



## **Muirburn Code Review**

**Minutes**  
from the  
**Steering Group Conference Call**  
held on  
**Friday, 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016**  
15:30–16:30

### **1 Welcome & Introduction**

- 1.1 A list of Participants and apologies is at Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The aim of the call was to:
  - 1.2.1 Provide an update on progress;
  - 1.2.2 Seek broad agreement for the initial feedback on three items identified for Milestone 1; and
  - 1.2.3 Agree next steps
- 1.3 The skeleton for the review process is now in place and everyone's input is now essential to develop the Code. There will be plenty to discuss and it should be noted that the scope of the review includes cutting as well as burning.
- 1.4 During the conference call, it was stated that the revised Code will seek to establish best practice where the decision has been made to burn or cut. In response to the draft Minutes, this position has been questioned; it has been suggested that the Code should include a discussion of the merits and problems associated with burning. This will be discussed during the next Steering Group meeting.

### **2 Progress Update**

- 2.1 The final version of the Critique Phase Report was submitted in June 2014.
- 2.2 Tender documents for the next phase of the review were issued on 28<sup>th</sup> October 2015, and a Tender Response was submitted on 14<sup>th</sup> December 2015.
- 2.3 Some discussion had taken place about the Project Plan and a final version had been agreed at a Project Start-up meeting on 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2016.

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Chairman: Lord Lindsay

Director: Simon Thorp

Administrator: Anne Stoddart

- 2.4 All the documents are available on the Muirburn Group page of the Moorland Forum website. This is a password-protected page, with access from the “separate page” link on the Muirburn page, which can be found under the Project Work menu. The username is: “mbgroup” and the password is “prescribed”.

### **3 Project Plan**

- 3.1 The original version of the Plan was prepared for the Tender response, with support from the Planning Group, and it has then been revised to reflect the discussions with the Scottish Government that were finalised at the start-up meeting.
- 3.2 The most significant change introduced into the final version of the project plan is the extension of the contract to allow four workshops to be held during the next muirburn season as part of the review. The feedback from these workshops will feed into the draft version of the Code, before it is finalised.

### **4 Project Programme**

- 4.1 The timetable for the review is defined by the Milestones contained in the Project Plan, section 6, page 5.
- 4.2 A proposed plan for Steering Group meetings and conference calls is based on the Milestone timetable and is outlined in para 7.1 on page 5.
- 4.3 The programme has been summarised in the GANTT chart (Appendix 3).
- 4.4 During the start-up discussion it was agreed that it might be necessary to postpone the final milestone to allow time to incorporate all the feedback received from the final workshops and agree any changes with the Steering Group.

### **5 Initial Feedback – Milestone 1**

- 5.1 Three items of initial feedback are required to satisfy the requirements of Milestone 1 and these were discussed:
- 5.1.1 The proposed structure and content of the revised Code;
  - 5.1.2 Proposals for Stakeholder Engagement; and
  - 5.1.3 Reasons why other recommendations from the Critique Phase have not been taken forward.
- 5.2 An outline of the structure and content of the Code is attached at Appendix 1 to these Minutes. This version incorporates the feedback provided during the discussion that included:
- 5.2.1 This outline will provide a framework for the development of the practitioners’ guide that will form the basis of the revised Code.
  - 5.2.2 This framework will be adjusted as required during the drafting process. The first draft of the Code is due on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016 and this will be further discussed before the final draft is produced for 31<sup>st</sup> August 2016.

- 5.2.3 The second additional topic should refer to burning for grazing management, not just to grassland. Grazing does not just take place on grassland.
- 5.2.4 There should be reference to wildfire.
- 5.2.5 There should be some discussion about a requirement to carry out some muirburn or cutting to reduce the risks associated with wildfire as part of satisfying the requirements of Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition.
- 5.2.6 More prominence should be given to the statutory requirements.
- The Code contained should contain enough guidance to keep practitioners within the law.
  - The Code should also include guidance about the responsibilities of tenants and crofters when carrying out muirburn.
- 5.2.7 The detail relating to the additional guidance topics will not form part of the Code.
- Highlights, perhaps in the form of ‘dos & don’ts’, will be included within the Code.
  - The aim will be to keep the Code as short as possible and avoid including a lot of detail that will only be relevant to part of the practitioner audience.
- 5.3 The Project Plan sets out some Stakeholder Engagement options, in Para 4.6 on page 3. These were discussed and it was agreed that these are a good starting point but every available option and opportunity should be investigated to spread the word about the review of the Code.
- 5.3.1 The initial proposals in the Project Plan will be developed further, and other options will be considered including:
- Visual information – diagrams may be clearer than photos
  - Video clips providing additional information / examples of techniques.
  - Web based presentations / webinars.
- 5.3.2 Details of the engagement that is in progress, and proposed, will be prepared for 31<sup>st</sup> May 2016 to satisfy the requirements of Milestone 2.
- 5.3.3 A record of engagement will be established and the Steering Group will be asked to inform Anne Stoddart about all engagement activity.  
**Action: MF**
- 5.3.4 Briefing material will be prepared to provide members with some basic information to prepare their own output. All information that is circulated will contain contact details and a request for comments about the review. **Action: MF**

- 5.3.5 The Muirburn Code Review blog has been set up and this will be used to provide information about the review, as the work progresses. The blog contains a comment facility.
- 5.4 It has not been possible to address all the recommendations included in the Critique Phase Report, and the scope of the review has been determined by the scope outlined in the tender documents.
  - 5.4.1 The contents of the Invitation to Tender had been queried as part of the discussion that took place to agree the final version of the Project Plan.
  - 5.4.2 Broadly, the recommendations made in the Critique Phase have now been brought within the scope of the contract and the review. A high priority will be to address the additional guidance topics that have not been included in this phase of work.
  - 5.4.3 It is hoped that this review can be seen as the start of the larger process, as envisaged during the Critique Phase, which includes the development of more additional guidance, a Muirburn Handbook and a Muirburn Dossier.
  - 5.4.4 The aim will be to move onto other phases of work when the revised Code has been published.

## **6 Muirburn Research**

- 6.1 It will be important that the contents of the revised Code are supported by evidence. A list of relevant references will be prepared and made available through the website.
  - 6.1.1 Initially, this list will be restricted to issues that are relevant to muirburn; in due course it may be possible to expand this list as part of the development of the planned Muirburn Dossier.
  - 6.1.2 SRUC offered to assist with this. The plan for the development of this list will be discussed further. **Action: MF**

## **7 Actions following the Conference Call**

- 7.1 These Minutes will be circulated to all members of the Steering Group by Monday morning, 29<sup>th</sup> February.
- 7.2 A report, based on these Minutes, will be submitted to the Scottish Government late afternoon on Monday, to address the three issues and satisfy the requirements of Milestone 1. **Action: MF**
- 7.3 Comments from Steering Group members, whether or not they took part in the conference call, will be welcome.

- 7.4 A Doodle poll will be circulated, early in the week commencing 29<sup>th</sup> February, with date options for a full meeting of the Steering Group. This will be held as soon as it is possible to identify a date that suits all or most Steering Group members. **Action: MF**
- 7.5 Members were asked to start identifying options and opportunities for circulating information about the review. Briefing material will be developed and the Review blog will be used to start raising the profile of this work further.

### **Actions Summary**

<b>Para</b>	<b>Details</b>	<b>Action by</b>
5.3.3	Establish record of engagement	MF
5.3.4	Prepare briefing material	MF
6.1.2	Compile list of relevant muirburn research	MF, SRUC
7.2	Submit report to Scottish Government	MF
7.4	Doodle Poll for Steering Group meeting	MF

**Participants**

Simon	Thorp	Project Manager
Tim	Baynes	Scottish Land & Estates Moorland Group
Alistair	Hamilton	SRUC
Gemma	Hopkinson	GWCT
Ronnie	Kippen	SGA
Richard	Luxmoore	NTS
Graham	Sullivan	SNH

**Apologies**

Michael	Bruce	Firebreak Services Ltd
John	Gillies	Crofter, Raasay
Jonnie	Hall	NFUS
John	MacDonald	SFRS
Duncan	Orr-Ewing	RSPB
Colin	Shedden	BASC Scotland
Malcolm	Younger	RICS