

Consultation Title	Connecting People and Places – a policy statement on rangering in Scotland
Date	March 2020
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Scottish Land & Estates is the voice of rural businesses throughout Scotland. We are a membership-based organisation representing a wide range of rural businesses, including farmers, foresters, tourism operators, housing providers, leisure companies, and renewable energy providers.

Our members provide a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits which are vital to the success and survival of communities throughout rural Scotland. They play a critical role in ensuring sustainable, healthy and empowered rural communities, providing housing, employment and a wide range of economic, environmental and social benefits.

Key Issues for Consultation

SLE recognises the important role and wide-ranging benefits that ranger services bring to rural Scotland and we therefore welcome the opportunity to respond to this consultation. A number of SLE members provide their own local ranger services that provide essential education and conservation initiatives, and an interface between land management activities and public access.

A 2030 vision for rangering in Scotland

SLE is supportive of the vision statement for rangering in Scotland, particularly with the inclusion of promoting responsible access to the outdoors. We believe this is vital when engaging with members of the public to ensure people taking access have an awareness and understanding of their rights and responsibilities.

A number of our members employ and train their own countryside rangers. We agree that maintaining close cohesion with public and private ranger services, including shared training and development programmes, is important to achieve consistency and will enable skills development across various ranger service providers. Collaboration with neighbouring ranger services enhances productivity and makes access, education and species protection initiatives more effective.

Ranger services are clearly a well-established and important part of Scotland's outdoor access, countryside and heritage infrastructure playing an integral role in promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and in raising awareness and encouraging appreciation of the scenery, wildlife and heritage of an area to visitors and the local community.

Defining the role of rangering

We are generally supportive of the definition of rangering. In terms of the skills and knowledge required of people in rangering roles, more emphasis could be placed on these individuals having knowledge of associated countryside and access legislation, including the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Key benefits provided by rangering

Ranger services provide a wide range of benefits for both communities and land managers and it is great to see all of these benefits represented in the document.

The Scottish Government's priorities of improving wellbeing and reducing health and social inequalities rely heavily on enabling more people to enjoy the outdoors and gain all the benefits that brings, which means investment in access management through the provision of a well-structured and well-supported ranger service is a crucial foundation for achieving these outcomes.

Achieving the vision

Establishing a collaborative approach and exploring more diverse funding options for rangering will be vital in ensuring the vision is achievable.

SLE is concerned by the reduced level of grant support made over the last decade and the damaging impact this is having on both the funding of existing ranger posts and on the opportunities to develop new posts. While some SLE members' ranger services are privately funded, others have received support from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) to help deliver natural heritage outputs. However, reductions in funding support for ranger services over time has seen some estates lose funding for entire posts. In some instances, this has resulted in some estates losing up to 1.5 posts. The consequences of estates being unable to secure funding for ranger services has in some instances resulted in the inability for estates to provide services which could have delivered a range of benefits for local communities, education provision and biodiversity.

While SLE recognises current budgetary pressures, we would encourage a solution to be found that supports and grows ranger services in Scotland. If ranger posts continue to be lost at the current rate SLE has serious concerns about the implications this will have on the key services currently being delivered not least the important interface role rangers play between landowners and the visiting public – a good ranger service is key to not only enhancing the recreational experience for visitors but is often necessary in helping landowners manage additional numbers.

Consultation Pro-forma

Are you responding (please tick one box)

(a) as an individual

(b) on behalf of a group/organisation

GROUPS OR ORGANISATIONS

The name of your organisation will be made publicly available (for example in a response summary document). Are you also content for your response to be made available?

Yes No We will treat your response as confidential.

SHARING RESPONSES/FUTURE ENGAGEMENT

We will share your response internally with other SNH teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so.

Are you content for SNH to contact you again in the future in relation to this consultation?

Yes No