

The Highland Council

Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee 9 December 2014

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| Agenda Item | 4. |
| Report No | NBS 34/14 |

Countryside Ranger Activity

Report by Director of Development and Infrastructure

Summary

Paper summarises the events programme delivered by the Council's Countryside Ranger team in Badenoch and Strathspey during 2014/15 and the resources allocated to the activities. The paper also presents the activities proposed within Badenoch and Strathspey for the financial year 2015/16. Members are invited to:

- (a) note the content of the report, including highlights of the work of the Countryside Rangers in Nairn Badenoch and Strathspey during 2014/15, and;
- (b) consider and approve the proposed priorities and activities programme for financial year 2015/16.

1. Background

- 1.1 Countryside Rangers have been operating in Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey area since 1979, starting with a Ranger based at Ralia. In the last 40 years the service has developed to cover a wider range of responsibilities
- 1.2 The current staff complement in the area comprises:
 - Nairn - 1.0 FTE based at Inverness, also covering Inverness East
 - Badenoch and Strathspey – 2.0 FTE based at Grantown on Spey.
- 1.3 The Rangers' role has changed substantially over the years, primarily moving from a predominantly site based to an area based service.
- 1.4 Rangers deliver a wide-ranging service for local communities and visitors to the area as well as fulfilling functions across the remit of the Highland Council, notably assisting in the delivery of the Council's duties relating to Access and Biodiversity and the management and maintenance of its countryside properties. In Badenoch and Strathspey the Rangers work closely with the Park Authority, assisting in the delivery of the Park Plan, and CNPA provides grant-aid for each of the Ranger posts, currently £11,000 per post per annum.
- 1.5 This report highlights the key achievements over the past year and proposes priorities and an events programme for financial year 2015/16.

2. Activity delivered via the 2014/15 programme

- 2.1 Guided Walks and Events – The final figures for 2014/15 will not be available until the end of the financial year so the following figures are for the last full year, 2013/14.
156 events attended by 8524 people. Customer surveys indicate that 98% of participants thought the events met their expectations whilst 59% thought they exceeded their expectations.
- 2.2 School Visits – The final figures for 2014/15 will not be available until the end of the financial year so the following figures are for the last full year, 2013/14.
492 school visits providing 9840 children with high quality outdoor learning in their local environment led by the Countryside Rangers.
- 2.3 Nairn Seashore Roadshow – As part of the Council's Biodiversity commitments the Rangers delivered an event at Nairn Central Links to encourage wider understanding of the seashore and its wildlife. Over 300 attended this event.
- 2.4 Top Dogs Day Out – An annual, fun, dog-friendly event at Glenmore in conjunction with Forestry Commission Scotland and Cairngorms National Park Authority to promote responsible dog ownership in the countryside.
- 2.5 Sparsholt College Conservation and Management Students – Working with up to 80 students at a time to assist in the management of the Council's site at Feshie Woodland. This is the fourth time students have visited the area.
- 2.6 Countryside Properties -The Rangers continue to have the direct responsibility for the local management of the numerous D&I countryside properties in Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey. These range from small sites such as small car parks and picnic sites to larger properties such as Feshie Woodland, Ellan Wood and the Aviemore Orbital Path. This includes twice yearly risk assessments, monitoring visits and either undertaking or enabling maintenance and upgrading works on these sites.
- 2.7 Countryside Access – The Council's Access Officers undertake the major role in delivering the Council's access duties under the Land Reform (Scotland) 2003 Act, but the Rangers continue to provide vital support to highlight potential problems, assist the audit of Core Paths and have the main responsibility for promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.
- 2.8 Income targets – The Rangers currently charge for guided walks and events and this has contributed significantly towards the overall team's income targets.
- 2.9 Partnership – The Rangers work closely with CNPA, who, as referenced above, provide grant-aid in return for their contribution to the delivery of the Park Plan. Other partnerships include working with the Waterways Trust

3. Proposed priorities and programme for 2015/16

3.1 The proposed priorities for Ranger activities during 2015/16 are guided by the Single Outcome Agreement, the Programme for the Highland Council, 'Working together for the Highlands', and the Development and Infrastructure Service Plan 2012-2017.

3.2 The relevant Priority Themes are:

- Cross-cutting themes – Gaelic, Equalities and Climate Change.
- Working together for the economy.
- Working together for children and young people.
- Working together for better infrastructure.
- Working together to empower communities.

Gaelic – support to Gaelic and reflect the Gaelic culture in events and activities.

Climate change – working with communities to raise awareness and contribute to activities that contribute to the Council's climate change targets.

Equalities – delivering activities to as wide a range of groups and individuals as possible and where necessary target specific groups and individuals who have had little or no previous engagement.

Economy – delivering events and activities and contribute to the countryside facilities enhancing the tourism product to attract and retain more visitors to the Highlands and contribute to the Council's Green Tourism and income generation targets.

Children and young people – key contacts for Highland schools supporting the achievement and retention of Eco-school status; and supporting the outdoor learning element of the Curriculum for Excellence.

Infrastructure – responsibility for the management of Development and Infrastructure properties, including risk assessments, monitoring and maintenance. Support provision via audit and maintenance of the Core Path Network and promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Empowering communities – continue to work in partnership with CNPA, Forestry Commission Scotland and others, as appropriate to assist communities with environmental and access projects, providing specialist advice and assisting their search for appropriate funds.

4 Proposed events programme 2015/16

4.1 Appendix 1 sets out the draft events programme for the Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey area during 2015/16.

5. Implications

5.1 Resource – There are no additional resource implications arising from this

report. Countryside Rangers are part of the Development and Infrastructure Service and are funded from existing resources.

- 5.2 Legal – There are no additional legal implications.
- 5.3 Equalities – There are no additional equalities implications arising from this report. Rangers undertake equalities training and ensure that this is a key element of their work.
- 5.4 Climate Change/Carbon Clever – No additional implications. Rangers encourage understanding and respect of the natural environment. Their work promotes the climate change/carbon clever agenda.
- 5.5 Risk – There are no additional risk implications arising from this report.
- 5.6 Gaelic – Rangers support the Gaelic language and culture and strive to include Gaelic in their activities.
- 5.7 Rural implications – There are no additional rural implications arising from this report. Rangers operate in the rural environment and contribute substantially to its understanding and enhancement.

Recommendation

Members are invited to:

- a) note the content of the report, including highlights of the work of the Countryside Rangers in Nairn Badenoch and Strathspey during 2014/15, and;
- b) consider and approve the proposed priorities and activities programme for the 2015/16 financial year.

Designation: Director of Development and Infrastructure

Date: 20th November 2014

Author: George Duff, Countryside Manager (Ext 2279)

Saturday March 28, 2015

7.30pm - 10pm



Ghost Walk, Carrbridge

Celebrates this year's Earth Hour by exploring Ellan Wood and the riverside path with your head torch. We'll be listening for sounds of the night and checking for stars and planets on the way. Hot chocolate and cakes await us in the woods. Good dogs very welcome. Suitable for families.

Meet at the Community Wood car park, Carrbridge. Grid ref: NH 904228. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.

Sunday April 12, 2015

2pm - 3.30pm



Dragon Walk at Tradespark

Do dragons really exist? There's only one way to find out! Be brave and join us for a dragon hunt. Suitable for families with children 4-10 years and a sense of adventure.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.

Tuesday April 14, 2015

2pm - 4pm



Go Fly a Kite in Carrbridge

A chance to make kites out of bits and bobs and weather permitting, fly them!

Meet at the Carrbridge village car park. Grid ref: NH 908228. Grade A. Adults go free with accompanying children, £3.00 per child. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.

Wednesday April 29, 2015

5am - 7am



Lords of the Dance, Kincaig

An opportunity to witness the spectacle of a Black Grouse lek and other wildlife, in beautiful surroundings. Tea and coffee available.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.

Saturday May 16, 2015

2pm - 4pm



Let's Make Homes for Wildlife!

Some fun activities to create your very own wildlife homes for you to put in your garden.

Meet at the Town House, Grantown. Grid ref: NJ 034280. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.

Sunday June 14, 2015

11am - 3pm



Shenachie Stroll

A beautiful walk above the Findhorn River, up Tom na Slaite Hill (426m) and down to the ruins of Shenachie Croft.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade C. Adults £8.00, conc. £4.00, family £20.00. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.



Tuesday June 16, 2015 6pm - 9pm

Orchids Galore, Newtonmore

A gentle stroll around part of the Wildcat Trail in search of orchids and other wildflowers. We'll be hearing about some of the stories associated with them.

Meet at Newtonmore Station car park. Grid ref: NN 715984. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday June 24, 2015 2pm - 5pm

Bog life in the Mossie, Grantown-on-Spey

A chance to have an in depth look at the weird and wonderful plants and animals that call the Mossie 'home'.

Meet at the Town House, Grantown. Grid ref: NJ 034280. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Saturday June 27, 2015 2pm - 5pm

Bogs, birds and birches at Anagach, Grantown-on-Spey

A family friendly event to explore the bogs at Anagach Woods. We'll be using nets to catch some of the special insects in the air, on the land and in the water. Please wear wellies.

Meet at the Town House, Grantown. Grid ref: NJ 034280. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday July 08, 2015

2pm - 4pm

Peeking into a Pond, Loch Vaa

Everyone enjoys peeking into the unknown depths of a body of water! Join us to find out what fabulous beasts lurk in this beautiful pond. Wear wellies.

Meet at Laggantygown Cemetery car park. Grid ref: NH 910174. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday July 15, 2015

2pm - 3.30pm

Nairn Aquabeasts! A Look in the River

Dip your nets in the River Nairn to find some watery wildlife and learn all about them.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.



Friday July 17, 2015

11am - 4pm

The Nairn Seashore Roadshow

Crafts, kite making, guided walks, activities, displays and entertainment at this seashore related open day.

Meet at Nairn Central Links. Grid ref: NH 880569. Grade A. Free event. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.

Sunday July 26, 2015

12pm - 4pm



Top Dogs Day Out, Glenmore

Dog agility courses, displays, quizzes and all sorts of doggy craziness! Register your dog on the day (first come, first served basis), or simply come and watch the fun. Refreshments available. Joint event with the Forestry Commission Scotland.

Meet at Hay Field, Glenmore Forest Park. Grid ref: NH 980093. Grade B. £5 per dog. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.

Friday August 14, 2015

7pm - 9pm



Nairn Bat Walk

A short presentation and a wander around Viewfield Park, using bat detectors to help us find these elusive night time fliers.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.

Sunday August 23, 2015

11am - 3pm



Whiteness Head & Back

Enjoy an extensive 6km/4mile walk by salt marsh and shingle to the end of this unusual and remote spit.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade C. Adults £8.00, conc. £4.00, family £20.00. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday September 16, 2015

8pm - 10pm

Bat Walk, Grantown

Ever wondered what bats do for us? Or how they find their way in the dark? Join us for a bat walk in Grantown to find out what bats we have around us. Please dress warmly and bring a torch.

Meet at Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey. Grid ref: NJ 033279. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Friday September 25, 2015

8pm - 10pm

Bat walk to the River Spey, Grantown

Ever wondered what bats do for us? Or how they find their way in the dark? Join us for a bat walk to the River Spey in Grantown to find out what bats are about. Please dress warmly and bring a torch.

Meet at Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey. Grid ref: NJ 033279. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday September 30, 2015

4.30pm - 7pm

Monarchs of the Glen, Laggan

The red deer rut is one of Scotland's finest wildlife spectacles. The glens are echoing to roaring of stags at this time of year. We will be looking for other wildlife too.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade A. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday November 04, 2015 2pm - 3.30pm

Loch Bellivat Loop

A short walk around this secluded lochan with beautiful autumnal colours all around.

Booking essential. Meeting place given out on booking. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact John on 01463 255291 or rangers.inverness@highland.gov.uk.



Wednesday November 04, 2015 10.30am - 12.30pm

Meditate to the autumn colours at Craigellachie NNR, Aviemore

De-stress on Stress Awareness Day in a mindful fashion! We'll wander through the gorgeous birch woods of Craigellachie National Nature Reserves and have a go at meditating outside - a wonderful experience! Perhaps we'll see some migrating birds too?

Meet at the dry ski slope car park, MacDonald's Aviemore Resort, Aviemore. Grid ref: NH 892123. Grade B. Adults £4.00, conc. £3.00, family £11.00. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.



Tuesday December 01, 2015 6.30pm - 8pm

Christmas Arts & Crafts Winter Lights Switch-on, Grantown

Try your hand at making your own natural Christmas decorations as the town is lit up with festive lights. Look for details in the press nearer the time.

Meet at the Town House, Grantown. Grid ref: NJ 034280. Grade A. Adults go free with accompanying children, £3.00 per child. Contact Saranne on 01479 873914 or saranne.bish@highland.gov.uk.
