

REPORT OF RANGER SERVICE MANAGER

SUBJECT: RANGER SERVICE

Purpose of Report

To review the work of the Ranger Service following the first year as a standalone team since re-structuring.

Introduction/Background

The Ranger Service has been brought together into a single team within the Park Delivery Service, consisting of the Ranger Service Manager and five Area Rangers, each covering a defined area of the National Park; North (1.5 Rangers), West (2 Rangers), South (1 Ranger). The Castlemartin Ranger is also based within the team, covering the military ranges of South Pembrokeshire. This post is funded in partnership with the MOD and CCW. A Map of the present Ranger areas is attached at Appendix 1.

The team has three core priorities which it leads on for the Authority and a further three supporting priorities where the team contributes significantly to the priorities of other teams.

Core Priorities.

1. *Local area and community work.* Rangers undertake a wide range of community work from providing advice and practical assistance to groups, through to helping communities enjoy the Park and celebrate local heritage and culture. Rangers help to facilitate better understanding between the Authority and the communities in their area.
2. *Recreation Management.* The rangers monitor and manage recreational use of the Park, helping to ensure that recreation is sustainable and does not cause conflict. The Rangers are actively involved in partnerships such as the Outdoor Charter and work to promote enjoyment of the Park amongst residents and visitors. The team is responsible for managing the area of Crown Foreshore which is leased by the Authority. The Ranger Service Manager takes the lead on many Park-wide initiatives and partnerships.
3. *Practical Volunteering.* The Rangers provide a wide range of opportunities for individuals and groups to take practical action to improve the Park environment. The Voluntary Warden Service is run by the Rangers and has been operating for over 40 years, with approximately 70 participants currently volunteering regularly.

Supporting priorities

4. *Access.* Rangers support the work of the Access and Rights of Way Manager to promote and manage the access opportunities in their area, in conjunction with the Area Warden Team.

5. *Education.* Rangers contribute to the delivery of the education programme in conjunction with the Discovery Team, providing classroom and site based activities, advice and practical assistance to schools to use the outdoor environment. The Rangers deliver the majority of the Authority's Welsh-medium education.
6. *Groups and Events.* Rangers support the Discovery Team to deliver the published programme of activities and events as well as meeting requests for walks, talks and other activities from communities and groups. Rangers attend fairs, shows and festivals and contribute to cultural activities. Rangers monitor and work with organisers of large scale events to ensure they do not have a detrimental impact on the National Park.

Evaluation

The work of the Rangers directly supports all of the Authority's Corporate Outcomes but the majority of their work focuses on delivering Outcomes 2, 3, 6 and 7, those which most directly affect individuals and their relationship with the National Park.

The table below shows some comparative data for the Ranger Team from the last three years which show some interesting trends. Notably that the number of Ranger contacts with school groups has decreased. This can partially be explained by the new Discovery Ranger team who took up post in 2011 and now deliver a significant portion of the Education programme. This has released capacity for Rangers to increase our offer of volunteering opportunities to many more groups and individuals.

In particular Rangers have focused on providing more opportunities for 'hard to reach' groups and those who face 'barriers' to enjoying the National Park. In 2012 1,086 volunteer days were supported by the Rangers, with at least 400 of these for individuals at risk of social exclusion. The data for 2012 whilst incomplete shows a slight reduction in numbers due to a period of short staffing following the restructuring process which has now been addressed.

Number of individuals	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13 year to Dec 2012 (0.75)
Schools	4605	3873	2756	2030
Volunteers	1096	1280	1440	707
Communities and Events	3981	3558	4171	2534

The opportunity to review the work of the Rangers as a single team has given rise to the development of the following key actions and outcomes to support the six priorities above for 2013.

1. Communities see the National Park Ranger Service as supportive, with each Ranger working with at least four community groups on sustained practical, engagement or heritage projects in their localities to achieve both community and NPA priorities.
2. Recreation and management issues are identified and resolved at a local level and the team contributes to Park-wide management and promotion of

recreation. Rangers will provide practical support to partnerships such as the implementation of the Authority's Recreation Plan, the Pembrokeshire Outdoor Charter Group and through the Castlemartin Ranger Partnership. The Team will ensure that the Authority meets the conditions of the Foreshore Lease and that recreational use of the foreshore is sustainable.

3. Rangers will provide opportunities for people to gain new skills and training through work experience and student placements and skills training for volunteers. The Ranger Team will work closely with the Discovery Team Leader to assist in the development of a Volunteering Strategy and to review and widen opportunities for individuals and families to gain the health, well-being and social benefits of volunteering in the National Park. Rangers will continue to target opportunities for involvement at hard to reach groups and will provide support to the Your Park programme.
4. Rangers will promote local walking opportunities to the main settlements within the Park and will contribute to the maintenance and enhancement of the Rights of Way network to ensure that more people can access the health and well-being benefits of regular activity in the countryside. Delivery of path maintenance work will remain the mainstay of practical work for volunteers.
5. Rangers will continue to contribute to widening the understanding of the National Park through informal and formal education and will ensure that their locally applied knowledge compliments the Discovery Team's curriculum expertise. Rangers will work with schools to provide them with advice and practical support to develop their grounds and use their locality for outdoor learning. Rangers will also continue to provide opportunities for pupils to gain practical and social skills through volunteering.
6. Rangers will contribute to residents' and visitors' enjoyment and understanding of the NP through organised events; the rangers will lead up to 60% of the published Activities and Events programme in 2013 and will provide support for external events which help to meet Park purposes and corporate outcomes. Rangers will contribute to the Authority's presence at the Urdd Eisteddfod.

In addition the role of the Ranger Service Manager ensures that a Park-wide perspective is taken and that work is prioritised according to Park priorities rather than area priorities.

Financial considerations

The current cost of the service is £208,000, the bulk of which covers staff salaries and vehicles. The team has a spending budget of approximately £5,000 and receives grant income of £27,000.

Compliance

The work of the Ranger team mainly contributes to Outcomes 2 and 3 of the 2013-4 Corporate Plan but the Recreation Management work also contributes to Outcome 1. If the work is done to a high standard in close partnership with local communities and park users, then Outcome 4 is also supported. The work of the Ranger team is closely aligned with the Park Purposes as defined in the Environment Act.

Human Rights/Equality issues

There are no human rights or equality implications to this report.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

The work of the Ranger team supports the National Park Management Plan to improve the management of land within the Park for nature conservation, and to increase knowledge and understanding of sustainability amongst residents and visitors.

Welsh Language statement

Two of the five Area Rangers are Welsh speakers and deliver services to the public, communities and partners through the medium of Welsh.

Conclusion

Bringing the Ranger Service together into a single team has provided the opportunity for the Authority to review and focus more clearly on Park-wide priorities. The Ranger Service is better able to deliver the actions of the Authority's Recreation Plan and to work with partners on county-wide initiatives.

For 2013-14 the Rangers will prioritise working with local communities to enhance the Authority's relationship with our local communities. The work of the Ranger Service will also review our work with volunteers and provide new opportunities for involvement.

Recommendation

Members are requested to **NOTE** and **COMMENT** on the report.

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