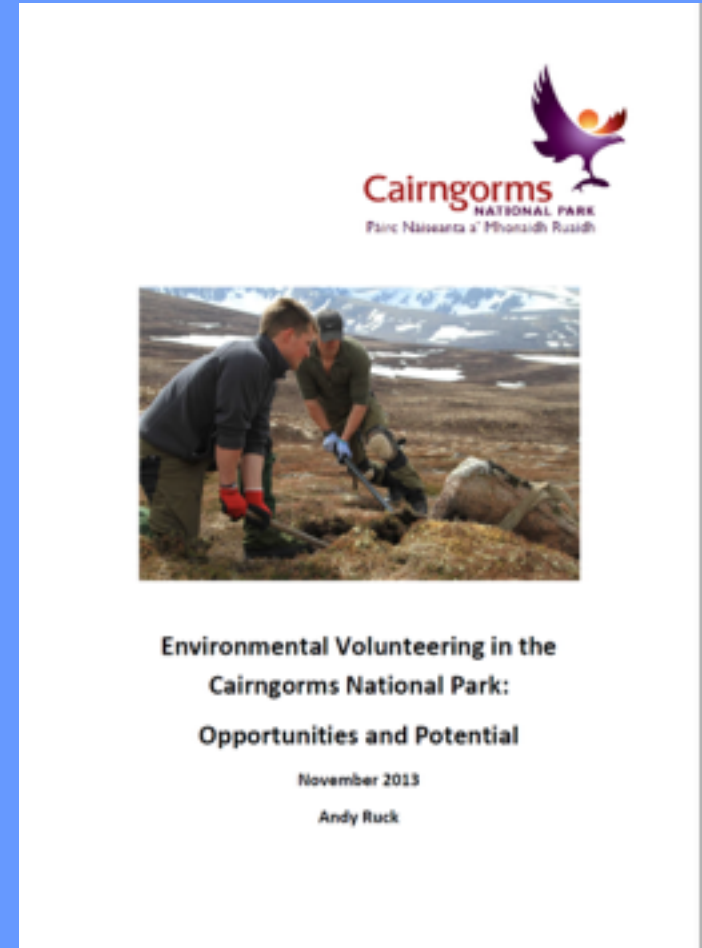


Environmental Volunteering in the Cairngorms National Park

- The report found that there are just over two thousand people involved in environmental volunteering in the National Park, across around twenty-five organisations.



Key findings

- Lack of time and resources in particular due to perceived time constraints created by health and safety/risk assessment considerations.
- A lack of organisations primarily requiring volunteers with specific skills.
- A prevalence of volunteers from outside the National Park volunteering on a short-term, residential basis.
- A lack of local volunteers and a difficulty in recruiting them.
- A correlation between population centres with organisations nearby offering environmental volunteering opportunities.
- A lack of environmental volunteering opportunities in Perth and Kinross.
- It was almost impossible to find accurate data on annual numbers of volunteers within each organisation.
- Most organisations had not made specific efforts to align their voluntary activities with the aims of CNPA or the CNAP, although in many cases their own aims are similar in practice.

Other significant findings

- A prevalence of ongoing projects suitable for individuals to become involved with, but also a significant number of organisations suitable for involving groups of volunteers for one-off, specific projects.
- Among organisations, the most common motivations for taking on volunteers were advocacy, the completion of large-scale tasks, and the provision of opportunities for those looking to pursue a career in conservation or ranger work.
- A prevalence of organisations focused on practical conservation tasks in their environmental volunteering opportunities. Other activities can mostly be categorised into wildlife recording and visitor engagement.
- A large proportion of volunteers are retired people in the 60+ age category. This reflects Europe-wide trends in environmental volunteering.

Recommendations

- An existing member of CNPA staff acting in a brokering role to direct potential volunteers to the organisations most suited to their interests and abilities.
- Development of a Park-wide system for organisations to collect accurate data on the annual numbers of volunteers they receive.
- Establishment of several large-scale, long-term projects on specific sites based on CNAP objectives that would be suitable for various levels of volunteer commitment.
- Establishment of community-based volunteer groups that would meet regularly to carry out voluntary projects.
- A team of Volunteer Rangers recruited, trained and managed by CNPA and operating at multiple sites.

CNPA

Corporate Plan 2015-18 – Conservation

Long term outcome from NPPP 2012-17

A special place for people and nature with natural and cultural heritage enhanced.

Key partners – FCS, SNH, SEPA.

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2013-18

Visitor Experience

Long term outcome from NPP 2012-17

People enjoying the Park through outstanding visitor and learning experiences.

Key partners – FCS, SNH, NHS.

Active Cairngorms Strategy 2015-20

Rural Development

Long term outcome from NPPP 2012-17

A sustainable economy supporting thriving businesses and communities.

Key partners – SNH, SEPA, Community Councils.

Biodiversity

SG Outcomes

12. We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.

Other national policy –
SBS 2020.
Land Use Strategy.

Health

SG Outcomes –

6. We live longer healthier lives.

Other national policy –

A More Active Scotland: Building a Legacy from the Commonwealth Games.
National Walking Strategy.

Community

SG Outcomes –

11. We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

Other national policy –

Community Empowerment Bill.
Land Reform Review

Model

Research and conversations with other national park authorities have highlighted a preferred model that has become common practice; a volunteer co-ordinator manages a core of Volunteer Rangers who assist with organising a wider group of Community Volunteers who commit varying amounts of time.

The model to be developed in the Cairngorms NP will not be based around a specific site or location but rather around local communities and the opportunities that have been identified through 3 different channels –

- Community Planning Process – (Community Empowerment Bill).
- Cairngorms Nature Action Plan – (Scottish Biodiversity Strategy 2020).
- Liaison with local landowners and estates – (Land Reform Review, Land Use Strategy).

This innovative model could be replicated in other parts of Scotland.

Next steps?

- Develop an environmental volunteering policy.
- Develop relevant and appropriate monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Produce a volunteer training and induction package.
- Develop a Volunteer Ranger scheme based around local communities.
 - Recruit Volunteer Rangers in partnership with Community Councils
 - Train Volunteer Rangers to a standard where they can supervise and co-ordinate community volunteering groups.
- Conduct Community environmental audits to determine what communities valued most about their natural heritage.
- Coordinate and supervise the existing Health Walks Programme.
- Develop long term sustainability by building the role of volunteer co-ordination into the Community Councils with an appropriate level of support still being available through CNPA.