

PE1678/X

Petitioner submission of 9 April 2018

Selected Petitions Committee questions

The Convenor of the committee asked if, during the development of the 2008 Rangers in Scotland framework, there was any awareness of the impending decision to make our ring-fenced funding part of the main settlement from 2009, and if representations were made at that time.

Written reply

The partners involved in developing the 2008 “Rangers in Scotland” framework were COSLA, Scottish Countryside Rangers Association, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Forestry Commission Scotland, Historic Scotland and chaired by Scottish Natural Heritage. By the time the framework was finished the withdrawal of ring fenced grant aid was known about and this group recognised that a mechanism was needed to help SNH continue to advocate for Rangers, to keep policy under review and to develop appropriate joint actions/projects. These partners formed themselves into the **Ranger Development Partnership** (RDP).

This has been chaired by SCRA, and the last meeting was in March 2017. COSLA has never sent representation to this group, but Local Authority input has been gained through representation initially from Stirling and then North Ayrshire Councils.

Associated with the RDP was the Ranger Manager Forum, which met annually to discuss and agree issues of common interest. This included national reporting, the promotion and use of the national Ranger badge and raising awareness of the significance of the work of Rangers across Scotland.

Through the **Ranger Manager Forum**, Scottish Natural Heritage did try and continue with collation of a national report on the outputs of Rangers related to the Single Outcome Agreements, but their influence had been drastically curtailed by the break in the funding partnership previously binding these organisations and so national reporting became another casualty.

Petitions Committee – request for information from Local Authorities

The poor level of response from Scotland’s Local Authorities to your request for information is symptomatic of their continued indifference to the crisis they have contributed to within the Ranger profession. This attitude must be robustly challenged.

Local Authorities received substantial sums over many years to help create, staff and promote Scotland's network of Country and Regional parks. They were able to reap the economic and social benefits afforded by these resources.

Selected Petitions Committee questions

Rona Mackay MSP asked:- "You spoke about the jobs that have been lost - is someone filling the posts or are those jobs not being done?"

Written Reply

Many Rangers are being asked to take on additional roles and responsibilities when posts around them are lost. We have anecdotal evidence of increasing incidences of stress-related illnesses amongst our membership. A further impact is evident in career prospects where, at one end seasonal posts are lost, and at the other Senior Rangers are being made redundant or retired and not replaced.

There is increasing reliance on volunteers to deliver core services. There have always been volunteers, but within the context of professional support and adequate training. This is being compromised by fewer Rangers in post to do this.

Ranger Services normally operated over 7 days to meet the demand from the many and varied user groups. With fewer staff this demand now goes unanswered. Education groups with their Curriculum for Excellence requirement for outdoor learning and innovative approaches to the "Natural Health Service" are other examples.

As a membership organisation, SCRA is finding it really challenging to secure commitment from those in post as workloads are now too onerous.

Petitions Committee – request for information from Agencies and NGO's

SCRA welcomes the submissions and support shown by Cairngorms National Park Authority, Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, Forest Enterprise, Crown Estates, Scottish Land and Estates, Community Land Scotland, and the National Trust for Scotland in clearly recognising and acknowledging the positive contribution Rangers make to their respective organisations.

SNH considers that well trained and resourced Ranger Services are a key resource. Their recent corporate plan is entitled "Connecting People with Nature", a function carried out daily by Rangers since the first appointment in 1969.

SCRA survey result comment

Through its survey, and subsequently confirmed by the 2018 SNH Corporate plan, SCRA has learned that SNH are advising their current funding partners to find

alternative sources of grant support. The medium-term objective is that these services will no longer receive any core funding from SNH.

SCRA believes this will lead to further job losses within all sectors as small community-based services, those in private estates and Trusts do not have the financial resilience to overcome this. There are current job losses and reconfiguration of services in the NGO and charity sectors as they adjust to the new financial landscape. There will inevitably be far fewer Rangers delivering the front-line services the public value so highly.

SCRA request that the Petitions Committee ask the Scottish Government to ensure new funding is secured to halt the loss of any more Ranger jobs amongst all the Services, including those currently receiving grant aid support from Scottish Natural Heritage.

SCRA welcomes the Scottish Government's recognition of the importance of all the Services that Rangers provide, and stating that this is the view shared by SNH as the lead body for Countryside Rangers in Scotland¹.

It concerns us, however, that SNH does not monitor Ranger numbers in Scotland, including which Services adopt the professional identification badge². Despite the investment of public money, there seems to be no longer a national agency overseeing this important strategic resource.

We believe that it is in Scotland's interest for the Government to have a national overview approach in delivering Countryside Services, including those within Local Authorities across the country.

Our survey has established that job losses amount over 38% of the posts (since 2008), mostly occurring in Local Authorities. Numbers in all grades have reduced, particularly Ranger Managers (resulting in Rangers often being managed by someone who has little experience of their work) and Seasonal Rangers (resulting in a much reduced service at the busiest periods and the loss of an important step on the employability ladder for young people aspiring to work in the area).

As mentioned previously, SCRA is very concerned that SNH's intended grant removal from the wider sectors to which SNH currently provide funding to, starting next year, will escalate these job losses even further.

Notwithstanding, Rangers continue to deliver on a series of Scottish Government priorities, including Health, Education, Community, Safety and Environment.

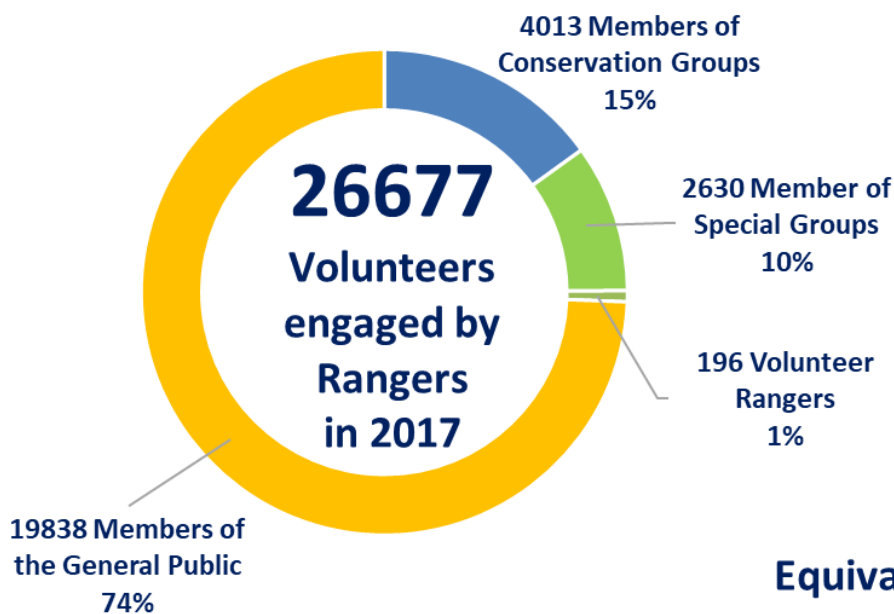
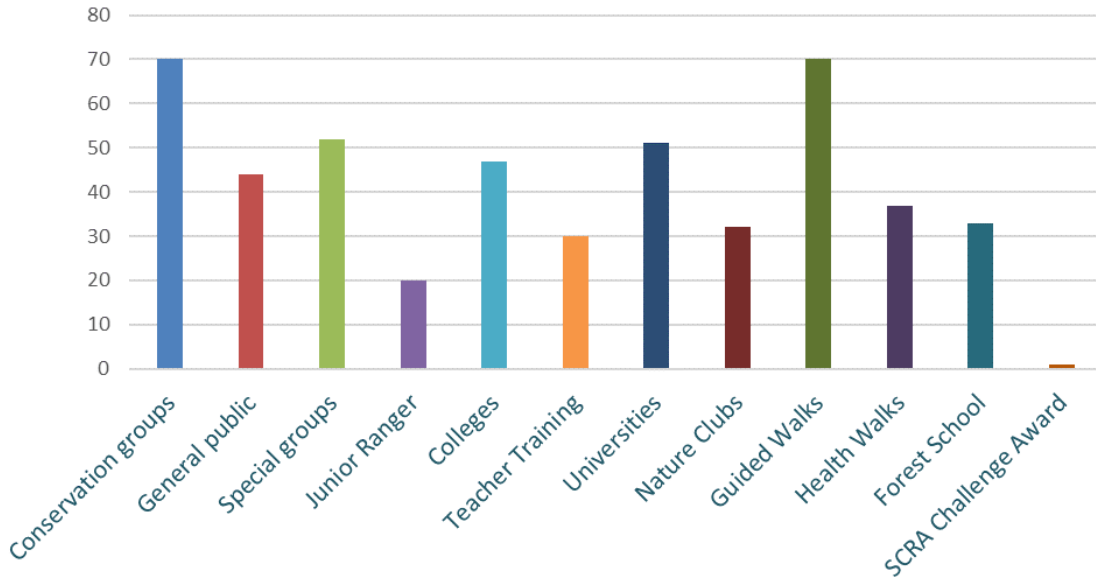
¹PE1678/O Scottish Government submission of 1 March 2018

² PE 1678 /I Scottish Natural Heritage submission of 27 February 2018

25 million people visit sites managed by Ranger Services in Scotland every year

The graphs below illustrate examples of work Rangers across Scotland do **connecting people and nature**, and derived benefits.

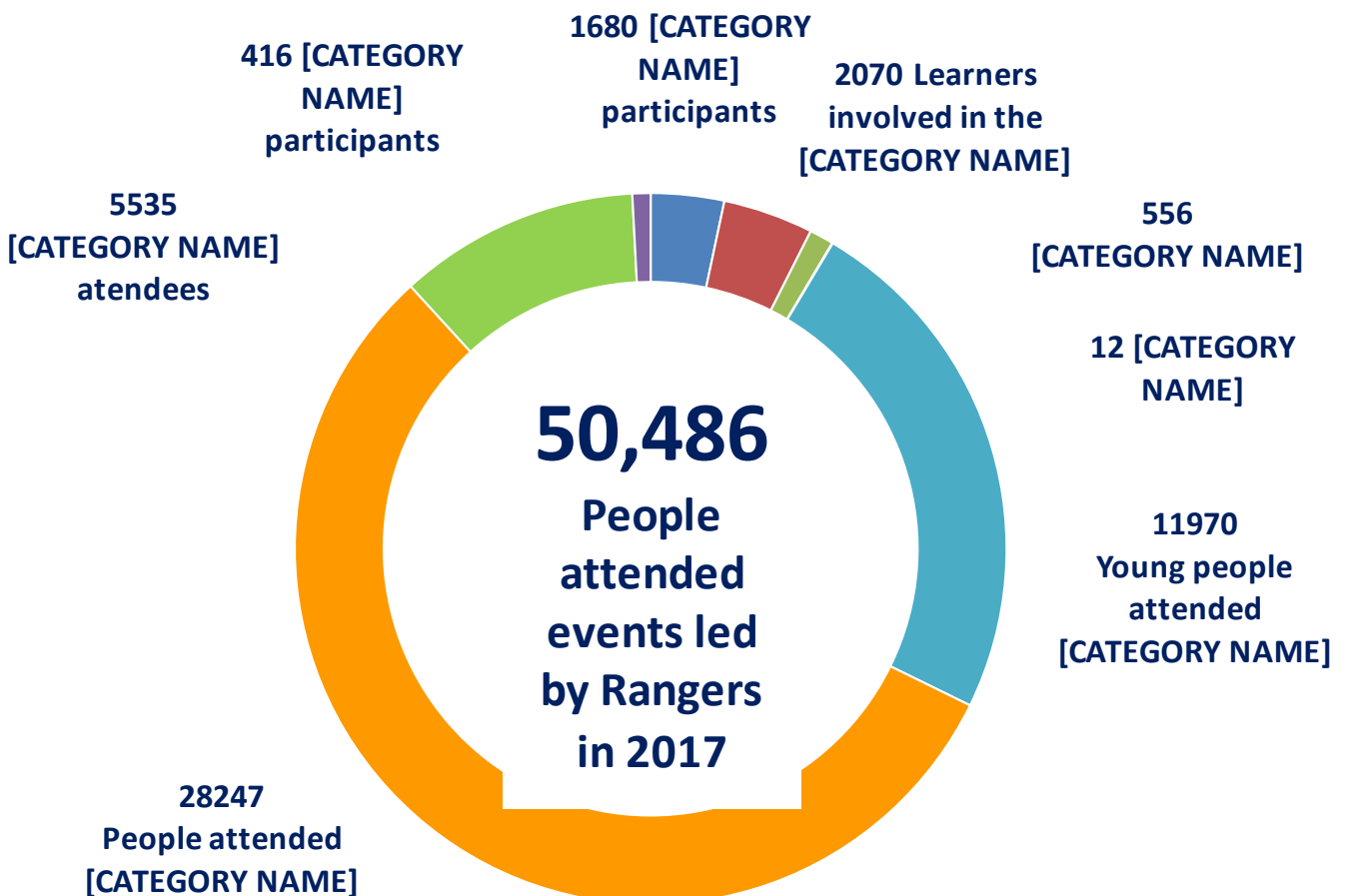
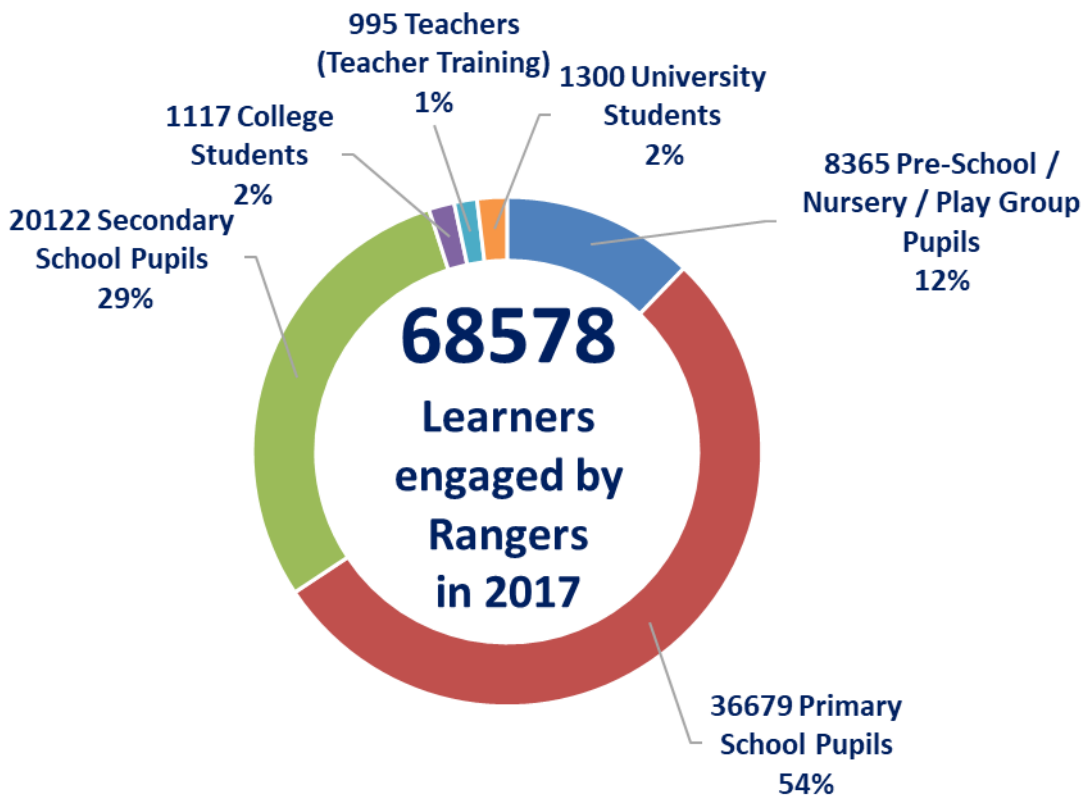
Number of Ranger Services in Scotland delivering education, skill development and health-oriented activities



Equivalent to **80031** hours volunteering

A value of **£560,217**

(Considering a £7/hour minimum wage)



SCRA - our priority outcomes from this process

A new National Strategic Framework for Countryside Rangers in Scotland

We ask the Scottish Government to secure new funding to halt the loss of Ranger jobs, and to inject new growth into the profession.

To protect the National Ranger Badge - our charter mark and quality assurance

We ask that all government appointed countryside staff fulfilling Ranger tasks be identifiable as part of a Scotland-wide service, as indicated within the 2008 strategic framework "Rangers in Scotland."

With reference to a national reporting framework we would look to outline the impact of the loss of national reporting has had and discuss what might be done to mitigate this:-

- Joint future actions - possible joint approaches to policies in the proposed new National Parks.
- Commissioning a rewrite of the 2008 "Rangers in Scotland" document and fund its implementation programme.
- Possible partnership working on Government recommendations emerging from the petition process.

That concludes our responses to the Petitions Committee Questions to the SCRA Survey findings and to the written responses received by the Petitions committee to their requests for information from employers.

As a membership organisation SCRA would welcome the opportunity to contribute our knowledge and expertise to the development and implementation of these outcomes.

ENDS

Scottish Rangers



**We are at the front line -
connecting people with nature**

68,578 Learners From Nursery to University levels attended educational activities with Rangers in 2017

26,677 Volunteers Participated in Ranger-led practical conservation tasks in 2017

3,153 Community groups Were actively engaged by Rangers in 2017

50,486 People Attended Ranger-led public events in 2017

There are only 269 full time Rangers for the whole of Scotland

**We deliver on Health,
Education, Community and
Environment**

<https://scra-online.co.uk/>

SCOTTISH COUNTRYSIDE RANGERS ASSOCIATION Scotland's Countryside Professionals

The Scottish Countryside Rangers Association is a registered Charity (SCO43188) and membership is open to professionals, volunteers and Junior Rangers, people working in associated professions and members of the public interested in supporting its aims and objectives



SCRA SURVEY – 2018

In February 2018, SCRA presented a petition to the Scottish Parliament.

The petition urged the Government to instruct the implementation of a strategic framework for the network of Countryside Ranger Services as first set out in a 2008 document, “Rangers in Scotland”, produced by Scottish Natural Heritage.

To better inform the progress of the petition, SCRA undertook a survey of all Ranger Services across Scotland, to assess their current status and to gather information on their areas of service delivery.

THE SURVEY IDENTIFIED 141 POSTS LOST IN THIS SECTOR SINCE 2008

What did the survey cover?

- How many Rangers are currently employed in Scotland
- How many Ranger posts, at different grades, have been lost since 2008
- What have Rangers across Scotland delivered in their key duties of connecting people and nature
- If there have been changes in the emphasis on this work
- Information on job titles and use of the national Ranger badge

Survey methodology

The survey was carried out by direct telephone contact with Ranger Services across Scotland. A prepared set of questions (Appendix 1) were carried out and the responses noted.

Where staff were unable to answer questions, for example due to time constraints, available service reports were used to extract the information. This information was then collated and used in the production of the graphics in this summary.

There are 64 employers and 90 services. Scotland has 269 full time Ranger posts, of which 54 are based in Scotland's two national parks

Survey findings

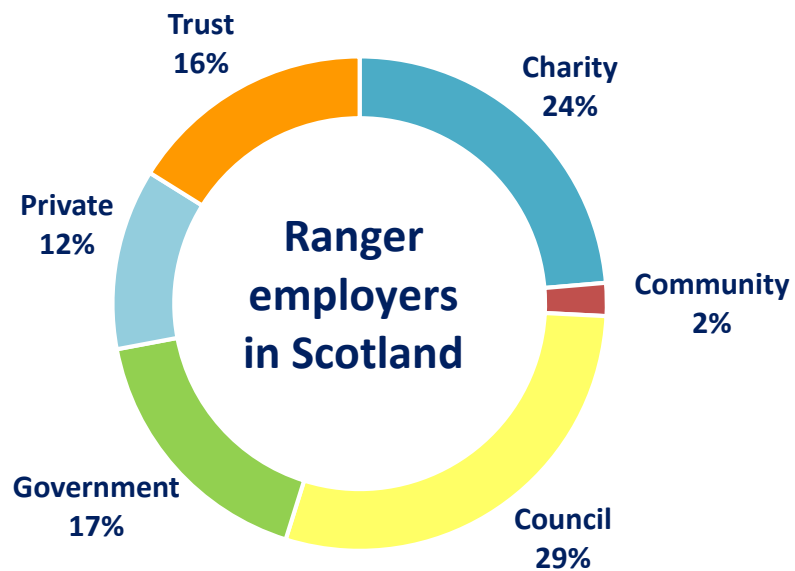


Fig 1. Ranger employers in Scotland

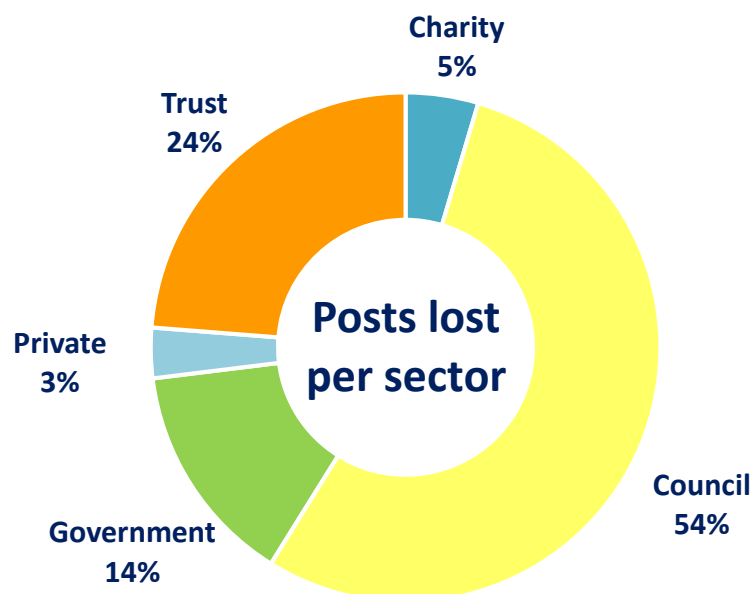


Fig 2. Proportion of posts lost by employer status

Roles lost by sector

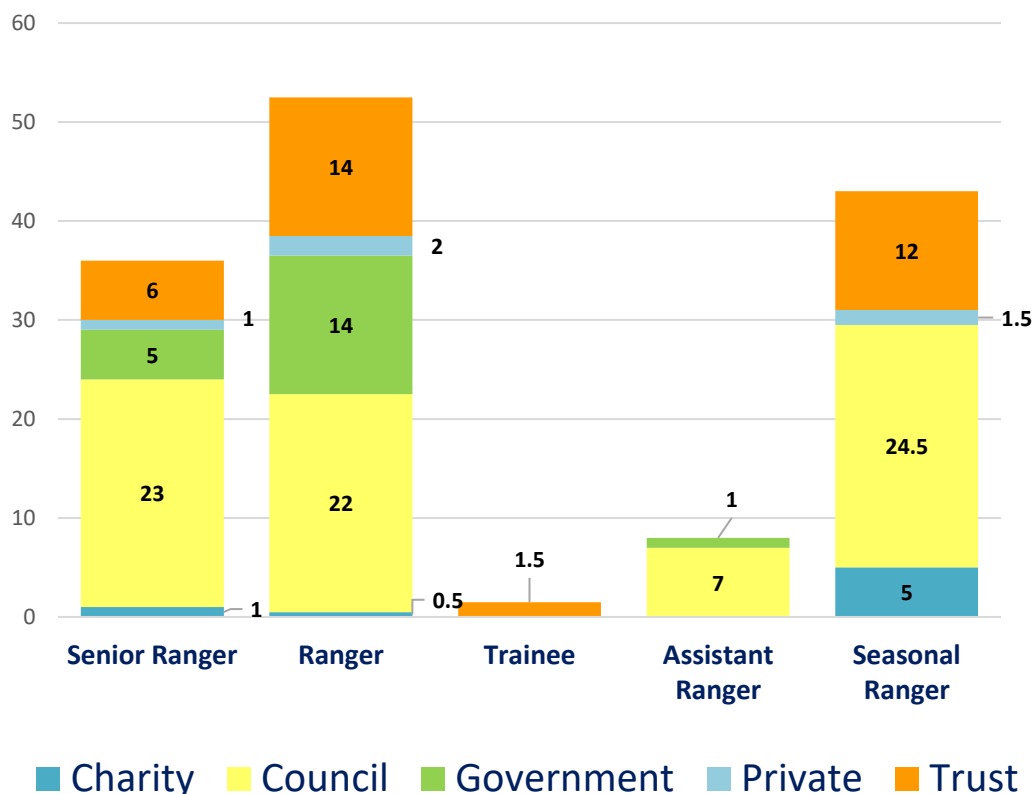


Fig 3. Roles loss per sector

Loss of posts

The majority of posts lost since 2008 were within Local Authorities. These posts have been deleted from the organisations through active policies of not filling vacant posts, restructuring of services, re-designation of post name and duties and not appointing Seasonal (fixed contract) posts.

Our survey has established that job losses amount over 38% posts (since 2008), mostly occurring in Local Authorities. Numbers in all grades have reduced, particularly Ranger Managers (resulting in Rangers often being managed by someone who has little experience of their work) and Seasonal Rangers (resulting in a much reduced service at the busiest periods and the loss of an important step on the employability ladder for young people aspiring to work in the area).

Impact of loss of posts

Most Ranger teams are less than 5 people. The loss of posts has a disproportionate effect on the viability of the team and the core service delivery that can be achieved. This is reflected at a national level as engagement with communities across Scotland falls into decline.

Notes on meeting held with Francesca Osowska, Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage, 21 March 2018.

SCRA representatives had an important first meeting with Francesca Osowska, Chief Executive of Scottish Natural Heritage. This was a successful meeting, covering items outlined in the petition, and the content of our survey.

Both parties are now awaiting the outcome of the petition in order to organise a further meeting.

We seek possible joint actions such as commissioning a rewrite of the 2008 “Rangers in Scotland” document and establish a working partnership on Government recommendations emerging from the petition process.

Conclusion

As a volunteer-driven organisation SCRA has limited resources with which to conduct a detailed analysis of the shifting demographics within Scotland’s Ranger Services.

The national reporting remit previously held by Scottish Natural Heritage, has been a significant loss in identifying the strategic and social benefits accrued by maintaining a national network of Ranger Services.

Our survey results are only indicative of underlying issues which have resulted in a significant loss of posts, the loss of a national co-ordination and reporting function and, most urgently, the absence of a current national strategic framework to provide a focus and direction for Scotland’s Rangers.

Appendix 1: Sample questionnaire

Survey Sheet no 1

Ranger Service

Department Head Address

Email

Name of Senior Ranger

Senior Ranger	YES	NO	Numbers	Number of post lost since 2008		
Full time Rangers	YES	NO	Numbers			Number of post lost since 2008
Sessional Rangers	Yes	NO	Numbers			Number of post lost since 2008
Assistant Ranger Volunteer Ranger	Yes	NO	Numbers			Number of post lost since 2008
Conservation Groups	Yes	NO	Numbers			
General Public	YES	NO	Numbers	Numbers	Males	age range
Special Groups	YES	NO	Numbers	Numbers	Female	age range
Junior Rangers	YES	NO	Numbers	Visitor Numbers		
Pre School	YES	NO	Numbers			
Primary School	YES	NO	Numbers			
Universities	Yes	NO	Numbers			
Nature Club	Yes	NO	Numbers			
Guided Walks	Yes	NO	Numbers			
Health Walks	Yes	NO	Numbers			
SCRA Challenge Award	Yes	NO	Numbers			
Forest School	Yes	NO	Numbers			
John Muir Award	YES	NO	Numbers			
SCRA Members 2017	YES	NO	Numbers			

Appendix 2: Ranger employers

Aberdeen City Council	Highland Council Highland – High-Live Trust
Aberdeen Council	Historic Environment Scotland
Aigus Field Centre – Beauly	Hoddum and Kinmount Ranger Service – Lockerbie
Angus Council - Alive Trust	Hopetoun Estate Ranger Service - South Queensferry
Atholl Estate Ranger - Pitlochry	Invercauld Estate - Braemar
Balmoral Estate Ranger Service – Ballater	John Muir Trust – Pitlochry
Buccleuch Estates - Selkirk	Kelburn Castle and Estate – Largs
Cairngorm Mountain Ranger Service Ski Centre	Knoydart Foundation Ranger Service
Cairngorm National Park Service	Leys Estate Ranger Service – Banchory
Clyde Muirshield Regional Park	Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park
Clarkmannanshire Countryside Ranger Service	Midlothian Countryside Ranger Service
City of Edinburgh Countryside Service	Moray Council Ranger Service
Dams of Darnley Country Park - Glasgow	Mugdock Country Park Ranger Service – Milngavie
Dundee City Council	Mull Staffa and Iona Ranger Service
Dumfries and Galloway Countryside Service	National Trust for Scotland
East Ayrshire Leisure	North Ayrshire Council Ranger Service
East Lothian Council Ranger Service	North Harris Trust
Fair Isle Ranger Service	North Lanarkshire Council Countryside Ranger Service
Falkirk Council Ranger Service	Orkney Island Council Ranger Service
Falkirk Community Trust - Muiravonside Country Park	Perth and Kinross Council Ranger Service
Fife Coast and Countryside Trust	Renfrew Council Ranger Service
Fife Council Ranger Service	Rothiemurchus Ranger Service – Aviemore
Finlaystone Country Estate Ranger Service – Gourrock	Rum Community Ranger Service
Foula Heritage - Shetland - Forestry Commission	Sanday Development Trust Ranger Service – Orkney
Freelance Ranger Service - New Galloway	Scottish Borders Council Countryside Ranger Service
Glasgow City Council	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Glenlivet Estate – Tomintoul	Shetland Ranger Service – Lerwick
Glen Tanar Estate Trust – Aboyne	
HEAW Knapdale	
Arichonan, Near Crian	

South Ayrshire Belleisle Park Ranger
Service – Ayr

South Lanarkshire Council
Countryside Ranger Service

Stirling Council Ranger Service

Tiree Ranger Service

West Dunbarton Council Ranger
Service

West Lothian Council Ranger Service

Whitelees Countryside Ranger Service
– Eagleham