeenshire Community Plan	
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People with disabilities or who are vulnerable are supported and included	1
Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported	2
Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland	2
To be a key visitor destination in Scotland	1
Improved attainment and achievement for all	1
Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations	3
Strategic Priorities	
Improve opportunities to achieve and attain	1
Preparing for life and work	1
Enhance community learning and participation	3
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The best workforce	
Effective resource and asset management	2
Improve early year opportunities	1
Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment	3
Providing quality public space	1
A focus on the customer	2
Excellent communication, performance and improvement	2
Infrastructure Services Plan	
Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations	3
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Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 5

To Protect and Enhance our Biodiversity

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How will we deliver this?

- Deliver public events and specific workshops specifically promote biological recording and protection/enhancement of biodiversity
- Promote biodiversity, geology and biological recording at school sessions and events
- Support the work of NESBReC and local and national initiatives through promotions and undertaking site surveys, monitoring and biological recording
- Deliver Ranger Service Action from Local Biodiversity Action Plan
- Target biological recording for volunteers through support to local communities and partners in projects that promotes, protects and enhances biodiversity in public spaces

Why these actions?

- Raised awareness and understanding of Nature Conservation in Aberdeenshire
- Increased biological recording and biological records passed to North East Scotland Biological Record Centre (NESBReC)
- Increased protection of Aberdeenshire natural environment
- Enhancement of biodiversity throughout Aberdeenshire
- Co-ordinated approach to biological recording
- Improved partnership working with communities and stakeholders

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
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Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 6

To Promote Responsible Access to the Countryside

How will we deliver this?

- Deliver targeted events, walks sessions with schools and groups to promote Scottish Outdoor Access Codes (SOAC) and duties under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003
- In partnership with the Environment Team:
 - Provide advice and guidance on responsible behaviour as defined by SOAC to user groups and land managers
 - Identify and initiate initial liaison with user groups / land managers to ensure access
 - Respond to SOAC behaviour issues
 - Develop and distribute interpretation materials to promote SOAC deliver public awareness campaigns relating to SOAC
- Seek customer feedback on events, school and group sessions where SOAC is promoted

Why these actions?

- Increased understanding and awareness of responsible behaviour as defined by SOAC
- Increased participation in sport and leisure activities
- Improved access to recreational opportunities in well maintained public places
- Improved partnership working with other areas of the Service
- Improved access to our natural environment
- Improved health and wellbeing physically and mentally
- Improved customer focussed delivery

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	1
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Improve early year opportunities	
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Excellent communication, performance and improvement	2
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Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 7

To Promote and Enhance Access Opportunities to the Countryside

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How will we deliver this?

- Deliver guided walks on Long Distance Routes, Core Path Network and other access routes
- Provide advice and promote guidance on Long Distance Routes, Core Path Network and other access routes
- In partnership with Environment Teams:-
 - Support community projects to enhance access opportunities throughout Aberdeenshire
 - Develop and distribute interpretation and education material
- Contribute to the inspection and maintenance of Long Distance Routes & Core Path Network
- Deliver opportunities for volunteers in practical conservation works
- Seek customer focussed feedback on events of guided walks

Why these actions?

- Improved awareness and promotion of recreational opportunities to residents and visitors of Aberdeenshire
- Improved access to well maintained public places
- Improved partnership working with other area of the Service and local community
- Increased participation in sport and leisure activities
- Increased understanding and awareness of responsible behaviour as defined by SOAC
- Improved health and wellbeing physically and mentally
- Participants inspired to get involved in conservation volunteering
- Improved customer focussed delivery

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	2
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Improve early year opportunities	
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A focus on the customer	2
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Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 8

To Support, Sustain and Enhance Facilities at Bennachie Centre

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How will we deliver this?

- Provide the resource to manage the day to day running of the centre and the shop
- Contribute to the development and implementation of the Bennachie Centre Management Plan
- In partnership with the Bennachie Centre Trust and other parties contribute towards enhancing the visitor experience at the Centre
- Utilise the Centre for the delivery of ranger events and act as a hub for the Ranger Service
- Promote and support the development of the Centre as a host venue for environmental and education initiatives, courses and groups with local community links
- Contribute to physical maintenance of building
- Seek customer feedback on events and visitor experience at the centre

Why these actions?

- Raised awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire natural and cultural heritage
- A sustainable and enhanced visitor experience for visitors and residents to this iconic landmark
- Improved access to recreational opportunities in well maintained spaces
- Contributes to the tourism destination package of Aberdeenshire
- Increased participation in sport and leisure activities
- School children and groups encouraged to explore their local and natural and cultural heritage through positive outdoor play and learning experiences
- Improved customer focussed delivery

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	2
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	2
Our public services are high quality	2
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Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported	1
Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland	3
To be a key visitor destination in Scotland	3
Improved attaining and achievement for all	
Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations	3
Strategic Priorities	
Improve opportunities to achieve and attain	2
Preparing for life and work	
Enhance community learning and participation	2
Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities	3
The best workforce	
Effective resource and asset management	2
Improve early year opportunities	1
Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment	3
Providing quality public space	2
A focus on the customer	2
Excellent communication, performance and improvement	2
Infrastructure Services Plan	
Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations	3
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Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

Ranger Service Objective 9

To Implement Ongoing Improvements to the Ranger Service Delivery

How will we deliver this?

- Develop and implement a promotional and marketing plan for the Ranger Service
- To monitor and analyse Ranger Service delivery feedback and identify and implement improvements
- To monitor and analyse Ranger Service benchmarking and identify and implement improvements
- Through the period of the Strategy and associated Annual Action Plans there will be a need to consider and modify service delivery to reflect new challenges of our changing environment and changing needs of our present and potential user groups.

Why these actions?

- Improved communication and promotion of the Ranger Service
- A more coordinated and systematic approach to Ranger Service delivery to target Ranger resources based on customer needs
- Improved partnership working and best practice to deliver a quality Ranger Service

Contribution to National Outcomes and Aberdeenshire Priorities

National Outcome	
Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens	1
We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others	1
Our public services are high quality	3
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Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed	1
We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations	3
Aberdeenshire Community Plan	
People in Aberdeenshire have access to recreational opportunities in well-maintained public spaces	1
People with disabilities or who are vulnerable are supported and included	1
Children and young people make better health and lifestyle choices and their mental wellbeing is supported	1
Aberdeenshire offers the best rural quality of life in Scotland	1
To be a key visitor destination in Scotland	1
Improved attainment and achievement for all	1
Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historic environment is maintained for future generations	3
Strategic Priorities	
Improve opportunities to achieve and attain	1
Preparing for life and work	1
Enhance community learning and participation	1
Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities	1
The best workforce	3
Effective resource and asset management	3
Improve early year opportunities	1
Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment	3
Providing quality public space	1
A focus on the customer	3
Excellent communication, performance and improvement	3
Infrastructure Services Plan	
Manage Aberdeenshire's unique environment, use of land and resources in the interests of current and future generations	3
Work with other public bodies, private and voluntary sector partners to continually improve the quality, efficiency and level of services provided to all stakeholders to demonstrate best value.	3

Scale of Ranger Contribution – 1 Small; 2 Significant; 3 Major

7. DEMONSTRATING SUCCESS

Performance, feedback and benchmarking will be embedded at all levels of the Ranger Service delivery.

The service will measure delivery of the aims through recording key performance indicators. The service has three key performance indicators:

- Number of people attending a public event (KPI 30)
- Number of people attending as part of a school session (KPI 31)
- Number of people attending as part of an organised group (KPI 32)

Scottish Natural Heritage benchmark Ranger Services across Scotland based on delivery of the National Ranger Aims. Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service contributes information on achievements to be included in the annual "Ranger Service Achievements" publication.

For each strategy objective the action plans identifies key actions and associated measurements to demonstrate performance.

A Ranger Service Annual Report summarises key achievements and performance for each year, appendix 2.

8. EQUALITIES

The Ranger Service aims to make the service available to all regardless of age, race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. The Service will also consider the needs of those disadvantaged by poverty or poor health.

The individual nature of disability makes it difficult for the service to describe event or walk as being accessible. However, the Ranger Service will seek to provide a range of walks and events to specifically accommodate needs of people with disabilities, and will endeavour to provide such information as is necessary to enable people with disabilities to determine if a specific event or walk is accessible within their individual circumstances. Where possible, the Ranger Service will make reasonable adaptations or amendments to events, guided walks and other services in order to make them accessible to all.

Appendix 1

Strategy Objectives
Action Plan 2013-2014

This table details the actions the Ranger Service will take to deliver the strategy objectives and how these outputs will be measured during 2013 – 2014.

Individual Area Ranger work-programmes provide detail as to how the strategy objectives and action plan will be delivered in individual areas, the lead officer and the number of days spent on each action.

Table 1

Objective 1	To Provide an Annual Programme of Guided Walks and Events
Actions	Deliver 55 events or walks throughout Aberdeenshire including: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 30 events to support Year of Natural Scotland• 7 events supporting local festivals and Aberdeenshire Priority Areas including; Energetica Wildlife and Walking Festival, Ballater Walking Week, Banff Coast Festival, Active Aboyne, Turriff Show• 4 Walks with health promotion as a primary or secondary theme• 4 walks or events to support Scottish Archaeology Month• 6 Volunteer events
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• KPI 30• Record number of events, walks and volunteer days provided.• Seek feedback from attendees on events, walks and volunteer days.

Table 2

Objective 2	To Support Environmental Education for Schools and Groups
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deliver 175 school sessions for nursery, primary, secondary schools and a wide range of groups across Aberdeenshire• Support delivery of 3 John Muir Awards• Improve availability of resources on Ranger website
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• KPI 31• Monitor customer hits and feedback on website• Seek feedback on quality of service delivery from teachers

Table 3

Objective 3 To provide Professional Development Training and Materials for Education Providers	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 2 Continuous Professional Development training workshops for teachers • Promote Outdoor Learning at 4 school cluster groups • Deliver actions associated with Outdoor Learning Strategy meetings • Review, update and either deliver or provide links to websites on relevant education packs • Develop education pack focussed on outdoor learning for 3 to 5 year olds
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek feedback on quality of CPD sessions • Actions and feedback from Cluster group meetings • Actions and feedback from Outdoor Learning Strategy meetings • Follow-up teacher-led outdoor learning post-workshop

Table 4

Objective 4 To Engage with the Local Community	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support Community Groups where there is an identifiable need and supports Aberdeenshire priority areas for Ranger involvement; Inch meadows, Arnhall Moss, Portlethen Moss, Friends of McDonald Park • Support the production of interpretative materials for community sites; Benholm Mill, Haddo Estate. • Provide support for community groups wishing to enhance local biodiversity; Portlethen Moss ponds, • Provide talks and events for community groups to promote awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage • Deliver 6 volunteer conservation days
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI 32 • Actions and feedback from community meetings • Publication of interpretative materials • Seek feedback from attendees at events/talks.

Table 5

Objective 5 To Protect and Enhance our Biodiversity	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver 6 public events specifically to promote biological recording • Mammal Atlas project promoted at 25 events and to 100 schools and groups • Deliver 2 SCRA workshops or training courses focused on protection/enhancement of biodiversity • Support review of LNCS and LBAPS and Ranger actions in Rivers and Burns, Lowland Wetlands LBAPs • Promote and participate in the monitoring of Red Squirrel, water vole and Lepidoptera species in line with council support for national and regional campaigns • Provide information on relevant wildlife legislation where appropriate
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI 30 • Record events with a primary theme of biodiversity protection and enhancement • Record number of school sessions where mammal atlas promoted • Record the number of wildlife monitoring sessions in which the service participates • Seek feedback from attendees on events • Seek feedback from teachers leading school sessions

Table 6

Objective 6 To Promote Responsible Access to the Countryside	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SOAC promotion at 45 events/walks • SOAC promotion 5 John Muir Awards • SOAC promotion at 150 sessions for Schools • SOAC promotion at 25 sessions for groups • Respond and resolve enquiries relating to responsible access issues. • Identify and initiate liaison with user groups and land managers as required • Develop and distribute SOAC interpretation materials • Deliver public awareness campaigns as required.
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI 30, KPI 31, KPI 32 • Record events/walks where SOAC is promoted • Record sessions with schools and groups where SOAC is promoted • Seek feedback from attendees on events, walks and talks where SOAC is promoted • Seek feedback from teachers on sessions where SOAC is promoted

- Record number of SOAC cases with Ranger response

Table 7

Objective 7	To Promote and Enhance Access Opportunities to the Countryside
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Deliver a series of guided walks throughout Aberdeenshire involving 8 events or guided walks especially on sections of long distance routes, including Formartine and Buchan Way, Deeside Way, Gordon Way and the Coastal Path • Provide advice and guidance on access opportunities in Aberdeenshire as required • Develop and distribute interpretation material • Contribute to the inspection • 2 Walks with a walking for health theme
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • KPI 30 • Record number of walks, events and volunteer days on each route • Record number of access requests involving a Ranger response • Seek feedback from attendees on events

Table 8

Objective 8	To Support, Sustain and Enhance facilities at Bennachie Centre
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage the day to day running of the centre and the shop and provide a welcome for visitors • Contribute to the development and delivery of the Bennachie Centre Management Plan. • Support the development and implementation of the results from the Bennachie Visitor Experience Plan • Support and deliver actions resulting from Bennachie Centre Trust meetings • Pro-actively manage and develop the displays and visitor information • Support the Bennachie Centre Trust (BCT) to deliver projects to encourage repeat visits to the Bennachie Centre; Placemaking • Promote, support and administer the development of the centre as a host venue for environmental and education initiatives, courses and community groups • Develop and implement best practice processes • Deliver a sustainable approach to the maintenance of the building
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record number of visitors to the Centre and seek visitor feedback.

- Monitor mystery shopper feedback
- Record use by community projects/groups.
- Record use of Centre for events and user feedback

Table 9

Objective 9 To Implement Ongoing Improvements to the Ranger Service Delivery	
Actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Develop and implement a Promotional and Communication Plan involving : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Establish Facebook pages • Review and develop website pages. • Introduce standard poster and flyer format to promote events and standardise distribution • Submit 8 articles to IQ per year • Inform local press of Ranger Service events • Liaise with Corporate Communications regarding high profile Ranger Service initiatives • Establish database for targeted events promotion • Develop and implement improvements based on feedback results : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer feedback cards for Bennachie Centre • Customer survey for Bennachie Centre • Feedback from Ranger events, walks, community groups, education sessions, website, Facebook • Develop and implement improvements based on benchmarking results: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Natural Heritage National Performance Recording • Develop, Implement and review Ranger Strategy, Annual Reports, Individual Work Programmes
Measurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Record Facebook likes and reach • Record website hits, activity and feedback • Usage of standardised publicity materials • Record number of articles submitted to IQ and of those published • Record Ranger coverage in local press • Record numbers on events database. • Record feedback • Record actions associated with benchmarking

Appendix 2

Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service



*From mountain to sea,
connecting people with place.*

Annual Report
1st April 2012 to 31st March 2013

Introduction

Connecting people with place, Rangers work in settings where people engage with the environment, whether that be rural, urban, coastal, inland or upland. Rangers are highly knowledgeable about our natural and cultural heritage, the sustainable management of these resources and are imaginative and effective communicators able to share this knowledge with residents and visitors alike.

In common with other ranger services in Scotland, Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service seeks to deliver three national aims;

- To provide a warm welcome and provide support to help people enjoy the outdoors.
- To increase awareness, understanding, care and responsible use of the natural and cultural heritage.
- To support the sustainable management and use of the outdoors to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives

Purpose

The purpose of this annual report is to celebrate the achievements of the Ranger Team 2012-2013 and to demonstrate where the work of the team supports the Council in the delivery of the Aberdeenshire **Single** Outcome Agreement.

Comment [AAU1]: Should this be Aberdeenshire Council?

1. Organisational Improvement and Efficiency

1.1. Key Performance Indicators

The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for the team during 2012-2013 are shown in table1 below.

Table 1. Ranger Service KPI 2012-1013

KPI 1, KPM 30 Events	
People attending a public event (Number of sessions)	1923 (55)
KPI 2, KPM 31 Schools	
People attending as part of a school session (Number of sessions)	6486 (192)
KPI 3, KPM 32 Groups	
People attending as part of an organised group (Number of sessions)	1192 (56)

This is the first year of the new team structure and KPI recording and therefore there is no comparable data available from previous years.

1.2 Team Structure

The team comprises six (fte) countryside rangers covering each of the six administrative areas. The Bennachie Centre is staffed by two part time (1fte) Wardens and one (0.5 fte) Cleaner. Rangers and Wardens work on an annualised hours contract which gives the team flexibility to respond to seasonal demands.

The team is line managed by a (0.6 fte) Ranger Service Co-ordinator. The team sits within the Specialist Services team, part of Infrastructure Services.

The emerging Ranger Service Strategy seeks to provide direction and responsibility on the key areas of work for the team.

1.3 Marr and Cairngorms National Park Ranger

The Marr Ranger post receives grant funding from the Cairngorms National Park Authority. In order to show where the work of this post delivers the aims and objectives of the National Park Ranger Services, an annual work-programme is agreed between the Ranger Support Officer for the CNPA and Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service. Reporting on the work-programme is achieved through a mid-term meeting and an annual report.

2. Ranger Aim 1 - Providing a warm welcome to the Countryside

2.1 Events and Guided walks

Despite the wettest summer in decades, the Ranger Service was able to successfully deliver a varied programme of public events. 1923 adults and children attended a variety of themed events throughout Aberdeenshire. The team continued to deliver events in partnership with organisations including, Aberdeen City, Balmoral Estate Ranger Service Forestry Commission Scotland, Historic Scotland, National Trust for Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. A list of events can be found in the attached appendix.



Bird box building event, Garioch

In order to respond to the views and needs of our customers and to provide robust monitoring of the service, a feedback questionnaire is planned for implementation in May 2013.

3. National Ranger aim 2 - To increase awareness, understanding, care and responsible use of the natural and cultural heritage

3.1 Environmental Education

During 2012-2013 the Ranger Service supported 6486 pupils working on Curriculum for Excellence topics which developed an awareness and understanding of our natural and cultural heritage. Topics covered included Woodland ecology and responsible access; planting for wildlife; biodiversity and interdependence; archaeology; visitor impacts at Aden Country Park; and sand dune succession. A full list of schools and topics can be found in the attached appendix.



Environmental Education, Banff and Buchan

The Ranger Service has also been working with schools and other organisations including Haddo Country Park and Benholm mill to develop outdoor classrooms and site education packs. During 2013 the webpages for the Service will be developed to provide guidance for groups on responsible access and sustainable use of the countryside sites where a ranger is not required.

3.2 John Muir Award

The Ranger Service supported six groups of young people through their John Muir Awards during 2012. Groups were from Aboyne Academy, Alford Academy (both through Cairngorms Junior Ranger Programme), Kellands Primary School, Kemnay Academy and Portsoy.

In 2013 the Ranger Service will be working in Banff and Buchan, Buchan, Formartine, Garioch and Kincardine and Mearns, and Marr to support young people in achieving the John Muir Award.

3.3 Higher and Further education

The Ranger service has delivered four sessions with a number of classes from SRUC. These have taken the form of site visits and excursions and talks on topics such as access, visitor management, LNR management and biodiversity.

3.4 Continuous Professional Development

3.4.1 Continuous Professional Development for teachers

The reduction in the size of the Ranger Team and a continuing interest in outdoor learning from schools has led the Ranger team to offer CPD sessions for teachers. The purpose of workshops has been to share skills and knowledge with teachers in order that they can use local sites imaginatively, responsibly and sustainably for outdoor education.

Over thirty teachers attended three twilight sessions titled "*Curriculum for Excellence: Opportunities for Learning Outdoors with Archaeology at Bennachie*" at an event run in partnership with Aberdeen University School of Education and the Bailies of Bennachie.

Seventy teachers from Mintlaw CSN and twenty-two from Peterhead and Fraserburgh CSN attended workshops on outdoor education at Aden Country Park at two events organised in partnership with Forest Education Initiative.

Twenty student childcare workers from Aberdeen College attended a “*Skills in Outdoor Learning for Pre-School Children*” event at Haddo Country Park.

3.4.2 Continuous Professional Development for Countryside Professionals

Through the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (Grampian), Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service organised three days of CPD for Countryside Professionals in the north-east. Topics were Ants, Geology, Visitor and Countryside Management.

4. National Ranger Aim 3 - To support the sustainable management and use of the outdoors to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives

4.1 Community

During 2012-2013 the Ranger Team continued to provide support to local communities working on community projects which engage people with their local environment. Projects included exploration of the coastal environment with Banff Academy and social work day service users as part of the COAST festival. Working with users and staff of the Harlaw Centre to promote use of the Pitsurry project by local schools and community

The Ranger Team has also been working with colleagues in the Environment Team to develop site management plans for Arnhall Moss and Inch Meadows and interpretation panels for Gourdon and Portlethen.

4.2 Protection and Promotion of our Biodiversity

The Ranger Service has delivered 16 events to encourage community volunteers to further the council's responsibility to biodiversity. Recent community projects have included tree planting at Kirkton of Skene and Portlethen Moss, tree planting and wildflower seeding at Battlehill (in association with Environment Team and volunteers from TCV) and scrub bashing for lepidoptera in association with Balmoral and Invercauld estates.



Scrub-bashing volunteers, Cairngorms National Park

The Ranger Service has continued to deliver Ranger Actions in LBAPs and to contribute to monitoring of species including Red Squirrel, Mink and Pearl Bordered Fritillary. Four events were delivered with a specific focus on encouraging biological recording by volunteers and the service attend the Bio-Blitz day at Haddo Country Park with a stall and events through the day.

4.3 Bennachie Centre

The Centre continues to attract around 35,000 visitors per year. During 2012-2013 the opening hours were changed to increase opening in the summer and reduce opening in the winter.

4.3.1 Bennachie Landscapes Project

The Bennachie Landscapes project was awarded £100,000 from the Arts and Humanities Research Council to continue the successful community archaeology project on the Bennachie Colony. Part of this award has been used to employ community archaeologist and research assistant, Leaf Gauld. Leaf will be based at the Bennachie Centre for two days per week for twelve months from March 2013.

www.bailiesofbennachie.org/bennachie-landscapes/

4.3.2 Year of Natural Scotland, Natural Bennachie Project

A Year of Natural Scotland grant of £40,000 has been awarded to the Natural Bennachie project, a partnership project with the Scottish Sculpture Workshop, Bailies of Bennachie, FCS and Aberdeen University. The project will see a site specific artist work with the community to deliver a site based piece of art on the theme of "What is Natural?", similarly, a multi-media artist will be employed to develop a legacy piece of work on the same theme.

www.naturalbennachie.org

5. Table summary of primary Strategic Priorities delivered by the Ranger Service 2012-2013

Strategic Priority	Key Actions	Ranger Service Actions 2012-2013
Providing good quality public spaces	Work with communities and partners to provide recreational opportunities in well-maintained public spaces.	<p>Arnhall Moss LNR Management Plan</p> <p>Insch Meadows Management Plan</p> <p>Interpretation leaflet for Portlethen Moss</p> <p>Interpretation panels for Johnshaven</p> <p>Log seat construction and wildflower planting</p> <p>All delivered through joint working with Environment Team.</p>
Improved early years opportunities	Enhance the early years provision for children and families provided by the Council.	<p>6 sessions with pre-school groups</p> <p>1 session with student early years teachers</p>

		1 session for playgroups and early years providers.
Improved access to sport and cultural activities	Increase participation in sport and leisure activities.	7 strenuous guided walks. 6 walks with NHS for mental and physical health promotion.
Enhanced community learning and development	Promote achievement through learning for young people.	6 groups/classes achieving success through John Muir Award
Reduce Aberdeenshire's global footprint	Reduce reliance on goods and services from non-sustainable sources.	Monitor purchases for life cycle impacts. Developing purchasing policy for Bennachie Centre (in partnership with Trust). Rangers and wardens using Worksmart using homeworking at appropriate times to reduce mileage.
Protect and promote the historical environment	Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's cultural heritage and historical environment.	25 events with a lead cultural theme 14 talks/walks on cultural theme to groups 30 school sessions with cultural heritage theme
Protect and promote the natural environment	Manage access to our natural environment	SCRA CPD session AECC event 5 events 3 groups 14 schools 2 SRUC
	Protect and promote our biodiversity.	2 SCRA CPD sessions 33 events 16 groups 132 school sessions 2 sessions on Wildlife garden development.
Delivering high quality customer service	Maximise the ease with which customers are able to contact and	Development of improved webpages and public feedback for

	interact with the Council.	2013. Annualised hours to respond to seasonal peaks of demand.
Efficiency	Ensure efficiency is an integral part of all services.	Ensure best use of Worksmart. Improved dialogue and co-ordination with environmental planners. Projects include Arnhall Moss, Inch Meadows, Formartine and Buchan Way,