

**PERTH AND KINROSS COUNCIL****Environment Committee – 27 January 2010****COUNTRYSIDE RANGER SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2008/9 AND REVIEW  
1980 - 2009****Report by the Depute Director (Environment)**

In previous years, the Countryside Ranger Service has produced an Annual Report as part of a grant aid commitment with Scottish Natural Heritage as well as for the information of Elected Members. In 2009 changes to the grant aid relationship mean that this is the last annual report that is required to be submitted to SNH. It also provides an opportunity for the Ranger Service to review its 30 year history and accomplishments.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

The Committee is asked to:

- i) Approve the Annual Report for 2008/9
- ii) Recognise the achievements of the Countryside Ranger Service highlighted in the Review 1980 – 2009
- iii) Note the changes in the nature of the funding of the Countryside Ranger Service

**BACKGROUND**

1. The Perth and Kinross Countryside Ranger Service has operated since 1980 and has a significant body of achievements to date. Since inception, the Ranger Service has received grant aid against the outcomes of the Service from the Countryside Commission for Scotland and subsequently, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).
2. Over its 30 year history:
  - More than 11,000 children have participated in formal education sessions with the Ranger Service
  - More than 2700 hectares of land in Perth and Kinross is managed by the Ranger Service
  - More than 200 bridges are maintained by the Countryside Squad
  - More than the equivalent of 12 years of volunteer time has been facilitated by the Ranger Service

3. In late 2008, Government announced that SNH should no longer act as a grant giving agency to local authorities. Money that SNH had used to support the Ranger Service in Perth and Kinross would no longer come from SNH, but was to be included from April 2009 as part of the agreed settlement with central government forming part of the Single Outcome Agreement.

## **SUMMARY**

4. The Countryside Ranger Service is well placed to support the Council delivery of its Single Outcome Agreement. The Ranger Service delivers against at least 9 of the agreed Local Outcomes including, 'Our area will have a sustainable built and natural heritage', 'Our people will have improved health and wellbeing' and 'Our young people will attain, achieve and reach their potential'. We will demonstrate these achievements against the Council's SOA by reporting on a monthly basis to the Community Greenspace Team Plan.
5. Additionally, the Countryside Ranger Service wishes to keep Members informed of achievements and hopes to produce a bi-annual newsletter to allow Members to keep abreast of Ranger Service projects.
6. The Countryside Ranger Service Annual Report 2008/9 and Review 1980 – 2009 summarises the achievements of the Ranger Service over the period of 2008/9 in the form of a table appended to the report. This worksheet highlights the main elements of work of the Ranger Service against the agreed objectives set out by SNH over the period April 2008 – March 2009.
7. Highlights over this period include the successful handover of the Loch Leven Heritage Trail to the Ranger Service to take on the annual maintenance of the path, the completion of in excess of 95% of agreed inspection targets, successful partnerships with a wide variety of community groups across Perth and Kinross, direct contact through the formal education sector with 62 school groups, delivery of a varied programme of guided walks and a significant contribution to aspects of the Tayside Local Biodiversity Action Plan.
8. The Review summarises the work of the Ranger Service over the past thirty years in the key areas of work:
9. Site and Path Management – more than 2700 hectares of site are managed by the Ranger Service across 18 sites, in excess of 250 miles of path are under the auspices of the Ranger Service including four formal path networks, more than 200 bridges are maintained by the countryside team and visitor figures have been gathered across a number of these sites showing high levels, and increasing levels of public access to the outdoors across the Perth and Kinross area.
10. Promotion and Interpretation – the Ranger Service demonstrates a significant experience in this area with promotion being undertaken via leaflets, press releases and on site interpretation carried out directly by staff and by the delivery of interpretation boards and other forms of interpretation such as sculpture.

11. Education – is a key element of the Ranger role. Over the past 30 years, the delivery of guided walks, talks and educational sessions has meant that the Ranger Service has been able to deliver messages pertaining to the environment, biodiversity and sustainability, directly to well over 20,000 people.
12. Biodiversity – the Ranger Service manages several sites that are of key biodiversity value, have undertaken monitoring and recording of many specific species as well as compiling detailed records of biodiversity on our sites over a thirty year period. The Ranger Service is a key element of the delivery of the Tayside Biodiversity Action Plan, helping work toward local, national and international targets in biodiversity.

### **CONSULTATION**

13. The Head of Legal Services and the Head of Democratic Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

### **RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

14. There are no resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report

### **COUNCIL CORPORATE PLAN OBJECTIVES 2009-2012**

15. The Council's Corporate Plan 2009-2012 lays out five Objectives which provide clear strategic direction, inform decisions at a corporate and service level and shape resources allocation. This report impacts on the following:-
  - (i) A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment
  - (ii) Healthy, Caring Communities
  - (iii) A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive Economy
  - (iv) Educated, Responsible and Informed Citizens
  - (v) Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities

### **EQUALITIES ASSESSMENT**

16. The Council's Corporate Equalities Assessment Framework requires an assessment of functions, policies, procedures or strategies in relation to race, gender and disability and other relevant equality categories. This supports the Council's legal requirement to comply with the duty to assess and consult on relevant new policies to ensure there is no adverse impact on any community group or employees.

17. The function, policy, procedure or strategy presented in this report was considered under the Corporate Equalities Assessment Framework and the determination was made that the items summarised in this report do not require further assessment as they do not have an impact on people's wellbeing.

## **STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

18. Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is a legal requirement under the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 that applies to all qualifying plans, programmes and strategies, including policies (PPS).
19. However, no action is required as the Act does not apply to the matters presented in this report. This is because the Committee are requested to note the contents of the report only and the Committee is not being requested to approve, adopt or agree to an action or to set the framework for future decisions.

## **CONCLUSION**

20. The Committee is asked to note that this is the final Annual Report required on the Countryside Ranger Service for submission to SNH due to the fact that SNH no longer provides grant aid to Local Authorities. Furthermore, this report highlights the successes of the Ranger Service over the past 30 years.

JIM VALENTINE  
DEPUTE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENT)

## **NOTE**

No background papers as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information) were relied on to any material extent in preparing the above Report.

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**Perth and Kinross Council  
Countryside Ranger Service**



**Annual Report 2008/9 and  
Review 1980 - 2009**

**Summary**

In previous years, the Perth and Kinross Council Ranger Service has produced an Annual Report reviewing its activities over the previous year. With the ending of SNH Grant Aid to the Ranger Service and the implementation of Single Outcome Agreements, the Ranger Service has taken the opportunity to review its successes over the past thirty years and look to the challenges ahead.

The achievements over the last thirty years include:

- More than 11,000 school children having contact with a Ranger as part of a formal education session
- Built and maintained 200 bridges to facilitate access to the countryside
- More than 12 years of volunteer work on Perth and Kinross Council sites
- Manage more than 2719ha of land and more than 238km of paths across Perth and Kinross



## 1. Introduction

- a. Perth and Kinross Council employs a Countryside Ranger Service as part of the Community Greenspace Section of The Environment Service.
- b. The Ranger Service was established under the 1967 Countryside (Scotland) Act, and operates under both this Act and the Land Reform (Scotland) 2003 Act. The Ranger Service contributes to a number of statutory duties placed on local authorities by the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended) and the Nature Conservation (Scotland) Act 2004.
- c. The Ranger Service has responsibility across the whole of Perth and Kinross for managing the Council's interest in the wider countryside, including managing sites owned, leased or managed by agreement for public benefit. This includes path networks, Rights of Way and increasingly potential core paths. The Service also works to engage with communities and visitors to the area by promoting the countryside, facilitating and supporting access through installing and maintaining interpretative facilities, and supporting and instigating community projects. The Ranger Service does this in many ways, including (but not restricted to) the support of Outdoor Learning and Environmental Education within the formal and informal education sectors, including a key role in the delivery of EcoSchools. Finally, the Ranger Service plays an important role in undertaking the statutory duties of the Council for the protection, promotion, education, and enhancement of Biodiversity across the local authority area.
- d. The Ranger Service was established in 1980 as part of the then Perth and Kinross District Council, and has operated continuously since this time. In that time the Ranger Service has achieved a great deal and has grown to be a much respected Service in Scotland. Throughout its establishment and growth, the Ranger Service has been supported by grant aid from Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) and its predecessor the Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS).



- e. In 2009, the Scottish Government announced that SNH would no longer have grant awarding powers to Scottish Local Authorities. Monies formerly given by SNH through grant were transferred into the grant aided expenditure from central government to deliver outcomes highlighted within the Single Outcome Agreement. This change removed the need for the Ranger Service to produce reports to SNH against an agreed work programme. Today, the Ranger Service provides a contribution to the Single Outcome Agreement and reports via the Community Greenspace Team Plan on a monthly basis.
- f. The aim of this report is to highlight to Members some of the main achievements of the Ranger Service over the past 30 years and to demonstrate the key role the Ranger Service plays in the delivery of Perth and Kinross Council's Corporate objectives.

## **2. A Developing Service**

- a. Since 1980, the Ranger Service has grown and developed. Today, a team of 8 staff make up the Service; a Countryside Management Officer, 2 Senior Rangers and a team of 5 Rangers (including a Greenspace Ranger). Established under the 1967 Countryside (Scotland) Act, the Ranger Service has expanded and evolved in response to changes both in local government and a changing emphasis on a variety of countryside and environmental issues. In particular, the Ranger Service expanded in 2003/4 in response to the passing of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and additional funding support which was made available at that time. The addition of a Greenspace Ranger in 2007 recognised the increasingly joined up work in engaging with people and communities around Perth across Community Greenspace.
- b. Alongside the Ranger Service, the Countryside Squad is an integral part of the work of the Countryside Team bringing a tremendous body of local knowledge, experience, skills and expertise to countryside infrastructure management. The Squad, like the Ranger Service, has expanded and evolved over time, and now has a compliment of three



full time staff. The growth in the Squad reflected the responsive, efficient and effective way in which a small, dedicated squad was able to deal with management issues on countryside sites. The Squad are specialist craftspeople and undertake a great many of the physical management works associated with the management of the countryside infrastructure.

- c. Today, the Ranger Service covers the whole of the local authority boundary, dividing it into 5 areas. A Ranger operates in each area with two Senior Rangers managing day to day operations in the west (Highland and Strathearn) and east (Perth, Eastern Perthshire, Kinross) and the Countryside Management Officer overseeing operations. A staffing diagram is included as Appendix 1.
- d. The Ranger Service does not work in isolation and close partnerships have been developed internally with a wide selection of Officers in The Environment Service, particularly within Public Space Management, as well as other Services, such as Children and Education Services. We also work closely with external partners such as; Perth and Kinross Leisure, Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust as well as ensuring a continued cooperative relationship with Scottish Natural Heritage.

### **3. The Work of the Ranger Service**

- a. The Ranger Service's work can be divided into five main areas:
  - Site & Path Management (including bridges)
  - Promotional materials and Interpretation
  - Education – both formal and informal
  - Volunteer and Community Engagement
  - Biodiversity
- b. These contribute to key areas of the Perth and Kinross Council Corporate Strategy;



- *A Safe, Secure and Welcoming Environment* - by managing the countryside infrastructure and contributing toward safeguarding biodiversity across the area, we ensure that the countryside of Perth and Kinross is safe and welcoming
- *Healthy and Caring Communities* - through partnerships and community engagement, we ensure that local communities take a sense of pride and ownership for their rural greenspaces and care for them. Through the provision of facilities and promotion of active lifestyles we support healthy lifestyles and work on a health agenda
- *A Prosperous, Sustainable and Inclusive economy* - through the management of sites, paths and greenspaces, the Ranger Service contribute towards a sustainable economy by enhancing tourism and encouraging more visitors
- *Educated, Informed and Responsible Citizens* - a lifelong approach to learning enables the Ranger Service to ensure citizens have access to a wide range of opportunities to enhance their awareness and understanding of countryside and environmental issues
- *Confident, Active and Inclusive Communities* - through supporting a range of community groups the Ranger Service facilitates inclusive, active and confident communities and through specific projects such as those undertaken by the Greenspace Ranger we try to ensure that our services are accessible to all



## Site and Path Management

- c. The Ranger Service has responsibility for Council owned or managed sites. At the time of the inception of the Ranger Service, attention was focused on two areas; Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park in Perth and Lady Mary's Walk in Crieff. Since 1980, the work of the Ranger Service has expanded and it now manages or facilitates management at;
- Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park
  - St Magdalene's Hill
  - Buckie Braes
  - Loch Leven Heritage Trail
  - The Inner Tay Estuary Local Nature Reserve
  - Kingoodie Quarry
  - Abernethy Circular Paths
  - Rumbling Bridge Gorge (Crook of Devon)
  - The Den of Alyth
  - The Riverside in Blairgowrie
  - The Falls of Acharn
  - The Birks of Aberfeldy
  - Ben Vrackie Path
  - Black Spout Wood, Pitlochry
  - Killiechonan Access, Loch Rannoch
  - Lady Mary's Walk
  - The Knock and Puddock Wood at Crieff
  - Kinardochoy Lime Kiln & Viewpoint
- d. Each one of these sites is either owned or leased by the Council or managed by agreement. The majority of these sites have five year Management Plans, and appropriate management is undertaken sensitive to the needs of each site. The Council manages several of these areas in partnership; for example, Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park consists of 78ha of land owned by Perth and Kinross Council, and through a partnership with Forestry Commission Scotland, the



Gannochy Trust and St Mary's Monastery, supports the management of 307ha of woodland accessible to the public. In this way the Council maximises the public benefit to be gained from the countryside of Perth and Kinross.

- e. Alongside these formal sites, the Ranger Service helps to manage and look after Rights of Way. Perth and Kinross has a network in excess of 250 miles of Rights of Way. In some instances, the Ranger Service has expanded the nature of its role on Rights of Way through the development of path networks. The first path network to be initiated was in Dunkeld and Birnam in 1994. This 36 mile network spans 18 square miles of countryside with 8 way marked routes. A survey completed shortly after the path network was completed, in 1998, suggested that the network supported the local economy to the tune of between £160,000 and £230,000 per year, significantly outweighing the maintenance costs (estimated at around £6,000 per year at the time). In 1998, an estimated 100,000 people used the network; a figure which is likely to have risen since then. Path networks have since been established by the Council at Pitlochry and by the Countryside Trust at Blairgowrie and Creiff & Comrie. A network is being developed in Auchterarder, but all fall within the management of the Ranger Service.
  
- f. Outside of formal path networks, the Ranger Service is responsible for *ad hoc* management of the wider network of Rights of Way, many of which have been signposted and waymarked. These range from remote rights of way such as the route between Lair and Kirkmichael, to more urban routes around towns and villages. Involvement in these areas is on an 'on demand' basis and it is difficult to value the use of these routes, however, Rights of Way provide and facilitate local access to the countryside and to and between settlements for many residents and visitors to the area. Increasingly, the Ranger Service has a practical role to play in establishing the Core Paths Plan on the ground in Perth and Kinross.



- g. One aspect of site management is the monitoring of use of sites. The Ranger Service recognised the value of this in the first annual report in 1981 where *ad hoc* on site counts were undertaken to gain some appreciation of how sites were used. In 1991, the Service started to formally measure access to key locations around Perth and Kinross using automated people counters. Today, the Ranger Service has a network of 14 path counters monitoring key sites. The data from these is combined with on site survey work and visitor survey work, to give an idea of the use of sites. This allows the Service to make informed decisions over their management and improvement.



**Ian Montgomery installing a Path Counter at Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park.**

- h. Path counters at Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park demonstrate that in the order of 120,000 visits are made to the site every year, approximately 30% of which are visitors to Perth with an average spend of £70 per person directly related to their visit to Kinnoull (derived from a visitor survey undertaken in 2006 in addition to automated counts). This equates to more than £2.52m of income related to visits made to Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park. Kinnoull Hill costs around £15,000 per year to maintain; just 12½p per visit!



**A bridge installed on the Loch Leven Heritage Trail**

- i. Of course, in order for these sites and path networks to flourish, there is a significant input of resources in terms of infrastructure. 200 bridges are currently being maintained by Community Greenspace, of these 146 new, or refurbished bridges have been provided since 1980, as replacement or new structures to facilitate access to the countryside. The Countryside Squad inspects bridges annually and identifies programmes for future work.
- j. The Countryside Ranger Service undertakes routine inspections of sites to an agreed frequency to ensure that health and safety standards are maintained and to ensure that our countryside sites and infrastructure are maintained to the high standard that the public have come to appreciate.
- k. Paths are upgraded, built and improved – in the past three years alone, more than 20km of new paths have been built, a continuation of the programme that started with the first improvements in 1982 to the Glen Lednock Circular walk at Comrie.



- I. Figures of economic value of countryside sites and facilities are one measure of the value of this asset, however, they hide the intangible value of these sites as areas of relaxation, peace, recreation and enjoyment. Countryside sites and facilities contribute to the physical and mental health of the residents of Perth and Kinross allowing them areas to exercise and enjoy. They are also havens for wildlife and act as a biodiversity resource for the area.

#### 4. Promotional Materials and Interpretation



**Interpretative sculpture at Kinnoull Hill**

- a. One of the key roles of the Ranger Service is to encourage use of the outdoors and to interpret the cultural and natural heritage of sites that we are involved in. This can be achieved in many ways;

##### **Leaflets**

- b. The first site leaflets were produced in 1986 for the Birks of Aberfeldy and the Glen Lednock Circular Walk. These were followed in 1988 and 1989 with leaflets for the Den of Alyth and the Falls of Bruar (now handed back to Atholl Estates). These simple leaflets enabled the Ranger Service to promote sites and to encourage understanding and awareness of those sites to a wider audience than through direct



contact. Over the past 30 years, more than 600,000 site leaflets have been printed and distributed for sites that the Countryside Rangers manage. Generally, leaflets have been distributed via local outlets and on site as well as through activities and events that the Ranger Service have participated in.

- c. Today, leaflets are available for all major sites and path networks that the Ranger Service manages. All leaflets designed in the 1980's and early 1990's have been redesigned, updated and re-issued. Leaflets continue to be a popular way for the public to gain information on sites and the demand for leaflets, particularly for areas with a high tourist appeal (such as Dunkeld and Pitlochry) continues.
- d. Due to increasingly tight budgets, the Ranger Service currently operates a charging system for leaflets to help toward the cost of maintaining leaflet stocks. As management of sites is reviewed, the relevance of site leaflets is considered and alternative interpretative techniques are implemented where suitable. Additionally, in moving into an era where the internet is increasingly a source of information, all of the Ranger Service's leaflets are freely available via the Council's website.

### **Interpretation and Information Panels**

- e. In 1986, the first interpretation/information panels were erected on sites in Perth and Kinross. These panels provided a map and basic information for visitors to use to help them enjoy their visit. Such panels were designed and installed at many sites, and have, as time has passed, been renewed and upgraded. *Interpretation* is the art of opening visitors' eyes to the area they are seeing and is different to *information* where facts are presented to the reader. Interpretation has the ability to pass on enthusiasm and to challenge the reader to broaden their horizons, and good interpretation encourages the visitor to make repeat visits.



- f. Over the past 5 years, in partnership with Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust, new interpretation panels have been produced for sites forming part of Perthshire Big Tree Country. These panels aim to inspire the reader to discover the site before, during and after their visit and to return in the future. The Ranger Service has also taken opportunities to interpret sites in the management of Perth and Kinross Council in new ways; Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, The Birks of Aberfeldy and Kinross's Kirkgate Park all have sculptures on site reflecting qualities of flora, fauna or cultural heritage present. These new forms of interpretation encourage new users – the sculpture trail at Kinnoull Hill has received much praise from a much younger audience.
  
- g. The Ranger Service also welcomes opportunities to work with others in interpreting the environment; in 1980 the Ranger Service was the only organisation actively engaged in promoting the outdoors. Today there is much undertaken with partners such as community groups. For example, we supported the design of interpretation at the Loch Leven Heritage Trail, in addition to advice on its construction.
  
- h. Guidance of route finding is also required and the Ranger Service has undertaken a lead role in sign posting and way marking paths across Perth and Kinross. Sites and path networks have provided a focus for this informational signage, but the Service also manages signage on popular Rights of Way, and increasingly looks to sign post Core Paths to establish links between settlements and countryside.

### **The Future**

- i. Over the next few years, the Ranger Service aims to continue to refresh and re-vitalise interpretation on its sites, continuing to replace and renew panels, but also in utilising new ways of interpreting the unique countryside of Perth and Kinross to its visitors. With an increasing need to promote Perth and Kinross as a destination to stimulate the local economy, alternative techniques in interpretation are being explored. Over the coming years, downloadable



interpretation in the form of audio and visual files will become more widely available and the Ranger Service is keen to explore these forms of interpretation, with less emphasis on paper formats.

## 5. Education

- a. Education is a mainstay of Ranger Services across Scotland. Rangers act as a conduit for information, advice and support on all aspects of the countryside, both to the formal education sector through schools and through informal education to communities and visitors by giving illustrated talks and guided walks.



**A Guided Walk at Quarrymill**

### Guided Walks

- b. The early days of the Ranger Service recognised the value of guided walks in raising awareness of the countryside, and a programme of guided walks was initiated in its first year, which has continued almost every year since. These walks have been organised, advertised and run by the Ranger Service and have offered opportunities to find out more on specific subjects such as flora or fauna, or more general information on aspects such as the landscapes of Perth and Kinross. Guided walks have been freely available, on request to groups as well



as through an annual promoted programme of events. They are accessible to all, and offer the ideal opportunity for the first hand gaining of information and are recognised as the most effective interpretation and promotion tool available to the individual.

- c. In the past 30 years, the Ranger Service has delivered 416 guided walks, to an audience of more than 7,000 people. Participants come from all walks of life and include both residents and visitors to the area. Guided walks have enabled promotion of the new access rights arising from the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and also encouraged responsible behaviour by promoting the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC).
- d. The passing of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, and the implementation of new access rights as highlighted in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) have resulted in new forms of access being taken. We are increasingly dealing with access issues related to horses and bicycles, which, whilst always present historically, are an increasing factor in the countryside.
- e. The guided walks programme is as popular as ever and on average between 15 and 20 people attend each walk offered. Perth 800 offers an excellent opportunity to build on the Year of Homecoming and develop new audiences to engage with the countryside of the area.
- f. In order to address an expanding demand for countryside recreation, the Ranger Service encourage self led walks as well, and provide a wide range of information to groups and individuals to support this via our website ([www.pkc.gov.uk/countryside](http://www.pkc.gov.uk/countryside)). Use of this part of the Council website has increased by almost 60% in the last two years.



## Formal Education

- g. It was not until the mid 1980's when the Ranger Service grew to a staff complement of 2(!) that the Ranger's role in Environmental and Outdoor Learning could really develop. Through 1980 – 1984, limited involvement with schools took place, but there was an appreciation of just how much of a demand schools had for experienced outdoor educators to help support and facilitate outdoor learning in a formal curriculum.
- h. The appointment of Lynnette Borradaile as a Ranger saw a steep rise in engagement with the formal education sector, and since 1984, Perth and Kinross Ranger Service has welcomed more than 724 classes and well in excess of 11,000 school pupils to the countryside. Every school in Perth and Kinross has access to the Ranger Service and every school has been visited by one of the Rangers to provide a structured learning experience. From classroom sessions, to pond dipping and woodland exploration, the Rangers provide an enthusiastic and challenging support to schools wishing to 'take the classroom outdoors'. The Ranger Service has received much praise for its educational role.
- i. The Ranger Service has lead the way in environmental education; educational support packs have been produced to support self-led visits to the outdoors, the latest of these being the Perthshire Big Tree Country pack developed in partnership with the Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust. The Ranger Service is one of the lead partners in the Trout and Salmon in the Classroom project, bringing the wonder of hatching fry into the classroom and the release of parr in a local burn. With the Trust, the Woodland Bus project brought the woods to the school grounds where a former library van was kitted out as an educational resource; the bus visited every primary school in Perth and Kinross.



- j. The demand for Rangers supporting schools and the formal education sector is still high. With recognition that children are increasingly separated from the natural world, Rangers provide the passion and enthusiastic appeal to re-connect children with their natural heritage. Today, the Ranger Service is engaged in the EcoSchools programme and is looking to take forward outdoor learning within the Curriculum for Excellence. Support will be offered to teachers to take classes outdoors through the provision of teacher training and support.

### **Talks**

- k. Promotion of the work that Rangers do and the environment Rangers work in is another key role for Rangers. Being invited to give illustrated talks offers an opportunity to inform other audiences of the natural and cultural heritage that can be found within Perth and Kinross. Talks also open the opportunity to engage with new users and encourage more people to visit the outdoors and areas that the Ranger Service manages.
- l. The Ranger Service has delivered more than 346 talks to a wide range of audiences, from Rotary Clubs to Women's Rural Institute meetings, from walking groups to Church groups; illustrated talks continue to be an area of demand for the Ranger Service.

### **The Future**

- m. At a time when the state of the global environment is increasingly raised in our news, the need for a greater appreciation and understanding of how the world works and how we impact on our planet becomes more important. Rangers can support the delivery of outdoor and environmental learning and support the needs of all areas of the educational sector in addressing this need.



## 6. Volunteer and Community Engagement

- n. An essential element of the Ranger Service's role is in ensuring that the countryside is sustainably managed and utilised. The only way in which this can be achieved is through the active engagement of communities in taking a sense of ownership and pride in their local area.
- o. Community Engagement has increasingly been viewed as a core activity of the Ranger Service. From 1980, the Ranger Service has fostered and supported Community Groups – the Longforan Conservation Group being one of the earliest groups supported. In 2009, the Ranger Service actively supported 10 groups with a direct interest in sites or paths, from the Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park User Group to TRACKS (The Rural Access Committee for Kinross-shire). Direct support on practical projects is given to these groups, and at meetings. Support is also given to groups requiring advice or assistance on local projects such as Community Councils.
- p. As well as the ongoing support and facilitation of community involvement, all Management Plans and associated actions undertaken on sites with a Council interest, undergo community engagement. From initial engagement sessions to help formalise ideas and shape the future of greenspace management, to consultation on proposals, through to ongoing management with community input, local people are central to the work that the Ranger Service undertakes.
- q. In some instances, members of the community wish to undertake a more physical and proactive role in their local countryside. The Ranger Service supports this through a widespread programme of voluntary activities. The Ranger Service has worked with a wide range of volunteer groups, schools, communities and businesses that want the opportunity to undertake practical work in the countryside. From site surveys for wildlife, to undertaking path improvements and vegetation management, the scope of work of volunteers is immense.



- r. In all, more than 176 activities have been organised, with well in excess of 3000 volunteers contributing to work across the area. This equates to almost 590 weeks of work, or more than 12 years! In addition, in 2009, the Perth City Bat Project was supported by 40 volunteers, giving up a total of more than 7 weeks of time to the project.
- s. Much of this activity is undertaken by groups that seek opportunities to work with the Ranger Service, but in the mid 1990's the Ranger Service established its own Conservation Volunteer group. The members of this group give up around 12 days a year to help on various manual tasks on sites the Ranger Service manage. Over the past 10 years, the Perth and Kinross Conservation Volunteers have given more than 525 working days of time toward the management of the Perth and Kinross Countryside.
- t. The countryside offers an opportunity to engage and work with communities and volunteers in a positive and proactive fashion. The Ranger Service see this as a key element to their role, and the support of these groups is a vital part of the delivery of the Ranger Service outcomes, which also provides a contribution to the Single Outcome Agreement.

### **The Future**

- u. The Ranger Service within Community Greenspace is constantly seeking to improve the services that it offers and the way in which it engages. Partnerships within Community Greenspace offer a tremendous opportunity for the Council to engage with volunteers on a wide basis, and a new strategy to support this work will be developed in 2010.



## 6. Biodiversity

- a. The Countryside Ranger Service has been well placed to play a key role on many of its sites through the monitoring of biodiversity as well as its promotion, protection and enhancement. These sites have a wide range of habitats and the lack of disturbance and intensive management provided for a rich diversity of plant and animal life.
- b. This opportunity has been recognised since the Ranger Service was established, and in each Annual Report since 1980, there is a mention of the Ranger Service's involvement in monitoring and surveying sites to better establish a basis on which management can be planned and undertaken. During the 1990s, particularly in the wake of the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and the popularisation of the term 'biodiversity', there has been an ever increasing need to engage with people of all ages in their understanding of the inter-connectivity of the world in which we live, and the vital importance of biodiversity to our survival on the planet. The Ranger Service has responded positively to this, and today offers a range of educational and practical opportunities to actively engage in promoting biodiversity across Perth and Kinross.
- c. Perth and Kinross Council manages several sites designated for their biodiversity value; sites which contribute toward biodiversity both locally and nationally, and sites which are recognised as national indicators of Scottish Government progress against biodiversity targets.

### Designations

- d. Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI's) are designated on a national basis by Scottish Natural Heritage which has a responsibility to undertake site condition monitoring. Site Condition Monitoring rates sites as in Good, Fair or Poor condition based on the qualifying features for which it was designated. A national performance indicator



seeks to increase to 75% the number of sites reaching a 'Good' standard. The landowner has responsibility to manage SSSI's in line with recommendations from SNH. The Council takes a proactive approach to managing SSSI's and engaging with the public in these areas. Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park, the Den of Alyth and the Birks of Aberfeldy all contain SSSI's.

- e. Special Areas of Conservation (part of the NATURA framework) is a designation, resulting from the EU Habitats Directive 2000. These sites reflect some of the most important sites in Europe for conservation across a range of species and habitats. Both the Den of Alyth and the Birks of Aberfeldy fall within the River Tay SAC as well as the Inner Tay Estuary Local Nature Reserve.
- f. Local Nature Reserves are a local designation, designated by local authorities. LNR's are designated where there are species or habitats that are locally important, particularly in regard to facilitating education and involvement in these areas by local communities. There is just one LNR in Perth and Kinross, the Inner Tay Estuary Local Nature Reserve, managed by Perth and Kinross through lease and agreement.
- g. Management Plans for these sites are produced to reflect the high conservation value and identify appropriate management techniques to conserve and enhance their biodiversity value.
- h. The Ranger Service is a partner in the Tayside Biodiversity Partnership and is an active member of several of the sub groups. This incorporates a number of key project areas as well as specific projects on sites that contribute toward the aims of the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP).



**Red Squirrel on a Red Squirrel feeder at the Knock, Crieff**

- i. In recent years, there has been an increasing emphasis on species which are of a particular biodiversity value to Perth and Kinross. The Ranger Service has actively engaged in working groups and projects and currently has an interest in the following groups;
  - Red Squirrels – In the mid 1990's the Ranger Service organised and collated in partnership with others data from 8 sites on the signs and abundance of red and grey squirrels across Perth and Kinross. Of particular interest was an examination of the sites where both species occur and their preferences for habitats and types of food. A report was published by the Ranger Service on its observations which received national recognition. Currently the Ranger Service is a member of the Red Squirrel Group; help collates information on Red Squirrel populations; monitors for Squirrel abundance on two sites; monitor road deaths to support signage strategies; runs two red squirrel feeding stations on the Knock to support the local population; undertakes planting programmes on sites to enhance Red Squirrel habitat



- Swifts – work on the Swift Species Sub Group of the Tayside LBAP coordinating monitoring of swift sites; undertake public promotional work on Swifts
  - Geese/Waterfowl – undertakes WeBS (Wetland Birds Survey) counts on the Inner Tay Estuary Local Nature Reserve; monitors goose numbers fortnightly on the Reserve to evaluate the impact of wildfowling
- j. Other projects in 2009 have included species such as bumblebees and bats as well as continuing to develop meadows at Lady Mary's Walk and initiating biodiversity projects in Care Homes in Perth and Kinross. These projects have both a specific biodiversity value in terms of monitoring and improving management or habitats, but are of most value in terms of raising profile and increased awareness of the need to conserve certain species.

### **The Future**

- k. The emphasis on biodiversity is only likely to increase in coming years. 2010 is International Year of Biodiversity when countries report back on biodiversity commitments made in 2000. It is broadly recognised that in many areas we will fail to meet the commitments made, and that refreshed and new commitments will be made, alongside an increased public awareness of the need to conserve biodiversity. Given this, the Ranger Service is proposing to undertake several biodiversity projects, not only on Council countryside sites, but also across the whole of Community Greenspace; projects that at their heart involve people. Through engaging with communities, long term sustainable improvements can be achieved as well as a wider appreciation of the value of biodiversity.



## **7. Conclusion**

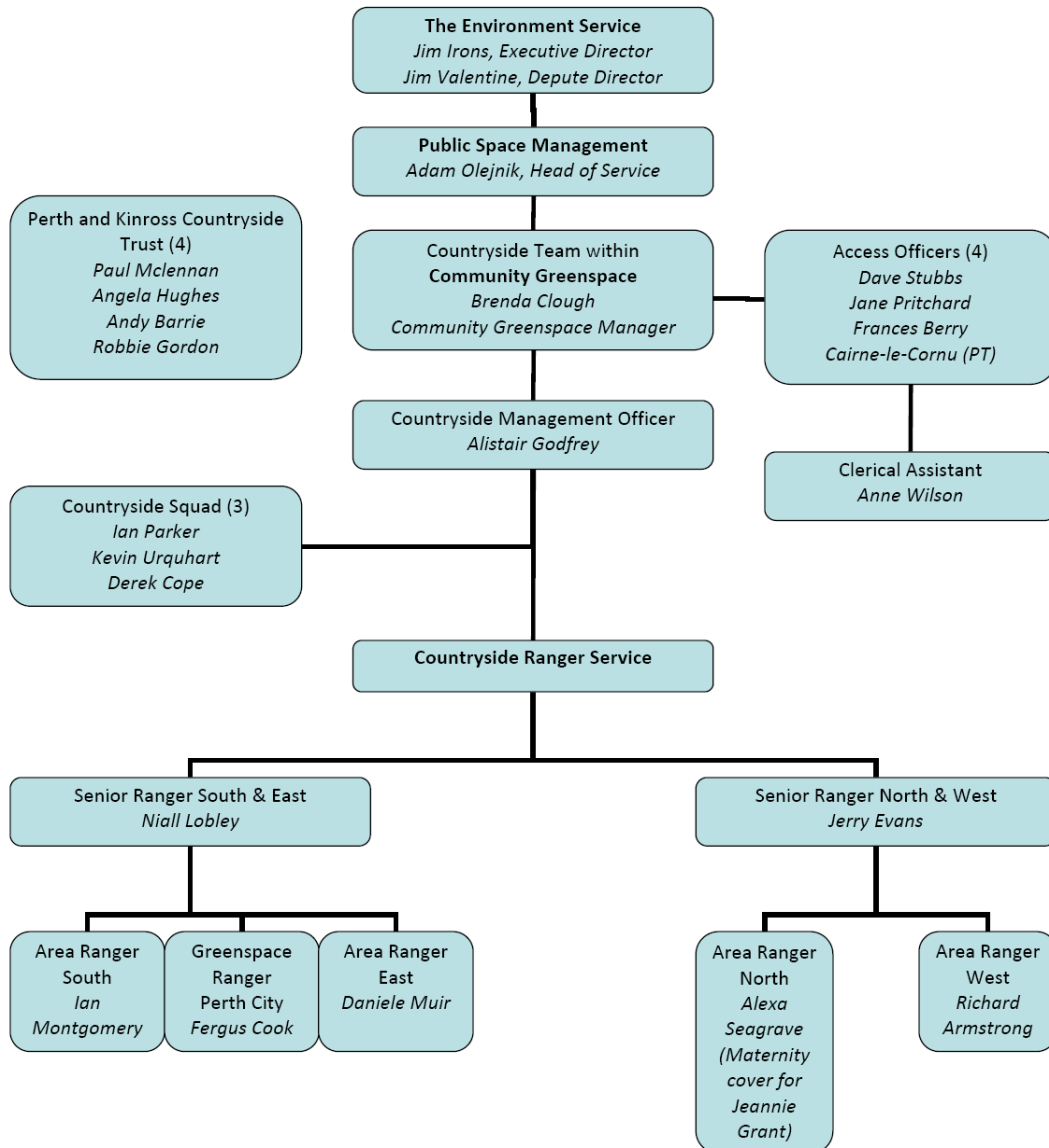
- a. The Ranger Service has, for thirty years, provided a first class, respected and adaptable service meeting the needs of the countryside, residents and visitors to Perth and Kinross. The Ranger Service has evolved as the attention on the 'countryside' has increased. Thirty years ago, the Ranger Service was almost alone in working in areas of access, biodiversity, conservation and countryside management. It is now joined by many other organisations within Perth and Kinross and other activities within the Council.
  
- b. The Ranger Service seeks to continue its work in the interest of residents and visitors. Having proved a sound track record over the past 30 years, the Ranger Service aims to be a leading light in Council activities for the next 30 years and beyond.





# Appendix 1

## Staffing Diagram

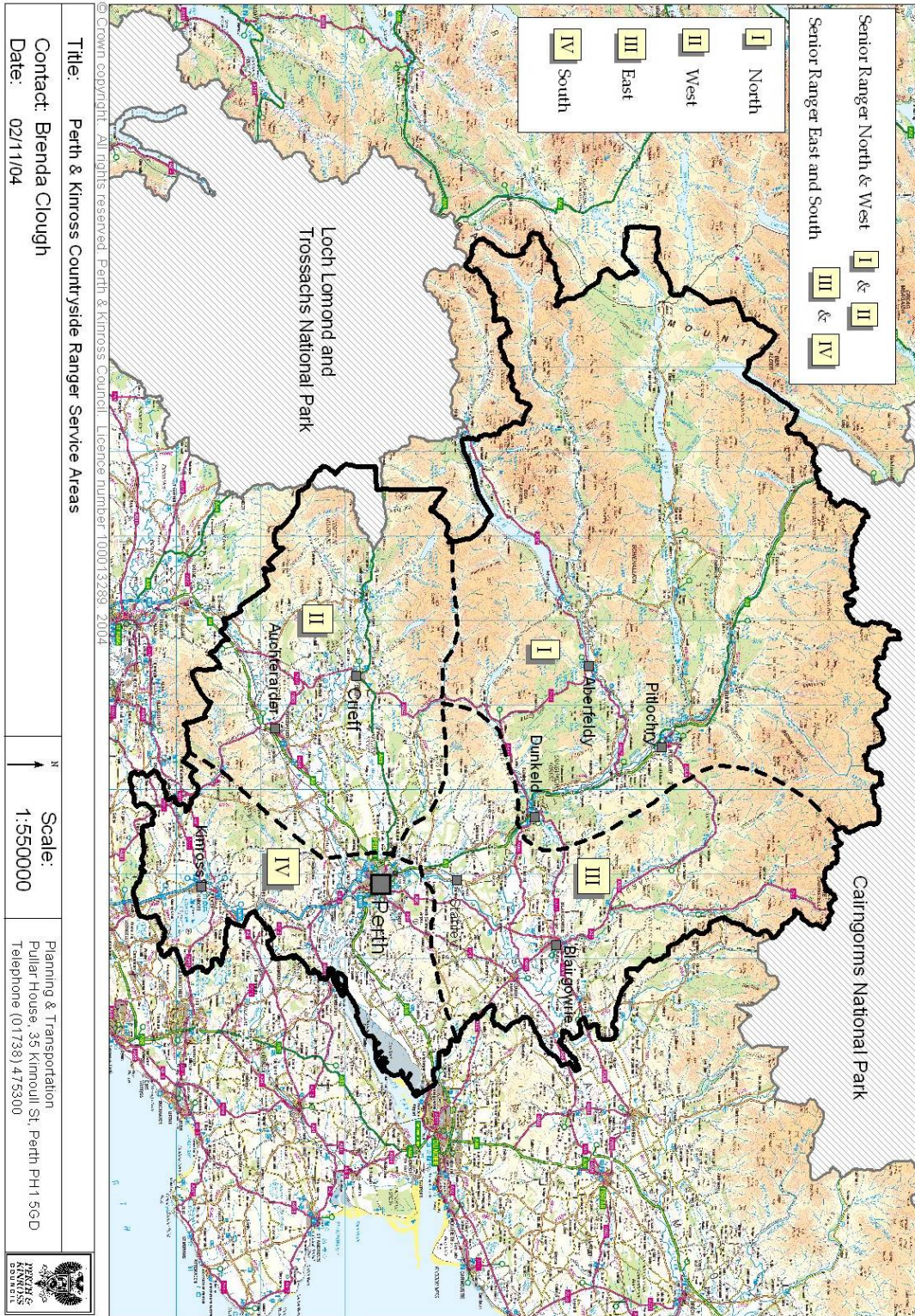






# Appendix 2

## Areas of Operation





SNH Work Programme showing agreed targets and performance against those targets for 2008/9

# RANGER SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT



**RANGER EMPLOYER:**

Perth and Kinross Council

**RANGER SERVICE:**

Perth and Kinross Council Countryside Ranger Service

**RANGER / DIVISION OF SERVICE:**

The Environment Service

**PERIOD OF PLAN:**

April 2008 to March 2009

**KEY**

Data Entry Field
Protected Information Field

SNH ESSENTIAL AIM	ANNUAL OUTPUT OR TARGET	STAFF DAYS	Year End OUTPUT	Output days
1. ENSURING A WELCOME FOR VISITORS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE				
<u>Ranger Activities:</u>				



Provision of information (e.g. leaflets, posters and media).	Maintain stocks of leaflets across Perth & Kinross. Review the outlets and distribution methods for Countryside Leaflets. Make leaflets available via the website where possible. Distribute new Big Tree Country leaflets. Include the Scottish Outdoor Access Code in printed material. Provide information at public events. Print leaflets x 40,000. Supply leaflets x 20,000. Distribute to outlets x 30. Issue press releases x 10. Work with Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust in renewing interpretation for the Crieff Path Network.	25	10 000 Birks leaflets, 10 000 Kinnoull leaflets, 15 000 Great Outdoors events leaflets and 5000 Portmoak leaflets printed. (Total 40 000). Leaflets distributed as required. Leaflets put on to the Council website. Issued press releases x 15.	43
Site management for public enjoyment (e.g. installation of orientation material and waymarking; initiation and advice on new facilities).	Co-ordinate work programming and set standards for site management. Monitor sites and prepare work programmes. Issue work programmes to the countryside squad x 180. Complete new signage for the Dunkeld and Birnam Path Network and path upgrades in the Crieff Path Network in conjunction with Perth & Kinross Countryside Trust. Complete signage of the Abernethy Circular Path. Issue orders worth £90,000. Facilitate waymarking and signposting in the wider countryside in conjunction with access officers.	55	169 work programmes issued to the Countryside squad. Dunkeld and Birnam resignage project progressing. Big Tree Country project work initiated in the Crieff area and is ongoing.	96
Small scale maintenance of recreation facilities (e.g. repair of stiles, picnic benches, viewpoints etc.).	Assist the Countryside Squad in undertaking improvement works on core paths and on Council managed land. Directly undertake minor improvement works for public safety.	30	Various small scale works carried out including vegetation clearance, drainage and removal of bike jumps.	20
Contribute to recreational planning, including the monitoring of visitor activities.	Monitor path counters and undertake the regular retrieval of data and calibration x 17. Assist in consultation exercises where access improvements are proposed. Utilise SNAP questionnaire formatting if available. Monitor recreational activities on sites. Monitor use of the Cateran Trail in partnership with PKCT.	50	Path counters checked on a regular basis. Counter at the Birks upgraded to a beam counter.	42
Development of improved access, including survey and negotiation and Paths For All work.	Assist TRACKS on the Loch Leven Heritage Trail. Assist the "Big Tree Country" project. Review access on paths and Core Paths for development and in consideration with Access Officers investigate obstructions. Give advice and assistance on access to landowners and users. Identify improvements to the Glen Lednock Circular Walk. Upgrade paths at the Den of Alyth. Assist with the repair/replacement of bridges.	45	Ongoing liaison with TRACKS at Loch Leven. Specifications drawn up for the first phase of the Den of Alyth works. Interpretation element of the Big Tree Country Project nearing completion, installation in progress. Improvements at Glen Lednock on hold pending legal agreements with the owner. Bridges initiated at Camsemey and over the river Lednock.	43



Undertake public safety works.	Carry out site and path assessments in terms of the <i>Countryside Section Inspection and Safety Procedures and Guidance</i> . Review the target frequency for visits and the standard of improvements being identified by rangers. Provide improvements in safety in response to results from site assessments. Effect short-term protective measures where required. Liaise with the Countryside Management Officer in issuing work programmes to Countryside Squad and identify contract work. Promote and respond to the Council's Customer First response line. Participate in discussions and actions regarding the implementation of Water Safety measures as highlighted by RoSPA and internal assessment.	100	95% of inspections carried out in accordance with Council guidelines. Responses made to enquiries.	196
Staffing of key visitor facilities (e.g. Visitor Centres, regular programmed presence at key sites).	Visit key sites and path networks on a regular basis to provide advice and assistance to visitors. Respond to enquiries and requests on site and at Pullar House and area offices raised in correspondence, telephone calls and e-mails. Respond to problems directly or liaise with other members of the Countryside Countryside Section. Respond to public enquiries x 200.	70	Regular patrols carried out on site and guidance given where required.	64
		375		503
		27	% of annual target	29
<b>2. MEDIATION BETWEEN PUBLIC USE AND OTHER RURAL LAND USES</b>				22
<b>Ranger Activities:</b>				
Formal and informal liaison with public, user groups and land managers.	Liaise with, advise and assist land managers throughout Perth and Kinross on statutory access rights. Attend meetings of; Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park Users Group x 4, Kinnoull Hill Woodland Park Management Group x 4, Inner Tay Estuary LNR Advisory Panel x 2, Alyth Environmental Group x 4, and work with groups including the Comrie Millennium Footpath Association, the East Perthshire Access Network, the Portmoak Paths Group and Abernethy Environment Association as required.	35	Attended meetings of Kinnoull Hill users group x 1, Inner Tay x 1, Portmoak x 3 and Kingoodie x 1. Work ongoing with Comrie Millennium Footpath Trust to try and resolve outstanding planning issues.	25



Guidance on responsible access routes.	Encourage responsible behaviour through contact. Work with landowners to manage access to land and water. Assist the resolution of access problems in areas of high recreational use, such as on the River Tay. Provide signage on path diversions or on paths affected by works. Provide guidance for particular access takers, e.g. dogs walkers passing through stocked fields. Offer guidance on responsible camping, including issues such as litter and fires at Loch Rannoch, Loch Tummel and Clunie Loch as required.	65	Worked with the local community and Access team on camping issues around Lochs Rannoch and Tummel including a pilot project. Carried out monitoring work of kayakers and anglers on the River Tay. Encouraged responsible behaviour as opportunities arose. Discussions regarding gold panning.	58
Promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code	Assist SNH in the publicity and promotion of the Code. Assist access officers in dealing with minor obstructions. Identify access improvements to meet the needs of users, including the removal of obstructions.	60	Responded as required.	40
Generation of responsible behaviour, including the development and promotion of user codes of conduct.	Promote the Code where there are potential conflicts of use by targetting land managers, user groups and commercial outlets. Liaise with other sections of the Environment Service in the control of dog fouling and litter in countryside areas.	35	Regular topping up of dog bags at on site dispensers. Installation of new bins to try and alleviate problems. Ongoing liaison with dog wardens to try and resolve issues.	27
Advice on public impacts and measures to mitigate them (e.g. seasonal impacts).	Respond to access issues raised at the Perth and Kinross Access Forum and any sub-group, including participation on the Wild Camping sub-group. Attend Access Forum meetings and sub-groups as required x 10. Provide advice at meetings with local groups, including monitoring of access issues at Thistle Brig. Provide advice on the impact of recreational activities on nature conservation. Prepare advisory signage or press releases where necessary.	60	Responded as necessary, see entry above regarding responsible access as there is some overlap here.	40
Demonstration of successful countryside management.	Seek high standards of provision and a professional approach in all work. Promote the work of the Ranger Service by personal contact, press releases, publications, displays and reports. Give advice on the basis of work carried out on Council managed sites. Provide displays at events x 4.	45	Attended Loch Leven Discovery Day, Kinnoull Hill Open Day and Woodfair.	25
		300		216
		22	% of annual target	23
<b>3. PROMOTING AWARENESS AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE NATURAL HERITAGE</b>				



<b>Ranger Activities:</b>								
Interpretive planning (including monitoring and review).	Monitor use and content of existing leaflets and panels and plan for new interpretation material. Provide advice on interpretation where required or sought and liaise with the Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, particularly in regard to Blackspout Wood. Work with Dundee Ranger Service and the Scottish Crop Research Institute on a leaflet and interpretative boards for the Inner Tay Estuary LNR.		18	Initial liaison with Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust regarding future interpretation at Black Spout Wood. Leaflet stocks monitored.				12
Development, provision and renewal of interpretive material.	Review all information and interpretation provided by the Ranger Service.		7	Limited review carried out to date, but significant work on upgrading website.				10
Ranger presence at key sites.	Assist the public on key countryside sites and walks on a regular basis especially in relation to Biodiversity. Implement information on Biodiversity and natural heritage issues on key sites, either through mobile interpretation, or as part of new static boards.		30	Assisted the public as necessary and promoted biodiversity as possible.				29
Increasing public awareness through personal communication (e.g. through talks, guided walks and events).	Encourage a greater understanding of the natural heritage and responsible behaviour on walks. Offer guided walks in ranger service programme x 12. Lead and assist in 4 weekday walks for the Blairgowrie and East Perthshire Walking Festival, Crieff Tryst x 3 and the Angus Walking Festival x 2. Respond to up to 30 requests for talks and walks aimed to increase an awareness of the countryside and the Code. Offer 10 talks on Heartland Radio of which 6 will be pre-recorded.		80	Carried out 23 walks, 10 talks and 5 radio broadcasts				57
Education planning in accordance with Scottish curriculum.	Undertake Eco-school visits x 20. Undertake Big Tree Country Woodland Bus activities x 10. Promote the Code. Run <i>Salmon in the Classroom</i> x 2 schools. Work with Initiatives Officer and Outdoor Learning Group to investigate offering In Service and CPD Training for teachers. Respond to up to 20 requests for environmental education from schools.		65	Carried out education visits x 62. Work continuing on Salmon in the classroom preparing for next season.				67
Production of educational material (e.g. schools packs).	Prepare material for educational site visits.		12	Preparation of material for visits.				8
Planning and implementation of an Environmental Education Programme, including work with schools, informal groups, nature clubs etc.	Implement new booking procedure for schools groups. Assist in the planning of Paths to Health and Active Schools walks and help to lead the same. Promote use of 'The Shed' at Kinnoull and the Big Tree Country Educational Pack across PKC.		30	Developed new booking form and sent out to schools.				33



Advice on educational use of sites.	Promote the Council's guidelines <i>Managing Excursions</i> . Promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.	10	Ongoing discussions regarding the excursions document. Promotion of the Code where possible.	5
Involving the local community.	Consult local communities on site and path developments. Work with local communities to increase awareness of statutory access rights and with access officers and other partners delivering access. Assist Comrie in colour and CMFA with wildlife management of meadow areas.	20	Wildlife meadow management carried out to enhance biodiversity of meadow area.	10
Publicise and promote the Scottish Outdoor Access Code	Ensure that the Code is promoted in all publications, displays, interpretation and by word of mouth. Liaise with SNH 'Quality of Life Unit' in regard to promotion of the Code.	3	Promoted the Code in all publications, displays and face to face meetings where possible and applicable.	4
		275		234
		20	% of annual target	18
<b>4. CARING FOR AND ENHANCING THE NATURAL HERITAGE ENJOYED BY VISITORS</b>				
<b>Ranger Activities:</b>				
Planning, implementing and supervising sustainable management of the natural heritage e.g. habitat conservation and enhancement, species protection.	Implement the LBAP targets agreed with SNH for invasive plants, bats, swifts, red squirrels and water fowl. Assist NNR Staff in promoting Biodiversity at Loch Leven. Attend meetings with the following groups; Tayside Swift Interest group x2, Biodiversity into Education sub-group x2, North Tayside Badger Group x4 Red Squirrel group x 4, Perthshire Bat Group x 2, Tayside LBAP Coast and Estuaries Sub Group x 2. Run red squirrel monitoring programme and butterfly transect on the Knock of Crieff. Set up residential home biodiversity project in Crieff. Develop Red Squirrel transects and monitor at Kinnoull Hill with User Group and report back via Annual Report. Promote Bats via activities during Bat Weekend. Assist in proposed Biodiversity Festival.	100	Species interest groups attended x 14, including swifts, red squirrels and coasts and estuaries. Ongoing squirrel feeding project on the Knock. Research carried out in to Amphibian deaths in road drains. Bat weekend event organised and plans made for biodiversity festival.	88
Planning, implementing and supervising sustainable management of the natural heritage e.g. footpath maintenance.	Implement management plan objectives and work programmes in conjunction with the Countryside Management Officer. Upgrader paths at the Den of Alyth. Assist in providing improvements on the Crieff Countryside Sites as part of Big Tree Country. Undertake Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) where necessary	65	Practical management projects initiated on the Knock and working up of the interpretive elements.	41



Encouragement of public involvement in conservation management, including the supervision of volunteers, local conservation groups.	Assess and review volunteering opportunities across Community Greenspace with colleagues. Provide a programme of work and support the Perth and Kinross Conservation Volunteers. Promote and encourage volunteering through PKCV, and organise 12 tasks to facilitate this. Consider options for a residential weekend. Respond to requests and organise up to 10 tasks for local communities and other voluntary groups.	85	Carried out volunteer tasks x 17. Some tasks cancelled due to bad weather early in the year. Residential cancelled due to lack of numbers.	52
		250		181
		18	% of annual target	14
<b>5. MANAGEMENT OF THE RANGER SERVICE</b>				
<b>Ranger Activities:</b>				
Administration (including preparation of work programmes, interim and annual reports, input to Ranger Service 3Yr. management strategy).	Provide input into reports and programmes to meet the requirements of SNH for continued grant support. Attend meetings associated with the efficient running of the Ranger Service. Fulfill the functions of line management and implement Council policy. Respond to internal and external consultations. Update the Council's website and contribute information to other websites. Liaise with SNH on implementation of the Ranger Review.	70	Ranger service administration including team meetings, vehicles and reporting.	85
Training and development	Attend training courses x 11. Participate in Scottish Countryside Rangers Association activities x 12	85	Courses attended on Interviewer skills, Wild Camping, dog issues, MIDAS, managing school visits, salmon in the classroom, first aid, invasive species and the Ranger networking day. Internal courses on risk assessment, botanical recording, GPS, discrimination and lone working. Total 14 x external courses and 6 x internal courses.	70
Line management responsibilities (staff appraisal)	Attend Evaluation Review and Development interviews and reviews and meet set targets.	15	ERD's completed in line with Council procedure	11
Requirements under Health and Safety and Emergency Planning.	Implement The Environment Service Safe Working Practice in relation to the Ranger Service. Establish a safe working practice for volunteers. Undertake risk assessments.	10	Internal Health and safety audit.	9
		180		175
		13	% of annual target	13
	<b>TOTAL STAFF DAYS</b>	<b>1380</b>		<b>1309</b>

