



## Muirburn Code Review

**Minutes**  
of the Steering Group Meeting  
held at BASC Trochry on  
**Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> December 2016**

### Attendance:

Simon	Thorp	Director
Tim	Baynes	SL&E
Merlin	Becker	GWCT
Michael	Bruce	Firebreak Services
Ronnie	Kippen	SGA
Richard	Luxmoore	NTS
Duncan	Orr-Ewing	RSPB
Colin	Shedden	BASC
Graham	Sullivan	SNH

<b>No Reply</b>		
Jonnie	Hall	NFUS
Alistair	Hamilton	SRUC
<b>Apologies</b>		
Bruce	Farquharson	SFRS
John	Gillies	Crofter, Raasay
Malcolm	Younger	RICS

### 1 Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Concern was expressed about the lack of representation from NFUS HQ, but NFUS Regional Officers had been contacted and were primed to circulate and comment on the next draft of the Code.
- 1.2 There is some concern that we are not far enough forward technically. In particular greater reference to fire intensity and risk management is required.
- 1.3 Other comments surrounded how effective any Code can be. What is there to stop 'one man and a bucket of paraffin' who wants to light fires.
- 1.4 A risk management approach is important and it needs to be central to thinking of everyone involved with muirburn.
- 1.5 Enforcement will always be difficult to achieve and the thinking behind the Code will be to avoid the need for enforcement by increasing the level of understanding and use of different muirburn techniques. We have always done it this way is not justification for continuation.
- 1.6 The Code is not intended to be a muirburn manual. The aim is that the guidance in the Code will link to other information that is either already available or will be produced as part of the continuing review of muirburn.
- 1.7 It is recognised that the Code has a purpose beyond practitioners. Government and agency staff will also turn to it for guidance.

- 1.8 The legal considerations should include the Law of Negligence as this part of the law could be brought to bear in the case of an escaped fire. The Code could be used as a reference as to whether the person lighting the fire that had escaped was guilty of negligence.

## 2 Review of the draft Code

- 2.1 The extra detail provided in support of the Code will continue to be called Additional Information.
- 2.2 The summary tables at the start of different sections of the Code were liked and will be retained, although they may be developed when placed on the website.
- 2.3 We agreed that a burning plan should be introduced as part of the Code. This can be drafted to provide some clear guidance to practitioners as they plan muirburn activity. It will be suggested that best practice is for a burning plan to be completed before any muirburn takes place. **Action: Director, Michael Bruce**
- 2.4 It will be clearly stated in the Code that potentially burning is a dangerous activity and that no fire should be lit unless it is clear how it can be stopped. This will also be covered in the burning plan. **Action: Director**
- 2.5 The Code will include reference to the use of leaf blowers as a means to control muirburn. However, it will be important to emphasise that only, larger high-capacity commercial machines should be used in this role.
- 2.5.1 Guidance covering the specification of a suitable machine will be provided. **Action: Michael Bruce, Ronnie Kippen.**
- 2.6 Michael Bruce gave a short presentation about ignition patterns. This is available to view on the [Muirburn page](#) of the Moorland Forum website. The Euro-fire website also contains useful diagrams.
- 2.6.1 There is scope to introduce discussion about ignition patterns within the Code, but, as this is a complex subject, full details will be reserved for a further guide, that will be able to provide more advanced information.
- 2.6.2 Different ignition patterns, such as lighting the fire at the top of a slope, are a means of reducing fire intensity and therefore the flame length, the difficulty of control, and the potential for impact on soils and non-target vegetation.
- 2.7 SEPA has made some suggestions about the content of the Code, which have not yet been incorporated into the draft Code. A meeting will be held with SEPA to discuss their views, and this may include a moorland visit. **Action: Director, Michael Bruce.** *Post-meeting note: meeting arranged for 19 January.*
- 2.7.1 Suggestions include developing an online search facility through Scotland's Environmental Web.
- A search of the muirburn location could provide details of all designations and other factors that need to be considered such as acidification areas and sensitive water catchments etc.
  - This information could link to the need to seek specialist advice before carrying out muirburn activity.

2.7.2 To address concerns about the impact of muirburn on water quality SEPA has proposed introducing buffer zones against watercourses and this will be discussed during the meeting with SEPA.

- The establishment of anchor points as safety requirement when lighting fires will need to be considered.
- An approach might be to establish a presumption against burning up to watercourse with exceptions where this can be justified.
- There will need to be a clear definition of a watercourse.

2.8 The feedback from the Peatland sub-group has been incorporated into Section 7.1. Peatland Additional Information has been drafted and it is due to be revised and circulated to the sub-group for further comment. **Action: Director**

2.8.1 IUCN Peatland Programme is providing input.

2.8.2 Generally, there is likely to be a presumption against burning on deep peat, as there is little or no benefit from muirburn.

2.8.3 There may be a role for muirburn in a few instances but there needs to be a clear understanding of the objectives, the risks and potential benefits before carrying out any muirburn.

2.8.4 This may be best addressed by obtaining specialist advice before carrying out muirburn.

2.9 Additional Guidance to cover muirburn for management of grazing will be produced. Michael Bruce and Graham Sullivan offered to help. **Action: Richard Luxmoore**

2.9.1 The potential to increase grazing value by not burning every year will be covered.

2.10 Additional Guidance to cover Grouse Moor management has been drafted.

### 3 Workshops

3.1 Inviting other organisations to co-host the workshops will be considered. For example: the Scottish Crofting Federation could be asked to co-host the workshop on Skye. **Action: Director**

3.2 Dates

<b>Talk &amp; Walk:</b>	
7 Feb 17	Carfraemill, Borders. Host: Northumberland Estates
16 Feb 17	Sabhal Mor Ostaig, Skye. Host: Fearann Eilean Iarmain
21 Feb 17	Edinglassie Estate, Huntly. Malcolm Hay
<b>Workshop only:</b>	
14 Mar 17	Battleby.

3.3 Steering Group attendance: members will be asked by e-mail to indicate which workshops they will be able to attend. Some input to proceedings will be welcome from those who are able to attend. **Action: Director**

- 3.4 The programme for each workshop will be developed based on the drafts that were discussed during the meeting. The finish time will be adjusted to 15:00 to reduce the time commitment required by those attending.
- 3.5 A flyer will be circulated to announce the dates of the workshops. **Action: Director.** Additional information will be circulated to delegates before the workshops. The flyer will include an invitation for those receiving it to circulate around their own networks.
- 3.6 A questionnaire will be drafted to provide feedback from all delegates, which can be collated to aid the revision of the draft Code to reflect the views gathered during the workshops.

#### 4 Website development ([www.muirburncode.org.uk](http://www.muirburncode.org.uk))

- 4.1 The Home & Contents pages remain open to public viewing. The login for the other pages is: visitor - password: Calluna
- 4.2 The intention remains to set this site up in a working format and then develop it to include diagrams and other illustrations so that it becomes the main method of communicating the Code.

#### 5 Financial

- 5.1 This project is Commissioned work, and therefore some payment is available in return for the input from Steering Group members.
- 5.2 Anne Stoddart is coordinating the payments and will require an indication of time spent and other expenses. Timesheets and expenses forms are available for this.

#### 6 Next steps

- 6.1 Meeting 25<sup>th</sup> January at BASC, Trochry. The purpose of the meeting will be to review progress and confirm arrangements for the workshops.

#### 7 Summary of Actions

Ref	Item	Action
2.3	Draft Burning Plan	Director / Michael Bruce
2.4	State danger of burning activity in burning plan	Director
2.5.1	Provide guidance covering specification of a suitable machine	Michael Bruce / Ronnie Kippen
2.7	Arrange meeting with SEPA to discuss their views	Director / Michael Bruce
2.8	Revise and circulate Peatland Additional Information to sub-group for comment	Director
2.9	Produce additional guidance to cover muirburn for management of grazing	Richard Luxmoore
3.1	Invite organisations to co-host workshops	Director
3.3	Confirm Steering Group attendance at workshops	Director
3.5	Circulate flyer for workshops	Director