



From mountain to sea

Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service Strategy Review

2013-16

“From mountain to sea, connecting people with place.”



The Strategy Review is an assessment of the outcomes achieved by Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service over the period 2013-16 and considers the need for any changes in direction and focus for the next three year strategy.

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1 Introduction

1.1 The Ranger Service

From mountain to sea, Aberdeenshire boasts a rich and valuable resource in its natural and cultural heritage. Wildlife sites of international importance, local and national nature reserves, award winning beaches and Country Parks, 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 who are able to share this knowledge with residents and visitors.

Connecting people with place, Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service promotes the enjoyment, understanding and care of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage. This is in alignment with other Ranger Services and follows National Ranger Service Aims identified by Scottish Natural Heritage. The Service delivers first hand provision of information, advice, activities and interpretation on Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural environment for people of all ages and social groups. The Service contributes to the management, enhancement and monitoring of environmental assets to promote and encourage engagement with Aberdeenshire's outdoors in a responsible and sustainable way.

1.2 Aberdeenshire Council's Vision for the Ranger Service 2013-16

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 in 2013 was summarised as:

"From mountain to sea, connecting people with place"

1.3 Resources

Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service is part of the Specialist Services Team, Planning & Building Standards within Infrastructure Services. The Team is line managed by a Ranger Service Co-ordinator. There is one full time equivalent (FTE) Area Ranger for each administrative area. The team also includes staff to manage the day to day operations and resources of the Bennachie Centre on behalf of the Bennachie Centre Trust.

Staffing arrangements changed over the period of the Strategy:

Table 1: Resources (Staffing and Allocated Budget, including salaries and associated staff costs) 2013-16

| Year | Staff |
|---------|--|
| 2013/14 | 0.6 FTE Co-ordinator 6 FTE Area Rangers 1 FTE Bennachie Centre Warden 0.5 FTE Bennachie Centre Cleaner |
| 2014/15 | 0.6 FTE Co-ordinator 6 FTE Area Rangers 1 FTE Bennachie Centre Warden 0.5 FTE Bennachie Centre Cleaner 1 P/T Seasonal Ranger (Garioch area) |
| 2015/16 | 0.6 FTE Co-ordinator 6 FTE Area Rangers 0.5 FTE Bennachie Centre Warden 0.5 FTE Seasonal Bennachie Centre Assistant 0.2 FTE Relief Bennachie Centre Assistants 0.5 FTE Bennachie Centre Cleaner |

| Year | Costs | Income | Net Expenditure |
|---------|----------|---------|-----------------|
| 2013/14 | £339,899 | £13,847 | £326,052 |
| 2014/15 | £341,500 | £11,377 | £330,123 |
| 2015/16 | £360,334 | £11,149 | £349,185 |

1.4 Strategy Review

Following an internal service review in 2012, the Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service produced its first Strategy which covered the period between 2013-16. It provided a framework for the future delivery of the Ranger Service to reflect changed staffing levels and new staff roles. It showed where the Ranger Service Objectives would deliver or contribute to Scottish Government and Aberdeenshire's priorities and provided a structured approach to service delivery. The Ranger Strategy Objectives provided a framework for a customer and performance focussed service.

This review of the Strategy over the 2013-16 period will look at whether those objectives were achieved and their outcomes. New and emerging Government and Council priorities, aims and objectives will be considered for the next Strategy period to ensure the Ranger Service continues to deliver national and local priorities. This review will also identify any strategic and operational changes that need to be made going forward to enhance efficiency, performance, recording and reporting, and to continue best practice.

2 Overview of Ranger Service Strategy 2013-16 – Actions, Outcomes and Performance

The Ranger Service Strategy objectives were drawn together to reflect the strategies, plans and policies which formed the ‘Golden Thread’ between Scottish Government outcomes and delivery on the ground. The Ranger Service Strategy 2013-16 identified nine main Objectives to deliver the core areas of work undertaken by the Ranger Service - public events, communities and groups, education, biodiversity, access and the Bennachie Centre. These Objectives provided a framework for a customer and performance focussed service. Over the period 2013-16 the Ranger Service successfully achieved the identified Objectives to deliver Government and Council priorities. The following sections give an overview of the 2013-16 Objectives and details of performance and achievements over the period of the Strategy.

2.1 Ranger Service Objective 1 – To Provide an Annual Programme of Guided Walks and Events

The team delivered a public events programme across Aberdeenshire for adults, families and children to raise awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire’s natural and cultural heritage.

Table 2: Objective 1 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 1 – To Provide an Annual Programme of Guided Walks and Events – Achieved | |
|---|---|
| Actions | |
| 1. | Devise and deliver a co-ordinated programme of guided walks and events |
| 2. | Target a wide range of audiences, including working with less advantaged groups |
| 3. | Deliver events in partnership with other organisations |
| 4. | Target events to support local or national festivals |
| 5. | Target events to support National or Aberdeenshire initiatives |
| 6. | Deliver volunteer conservation days |
| 7. | Seek customer feedback on guided walks and events |
| Outcomes | |

Greater awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage
 Improved engagement with local environment
 Promotion of region
 Enhanced community learning
 Increased wellbeing
 Improved access to sport and cultural activities
 Inclusiveness
 Increased volunteer opportunities

Table 3: Public Events – Overview of Performance Indicators

| Public Events - Performance Indicator | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2013-16 Totals |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Number of events | 103 | 81 | 98 | 282 |
| Number of attendees | 2,875 | 2,080 | 2,471 | 7,426 |
| Number of events on biodiversity | 89 | 68 | 89 | 246 |
| Number of events promoting responsible behaviour (SOAC) | 31 | 24 | 21 | 76 |
| Number of events promoting health and wellbeing benefits | 25 | 2 | 13 | 40 |
| Number of events with disadvantaged / vulnerable | n/a | n/a | 39 | n/a |
| Number of events providing volunteers opportunities | 17 | 62 | 57 | 173 |
| % Positive feedback | 99 | 98 | 99 | 98.7 average |

2.1.1 Over the three year period of the Strategy the Ranger Service organised, led or contributed to 282 events, and had face to face meaningful engagement with 7,426 visitors and residents.

- 2.1.2 Each year a varied programme was devised to deliver a range of types of events for a variety of audiences to maximise reach - from dawn chorus events to bat and moth nights; from mountain walks listening for the roar of red deer to rock pooling on the coast; from mini-beast hunts to star watching evenings. The team devised a programme which was customer focussed to target residents and visitors, but which also fulfilled the delivery of Government and Council priorities as outlined in the Golden Thread of the Strategy.
- 2.1.3 Public events covered key areas of the Ranger Service Strategy – raising awareness of Aberdeenshire’s natural and cultural heritage, promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and responsible access, providing volunteer opportunities for conservation and biological recording, and promoting the health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors.
- 2.1.4 The team worked in collaboration with the following partners on some public events to improve service delivery. Sharing skills, knowledge and physical resources with partners enabled the delivery of additional high quality events for the best value.
- Bailies of Bennachie
 - Bennachie Centre Trust
 - Butterfly Conservation
 - Cairngorms National Park Authority
 - Dee Catchment Partnership
 - Forestry Commission Scotland
 - KIMO (Local Authorities International Environmental Organisation)
 - National Trust for Scotland
 - North East Scotland Bat Group
 - North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership
 - Other local Ranger Services
 - River Dee Trust
 - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)
 - Rhynie Woman
 - Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
 - Scottish Wildlife Trust
- 2.1.5 Events were delivered to support the following local and national festivals and initiatives. The benefits of extra promotion, marketing and resources provided by tapping into larger public engagement projects improved efficiency and delivery.
- Active Aboyne
 - Ballater Victoria Week
 - Ballater Walking Festival
 - Banchory River Festival
 - Banff COAST Festival
 - Beachwatch (beach clean and litter surveys)
 - Big Butterfly Count
 - Big Garden Birdwatch
 - Big North East Pond Dip/Pooling Our Ponds
 - Cairngorm Nature Festival
 - Energetica Summer Festival (originally Walking and Wildlife Festival)

- Glenbuchat Spring Fair
- Muir of Dinnet Fun Day
- National Meadows Day
- National Moth Night
- National Nest Box Week
- Scotland's Nature Festival
- Scottish Archaeology and Heritage Festival
- Turriff Show
- Wild About Aden
- Westhill Gala
- World Oceans Day
- 2013 Year of Natural Scotland
- 2014 Year of Homecoming

2.1.6 Feedback was gathered by way of an anonymous SurveyMonkey questionnaire. Just under 100% of participants on Ranger Service events found the events well organised, informative, enjoyable and were made to feel welcome each year.

Case Study 1 Energetica Walking and Wildlife/Summer Festival

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Residents of and visitors to the Energetica Corridor. |
| Where | The Energetica Corridor (Blackdog to Peterhead). |
| Aim | To raise awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of the area and promote the corridor as a great place to live, visit, work and invest. |
| Results | The Ranger Service has been involved in the Festival since its first year delivering guided walks, rockpooling sessions, seabird watches, traditional skills events, cycling events and talks along the Energetica corridor. |
| Legacy | <p>The festival has grown from originally a one weekend festival to a summer long festival, now with many more partners.</p> <p>Participants on Ranger led events gained greater understanding and awareness of the natural and cultural heritage of the area.</p> <p>The area was promoted as a great place to live, visit, work and invest to residents and visitors.</p> |



Case Study 2 Ballater Walking Festival

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Residents of and visitors to the Marr area, and festival organisers (local community volunteers and Ballater Royal Deeside Ltd. staff). |
| Where | Various locations in Marr. |
| Aim | Lead one or two guided walks in Ballater Walking Festival programme annually to inform residents and visitors about natural and cultural heritage in the area. |
| Results | <p>Walks delivered with support from Ballater Walking Festival.</p> <p>Provided volunteer opportunities.</p> <p>Involved participants from across UK and overseas.</p> <p>Positive feedback from participants and organisers.</p> |
| Legacy | <p>Locals and visitors gained greater awareness and understanding about heritage and walking routes (used by those who lead walks themselves),</p> <p>Promotion of region and support of local tourist industry.</p> <p>Health and wellbeing benefits of outdoor activity promoted.</p> |



Case Study 3

World Oceans Day Celebrations

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Residents and visitors to Macduff. |
| Where | Macduff Marine Aquarium and shore. |
| Aim | To work in partnership with the aquarium to deliver activities to celebrate World Oceans Day |
| Results | Rockpooling sessions were delivered on the shore outside the aquarium each year as part of the day's activities to raise awareness and understanding of the intertidal habitat. |
| Legacy | <p>Locals & visitors gained greater awareness and understanding about the intertidal habitat, and the rich diversity of life in the Moray Firth.</p> <p>Promotion of an international initiative to raise awareness of biodiversity.</p> <p>Promotion of region and support of the local tourist industry.</p> <p>Improved joint project delivery.</p> |



2.3 Ranger Service Objective 2 – To Provide Environmental Education for Schools and Groups

The Ranger Service supported teachers and other environmental education providers in their delivery of outdoor learning, Curriculum for Excellence and Learning for Sustainability.

Although Groups are mentioned in the Objective title in the original Strategy, for ease of reporting all groups that aren't schools are now included in Objective 4.

Table 4: Objective 2 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 2 – To Provide Environmental Education for Schools <i>(and Groups)</i> – Achieved | |
|---|--|
| Actions | |
| 1. | Deliver sessions to support schools in the delivery of outdoor learning in the Curriculum for Excellence |
| 2. | Deliver sessions to support a wide variety of youth groups, particularly working with less engaged groups <i>(if not schools then reported in Objective 4)</i> |
| 3. | Target groups to support local or national festivals and initiatives <i>(if not schools then reported in Objective 4)</i> |
| 4. | Support delivery of John Muir Awards |
| 5. | Seek customer feedback on environmental education sessions |
| Outcomes | |
| | Greater awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage |
| | Improved engagement with local environment |
| | Increased wellbeing |
| | Inclusiveness |
| | Increased joint project delivery |
| | Increased skills learning |
| | Better protected and enhanced biodiversity |

Table 5: Schools – Overview of Performance Indicators

| Schools - Performance Indicator | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2013-16 Totals |
|--|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Number of sessions | 227 | 340 | 251 | 818 |
| Number of attendees | 6,942 | 7,521 | 6,597 | 21,060 |
| Number of sessions on biodiversity | 181 | 280 | 225 | 686 |
| Number of sessions promoting responsible behaviour (SOAC) | 76 | 91 | 40 | 207 |
| Number of sessions promoting health and wellbeing benefits | 10 | 1 | 2 | 13 |
| Number of sessions with disadvantaged / vulnerable | n/a | n/a | 4 | n/a |
| Number of events providing volunteers opportunities | 26 | 20 | 15 | 61 |
| Number of classes undertaking John Muir Awards | 11 | 12 | 9 | 32 |
| % Positive feedback | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 average |

- 2.3.1 Over the three year period of the Strategy the Ranger Service delivered 818 sessions for schools attended by 21,060 children to support schools in their delivery of outdoor learning in the Curriculum for Excellence.
- 2.3.2 It is now well recognised that outdoor learning connects children and young people with the natural world, with our built heritage and our culture and society, and encourages lifelong involvement and activity in Scotland's outdoors. It helps develop the skills of enquiry, critical thinking and reflection necessary for our children and young people to meet social, economic and environmental challenges. It also motivates our children and young people to become successful learners and to develop as healthy, confident, enterprising and responsible citizens.

Outdoor learning is embedded in the Curriculum for Excellence and all children at school should have access to planned outdoor learning. The Ranger Service

provided support, expertise, specialist knowledge and skills to teachers and schools to deliver Government and Council priorities as outlined in the Golden Thread of the Strategy.

- 2.3.3 The year 2014/15 saw a larger number of sessions and number of attendees than the other years in the period. This was due to an extra member of staff on the team that year. Part of maternity leave for the Co-ordinator this year was covered by two Rangers, allowing funds to be available for a Seasonal Ranger who was able to respond to some of the high demand for sessions with schools in the Garioch area.
- 2.3.4 Sessions with schools delivered key Ranger Service Strategy areas of work on raising awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage, biodiversity, responsible behaviour, health and wellbeing, and provided volunteer opportunities. Work with disadvantaged/vulnerable children and young people in both mainstream and special schools was undertaken but was not effectively recorded during this period.
- 2.3.5 Schools were encouraged and supported by the Ranger Service to take part in national and local initiatives such as the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership camera trapping project, OPAL (Open Air Learning) biological surveys, Beachwatch, Big Garden Birdwatch, etc. The Ranger Service also provided advice and activities for schools wishing to improve their grounds for wildlife for future study and observation.
- 2.3.6 The John Muir Award is a national environmental award scheme which encourages people to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. It is for people of all backgrounds and is non-competitive, inclusive and accessible. Over the period of the Strategy the Ranger Service supported schools to discover, explore, conserve and share a wild place through the John Muir Award scheme with 32 classes.
- 2.3.7 Partnership working was developed to improve service delivery. For example a programme for Academy classes studying rocky shore ecology was developed with the MacDuff Marine Aquarium and school visits were jointly delivered by members of both teams. The arrangement benefitted both teams by pooling resources, skills and knowledge from each team to deliver a high quality learning experience for S1 to Advanced Higher level.
- 2.3.8 Feedback was gathered by way of an anonymous SurveyMonkey questionnaire. 100% of teachers gave positive feedback on the education sessions with their classes. On average 82% of teachers said that working with the Ranger had given them the confidence to do more outdoor learning on their own with their class.

Case Study 4 Buchanhaven Primary School Outdoor Learning

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Buchanhaven Primary School. |
| Where | Peterhead. |
| Aim | To raise awareness and understanding of local natural and cultural heritage. |
| Results | The Ranger Service worked with two classes from Buchanhaven Primary School. One class attended a Ranger led session exploring and investigating their local rocky shore. The other class had support from the Ranger to deliver their own outdoor learning session on traditional skills. |
| Legacy | <p>The children involved gained knowledge and understanding of their local environment, and are more likely to be engaged with it and help conserve it in the future.</p> <p>The staff at the school were supported and enabled to deliver their own outdoor learning allowing Ranger time and resources to be allocated to other areas of work.</p> <p>Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service was recognised at a national level as examples of good practice - these two sessions were included as case studies in a Care Inspectorate report 'My World Outdoors', which was produced as a resource for early years childcare providers to share examples of good practice of learning outdoors.</p> |



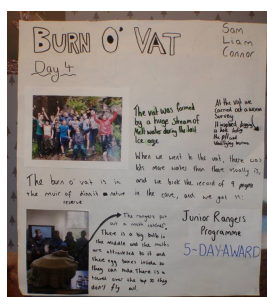
Case Study 5 John Muir Award with Youth and Family Services

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Five young people referred to Youth Services. |
| Where | Delgaty Woods, Turriff. |
| Aim | To deliver the John Muir Award to a group of young people not accessing mainstream education. |
| Results | The John Muir Award was used to foster and develop self-esteem, social skills and confidence in a group of teenagers who were struggling in social settings and in mainstream education, with the added benefit of developing environmental awareness and connection to nature. |
| Legacy | <p>Improved health and wellbeing - the young people developed in confidence over the duration of the Award.</p> <p>Greater awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage, and rights and responsibilities.</p> <p>Increased skills learning.</p> <p>Increased level of partnership working - The Youth and Family Services teams were so impressed by the improvements in their clients that they have since asked the Ranger Service to deliver training courses to enable them to run the John Muir Award themselves.</p> |



Case Study 6 Cairngorms Junior Rangers Programme

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Aboyne and Alford Academy students, other local Ranger Services/land managers/volunteers and the Cairngorms National Park Authority. |
| Where | Various locations across the Cairngorms National Park. |
| Aim | To deliver sessions involving students in aspects of Ranger work and contributing to the John Muir Award scheme on 1-2 days in introduction week in May/June, and 1-2 follow-up days in Sept – May annually. |
| Results | Sessions delivered in partnership with other organisations and students achieved the John Muir Award. |
| Legacy | <p>Students gained greater awareness and understanding, increased skills and gained experience for work.</p> <p>Some students were inspired to continue on the programme until leaving school and/or attend international Junior Ranger camps.</p> <p>Local practical conservation tasks completed.</p> <p>Joint project delivery.</p> <p>Wider awareness and recognition of the project (shortlisted for RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards after the period of this Strategy).</p> |



2.4 Ranger Service Objective 3 – To Provide Professional Development Workshops and Materials for Education Providers

The Ranger Service delivered or supported CPD and training events for teachers and other environmental education providers to share skills, knowledge and experience of outdoor learning opportunities.

Table 6: Objective 3 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 3 – To Provide Professional Development Workshops and Materials for Education Providers – Achieved | |
|---|---|
| Actions | |
| 1. | 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 |
| 2. | Deliver co-ordinated local training sessions for cluster groups to reflect outdoor learning priorities and local needs |
| 3. | Review, update and provide information and guidance on resources available to Education Providers |
| 4. | Provide customer feedback on Environmental Education Training |
| Outcomes | |
| | Greater awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage |
| | Increased skills learning |
| | Increased joint project delivery |

- 2.4.1 Over the period of the Strategy the Ranger Service contributed to 17 CPD and training events for teachers, other education providers and group leaders.
- 2.4.2 There is a continued commitment by the Ranger Service to deliver high quality sessions for schools and this accounts for a substantial amount of Ranger time. However, as Outdoor Learning became more embedded in the curriculum, the Ranger Service continued to deliver sessions for schools but also encouraged and enabled teachers to lead their own sessions. CPD sessions for teachers were designed to share knowledge, skills and resources to enable them to feel confident to deliver their own outdoor learning activities.
- 2.4.3 A number of the Ranger Service team are active members of the local Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA) and contributed to the planning and delivery of the annual SCRA regional training programme for other countryside professionals each year. Members of the team have also supported NESBReC (North East Scotland Biological Record Centre) in the delivery of their training days.

- 2.4.4 Rangers worked with partners to develop education resources for other education providers, for example on the Mill of Benholm, Dee Catchment and the “Rock Box” – a box of resources illustrating North East Scotland geodiversity and local sites. A presentation was given to a European Outdoor Education's Urban Nature Conference.

Case Study 7

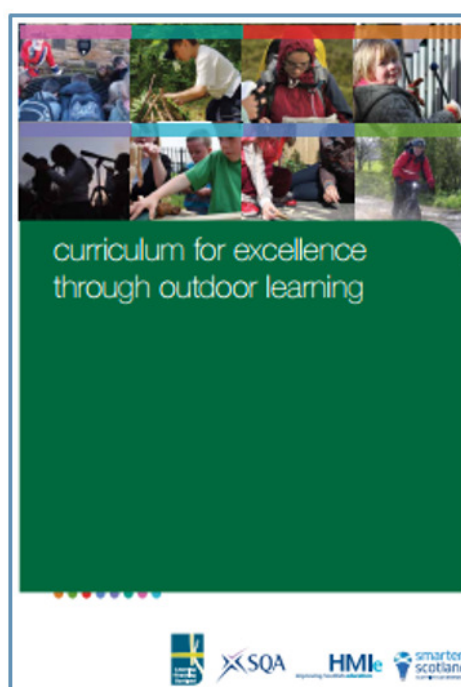
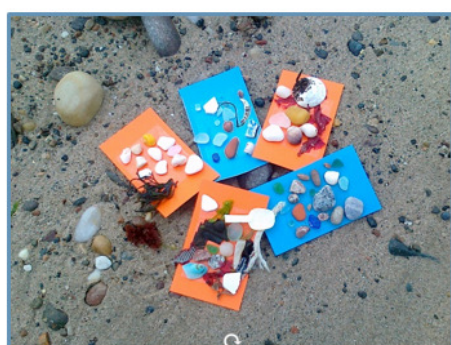
John Muir Award training for other providers

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Aberdeenshire Council and Aberdeen Foyer staff. |
| Where | Aden Country Park. |
| Aim | To deliver John Muir Award Training to other providers to reduce pressure on the Ranger Service and increase capacity for this popular award. |
| Results | <p>The Rangers delivered a John Muir Award Training Course following on from successful delivery of the John Muir Award to clients from Social Services, Youth services and Aberdeen Foyer.</p> <p>Twelve staff from Aberdeenshire Council Social Services, Youth Services, Community Learning and staff from Aberdeen Foyer were trained to deliver the John Muir award.</p> |
| Legacy | <p>Staff from other departments and organisations are now enabled to assist with delivering the John Muir Award resulting in increased awareness and capacity for delivering this popular award in the future.</p> <p>Increased skills learning.</p> <p>Increased joint project delivery.</p> |



Case Study 8**CPD Training for Primary School and Early Years Teachers**

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Primary School and Early Years teachers. |
| Where | Red Well Beach, Whitehills and Whitehills Primary School. |
| Aim | To work in partnership with other environmental education providers to deliver a training programme of outdoor learning techniques and give participants the confidence to deliver their own outdoor learning. |
| Results | 18 primary and early years teachers learnt about the benefits of outdoor learning, planning outdoor learning including risk assessment, and took part in a selection of environmental activities. As a result they grew in confidence throughout the training, learnt new skills and felt more able to lead outdoor learning activities with their classes in the future. |
| Legacy | <p>Participants felt enabled to take their teaching outside of the classroom to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning, allowing the children to explore the natural environment and develop an awareness and understanding of it.</p> <p>Increased skills learning.</p> <p>Improved joint project delivery.</p> |



2.5 Ranger Service Objective 4 – To Engage with the Local Community and Partners

The Ranger Service worked with local communities and organised groups to raise awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage, and to provide opportunities to protect and enhance biodiversity. This section also includes performance results from actions in Objective 2.

Table 7: Objective 4 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 4 – To Engage with the Local Community and Partners – Achieved | |
|--|---|
| Actions | |
| 1. | Engage, support and empower communities and partners in the promotion and sustainable management of local sites |
| 2. | Support local communities and partners in projects that achieve sustainability, protect the environment and conserve and enhance biodiversity |
| 3. | Target community groups which supports local initiatives or priorities, particularly concentrating on less advantaged groups |
| 4. | Compile and deliver a series of presentations and events to engage with individual groups and communities who cannot access mainstream events |
| 5. | Deliver volunteer conservation days |
| 6. | Seek customer feedback on projects |
| Outcomes | |
| Greater awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage | |
| Improved engagement with local environment | |
| Enhanced community learning | |
| Increased volunteer opportunities | |

Table 8: Communities and Groups – Overview of Performance Indicators

| Communities and Groups - Performance Indicator | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2013-16 Totals |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Number of sessions | 90 | 120 | 107 | 317 |
| Number of attendees | 1,686 | 2,090 | 1,793 | 5,569 |

| | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|-------------|
| Number of sessions on biodiversity | 64 | 109 | 105 | 278 |
| Number of sessions promoting responsible behaviour (SOAC) | 35 | 40 | 39 | 114 |
| Number of sessions promoting health and wellbeing benefits | 12 | 32 | 13 | 57 |
| Number of sessions with disadvantaged / vulnerable | n/a | 27 | 32 | n/a |
| Number of events providing volunteers opportunities | 11 | 32 | 15 | 58 |
| % Positive feedback | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 average |

- 2.5.1 Over the three year period of the Strategy the Ranger Service delivered 317 sessions for communities and organised groups which were attended by 5,569 participants.
- 2.5.2 The year 2014/15 saw a larger number of sessions and number of attendees than the other years in the period. This was due to an extra member of staff on the team that year. Part of maternity leave for the Co-ordinator this year was covered by two Rangers, allowing funds to be available for a Seasonal Ranger who was able to respond to some of the high demand for sessions with communities and groups in the Garioch area.
- 2.5.3 Sessions with communities and groups delivered key Ranger Service Strategy areas of work on raising awareness and understanding of natural and cultural heritage, biodiversity, responsible behaviour, health and wellbeing, and provided volunteer opportunities. The higher number of volunteer sessions in 2014 is in part due to the Seasonal Ranger working as a Volunteer Ranger after the end of the Fixed Term contract. Work with disadvantaged/vulnerable children in both mainstream and special schools was undertaken and developed over the period but was not effectively recorded in the first year of the Strategy.
- 2.5.4 Volunteer opportunities were provided for practical conservation and biological recording. The Ranger Service enabled members of local communities to participate in caring for and promoting their local environment for example at beach clean and litter surveys, tree and wildflower planting sessions, nest box building, pond creation, a path launch, and national and local biological recording initiatives.

2.5.5 The Rangers worked with colleagues, partners and communities with the promotion and sustainable management of local sites to achieve sustainability, protect the environment, and conserve and enhance biodiversity. Support was provided for the following -

Management Plans:

- Arnhall Moss
- Battlehill and Meadows
- Haughton and Murray Park
- Inch Meadows
- Portlethen Moss and Community Woodland

Biodiversity and Interpretation advice:

- Aden Country Park
- Aboyne Community Woods Association
- Collieston to Whinnyfold coastal path
- Feteresso Conservation Area
- Friends of Haddo (Discovery Zone)
- Gourdon Harbour
- McDonald Park and Caroline's Well Wood
- Mill of Benholm
- Newtonhill

2.5.6 Support and advice was also given by Area Rangers to colleagues' bids to the Heritage Lottery Fund for Haddo and Aden Country Parks. Following the success of the bids the Ranger were, and still are, involved in advising for improving biodiversity in the parks.

2.5.7 The John Muir Award is a national environmental award scheme which encourages people to connect with, enjoy and care for wild places. It is for people of all backgrounds and is non-competitive, inclusive and accessible. Over the period of the Strategy the Ranger Service supported 11 communities and groups to discover, explore, conserve and share a wild place through the John Muir Award scheme. It is particularly effective at reaching audiences not usually accessing Ranger Service events. Partnership working with local groups and organisations who support disadvantaged/vulnerable members of our communities proved a successful arrangement for all parties.

2.5.8 Feedback was gathered by way of an anonymous SurveyMonkey questionnaire. 100% of participants on sessions with communities and groups found them well organised, informative, enjoyable, and were made to feel welcome each year.

Case Study 9**Portlethen Moss Pond Creation Project**

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Portlethen Moss Conservation Group, British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (now The Conservation Volunteers) |
| Where | Portlethen Moss. |
| Aim | To construct two small wildlife ponds on a dry grassland area of Portlethen Moss. |
| Results | Ponds were successfully created and became colonised. Now a valuable resource for schools and community groups surveying aquatic life using the North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership's Pooling our Ponds programme and for public pond dipping events. |
| Legacy | <p>Increased community involvement in Portlethen Moss including in volunteer practical conservation activities.</p> <p>Increased biodiversity - more damselfly and dragonfly species recorded.</p> <p>Ongoing annual public events highlighting conservation success.</p> <p>Ongoing conservation activities by community groups on the Moss.</p> |



Emerald damselflies mating and laying eggs into the pond

Case Study 10 Community Wildflower/Tree Planting – Alford New Road Scheme

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Alford Scouts, Alford Primary School, Environment Team, Landscape Services, Roads. |
| Where | New section of A944 road embankments and around associated SuDS pond in Murray Park, Alford. |
| Aim | To involve the local community in habitat creation and enhancement. |
| Results | The local community and other council teams came together to create a habitat for biodiversity in the new road scheme in Alford. |
| Legacy | <p>There is continued local interest - Scouts are looking for further conservation work opportunities.</p> <p>Improved community engagement with the local environment.</p> <p>Enhanced biodiversity.</p> <p>Increased joint project delivery.</p> |



Case Study 11**Control of Invasive Non-Native Species along the River Ythan**

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Ythan Project (later Biodiversity) Volunteers. |
| Where | River Ythan catchment area. |
| Aim | To control Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) on the banks of the Ythan. |
| Results | Following a survey carried out by the River Ythan Trust in 2012 community-led control of INNS was undertaken by the Ythan Project Volunteers (who later became the Ythan Biodiversity Volunteers) from 2014 with the support of the Ranger Service. Control of the invasive species was carried out through affected areas of the Ythan catchment area entailing over 30 days per year of volunteer time and the assistance of a contractor. In 2015, financial assistance from the Formartine Community Planning Group and the Aberdeen Environmental Forum enabled the entire catchment to be treated for the first time with herbicide. Control work by volunteers and contractors resulted in over a 70% reduction in Giant Hogweed and Japanese Balsam in some areas. |
| Legacy | <p>Reduction in area affected by INNS on the Ythan.</p> <p>Practical conservation volunteer opportunities, increased skills learning and greater awareness and understanding.</p> <p>The community-led project supported by the Ranger Service was later included in the booklet “20 Years of Action for Biodiversity in North East Scotland” produced by the NE Scotland Biodiversity Partnership.</p> |



2.6 Ranger Service Objective 5 – To Protect and Enhance our Biodiversity

The Ranger Service worked with colleagues, partners and communities to deliver and support projects which protect and enhance Aberdeenshire's biodiversity.

Table 9: Objective 5 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 5 – To Protect and Enhance our Biodiversity – Achieved | |
|--|---|
| Actions | |
| 1. | Deliver public events and specific workshops to promote biological recording and protection/enhancement of biodiversity |
| 2. | Promote biodiversity, geology and biological recording at school sessions and events |
| 3. | Support the work of NESBReC and local and national initiatives through promotions and undertaking site surveys, monitoring and biological recording |
| 4. | Deliver Ranger Service Action from Local Biodiversity Action Plan |
| 5. | Target biological recording for volunteers through support to local communities and partners in projects that promotes, protects and enhances biodiversity in public spaces |
| Outcomes | |
| Greater awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage | |
| Better protected and enhanced biodiversity | |
| Increased volunteer opportunities | |

2.6.1 1,210 public events and sessions for schools, groups and communities were delivered to protect and enhance Aberdeenshire's biodiversity, through offering practical conservation and biological recording opportunities.

2.6.2 The Rangers worked with and supported colleagues, partners and communities on the following projects and initiatives to protect and enhance biodiversity -

Biological Recording:

- North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership Camera Trapping Project
- NESBReC Mammal Atlas
- OPAL (Open Air Learning) Surveys
- Pooling Our Ponds
- Small Blue Butterfly

Monitoring:

- Beachwatch (beach litter survey)
- British Trust for Ornithology Beached Bird Survey

- Local Nature Conservation Sites (designations and monitoring)
- Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels
- Scottish Mink Initiative

Action Plans:

- Cairngorm Nature Plan
- Scotland's National Peatland Plan
- UK Biological Action Plan Priority Habitats – lochs and ponds, lowland raised bogs, wetlands, woodlands.
- UK Biological Action Plan Priority Species - priority Lepidoptera species, water voles.

2.6.3 Members of the team sat on various local Biodiversity Action Plan groups. At the start of this Strategy period the Marine and Coastal group identified a need to combat marine and coastal litter in the North East of Scotland. As an action from this, Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service prepared a report to propose a Balloon and Chinese Lantern Release Policy banning mass intentional releases related to the Council in Aberdeenshire. The report was discussed and subsequently agreed at the meeting of the Infrastructure Services Committee on 3rd July 2014.

Case Study 12**Balloon and Chinese Lantern Release Policy**

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Aberdeenshire Council staff, residents and visitors to Aberdeenshire. |
| Where | Aberdeenshire-wide |
| Aim | To prevent any further mass intentional releases of balloons and Chinese Lanterns in Aberdeenshire, and to raise awareness of the damage these mass littering events can cause. |
| Results | <p>The policy prepared by the Ranger Service was approved and mass intentional balloon and Chinese lantern releases are now banned on Council property, Council owned land, by Council staff and at Council endorsed or supported events, including those not on Council owned land.</p> <p>These events are on the increase, often for fundraising, commemorative or celebratory events but evidence is growing of the damage they cause and Aberdeenshire Council joined with an increasing number of Local Authorities in introducing a policy banning all such releases.</p> |
| Legacy | <p>The number of mass intentional balloon and lantern releases in Aberdeenshire will be reduced.</p> <p>Greater awareness and understanding of the damage balloons and Chinese Lanterns cause to wildlife, livestock, humans, land and buildings.</p> <p>It is hoped that publicising the policy and promoting alternatives will also lead to a reduction in smaller scale private releases, especially of lanterns, as the public become more aware of the dangers they pose.</p> |

Publications Groups

Balloon and Chinese Lantern Releases

Aberdeenshire Council prohibits intentional balloon and lantern releases on council owned land and property, by council staff, and at events endorsed or supported by the council, including those on non-council land.

Data and Resources



Policy on intentional balloon and Chinese or sky lantern releases

Explore



Case Study 13**UK Priority Moth Species Conservation**

| | |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Butterfly Conservation staff and volunteers, Balmoral Estate Ranger Service, Invercauld Estate, SNH and other partners. |
| Where | Crathie/Inver area |
| Aim | To monitor the population and manage the habitat of the nationally rare Dark Bordered Beauty moth. |
| Results | Increased knowledge about the species and appropriate habitat management work was undertaken. |
| Legacy | <p>Aspen habitat and associated species (not just the Dark Bordered Beauty) conserved.</p> <p>Ongoing opportunities for volunteers.</p> <p>Partnerships strengthened and improved joint project delivery.</p> <p>Funding secured for future habitat management.</p> |



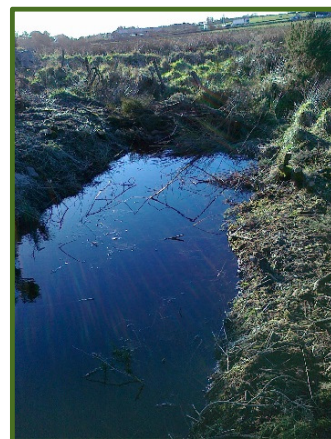
Case Study 14 Planting for Pollinators at Bennachie

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Aberdeen Foyer REACH Group. |
| Where | Bennachie Visitor Centre. |
| Aim | To support the Aberdeenshire Council Pollinator Action Plan and provide practical conservation opportunities for the Aberdeen Foyer REACH Group (Inverurie Group 4). |
| Results | The group planted wild flowers in pots purchased from Wood Recyclability by the Bennachie Centre Trust to encourage butterflies, moths, insects and hoverflies. |
| Legacy | <p>Greater awareness and understanding of the importance of planting for pollinators to encourage biodiversity.</p> <p>Wildflower pots continue to flourish at the entrance to the Bennachie Visitor Centre.</p> |



Case Study 15**Green Stimulus Peatland Restoration Project.
Peatland Action Fund**

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Portlethen Moss Conservation Group, SNH. |
| Where | Portlethen Moss. |
| Aim | Reduce the drying out of Portlethen Moss remnant of a raised bog by creating a natural dam made with gorse cuttings across the drainage ditch on the moss. Measure the peat depth on the Moss. |
| Results | Highlighted importance of Portlethen Moss as a habitat worth conserving and increased community involvement in Portlethen Moss including in volunteer practical conservation activities. More information on peat levels. |
| Legacy | <p>Increased understanding of value of raised bogs and peatlands in combatting climate change and flooding, as well as biodiversity.</p> <p>Portlethen Moss field visit during LBAP Peatland Conference.</p> <p>Importance of Portlethen Moss raised at Scottish Parliament by local MSP.</p> <p>Ongoing conservation activities by school and community groups on the Moss.</p> |



2.7 Ranger Service Objective 6 – To Promote Responsible Access to the Countryside

Table 10: Objective 6 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 6 – To Promote Responsible Access to the Countryside – Achieved | |
|---|--|
| Actions | |
| 1. 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 | |
| 2. In partnership with the Environment Team: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 | |
| 3. Seek customer feedback on events, school and group sessions where SOAC is promoted | |
| Outcomes | |
| Greater awareness and understanding of rights and responsibilities | |

2.7.1 397 public events and sessions for schools, groups and communities were delivered to promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and raise awareness of rights and responsibilities under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

2.7.2 Rangers worked with the Access and Environment Teams on issues of access as they arose. During the period of funding from the CNPA (Cairngorms National Park Authority) the Marr Ranger conducted Deeside hotspot patrols to promote responsible access through engaging with visitors during busy times at popular sites.

2.7.3 The Ranger Service supported the Access Team in promoting the SOAC, for example with distribution of leaflets and joint attendance at the Turriff Show. The Bennachie Centre contributed to promotions with the display of materials.

| Case Study 16 | Resolution of SOAC Issue |
|----------------|---|
| Who | Glenbuchat farmer, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Walk Highlands. |
| Where | Glenbuchat. |
| Aim | To resolve an issue reported by the farmer to the CNPA – walking groups with dogs were disturbing cattle when cutting across the field. |
| Results | Area Ranger met with the farmer and arranged for CNPA to make signs directing walkers around the field, and got a note added to the walking route promoted on the Walk Highlands website. |
| Legacy | The farmer was less concerned about walkers on his land. |
| | Greater awareness and understanding - walkers were better informed. |
| | Improved provision of information - Walk Highlands happy to amend walk description on website. |

2.8 Ranger Service Objective 7 – To Promote and Enhance Access Opportunities to the Countryside




Table 11: Objective 7 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 7 – To Protect and Enhance Access Opportunities to the Countryside – Achieved | |
|--|---|
| Actions | |
| 1. | Deliver guided walks on Long Distance Routes, Core Path Network and other access routes |
| 2. | Provide advice and promote guidance on Long Distance Routes, Core Path Network and other access routes |
| 3. | In partnership with Environment Teams:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community projects to enhance access opportunities throughout Aberdeenshire • Develop and distribute interpretation and education material |
| 4. | Contribute to the inspection and maintenance of Long Distance Routes & Core Path Network |
| 5. | Deliver opportunities for volunteers in practical conservation works |
| 6. | Seek customer focussed feedback on events of guided walks |
| Outcomes | |
| | Greater awareness and understanding of Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage |
| | Promotion of region |
| | Increased volunteer opportunities |

2.8.1 Performance on actions in this objective have been covered elsewhere.

2.8.2 Inspection and monitoring of Long Distance Paths took place but these are significantly reduced in number now and by the end of the Strategy were not a significant piece of work.

2.8.3 The Ranger Team supported the Access Team with work on the Core Path Plan.

| Case Study 17 | Kincardine and Mearns Coastal Path - Community Mental Health Team K&M walking group |
|--|---|
| Who | Community Mental Health Team (CMHT) K&M. |
| Where | Coastal path and old coach road Johnshaven, Gourdon and Benholm. |
| Aim | Deliver a winter coastal wildlife walk to CMHT walking group clients and staff to promote the health and wellbeing benefits of being outdoors and raise awareness of the coastal path. |
| Results | Greater awareness of local wildlife and interest in conservation activities. |
| Legacy | <p>Increased involvement in local area with members of group going on to participate in the John Muir Award using the coastal and core paths in the area and carry out practical conservation such as tree planting on local sites.</p> <p>Greater awareness and understanding.</p> <p>Improved wellbeing and health.</p> |
|    | |

2.9 Ranger Service Objective 8 – To Support, Sustain and Enhance Facilities at Bennachie Centre

Partnership working with the Bennachie Centre Trust, Forestry Commission Scotland and the Bailies of Bennachie developed to deliver a quality experience for visitors.

Table 12: Objective 8 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 8 – To Support, Sustain and Enhance Facilities at the Bennachie Centre – Achieved | |
|--|--|
| Actions | |
| 1. | Provide the resource to manage the day to day running of the centre and the shop |
| 2. | Contribute to the development and implementation of the Bennachie Centre Management Plan |
| 3. | In partnership with the Bennachie Centre Trust and other parties contribute towards enhancing the visitor experience at the Centre |
| 4. | Utilise the Centre for the delivery of ranger events and act as a hub for the Ranger Service |
| 5. | Promote and support the development of the Centre as a host venue for environmental and education initiatives, courses and groups with local community links |
| 6. | Contribute to physical maintenance of building |
| 7. | Seek customer feedback on events and visitor experience at the centre |
| Outcomes | |
| | Greater awareness and understanding of Bennachie |
| | Promotion of Bennachie and the area |
| | Improved visitor experience |
| | Increased joint project delivery |

Table 13: Public Events – Overview of Performance Indicators

| Bennachie Centre - Performance Indicator | 2013-14 | 2014-15 | 2015-16 | 2013-16 Totals |
|---|----------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------------|
| Number of public events at the Centre | 23 | 17 | 13 | 53 |
| Number of sessions for schools and groups | 46 | 45 | 44 | 135 |
| Number of training/workshops/meetings | 96 | 55 | 63 | 214 |

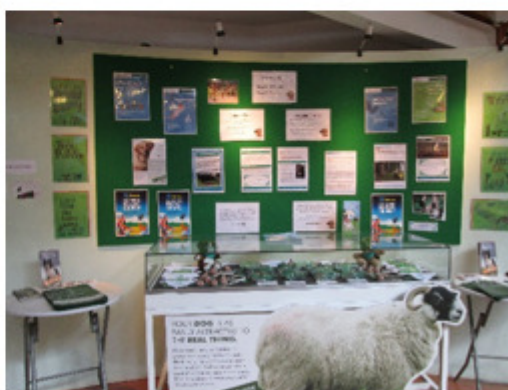
- 2.9.1 Staffing and opening hours at the Centre changed each year during the period of the Strategy. By the end of the period the most efficient use of staff resources and time were established, and the opening hours maximised during periods of high visitor demand.
- 2.9.2 The Bennachie Centre is an important asset for Aberdeenshire - it is a dedicated visitor facility with permanent and temporary exhibitions interpreting the hill and its heritage. There are interactive exhibits, audio stations, meeting area and a dedicated wildlife viewing area. The Ranger Service works with partners to deliver a quality visitor experience providing accessible and inclusive interpretation, education, information and assistance.
- 2.9.3 During 2013/14 Forestry Commission Scotland commissioned a Bennachie visitor experience consultation. The Ranger Service fed into the development of the final report which was produced in January 2014. Findings from this report resulted in the “Bennachie Visitor Experience Plan” which helped guide the Bennachie Centre partners in the development and management of the hill, footpath network, visitor facilities and the Bennachie Centre during the period of the Ranger Service Strategy. To deliver a co-ordinated and collaborative approach to implementing the Visitor Experience Plan (VEP) the Bennachie Warden worked with partners to produce annual reports and action plans.
- 2.9.4 A key change which emerged from the VEP was to have an ongoing programme of Centre-driven improvement and development works rather than a large scale total refurbishment every five years. This would allow smaller scale developments to be achieved which were easier to manage and implement. The experience of repeat visitors would be improved with regularly changing displays. Trending and topical initiatives and campaigns could be promoted effectively.

- 2.9.5 At the start of the period of this Strategy the Bennachie Centre staff re-established the Bennachie Operational Group meetings which are attended by Bennachie Centre staff, the Garioch Ranger, the Forestry Commission Scotland Ranger and representatives from the Bennachie Centre Trust and the Bailies of Bennachie. These meetings have resulted in significant improvements to the inter-partner communication, the running of the Bennachie Centre and the service offered to visitors.
- 2.9.6 The Bennachie Centre Staff supported partner projects over the period of the Strategy such as the Bennachie Landscapes Project, the Natural Bennachie Project and The Doric Opera. Towards the end of the Strategy period work was undertaken to prepare for a “Bennachie Welcomes” project by the Centre Trust. Bids were submitted for funding a refurbishment of the Centre which will result in a more open and welcoming Centre with accessible staff. Funding was achieved and work progressed.
- 2.9.7 For the majority of the period of the Strategy there was no people counter for the Centre. However, user numbers were recorded in terms of number of public events, schools and group sessions, training, workshops and meetings held at the Centre. Numbers were fairly consistent year on year but there were significantly more training/workshop events in 2013/14 because the Bailies of Bennachie employed a Community Archaeologist who delivered many sessions at the Centre associated with the digs undertaken that year.
- 2.9.8 The Team used Facebook and SurveyMonkey as methods of communication and feedback. Visitor feedback showed that 95% of visitors felt welcome (5% said n/a) and 100% found staff polite and helpful. The top three things that visitors liked about the Centre were that it was educational, good for children and a general appreciation of the facility.

Case Study 18

New Bennachie Visitor Centre Exhibition Panels

| | |
|----------------|--|
| Who | Bennachie Centre Trust. |
| Where | Bennachie Visitor Centre, Chapel of Garioch, Inverurie. |
| Aim | To replace the static interpretation within the Centre with flexible exhibition space which can be used by all partners for community projects, themed exhibitions and interpretation of the hill and environs. |
| Results | Programme of monthly displays throughout the season. |
| Legacy | <p>Creation of information resource for visitors, greater awareness and understanding.</p> <p>Area to showcase events, activities and projects resulting in renewed interest by repeat visitors.</p> <p>Supports and promotes local, national and community initiatives.</p> |



2.10 Ranger Service Objective 9 – To Implement Ongoing Improvements to the Ranger Service Delivery

Table 13: Objective 9 - 2013-16 Actions and Outcomes

| Objective 9 – To Implement Ongoing Improvements to the Ranger Service Delivery – Achieved | |
|--|--|
| Actions | |
| 1. Develop and implement a promotional and marketing plan for the Ranger Service | |
| 2. To monitor and analyse Ranger Service delivery feedback and identify and implement improvements | |
| 3. To monitor and analyse Ranger Service benchmarking and identify and implement improvements | |
| 4. 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. | |
| Outcomes | |
| Professional standards maintained | |
| Monitored work outcomes | |
| Continuous improvement | |
| Effective communication and promotion | |

- 2.10.1 The Ranger Service continually sought to deliver a high quality, efficient service and implement any identified improvements whilst focussing on National Ranger Aims, National Outcomes, Aberdeenshire Council Priorities and Outcomes, the Community Plan and the Infrastructure Services Plan.
- 2.10.2 In the year 2013-14 the new Ranger Service Strategy was implemented to clarify the Team's aims and objectives and a number of measures were introduced to monitor the Team's service delivery.

- 2.10.3 Communication was identified as an area to develop in the Strategy actions. In 2013 the Ranger Service Facebook page and SurveyMonkey questionnaires were created as methods of promotion, marketing, communication and feedback. Over the period of the Strategy the audience of the Facebook page has grown, the largest reach for a post in the period 2013-16 was 12,000 for the post promoting the launch of the summer events programme of 2016. The overwhelming majority of SurveyMonkey responses were positive, however they were completed by a small proportion of participants and visitors. Small business cards with QR (Quick Response) codes and the web address for the surveys were produced to hand to attendees on events and sessions which increased feedback obtained. A Facebook page for the Bennachie Centre was also created and the number of likes continues to increase.
- 2.10.4 The Ranger Service continually reviewed and updated policies, procedures and plans. In particular in this period, in collaboration with the Environment Team, a focus was given to procedures with regard to biosecurity, and invasive non-native species. The lone working policy was also scrutinised and updated to reflect changed staffing arrangements. Procedures and policies at The Bennachie Centre were continually reviewed in light of changing staffing arrangements, opening hours and season.
- 2.10.5 The team has continued to pursue a programme of continual professional development. Over the three year period of the Strategy members of the team attended 87 training courses, seminars and workshops to increase knowledge and skills; keep up to date with legislation, guidelines and research; and benefit from examples of best practice to ensure a quality delivery of service.
- 2.10.6 The team continued to develop working relationships with colleagues in other Aberdeenshire teams for projects and delivery of public events, and sessions for schools and groups to improve efficiency and share skills and knowledge.
- 2.10.7 The Strategy was intended to be a flexible document and could be amended through the Annual Team Action Plans to reflect new and different opportunities and requirements. It became apparent through the period of the Strategy that the following areas were growing and emerging as priorities at a national and local level - community empowerment and working with volunteers, and reaching vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities including those in areas high on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Individual work plans and the Team Action Plan developed to incorporate these new areas of work and record performance.

3 Review of the 2013-16 Strategy and the Way Forward for 2017-20

3.1 Review of the 2013-16 Strategy Document

- 3.1.1 The Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service Strategy 2013-16 was the first Strategy produced by the Ranger Service. Overall, the aims and objectives were achieved and the Strategy can be considered a success in terms of how it focussed the Team's working practices. This Review document has illustrated that the Ranger Service delivered the actions outlined in the Strategy to raise awareness and understanding of the natural and cultural heritage of Aberdeenshire, protect and enhance biodiversity, promote responsible behaviour, improve health and wellbeing, provide opportunities for volunteers and was inclusive and accessible. However, the Review process also highlighted improvements that could be made to the structure and content of future Strategies.
- 3.1.2 Future Strategies should be presented in a more outcome focussed way. The outcomes in this review document are a product of the "Why these Actions?" sections written in 2013, and the need to report in a more outcome-focussed way in 2017.
- 3.1.3 Future Strategies should link more closely to the Team's Action Plan. Whilst the majority of actions in the 2013-16 strategy were delivered, they could be organised, presented and reported on in a clearer, more streamlined strategy with less double entry recording, less overlap between objectives and proportionate weighting to objectives in terms of workload.
- 3.1.4 Future strategies should facilitate better monitoring of performance for reporting purposes. As the Strategy progressed it became apparent that more data could be recorded to enable thorough reporting on performance. More performance indicators were introduced, and more details were recorded on an ongoing and annual basis to effectively monitor and report on the achievements of the team. This should continue in future strategies.
- 3.1.5 The Ranger Service vision should be amended to *"we will aim to raise awareness and understanding in order to promote and protect Aberdeenshire's natural and cultural heritage - connecting people with place"* to give a clearer message and be consistent with the vision format of other teams within Specialist Services.
- 3.1.6 Over the period of the Strategy new priorities emerged, and future Strategies should outline "Key Priorities" – areas of work to particularly focus on to remain current with national and local priorities.
- 3.1.7 The 2013-16 Strategy included reference to the Golden Thread and illustrated how the work of the Ranger Service delivered on many national and local priorities and objectives. This could be made visually clearer in future strategies by means of one table and contain references to a current Scottish Government National Plan, Policy or Strategy, relating to each of the main strategy objectives.

3.2 The Way Forward

3.2.1 The Ranger Service will continue to deliver the National Ranger Aims:

- To ensure 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.

3.2.2 In delivering these National Ranger Aims the team will also deliver Scottish Government, Aberdeenshire Council, and even international outcomes, targets and goals.

3.2.3 Key priorities for the next Strategy period will be to focus on developing community empowerment and working with volunteers, and reaching vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our communities including those in areas high on the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. Further work will also help progress the national accreditation of the Bennachie Visitor Centre.

3.2.4 Future Strategies will also be flexible documents and can be amended through the Annual Team Action Plans to reflect new and different opportunities and requirements. Possible new areas of work to develop further in the next Strategy period could be raising awareness of and reducing our impact on climate change, including promoting active and sustainable travel.

3.2.5 Biodiversity will continue to be a major consideration in the next Strategy period as Scotland's Biodiversity – a Route Map to 2020 progresses. As set out in the 2020 Challenge, our well-being and prosperity depends on the benefits that biodiversity provides. Forests, meadows, rivers, saltmarshes and bogs in healthy condition provide clean water, food, fuel, storm protection, minerals and flood control. Nature underpins all of this, and of course is important in its own right. Regular contact with wildlife provides many health benefits, enables our children to enjoy learning, and helps bring people together. Our economy is also dependent on our biodiversity - Scotland's Economic Strategy (2015) states that 'Protecting and enhancing this stock of natural capital, which includes our air, land, water, soil and biodiversity and geological resources is fundamental to a healthy and resilient economy'.

We need to protect and enhance nature to secure these benefits now and into the future. The next Ranger Service Strategy will set out actions and outcomes to support the Route Map at a local level.

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Appendix 1 – Ranger Service Strategy 2013-2016



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 attaining 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 | |
| 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 attaining 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 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 attaining 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 |
| 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 | 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 |
| 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 5

To Protect and Enhance our Biodiversity

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 | |
| 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 | 1 |
| We live longer, healthier lives | 2 |
| Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed | |
| 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 | 2 |
| 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 | 3 |
| To be a key visitor destination in Scotland | 1 |
| Improved attaining 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 | 2 |
| Preparing for life and work | 1 |
| Enhance community learning and participation | 2 |
| Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities | 1 |
| The best workforce | |
| Effective resource and asset management | 1 |
| Improve early year opportunities | |
| Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment | 3 |
| Providing quality public space | 2 |
| A focus on the customer | 1 |
| 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 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 |
| 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 | |
| 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 | 1 |
| 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 | 3 |
| To be a key visitor destination in Scotland | 2 |
| Improved attaining 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 | 2 |
| The best workforce | |
| Effective resource and asset management | 2 |
| Improve early year opportunities | |
| Protect and promote Aberdeenshire's heritage and natural environment | 3 |
| Providing quality public space | 2 |
| A focus on the customer | 1 |
| 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 7

To Promote and Enhance Access Opportunities to the Countryside

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 |
| We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others | 2 |
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| We live longer, healthier lives | 3 |
| Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed | |
| We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 3 |
| To be a key visitor destination in Scotland | 3 |
| Improved attaining 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 | 2 |
| Support and enhance access to leisure and cultural opportunities | 3 |
| The best workforce | |
| Effective resource and asset management | 1 |
| Improve early year opportunities | |
| 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 8

To Support, Sustain and Enhance Facilities at Bennachie Centre

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 |
| We live longer, healthier lives | 2 |
| Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed | 2 |
| 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 | 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 | 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 |
| 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 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 |
| We live longer, healthier lives | 1 |
| 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 attaining 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.

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