



Countryside Jobs Service

Focus on Countryside Management

23 August 2010

**Endorsed by the Countryside Management Association
and the Scottish Countryside Rangers Association**



So what is Countryside Management?!

It's been happening ever since man started to use the natural world as a resource. At first, we started by farming, and managing our local environments to make our lives easier. I suspect that we never really appreciated this as Countryside Management as we do today!

As we moved into the 20th Century, the pressures on our countryside started to grow. The drivers for this were mixed and significant. Firstly, we started to think properly about conservation. We realised that intensive farming, climate change and an ever growing population were putting pressure on our countryside and there was an emerging agenda to look after, protect and enhance these areas for the future. Second, we were becoming increasingly detached from our environment or our countryside as we headed ever more toward an urban based society. Countryside Management was therefore required to start enabling the re-connection to this lost element in our lives. Thirdly, as a society, expendable income and increased leisure time meant that ever more of us were heading into the countryside for visits, short trips or breaks, and, as well as placing pressures on it, this use demanded facilities and management to support this use.

In Scotland, this was taking place in the late 1960's and early 1970's. At the same time, the national agency the Countryside Commission for Scotland, or CCS had realised the need to support a dedicated and national approach to the professional management of the countryside and the Ranger was born. Supported in Scotland by CCS and grant aid administered centrally, but available locally, Ranger Services started to appear. Rangers were in many ways the first of a new breed, a new breed that became known as Countryside Managers.

Their role was to help conserve areas of Scotland that were under pressure or threat, to manage these areas for the special qualities they displayed, to engage with people, to ensure that they had the ability to appreciate and learn about these special qualities, and finally, to provide and manage for an increasingly active population that wanted to get out and about into the countryside.

The growth of Rangering in Scotland was rapid. Through the 1970's and 80's we saw Rangers reach all corners of the country, both within the public sector and the private sector. In the mid 1990's CCS changed to Scottish Natural Heritage, SNH, who continued to support, through centralised grant aid, the delivery of Ranger Services.

In 1995 a review was held to evaluate what Rangers had achieved, and to look at refreshing the strategic approach to Rangers being involved in Countryside Management. This review distilled the work of Rangers into 4 areas; Ensuring a Welcome, Mediation between the Public and other Users, Caring for the Natural Heritage, and Promoting Awareness of Natural Heritage. These were an evolution in the initial drivers for Countryside Management and suited the emerging services well. Ranger numbers continued to grow, and in the late 1990's there were in the region of 350 – 400 FTE Ranger posts in Scotland and many other associated Countryside Managers.

Of course, the mid 1990's through to the early years of the new millennium, saw a relative explosion in Countryside Professionals. The awareness that had led to the first Countryside Managers, those Rangers in the late 1960's and early 1970's had continued to grow and public awareness of topics such as conservation had continued to develop. The Rio Earth Summit in 1992 introduced Biodiversity to the world at large, and through that decade a new Countryside Manager, the Biodiversity Officer was born. Later on in the 1990's there was an increasing desire for greater access to the countryside, resulting in the posts of Access Officer joining the hallowed rank of the Ranger.

These were not necessarily new jobs – Rangers had been dealing with biodiversity and access since their inception. However, pressure on these key areas had grown to the extent that they now required specialist roles to support them. So from quiet beginnings back in the early 70's, Countryside Management had blossomed and expanded to support an increasingly pressured environment, and an increasingly detached community that wanted to get out into that environment.

In Scotland, the first decade of the new millennium has also been exciting. Two National Parks have been designated each of which has a staff (albeit employed in one Park and facilitated and grant aided in the other) compliment of many Countryside Managers – Rangers, Access Officers and Biodiversity Officers at the core. But it is also a decade of change. In 2008, SNH undertook a review of Ranger Service policy, set against the review of 1995 and a refreshed policy – Enjoying the Outdoors II (an imaginative title replacing Enjoying the Outdoors I!). This review aimed to rationalise the increasingly diverse work of Rangers across both public and private services, but also across National Parks and governmental agencies such as Forestry Commission Scotland.

The result was the policy statement 'Rangers in Scotland' (search Rangers in Scotland on any search engine and you'll find it!). This further distilled the work of the profession into three key areas; To ensure a warm welcome and provide support to help people enjoy the outdoors; To increase awareness, understanding, care and responsible use of the natural and cultural heritage; and To support the sustainable management and use of the outdoors to meet a range of social, economic and environmental objectives.

These aims again evolved the role of the Ranger, notably reflecting a greater role in 'heritage' rather than natural or cultural in recognition that the two are often inextricably linked, and, perhaps more vitally, promoted the expansive role that Rangers play in community engagement and delivering on other agenda's such as health and wellbeing.

However, the announcement followed in late 2008 that SNH would no longer provide direct grant aid to public based Ranger Services (those in local authorities) and that this grant would be distributed as part of the governments central settlement to local authorities, in a non-ring fenced fashion. Some £2m of grant aid was lost to Rangers in early 2009, although some 50+ FTE posts are still supported in the private sector. The impacts of the loss of this grant aid are still not clear, although anecdotal evidence suggests that there has been the loss of several posts in the past year.

So, what of the future? Scotland's Rangers have a proud history of innovation and success. Over the past 40 years, Scotland's Rangers have delivered services to our environment and people that have been recognised around the world as demonstrating some of the best practice there is in Countryside Management. We are one of the few countries where the Ranger Services are united under a single logo and by common aims and aspirations. But in a period where we do not have national grant aid supporting the delivery of national objectives and policy, and when public spending is under increasing pressure, where will Scotland's original Countryside Managers be in 5 years time?



Niall Loble, Chair, SCRA niall@scra-online.co.uk 07720 774461 www.scra-online.co.uk
Further information can be found at: <http://bit.ly/RangersinScotland>

Organisations:

The Land Trust provides a cost effective and sustainable management solution for public open space and green infrastructure. We manage this land to deliver significant community benefits, improving health, social cohesion, providing an educational resource and uplifting the local economy. For further information visit www.thelandtrust.org.uk

Nurture Lakeland works with local businesses and visitors to the Lake District, promoting sustainable tourism and fundraising for conservation. You can discover what goes on behind the scenes to keep our special places beautiful and help look after the places you love by joining Nurture Lakeland. Visit www.nurturelakeland.org contact keira@nurturelakeland.org

The Fix the Fells project works to repair and maintain the Lake District fell paths. When grass becomes compacted and worn away by feet and the weather, erosion scars are created. For more information about the project please visit www.fixthefells.co.uk or email keira@nurturelakeland.org

Flora locale, the leading ecological restoration charity, offers free advice notes and training in all aspects of countryside management. Events include woodland creation and management, grassland management under HLS, wet grassland management, and pond creation and management. For more information see our website at www.floralocale.org or email infor@floralocale.org

Countryside Recreation Network is a network of the key government departments, agencies, and other national organisations in the UK and Ireland who: share information; promote best practice; encourage cooperation in identifying, coordinating and disseminating research related to countryside recreation; promote information exchange and foster debate about relevant trends and issues. Find out more about our activities on www.countrysiderecreation.org.uk

The Sand Dune and Shingle Network promotes knowledge exchange and shares good practice through newsletters, publications, events and training. Our website www.hope.ac.uk/coast has much information on all aspects of sand dune and shingle management. Members are from many backgrounds from all over the UK and Europe and collaborate widely on research and management projects.

UK Green City initiative is part of an international group of bodies dedicated to promoting green infrastructure and the triple-bottom-line benefits it brings. Visit our website www.thegreencity.co.uk and look out for upcoming events.

Trees for Life is an award winning charity working to restore the Caledonian Forest and all its constituent species, to a 900 square mile area west of Inverness. To find out more about our work and how you can get involved, visit our website www.treesforlife.org.uk or call 0845 458 3505.

The Open Spaces Society, founded in 1865, is Britain's oldest national conservation body. We campaign to protect common land, village greens, open spaces and public paths. We advise local authorities and the public and are consulted on applications for works on common land. We recently published Finding Common Ground, guidance to common-land managers on how to assess the community interest in commons.

As a registered charity, we rely on voluntary support from subscriptions, donations and legacies.

For further information or to join, please contact: Open Spaces Society, 25a Bell Street, Henley-on-Thames RG9 2BA
Tel: 01491 573535 Email: hq@oss.org.uk Web: www.oss.org.uk



Life on St Kilda

As the newly appointed NTS Ranger for St. Kilda, these are my first impressions of working on Britain's most remote and most designated small island.

Generally Countryside Rangers/Wardens fall into three broad categories; those with a scientific interest in natural heritage, those wishing to pursue and improve their practical skills and those enthused by interpreting their site for visitors.

Like many of us I have a foot in all three camps, impossible as that may sound.

Having grown up in a Midland city, St. Kilda has always held a romantic appeal. The 'Edge of the World', a place other to mainland existence but we quickly realise the magic begins to fade with familiarity. Day trippers to the island maybe making a once in a lifetime pilgrimage to a place imagined, staying for a few hours rather than truly experienced. Their first impressions last and it is up to me to tactfully interpret why the original community evacuated their supposed idyll in 1930. I write this in my warm office whilst outside storm force winds and high seas preclude any human visitor getting to St. Kilda. Safe and secure on the mainland potential visitors listen to Shipping Forecast gale warnings for Bailey, Malin and Hebrides. Here we experience them! Last night Force 10 winds kept me awake, rattling the slates and banging doors. Had the reconstruction of a Hebridean Blackhouse been complete I would have taken my sleeping bag there for a peaceful night.

Working here, I am at the mercy of the elements. 50 miles from the Outer Hebrides my supplies come by twice-weekly helicopter, itself dependent on good flying weather. Groceries have to be ordered by fax and the helicopter company asked to pick up my order. Get that wrong and there's no convenience store to help out. Any tools or materials have to be ordered from the mainland and waiting a week for anything would be pretty efficient. There is no mobile phone signal and only an incredibly slow dial up internet connection which works as and when the radio-telephone link functions properly.

We have no vehicle so it's shank's pony for everything. There is only one road on the island built by the Army to service a still functioning Cold War tracking station on top of the island. The idea of pushing a wheelbarrow to the top of a 1400' hill – well it is just not going to happen!

My duties include seabird and wild sheep monitoring done by telescope from precipitous places from which any member of the public would be well advised to keep away. Vertigo is not a qualification for this job.

The physicality of working on St. Kilda is probably not the biggest challenge. Living away from friends and family for extended periods of time can be difficult and island Rangering won't be for everyone. No partner to come home to at the end of the day and being with my archaeologist colleague 24/7 means we have to construct and respect each other's personal space. I am always pleased to meet visitors to St. Kilda who provide fresh social stimulus for a few hours. We have the small military base for neighbours though with a 10:1 male / female imbalance and no children on the island it is a friendly, yet strange community to work within. Not even a Ranger's dog is allowed on the island. For enthusiasts of scenery and wildlife this is an incredible place to work. However, even with a very supportive Area Manager the isolation can throw up practical and personal challenges. I feel I am well placed but Rangering on St. Kilda might not be for everyone.

Paul Sharman, St Kilda Ranger
www.kilda.org.uk



photo online



the National Trust
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a place for everyone

Publications:

SCottish Environment NEwS, SCENES, is an independent digest of news about Scotland. It is for anyone with an interest in the land or sea, whether professional or amateur. It is based solely on published material and contains only news with no editorial comment or opinion. See: www.scenes.org.uk

Wild Scape are an innovative countryside interpretation company. We also run a wildlife image/sound/video library resource. And in 2010 we launched 11 wildlife DVD's in the 'a black country lad explores' series. Check out our website for more at www.wild-scape.co.uk

eco-logic books - mail order books that provide practical, sustainable, solutions to environmental problems - visit our website at www.eco-logicbooks.com



Party on... your nature reserve?

The Isle of Wight Festival isn't quite the 500,000 hippies that famously descended on the Island in 1971, leaving the Island with its own Act of Parliament and a reputation for free love. These days, the music festival is a far more organised affair, and smaller too, with only 45,000 visitors this year. But that's still one of the country's biggest festivals, and much of it takes place on and around sites managed by the Isle of Wight Council's Parks and Countryside Service. The festival management take on the entire site and hand it back at the end of the event, and although the council has close liaison with the festival, council staff don't get involved in the

direct delivery of the event. They do not get free tickets, either!

The biggest impact is the sheer volume of footfall on the main site: which is otherwise Seaclose Park, the Island's biggest sports amenity area, with seven football pitches, a bowls green and a cricket pitch. After the event, hard work by the grounds maintenance staff and contractors means that football can be safely played on some of these pitches as soon as eight weeks after the festival, and almost all are usable by Christmas. So far, since 2002 there have been no football matches cancelled on account of the festival!

Across the nearby river Medina is a peaceful nature reserve, Medina Riverside Park. This meadow is only lightly used for most of the year, but come festival-time it gains sudden popularity as a site where the Festival can be enjoyed for free - well, heard, at least, if not seen. Traditionally the public have used this perhaps just to hear one particular band without paying for the whole weekend. This site is managed directly by the council, not the festival, and has problems of its own. Although visitor numbers are much lower, the grassland, woodland and estuarine habitats are much more vulnerable. Security staff are employed to protect the site and keep people from driving vehicles onto the delicate meadow; and the police are paid to provide extra patrols on the weekend of the festival. However, as a deliberate policy, facilities are not provided, so toilets and first aid are not on site. Skips are provided, but otherwise the idea is that people must bring their own things, and clear them away again - as one might expect in the countryside. Pleasingly, people seem to mostly respect this and the free site is generally a success. One problem is unauthorised fires, and the damage to trees and ground by campfires. Low branches of trees are gradually being 'browsed' upwards, giving the site the look of a parkland in places.

The Isle of Wight Festival is a major benefit to the Island's economy, and a lot of fun: but it also provides an opportunity for the Isle of Wight council's Parks and Countryside Team to welcome a lot of visitors to some of the lovely sites they manage.

Matthew Chatfield, Parks & Countryside Manager, Isle of Wight Council



<http://iwight.com>

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Loving our Landscapes!

National Lottery grants have helped many sites and projects in a wide variety of ways. In May 2010 the Heritage Lottery Fund announced a new round of funding in the **Landscape Partnership programme**. 10 landscape projects aiming for HLF support have already passed the first round, allowing them to proceed in building the strong local partnerships necessary for the eventual success of the scheme; funding is awarded after successful submission of fully-developed applications.



Over the past six years, HLF has been helping protect some of the UK's most treasured landscapes thanks to an investment totalling £72m. The 45 landscapes which have been supported, stretching from Orkney's Scapa Flow to the Isle of Wight's 'Needles', reflect the wonders and diversity of this country's natural heritage. Through the LP programme, key partnerships between public and community bodies are being forged enabling people to tackle the needs of their local landscapes in a co-ordinated and practical way. Grants range from £250,000 up to £2m and to date, HLF has awarded £416m to over 2,785 projects for support of the UK's natural heritage.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the HLF, said: "Landscapes play a huge role in our lives and are often the backdrop to daily routines - but we mustn't take them for granted. This significant investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund is important, particularly in the International Year of Biodiversity, because it not only encourages people to work together effectively but gives them a greater sense of involvement and connection to their own local landscape."

HLF's Landscape Partnerships are helping bring together members of the community as well as local, regional, and national organisations to deliver schemes which benefit some of the UK's most outstanding landscapes and rural communities.

One project that has already benefited from HLF funding is Bassenthwaite reflections, an Environment Agency project. Grant: £1,858,000

Bassenthwaite Lake in Cumbria and the surrounding area are home to important habitats and wildlife, but soil erosion and the spread of non-native species were threatening the unique character of this landscape.

From planting native broad-leaved woodland on farmland, to tracing the origins of place names in Borrowdale, 30 projects set out to protect the area's natural heritage and encourage local people to look after it and respect it. New footpaths and boardwalks have opened up the landscape for visitors of all abilities, and volunteers are helping to eradicate invasive plant species. Apprentices have been trained in forestry techniques to help conserve the area's woodlands and address the shortage of land-based skills. Guided trails and school education packs are helping local people understand the landscape better. The Osprey Bus encourages visitors to leave their cars behind, offering a journey with spectacular views of rare ospreys and stunning landscape.

HLF is also providing funding for training as part of the **Skills for the Future programme**, which offers work-based training in a wide range of skills. The programme is focused on vocational learning, helping meet the skills gaps identified by heritage bodies, and on encouraging potential trainees from all walks of life. There are currently 54 projects running. An additional £17m was announced in June delivering 808 placements equivalent to 780 years' worth of paid training opportunities.

It will not only support traditional conservation training but also a wide variety of more contemporary skills, such as managing volunteers and using social media to get people involved in heritage.



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www.hlf.org.uk

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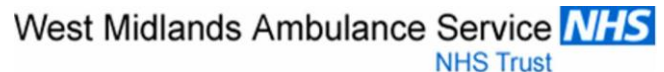
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Chase to the rescue



When running a countryside site there are many things to think about, from the management of the landscape to running the visitor centre but extrication of injured or dangerously ill people is probably not that high on the list. We all assume that if we fall and break a leg whilst on a walk or have a heart attack in the middle of the picnic that 'someone' will be there with the right skills and equipment but in the middle of a large country park who is that someone and perhaps more importantly how do they get there quickly without a network of tarmac roads?

This was a problem for the West Midlands Ambulance Service (WMAS) who cover Cannock Chase Country Park, one of the largest country parks in the region covering 4.5 square miles and is largely inaccessible by normal road vehicles, responding to incidents can occasionally prove tricky for the ambulance service. The park attracts visitors all year round, with many enjoying activities such as horse riding, mountain biking and rambling. The Service has come up with an unusual solution in seven year old 'Chase', an Irish sports horse who with and his owner Mark Bennett will soon be galloping to the rescue, responding to 999 emergency calls on behalf of WMAS, prior to the arrival of an ambulance. 'Chase' has been kitted out to enable him to carry essential equipment to incidents including a responder bag and defibrillator.

Talking about the new initiative, Mark said: "As a trauma instructor for the fire service, I have always had an interest in first aid. I decided to join WMAS' community response scheme a couple of years ago. I have already found myself having to put my first aid skills to the test in the country park on a couple of occasions. Being able to respond on horseback (or motorbike, if needs be) means that I can quickly access patients in difficult, hard to reach locations, prior to the arrival of the ambulance service."

Duncan Parsonage, WMAS Community Response Manager for South Staffordshire, said: "This is an excellent initiative that really could help to save lives. In many illnesses or injuries the first few minutes are critical and simple interventions can be performed in order to save lives or prevent disability. With Mark's additional knowledge of Cannock Chase Country Park and his ability to get around it quickly, he could potentially advise ambulance crews, who will often have to take to foot, of the best routes to take in order to quickly reach incidents."

Duncan can be contacted on 07793040321 or cfrs@wmas.nhs.uk
www.wmas.nhs.uk



photo online



The **Country Parks Accreditation Scheme** was launched by Natural England in 2009 to identify and recognise those sites that actually do deliver the core facilities and services expected of Country Parks. Country parks were established by the 1968 Countryside Act; with country park managers and partners, Natural England has updated criteria for core facilities and services established as part of

implementing the Act so they reflect the role of country parks today. These criteria now underpin the

Accreditation Scheme, and form the core of the Scheme handbook, which appears on the Natural England website alongside full details of how to apply.

Application is currently free and primarily by e-mail through submission of an electronic form and supporting evidence. Applicants need to provide clear evidence that demonstrates how their site meets the Scheme's criteria.

Accreditation lasts for three years from the date accredited status is confirmed. Accredited Country Parks can display a certificate and the Scheme logo; in addition their details also appear on the Natural England website in a listing of Accredited Country Parks; The potential indirect benefits are wide ranging; for example, visitors may become more confident that the essential facilities expected of a Country Park are present, which may influence their choices about where to visit. For site managers, having achieved the standard or having identified improvements necessary to achieve it might also strengthen their case for resources to politicians and funding partners.

Application to the Scheme is not limited to sites calling themselves country parks; it is open to any site offering the same services and facilities, even if a sites primary function is different. The Scheme is complementary to other greenspace quality standards such as the Green Flag Award with site managers encouraged to apply for both standards.

For more details of the Scheme visit the Natural England website via : <http://bit.ly/CountryParks>

If you're heading out into the countryside to find out if your destination is accredited view the list online via: <http://bit.ly/AccreditedParks>



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Technical:

The Environment Tools Directory provides a comprehensive listing of over 350 environmental accounting tools used by environmental professionals across many sectors. Including carbon footprinting, life cycle assessment, climate change adaptation planning and many more types of software tool. It is FREE to search, rate, review and add new tools. Go to www.environmenttools.co.uk

AditForm enables you to design your own recording form on your PC and then transfer it to your handheld computer for gathering data in the field. Data from several different users can be brought together on your desktop for reporting, graphing, mapping etc. See <http://www.aditsite.co.uk/content9.htm> for details

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Life of a Ranger



The Greensand Trust

Bob Holland is the Senior Ranger at The Greensand Trust (GST), an independent environmental charity. The Trust was formed in 1999 to conserve and promote the distinctive landscape, wildlife and history of the Greensand Ridge and the wider surrounding

area in Bedfordshire. The Trust engages and influences at many different levels of the community, councils, and private land owners to deliver its objectives of improving access, understanding and enjoyment for the benefit of everyone, through environmental partnership.

The Trust is unusual in that it has no members and therefore raises funds via grants, contracts, donations and bequests. Working in partnerships, it presently operates at 42 sites and, whilst land ownership is not a priority, it owns over 600 acres. When an important site is threatened the Trust will, if feasible, step in to secure its future.

Bob had worked for 33 years with BT, rising to a fairly senior position. He says, "At 50 it was time to move on; all I knew was that I wanted to work outside, like a lot of people in my position. Not quite knowing what I wanted to do, I took advice from 'naturenet' and I volunteered for the National Trust and the Greensand Trust. I started volunteering in 2005, to gain experience and get a feel for what I wanted to do." After volunteering with the Trust he was taken on as a seasonal Ranger and then retained as a part-time Ranger (2 to 3 days a week), whilst completing a foundation degree course in Land Management and Conservation. He became a full-time Ranger in 2008 and is now the Senior Ranger for the Trust, reaching the post fairly rapidly, mainly due to management and people skills.

Bob is part of the Land Management (Ranger Service) team operating out of two offices. He, along with his team of 6 rangers and 2 auxiliary staff, work a 7.5 hour day, 5 days a week out of 7; working about 3 weekend days a month, weekend duties being shared out on a rota. In addition there are 90 volunteers in 3 main teams and the Trust supports 7 Friends groups on behalf of local councils, carrying out environmental and maintenance tasks at local green spaces and parks. As Senior Ranger the main responsibility is the smooth and efficient running of the Land Management (Ranger Service) team. Bob says, "My time is allocated about 50% to managing the Ranger team of which 30% is supporting the individual rangers,

training, H&S, legislation, writing bids and carrying out project management. The other 20% is administration, i.e. timesheets, finance, ordering, writing reports and, negotiating contracts. Having a part-time Administration Assistant allows me the other 50% of my time to get out Rangering". He also manages five sites, ranging from urban Parks to arable farmland Nature Reserves. This, he says, "keeps my feet on the ground and in touch with the issues the rest of the team face." The work varies from carrying out site checks, litter picking, managing grazing and carrying out conservation / management work with volunteer groups and engaging the public, which includes providing support for the Education and Awareness team events held at the sites.

There are always ongoing projects, for example last year, following a successful grant application, Kidney Wood on the outskirts of Luton was the focus of a restoration project with the aim of encouraging natural play. Involving the community as much as possible to carry out the work, woodland boundary hedges were laid and a circular path was cleared, on which two "Play Glades" were opened. A large ride was cut through the wood to encourage butterflies. 54 GST volunteers and local people were involved in the project. Bob returned to the wood recently and was pleased to see the paths developing and dens built in the glades, as well as a good variety of butterflies and dragonflies along the ride.

Like all jobs, there are things that make your heart sink, Bob says, "I guess like most Rangers, inconsiderate people, like a minority of dog owners who let their dogs foul the open spaces; or worse throw dog poo bags into the bushes (I never understand this one). The highlight must be receiving a 'thank you' from a visitor to one of our sites, or on a guided walk." He adds, "I think a Countryside Ranger's job is possibly the best job I have ever done. In only 6 years I can see that there is increasing pressure on Rangers, especially in balancing the needs of various users, whilst also protecting and enhancing the biodiversity value and heritage of sites." Like many in the sector, he is a little apprehensive for what the future holds; balancing 'austerity measures' of local government spending cuts with the developing ideas of 'the Big Community' which could create more work.

At the same time, visitor numbers to parks and the countryside are rising and there is more pressure on the fabric of the countryside. Rangers are going to be under more pressure to manage these volumes whilst protecting wildlife and habitats with, in all likelihood, fewer resources. Like many, Bob doesn't want to see rangering developing into a form of park keeping with more emphasis on managing the public than the countryside and wildlife, which would take away the magic of the job, and the environment, might suffer as vital habitats are lost.

Bob has one final word of advice for budding rangers, "Go to the 'naturenet' website – it's all true. If you want to become a Senior Ranger, I would suggest that management and leadership training, and the ability to compromise on your terms, are essential, together with a cool head. You need to be good with your computer and numbers. And if you can get an Administration Assistant you have cracked it!"

www.greensandtrust.org



photo online

Grants:

Women & Work - £450 Funding Training

The Women & Work Programme, Sector Pathways Initiative from Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environment & land-based industries are pleased to launch the next phase of funding.

To be eligible you must be a women & work within one of the following sectors: Aquaculture, Agricultural, Fencing, Fisheries Management, Farriery, Game & Wildlife Management, Land-based Engineering, Horticulture, Landscape, Trees & Timber, & Environmental Conservation industries. As part of the criteria you will need access to a mentor for 15 hours & attend 15 hours of training.

Lantra Skills Coach, Angela Kimberley brings you the opportunity to apply for a £450 grant when you spend a minimum of £650 on training between April 2010 & January 2011. For more information go to

<http://www.angelakimberley.co.uk/women-and-work/>

Countryside Ranger exploits during the darker months

It is often said there is no such thing as a typical day for a countryside ranger or even a typical season. Perhaps it's winter which throws up the most unusual and difficult tasks.



Glasgow's Countryside Rangers have been involved in a number of out of the ordinary winter-time projects. They have assisted the Clyde Ringing Group with the capture and ringing of tufted ducks and mute and Whooper swans in the Eastend of Glasgow. Last winter they rescued over a dozen swans from one Loch alone, left injured or weak due to the uncharacteristically harsh conditions which also required that additional grain was fed to the migrant birds including hundreds of Greylags, mutes, whooper's and a whole host of ducks.

Bad weather can have its pluses too allowing the Rangers to negotiate a very frozen Loch to reach an island which gave them their 1st chance of counting heron nests during the winter months. A task frequently requested but never really possible other than in the frozen chill of a deep winter.

One cold November in North Eastern England found two Rangers staking out a large plantation of Sitka spruce and Lodgepole pine trees within a designated SSSI for over a month alongside the police and staff

from the local authority as large numbers of trees were disappearing overnight, presumably destined to brighten up the living rooms of local folk over the festive period.

John Parker, Countryside Ranger says, "There really isn't a 'typical' day or season in the life of a Countryside Ranger and for most of us it's just another day out of the office."

John Parker, Countryside Ranger, Glasgow City Council

www.glasgow.gov.uk

Winter 2009/10 saw **Derbyshire County Council's Countryside Service** with a new job to do.

Plans had already been put in place with Emergency Planning and Adult Care services to deal with extreme weather conditions, and smaller operations had taken place in previous years. This year, though was the biggest test faced by the Countryside Service in its 40 year history. The operation covered the whole of the county, including the Peak District National Park. Many of the Peak District villages were virtually closed off to normal vehicles. At times like this you realise just how remote the upland farms can be, and just how vulnerable people can be.

The right vehicles and training came in handy. We have a fleet of 20 well equipped 4x4 vehicles. Landrovers proved to be by far the best. Our team are Landrover Level 1 and 2 off road/recovery trained, winch trained, first aid trained, customer care trained, only occasionally wear underwear outside our trousers, and are, most importantly, enthusiastic – in short all round good eggs. Add to this the usual supportive families.

Because we ran the operation centrally we could co-ordinate resources ourselves and we were able to call staff from throughout the county so that no one team bore the brunt. Also, there was a new element of community involvement and support. The Peak 4x4 Response group were brought in to transport essential call centre and adult care support, and assist the Police in difficult road situations. A great opportunity to build links with an important user group in this area.

From the first on Christmas Eve to the last on 3 Feb, we had 160 shouts, used 42 drivers, drove 9500 miles and made 3000 visits.

All the corporate budgets couldn't buy the experience we've had in terms of team building, training, and developing community appreciation. We had people waving (more fingers than usual), and knocking on vehicle windows to tell us of their appreciation (better than asking us when we're going to fix the road). Word soon got round that their village, street and vulnerable neighbours were being helped by Rangers. We even made local TV and radio.

What sticks in the memory?

- The Ranger who appeared in a wedding video – don't ask.
- Pulling a Tesco (other supermarkets are available) home delivery van ¼ mile, and the helpful man who persisted in putting grit behind, rather than in front of the wheels. Yes, a Landrover really can pull 3½ tonnes uphill on sheet ice.
- We often had several carers on board to do multiple calls. One lovely old lady provided chocolate because "that nice Ranger will need it to handle 4 women".
- 9.30 p.m. in a raging blizzard - explaining to the Bentley driver who had blocked the road that, no matter how important he was, perhaps he should give way to the snowplough so we might all get home.
- The walls of snow higher than the vehicle, and the speed with which the road conditions would change.
- The good humour of the social services staff we carried. Who of us would do their job?

We demonstrated that not only we can do stuff with our 4x4's and training, but also that we have the skills to assist and contribute to major operations. We're all in this job to make a difference, but it's not often that we can do it on such a scale and in such an immediate and direct way.

Paul Finn, Head Ranger NW, Derbyshire County Council

www.derbyshire.gov.uk

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The Future of Countryside Management?

WHAT ABOUT THEM?

In the new Government, roughly a third of all MPs are taking seats in Westminster for the first time. Countryside and open space practitioners do not know the views of these MPs on issues that matter to countryside staff or which areas they believe should be centrally controlled and which left to those 'on the ground'. Further complicating matters is the largest budget deficit since the Second World War affecting ministers' ability to use public funding to implement policy.

We will need more champions in Parliament in the fight for available budgets and we must do all we can to identify and build good relations with the new generation of champions. An administration with a comfortable majority, as recently, can be confident in policy decisions; however this will change with the new coalition

Government where a single vote could sway the result. Expect more diverse, vibrant debate around issues including those affecting us, resulting in less firm policy making.

WHAT ABOUT ME?

Local authorities have a duty to ensure due regard to the conservation of biodiversity (NERC Act 2006) and provide a network of green spaces in order to promote sustainability (Planning Policy Statement 12). There is also a growing body of evidence proving that easy access to quality green space can bring economic and personal benefits. Thanks to champions such as CabeSpace and Natural England our profile has never been higher and yet countryside staff are seeing budgets, and whole services, being cut. So where do we go from here?

Building networks of MPs supporting our key issues needs networking and representation at regional and preferably national level among countryside managers. The sector is already sub divided both geographically and subjectively with a variety of professional organisations. Many specialists practice countryside management but might not relish calling it such. One organisation to represent all these interests would seem to be a way to a rosier future but requires a strong will to unite under one banner.

Already turnout on CMA training and study days is quite low. Is this reflective of employers being less prepared to release staff? If training is becoming more piecemeal it does not bode well for the future. The pressures on countryside staff mean that funding and time for continuing professional development is continually squeezed. In many cases employers only provide training to meet their legal requirements. It is possible that more countryside management delivery could be outsourced. Government will argue for greater localism in service delivery. Trusts to run parks and open spaces have been proposed (of course they already exist) but they still need funding. Volunteers play a key role bringing passion, commitment and knowledge. Asking them to deal with the complex and sometimes less enjoyable day to day issues is another matter. Seeing volunteering as a solution without understanding that supporting volunteers and paying their expenses could cost organisations as much as the minimum wage and ultimately negatively impact green space quality.

To continue at current levels countryside managers will need to continue to innovate and promote the benefits and political fit of their services. It seems likely that those with or able to access commercial skills will be more viable (essentially those who are more effective and professional).

One thing is for certain. The future of countryside management lies in the hands of all those who practice it.

Neil Lister, CMA

www.countrysidemanagement.org.uk



photo online

Short Training courses in 2010, all one day unless otherwise specified.

- 3 Sept Introduction to Woodland Management, 3 days in Powys at the Centre for Alternative Technology,
Contact: www.cat.org.uk/shortcourses
- 7 Sept Restoring a lowland river with Flora Locale in Hungerford. Contact: 01672 515723,
info@floralocale.org, www.floralocale.org
- 15 Sept The End of Tradition? the biggest threat to biodiversity in the 21st Century. 3 days in Sheffield with
Hallam Environment Consultants. Contact: info@hallamec.plus.com, www.ukeconet.co.uk
- 18 Sept Ponds and Wetlands over 2 days at Jupiter Wildlife Centre, Grangemouth with BTCV Scotland.
Contact: 01786 479697, www.btcv.org/scotland
- 28 Sept Advanced course for Pond Makers in Mold with Pond Conservation. Contact: 01865 483249,
jofever@pondconservation.org.uk, www.pondconservation.org.uk
- 19 Oct Sustainable Reedbed Management with RSPB in Somerset Contact: 01767 693308, conservation-advice@rspb.org.uk, www.rspb.org.uk
- 23 Oct Woodland Boundaries & Trackways in Longshaw with Hallam Environment Consultants. Contact:
info@hallamec.plus.com, www.ukeconet.co.uk
- 23 Oct OCN Level 3 Woodland Ride Management, 2 days in Coalbrookdale, Telford, The Small Woods
Association, Contact: , 07964 961556, groundsforconservation@hotmail.com, www.smallwoods.org.uk
- 13 Nov Creating an Orchard in Woodbridge, with Suffolk Wildlife Trust. Contact: 01473 892430 / 890089,
wildlearning@suffolkwildlifetrust.org, www.suffolkwildlifetrust.org
- 18 Nov Peatland Restoration in Gartcosh, North Lanarkshire, with IEEM. Contact: 01962 868626,
workshops@ieem.net, <http://www.ieem.net/workshops.asp>
- 19 November Practical Woodland Management using Hand Tools in Flimwell, East Sussex, with Plumpton
College, Contact: , 01273 892052, pd@plumpton.ac.uk, www.woodnet.org.uk/events

And don't forget to have a look at the Training Section of countryside-jobs.com which has further details for many of these courses and providers plus lots more...

The CJS team would like to thank everyone who has contributed adverts, articles and information for this CJS Focus publication. Next edition will feature Wildlife, published 22/11/10.