

NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

AUTHORITY MEETING – 29 JANUARY 2009

RANGER SERVICES IN THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

Report by: Stephen Trotter, Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development

Summary:

This report is about how ranger services can contribute to the delivery of national park purposes and the potential role of the Authority in ensuring that delivery. It summarises the key issues, compares the circumstances of the New Forest with other national parks and presents options for consideration.

From the earliest days of preparing for the creation of a New Forest National Park, there has been a continuing debate as to whether a new ranger service was required for the better delivery of National Park purposes on the ground.

This assessment concludes that existing ranger services perform an excellent job for their employers but that the twin purposes of the National Park are not necessarily being delivered in a comprehensive manner that would fully meet the Authority's needs or aspirations. The key question for the Authority is whether existing providers can be expected to adapt their approach or whether the Authority needs to employ its own rangers either directly or in partnership to fill the gaps in provision to help deliver national park purposes and raise the profile of the National Park.

Resources and Corporate Plan:

Resources required for delivery depend on the chosen approach and will be assessed in later reports. This report addresses a broad range of objectives in the Corporate Plan including C1 – 7; U1-6 and SE1.

Recommendations: To

- 1. note the background assessment;**
- 2. approve, in principle, the proposal for the Authority to become more directly involved in the coordination and provision of ranger services in the National Park;**
- 3. authorise the Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development to develop detailed proposals for a small National Park ranger team, and prepare a paper for approval by Resources and Performance Committee, outlining the resources required.**

Papers:

- NFNPA 286/09** Cover paper
- NFNPA 286/09 Annex 1:** Results of a questionnaire study by the New Forest National Park Preparations Group, 2005
- NFNPA 286/09 Annex 2:** A comparison of ranger services in UK National Parks
- NFNPA 286/09 Annex 3:** Existing Ranger Provision in the New Forest

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RANGER SERVICES IN THE NEW FOREST NATIONAL PARK

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The first UK national park ranger service was established in 1954 by the Peak District National Park Joint Planning Board. Many National Parks, Local Authorities and other organisations have since employed countryside ranger services to meet the needs of their areas – particularly where there are problems and opportunities presented by high levels of visitor pressure in sensitive landscapes and a need for careful resource management.
- 1.2 Rangers pursue a broad range of duties in overseeing the care of the countryside, managing visitors and recreation pressures and maintaining good relations with farmers, landowners and local communities. Other land owners and non-governmental organisations such as the National Trust also utilise rangers and wardens to ensure hands on estate management, interpretation and good communication with visitors and local people.
- 1.3 From the earliest days of preparing for the creation of a New Forest National Park, there has been a continuing debate as to whether a new ranger service was required for the better delivery of National Park purposes on the ground.
- 1.4 In December 2003, the New Forest Committee considered and agreed proposals for coordinating ranger services across the proposed New Forest National Park although these were not implemented at the time. It was suggested that the Committee should provide support and assistance to help improve the coordination and joint working of the countryside ranger services provided by the Forestry Commission, National Trust and Hampshire County Council.
- 1.5 In January 2005, the New Forest National Park Preparations Group undertook some research and preparatory work on ranger services prior to the establishment of the National Park. Part of this work involved a survey of the role of rangers in other national parks and the information from this questionnaire, which remains largely valid, is provided in **Annex 1** as background information.
- 1.6 This paper summaries the key issues for the New Forest National Park by describing:
 - ranger services in other national parks
 - the role of a national park ranger

- existing ranger services in the New Forest
- Authority involvement in ranger services to date,

and then:

- evaluating current provision
- assessing and extent to which it delivers national park purposes
- analysing options for Authority involvement.

2 Ranger services in other national parks

- 2.1 Ranger services are generally well established in the other UK national parks. With the exception of the Cairngorms, all of the UK national park authorities employ their own ranger services.
- 2.2 Whilst each national park authority seems to value and recognise the importance of ranger services for their National Park and in delivering their purposes, there is some variation in the way these services are organised. This generally reflects differences in local circumstances.
- 2.3 **Annex 2** provides a comparison of ranger service provision in other National Parks.
- 2.4 Some of the existing national park authorities, especially the Peak District, were leaders in the development of the UK countryside ranger function during the 1950s – 1980s. The established National Parks have benefited greatly from the way in which their ranger services have been designed in an holistic way, having been built around their purposes and needs from the start. This reflects the fact that they were the first organisations to establish new services in their areas with few if any other players. Any organisations that have since developed their own ranger presence in these areas have had to design their provision around the gaps in existing National Park services.
- 2.5 In contrast, the National Park Authority is the latest entrant to the New Forest scene. Ranger service development has already taken place to some degree in the New Forest and several services are now well established and relatively settled in their respective niches. Current ranger roles and functions have not been designed with the National Park in mind and so the New Forest starts from a very different position from that of other UK national parks.
- 2.6 As a late entrant, the Authority will either have to design its provision around the gaps in coverage and / or exert influence over how others deliver their services. There is no analogous model for the Authority to consider although there is good evidence to show how a ranger service might benefit the Park and the Authority. Our circumstances are unique and the approach is ours to develop: there is no off-the-shelf solution.

- 2.7 The experience of the Cairngorms National Park Authority is closest to that of the New Forest situation. There thirteen ranger services were already operating in the Cairngorms when the area became a National Park. The National Park Authority has therefore decided not to employ its own rangers directly. However it plays a key role because a large proportion of the funding for ranger services is provided by Scottish Natural Heritage and is now channelled through the National Park Authority. So the Authority has a degree of influence over the delivery of ranger services in the Park which would not be possible in the New Forest.

3 The role of a national park ranger

- 3.1 National park ranger services are directly involved in the practical implementation and delivery of the twin purposes and socio-economic duty.
- 3.2 At a national and international level, the role of rangers in protected landscapes has been defined and is summarised below

The following principles (known as the Losehill principles) were adopted by the International Ranger Federation at the Second World Congress of Rangers in 1997.

All Rangers should:

1. Have an awareness of international / national designations and of wider environmental ethics and sustainable resource management, including the history of national parks and other protected areas, and the development of rangers in such areas.
2. Have good communication skills, including an awareness of the variety of techniques for communicating messages, information and values.
3. Understand the dynamics of, and relationships between local landscape, biodiversity and culture, and the resulting conflicts of use.
4. Have the knowledge and ability to deal with visitor safety and countryside emergencies.
5. Have the ability to survey, monitor and report on the natural resource, as the 'eyes and ears' of the organisation.
6. Have knowledge of habitat and facility management techniques with skills in such techniques as an optional specialism.

The Peak District National Park Authority (2005) has further summarised the objectives for their ranger service as follows:

- 1 Actively provide a channel of communication between the Authority, local residents, visitors, partner organisations and the fabric of the Park.
- 2 Promote the understanding, awareness and enjoyment of the Park by visitors and local residents.
- 3 Endeavour to resolve problems resulting from visitor use affecting local residents and / or the fabric of the Park.
- 4 Participate in the growth of community awareness of wider environmental issues and the encouragement of sustainable management.
- 5 To provide protection for the National Park, its communities and visitors as appropriate to National Park purposes, in collaboration with other relevant organisations.

4 Existing ranger services in the New Forest

4.1 Rangers, wardens and keepers are employed by several organisations in the National Park (see **Annex 3** for details). The functions and key activities undertaken by these staff vary, depending on the circumstances and requirements of their employer. However, most tend to be:

- site or area based - mostly working on land owned by their employer
- concerned with delivering their organisation's aims and safeguarding its interests - particularly in relation to how visitors and local people understand and interact with the site and its management
- a key part of their employer's local public relations strategy, in terms of providing a public face to their organisation in the field - and they are normally clearly identifiable with a 'uniform' and the organisation's logo
- involved with delivering educational, interpretative and recreational activities and events that promote their employer's key messages – especially through positive activities and events that influence behaviour and by enhancing the enjoyment and understanding of both the place and the organisation
- the eyes and ears of their organisation on the ground sometimes with a limited role in compliance and enforcement
- involved with volunteers

- responsible for other practical duties such as facility maintenance (litter picking, car park and toilet maintenance), habitat and species conservation management and maintaining access infrastructure.
- 4.2 The balance of tasks varies considerably between different jobs and organisations. Non-ranger staff will also undertake a significant amount of estate maintenance and management. The terms ranger and warden are often used interchangeably for similar jobs by different organisations – although the latter job title tends to imply that the post holder undertakes a greater proportion of practical estate work than other roles with more of an emphasis on working with people.
- 4.3 The role of New Forest Keeper dates back to William the Conqueror's time, and it could be argued that this function has been the historic equivalent of the national park ranger since the coming of the car and modern recreational use of the area. Forestry Commission Keepers are predominantly concerned with natural resource protection and management but their work also involves an element of core 'rangering' duties and public liaison.
- 4.4 Existing provision has developed according to the local needs of individual organisations rather than for the strategic requirements of the New Forest. It does not necessarily reflect the new needs and circumstances of the National Park as a whole, eg promoting the special qualities and National Park messages.
- 4.5 Recent discussions with the main organisations that already employ ranger services in the New Forest (i.e. the Forestry Commission, Hampshire County Council and The National Trust) reveal that they are very satisfied with the outcomes and success of their current activities. They have also indicated that they would:
- like to expand the capacity of their services if additional resources were available;
 - be keen to work closely with the Authority to coordinate existing services more effectively. There is a view amongst some that there could be benefits if all rangers in the National Park worked under the same 'brand' image and were badged as a New Forest Ranger Service, for example, to reduce current confusion with the public. In practice, however, this could be difficult to achieve alongside each organisation's need to maintain its public identity and profile and some would find it hard to participate;
 - be keen to work jointly in many areas and help to deliver National Park messages but that there is probably a limit to the extent to which they can do this. It is unlikely to be a realistic option completely to integrate their services with the National Park Authority (at least in the short term) because they still have their own organisational identity, profile, and objectives to achieve;

- have reservations about having too many rangers on the ground. There is a balance to be found between providing an adequate presence and service where needed and maintaining the tranquillity and freedoms that are so highly valued in the New Forest. There is a risk that additional staff could be seen as an 'Authority police force' albeit this is far from their intended role and function;
- prefer the Authority to address the gaps rather than duplicate services – and there is a strong feeling amongst partners that there are some clear gaps that the Authority is well placed to meet;
- continue their strong commitment to partnership working. Shared posts are generally welcome but should be based on clear lines of responsibility and genuine partnership. There is scope for some jointly funded posts and potential for developing partnership projects on specific issues.

5 The Authority's involvement with ranger services to date

5.1 The Authority has trialled three different approaches with key partners over the last two years to explore the scope for delivering some of the National Park's needs and objectives, with and through others.

5.2 The three experimental partnership projects were:

Forestry Commission

- the Waterside Ranger project ranger post (funded through the Sustainable Development Fund and with sponsorship by Exxon Mobil) in association with and led by the Forestry Commission. This ranger has been working successfully in local communities to improve the way in which certain groups make use of the National Park and the Crown Lands on the edge of the Waterside and to address anti-social behaviour issues;

National Trust

- a community ranger post jointly funded by the Authority and the National Trust in the north of the National Park – a one year trial which has now ended. This post worked to engage with local communities in and around National Trust properties in the New Forest;

Hampshire County Council

- a coastal ranger post based at Lepe Country Park and jointly funded with Hampshire County Council for an initial period of six months (and extended for 2009). This post developed successfully a range of interpretative activities and events to improve the levels of understanding and enjoyment of visitors to the coast.

- 5.3 Additionally the Authority employed its own Mobile Unit Ranger for the period between August and December 2008. This officer managed the Mobile Information Unit – a project which has provided the Authority with its own visible presence for visitors out and about in the Park. The Unit has proved to be very successful: receiving 3660 visitors over the period between August 15 and 23 November 2008. In total, the Unit was used 48 times and worked with 13 different organisations including local businesses and charities.
- 5.4 A great deal has been learnt from these different approaches: some excellent outcomes and successful partnership working has been achieved. Each of the four main external partners involved with these projects is keen to continue the relationship with the Authority and continue the joint approach in future, depending on future funding.
- 5.5 There are areas for ongoing discussion and development particularly about which partner is best placed to host these joint posts. If the Authority is particularly interested in achieving its own profile and outcomes, the best option is often for it to be the lead organisation, where possible. Our partners are similarly keen to host the posts, for the same reasons.

6 Evaluation of current provision

- 6.1 Following a series of discussions with partner organisations and officers, a summary of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of current ranger services is presented below.

SWOT analysis of ranger services in the National Park

Strengths:	Weaknesses:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong commitment to the role of rangers in those organisations that employ them ▪ Some excellent examples of good practice in relation to countryside management, interpretation and education ▪ A high level of activity on the Crown Lands and a strong performance in terms of events, information provision and addressing management and communication issues ▪ One ranger service for the Crown Lands is simpler for the public ▪ Good level of volunteer ranger support in the Forestry Commission with circa 40 - 50 volunteers ▪ Most organisations with ranger services have very similar aims and objectives for the New Forest ▪ Some good educational and interpretation work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some but not enough coordination of ranger services, events, activities, messages and the approach across land ownership boundaries ▪ Minimal integration of New Forest services with surrounding conurbations ▪ Lack of a single style of branding for New Forest rangers irrespective of the employing organisation – leads to confusion for the public ▪ Large areas of the National Park are not covered by a ranger service – or are only thinly covered by staff – so there is an uneven approach in different areas; the main gaps include the enclosed landscape, and around 50% of the coast ▪ There are major functional gaps - some issues are not adequately covered by existing services such as outreach and promoting social inclusion ▪ Only partial involvement of local people

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Strong programme of public events ▪ Some good facilitation and consultation work takes place 	<p>and visitors in the stewardship of the New Forest – past approaches have polarised and entrenched opinion on several key issues such as dog issues, people and cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Perception by some local people that ranger services are ineffective at promoting behavioural messages to the visiting public ▪ Low profile and poor / variable promotion of the National Park and National Park messages ▪ Only limited success in getting information and messages across to the public – especially about behaviour
<p>Opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To deliver more work on the ground in partnership for mutual benefit and coordinate provision across the National Park - especially of targeted events and activities – and special projects – and have a more visible Authority profile ▪ To agree and disseminate a common approach to key messages / approach to behavioural issues ▪ To brand all rangers as ‘New Forest National Park Rangers’ and reduce confusion for the public ▪ To improve the experience of visitors and local people ▪ To find shared and common solutions to conflict issues across different land ownerships ▪ To complete the process of agreeing single codes of practice and deliver clear advice for visitors ▪ To develop a Park wide volunteer service and greater involvement of people in the Park’s management and stewardship ▪ To coordinate a response to future challenges such as resilience to climate change and wild fires ▪ To share limited resources for mutual benefit ▪ To remove the barriers to certain groups enjoying and experiencing the National Park ▪ Greater sense of ownership of National Park by local people ▪ Tangible outreach projects which promote the value of the Park to all 	<p>Threats:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Rangers and their organisations tend to be ‘territorial’ in their approach and focus exclusively on their own sites ▪ Most employers employ rangers for their own reasons and often have their own specific brand image, presence, visibility, tasks and profile to promote or defend ▪ A common National Park approach might undermine the distinctive approach taken by different land owners ▪ Funding for new areas of activity may be difficult to identify ▪ Poor relationships between some organisations and some sections of local communities may be a threat and opportunity ▪ polarisation between some interest groups in the New Forest

Gaps in current provision in relation to the delivery of National Park purposes

6.2 The evaluation of existing provision, discussions with partner organisations and previous reviews in the New Forest, suggests that there are several gaps in the coverage of current services. These gaps can be grouped under three main headings:

- geographical extent
- functional activity
- capacity levels.

Gaps in geographical extent

6.3 Three key gaps have been identified:

- Virtually none of the **enclosed landscape** or the **large private estates** is covered by a ranger service. Where there are currently visitor issues, a ranger presence for liaison and coordination could be effective. Rangers could also provide additional resource to help manage access issues, in partnership with the County Councils for example, in terms of small scale infrastructure maintenance and development on rights of way and permissive routes. It is critical to work at the invitation of landowners as a supportive resource or to focus on strategic issues.
- The **villages** and **settlements** where there are opportunities for rangers to work with people in the villages to build relationships between the National Park Authority and local communities. This could be linked to supporting the implementation of community and parish plans and a range of community groups.
- Much of the **coast** and its immediate hinterland has minimal or no coverage. With the likely introduction of coastal access, this is likely to be a key area where a Ranger Service could include implementation work through liaison, practical tasks and information provision.

Gaps in functional activity

6.4 There is **inadequate coordination** of existing ranger services and their activities, for example:

- events
- visitor management across the National Park
- key messages and their presentation – awareness of the importance of the New Forest landscape
- integration of visitor and local interests.

- 6.5 **Outreach work** to encourage excluded groups both within the National Park and beyond the boundary (Southampton / Waterside / Bournemouth), to enjoy the benefits of the National Park, through relationship building, identifying and addressing barriers to access.
- 6.6 A **ground force focused on working with local communities** to improve communications with local communities and user / interest groups.
- 6.7 **Supporting the Authority's second purpose activities** by improving the service for the public across the whole National Park for the benefit of the New Forest. Complementing existing programmes through increased capacity to organise and deliver events and activities that focus on National Park messages supported by material e.g. web pages, leaflets, walking guides.
- 6.8 **Problem solving and trouble shooting** by addressing areas of conflict in the National Park through a consensus building approach using the facilitation skills of rangers. Working to resolve identified problems through collaboration with interest and user groups, and promulgating behavioural messages for example on: managing visitors and traffic at drifts, animal accidents, feeding of ponies, litter, dog issues, off road cycling, off-road parking issues, wildfire campaigns, coordination of Ragwort control campaigns, fungi collecting, developing New Forest wide codes of conduct.

Capacity levels

- 6.9 Existing ranger services are **thin on the ground** – especially at peak periods to deal with visitor management across the Park. Several organisations would like to increase their capacity to interact with the public by having more rangers at key times.
- 6.10 Providing **more capacity to deliver healthy walks**; working more closely with the Primary Care Trust, Hampshire County Council, New Forest District Council and Forestry Commission to co-ordinate, develop and deliver healthy walks and the materials to support them.
- 6.11 Increasing the **volume of volunteering activity** and level of involvement and participation by the public in caring for the countryside through enhanced opportunities for volunteering. In particular supporting those groups currently excluded both within and outside the National Park boundary e.g. black and minority ethnic groups / young people.
- 6.12 **Capacity to deliver the Recreation Management Strategy and elements of the National Park Plan** (if agreed) for example:
- developing a core path network
 - developing an improved cycle network
 - improving communication of behavioural messages
 - monitoring recreational impacts.

7. Is current ranger service provision fully delivering national park purposes; if not what is required?

7.1 The current provision of ranger services in the Forest appears to be reasonably stable. Ranger services are likely to continue as they are, independently meeting their employer's needs for the foreseeable future, irrespective of whether the Authority becomes actively involved or not. Most employers seem happy with their services and some have modest development plans.

7.2 Because the objectives of the existing ranger services are similar to those of the National Park, current activity contributes indirectly to national park purposes in the areas of accessibility, some conservation management, visitor management and events/behavioural messaging. These activities do not however have a National Park focus and the evaluation in Section 6 has revealed gaps in geographical coverage, in some types of activity that arise from national park purposes and in delivery of the Authority's priorities, objectives and policies for the National Park. Capacity to deliver those priorities, objectives and policies will be critical in particular to delivery of the National Park Plan and Recreation Management Strategy.

7.3 Existing providers of ranger services are unlikely to re-orientate the focus of their services significantly to address these gaps and support delivery of national park purposes for operational and resource reasons, while recognising the need and potential benefits for the National Park and Authority.

7.4 The conclusion is therefore that while partnership working has proved very worthwhile and has achieved considerable success within the limited focus of the joint posts, the stronger delivery of national park purposes would require the Authority to:

- secure greater control and influence over the objectives and outcomes of ranger provision, and
- increase the overall level of resources for ranger services.

8 Objectives and principles for Authority involvement in ranger services

8.1 Proposed objectives for enhanced Authority involvement would be:

- 1 To raise awareness of the opportunities for people to enjoy the National Park and promote the understanding and stewardship of the special qualities
- 2 To work with partners to resolve problems resulting from use affecting local residents and / or the fabric of the Park

- 3 To improve the level of engagement and involvement of people with the National Park through volunteering and active involvement with land management and Forest issues
- 4 To enhance the profile of the New Forest National Park Authority and other delivery organisations by providing opportunities for engagement, liaison and communication between the Authority and local communities living in the National Park and visitors
- 5 To help implement the Recreation Management Strategy and relevant parts of the National Park Plan and daughter documents, in partnership with others.

8.2 The criteria or principles governing any extension of the Authority's involvement would be to:

- avoid duplication with existing services (where they are adequately resourced and of a high standard) only filling gaps in coverage where there is a clear and demonstrable need for intervention
- demonstrate clear added value above and beyond the existing services
- demonstrate clear delivery of National Park Authority objectives and policies with outcomes that others are either not resourced nor best placed to deliver
- recognise the need to build the profile of the National Park and the National Park Authority
- provide opportunities for better two way communication with local communities and user groups
- deliver key National Park messages
- ensure an element of face-to-face contact and a direct resource of dedicated staff at the core of activity.

9 Options for the Authority's involvement

9.1 In practical terms, should the Authority choose to become more actively involved in provision of ranger services for the reasons given in the preceding sections, but primarily to strengthen the delivery of national park purposes, there are two main alternatives, assuming to 'do nothing' is not considered appropriate. The advantages and disadvantages are set out below. No Authority resources have yet been identified for either option.

Option 1: Pay others to deliver ranger services on the Authority's behalf via service level agreements or similar mechanisms

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Encourages and supports other organisations to deliver on the Authority's behalf ▪ Buys some influence and good will with partners ▪ Builds on existing structures and enables them to develop and evolve their roles ▪ Could lead to development of a unified New Forest ranger brand ▪ Both Forestry Commission and Hampshire County Council would consider delivery of National Park ranger service under a Service Level Agreement if it was resourced ▪ The Forestry Commission is keen to operate beyond Crown Lands – and would particularly like to engage the surrounding conurbations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential reduction in the level of influence over the key messages and the way they are presented / delivered to the public – the Authority still not involved in direct delivery of services – runs the risk that partners will continue to do what they currently do and not embrace completely the Authority's needs ▪ Would be difficult to switch funding once committed with one organisation ▪ Limited opportunity to build the Authority's own profile and presence on the ground ▪ Limited scope for delivery of a wide range of Park-wide recreation management issues and problem resolution ▪ Would still require in-house expertise in a ranger role to manage and oversee the service level agreements ▪ Are partners ready for this option? Are relationships with the Authority yet at an appropriate level for this to succeed? Other organisations are unlikely to deliver the <i>Authority's</i> public relations messages on its behalf although they are keen to deliver New Forest <i>National Park</i> messages and will collaborate and work in partnership over issues of mutual interest

Option 2: A Hybrid: Directly employ a Head Ranger / Ranger Coordinator with a small ranger team and continue to participate in partnerships with others

9.2 This would build on and supplement the current limited partnership approach so as fully to develop ranger services across the Park. It could comprise:

- employing a Head Ranger / Coordinator
- continuing with two partnership posts

- employing an outreach officer
- expanding Mobile Unit delivery,

and as resources permit

- develop three Area Rangers

and would aim to achieve influence with partners through:

- partnership agreements
- involvement with shared projects, possibly involving small scale funding alongside training and other resources.

9.3 It would be necessary to commit officer time to agreeing an "operating framework" between the principal ranger services of the area as one way to mitigate the risks mentioned below. This would set out who was doing what and where, to avoid unnecessary duplication.

Pros	Cons
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Builds the Authority's profile and presence on the ground ▪ Engages directly with delivery of the second purpose ▪ Starts to fill the gaps identified in this review ▪ Offers the potential to meet the Authority's needs. ▪ Would enable a bespoke structure to be developed to reflect the particular circumstances of the New Forest 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Incurs some additional costs for the Authority but modest in comparison with other activities ▪ Does not immediately create a unified brand for the New Forest National Park Ranger Service but may lead to this in time ▪ Creates another ranger service which could add to public confusion and risks duplication ▪ Moves further away from creating a holistic service which all appear to agree is desirable

9.4 If the Authority selects Option 2, the Forestry Commission has commented that it would want to work even more closely with the Authority to ensure a co-ordinated approach to ranger services, which is welcomed.

Summary

9.5 Members are invited to consider:

- whether current ranger service provision across the National park provides sufficient delivery of national park purposes?
- if not, whether they would wish the Authority to take a stronger role?

- if yes, whether to proposed objectives, criteria and options for greater involvement are supported?
- 9.6 Officers have valued the positive approach to partnership work developed so far with key partners and the insights it has provided. However, officers are of the view that while the partnership work and the role of the other partners is very valuable in contributing to delivery of the two purposes, considerably more could *and should* be done and that, as the Authority responsible for ensuring delivery of national park purposes, the Authority has a clear role to play *itself* in contributing directly to ranger service provision in the National Park.

Recommendations: To

- 1. note the background assessment;**
- 2. approve, in principle, the proposal for the Authority to become more directly involved in the coordination and provision of ranger services in the National Park;**
- 3. authorise the Director of Conservation, Recreation and Sustainable Development to develop detailed proposals based on Section 2 of this report, and prepare a paper for approval by Resources and Performance Committee, outlining the resources required.**