



Muirburn Code Review

Minutes

from the Steering Group Meeting
held on
Wednesday 25th January 2017

Attending:

Simon	Thorp	Director
Tim	Baynes	SL&E
Merlin	Becker	GWCT
Michael	Bruce	Firebreak Services Ltd
Bruce	Farquharson	SFRS
Ronnie	Kippen	SGA
Richard	Luxmoore	NTS
Colin	Shedden	BASC

Graham	Sullivan	SNH
Apologies		
John	Gillies	Crofter, Raasay
Jonnie	Hall	NFUS
Duncan	Orr-Ewing	RSPB
Malcolm	Younger	RICS

1 Welcome and Introduction

- 1.1 Aims for the meeting
 - 1.1.1 Review progress
 - 1.1.2 Highlight concerns and next steps
 - 1.1.3 Review plans for the workshops, covering the outline programme and the proposed questionnaire.

2 Meeting with SEPA Representatives

- 2.1 A report was given about the meeting and site visit that took place with representatives of SEPA, led by Mark Aitken, on 19th January 2017.
 - 2.1.1 The meeting took place in Gargunnoch, to the west of Stirling, and after lunch, on Burnfoot Moor in the Gargunnoch Hills.
 - 2.1.2 Discussion had centred on the role of muirburn, impact of fire on peatland, wildfire related issues, the role of moorland in natural flood defence and the need for buffer zones to protect vegetation on the banks of watercourses.
 - 2.1.3 SEPA will be providing further views on the Code and in particular refined proposals for buffer zones.

3 Minutes and actions from the meeting held on 14th December

- 3.1 The status of Actions from Meeting held on 14th December 2016 was discussed and this is summarised in the table at the end of these Minutes.

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Chairman: Lord Lindsay

Director: Simon Thorp

Administrator: Anne Stoddart

4 The latest version of the revised Code (v3.2)

- 4.1 The final size, or length, of the Code will be important. Too large and it will not get read, but the Code needs to cover all the issues. The use of Additional Information is a way to keep the main Code short, while providing sufficient information to cover all the issues in adequate detail.
- 4.2 Editing is a continuing process but the main changes, since v3.1 was circulated in December, are minor amendments, the incorporation of comments from SEPA and the introduction of a Water Features section under the Sensitive Areas heading.
- 4.3 Some comments will be re-submitted on behalf of NTS. **Action: Richard Luxmoore.**
- 4.3.1 The comments will suggest that as about 70-80% of Scottish moorland is not burnt regularly there is no need to burn to maintain heather cover. The requirement to burn is linked to management objectives.
- 4.3.2 Discussion revealed concerns about the responsibility for fighting wildfires on moorland that has no burning management.
- SFRS accepted that this would be their responsibility.
 - It was suggested that the requirements of GAEC should force (or encourage) landowners to carry out some burning and cutting, to provide firebreaks for access, as a minimum.
 - This was agreed to be outside the remit of the Code.
- 4.4 The checklist at the start of the Code will be moved to a new location so that it does not dominate the introduction section. **Action: Director**
- 4.5 Some of the detail in the burning section will be removed from the main body of the Code and placed into a separate additional guidance document: 'Planning for Burning'. This will include the burning checklists and the text that covers the details of the required planning. **Action: Director**
- 4.6 The approach adopted for the burning checklist will be followed for the cutting checklist and this, with some of the detailed descriptive text, will form the basis of a separate additional information document. **Action: Director**
- 4.7 Every fire and every area of peat is different. The Code must seek to make the best of the evidence and information available and provide guidance that will assist practitioners in finding the most appropriate management approach.
- 4.8 Further versions of the Code
- 4.8.1 A revised draft will be prepared for issue on 30th January 2017.
- This will incorporate the discussion at the meeting and other minor amendments.
 - This version will be sent to all the delegates attending the first three workshops.

- 4.8.2 The feedback from the first three workshops will be considered and further revisions made to the Code. Other amendments or additional drafting will be introduced to the Code at this stage
- 4.8.3 A further revised draft will be issued to all delegates attending the workshop at Battleby.
- 4.8.4 A final version of the Code, for submission to the Scottish Government will be prepared after the Battleby meeting. The Steering Group will be asked to provide input to this final version during a meeting that will be organised in late March.

5 Additional Information

5.1 Muirburn on Peatland.

- 5.1.1 The provision of this additional information document is a requirement of the contract with the Scottish Government.
- 5.1.2 Version 2 had been circulated to the Peatland sub-group and was discussed during the meeting.
- 5.1.3 There are some concerns about the content and the need for this level of information within a Muirburn Code. Comments on the draft guidance were requested to allow these to be considered and circulated to other members of the sub-group.
- 5.1.4 It was suggested that it might be better to cover the information relating purely to peatland restoration in the guidance published as part of the Principles of Moorland Management project.
- 5.1.5 The biggest threat to peatland from fire is thought to be from wildfire.
 - Muirburn is seen to be part of the solution, but also part of the problem.
 - An integrated approach to fire management is a concept that might help to link muirburn to wildfire issues to allow common solutions to be identified.
- 5.1.6 There was general agreement that it is essential that any burning does not ignite the peat.
- 5.1.7 The report from the Rapid Evidence Assessment commissioned by the CarbonXchange from the James Hutton Institute (Muirburn, Peatland and Peat Soils – an Evidence Assessment of Impact) will be published shortly. This will identify the current state of knowledge and any gaps; the Code will be able to provide a link to the report.

5.2 Muirburn for Management of Grazing

- 5.2.1 The sub-group established at the last meeting (Richard Luxmoore, Graham Sullivan & Michael Bruce) are developing this guidance.
- 5.2.2 An initial draft was requested in time to circulate with the next draft of the Code on 30th January. **Action: Richard Luxmoore**

5.3 Water management

- 5.3.1 SEPA have been asked to submit recommendations about the need and value of including Additional Information to cover Water Management.
- 5.3.2 If so, this will become Additional Information No.3.

5.3.3 Topics could include: explanation about the need for buffer zones, acid sensitive catchments, flood risk and drinking water catchments.

5.4 The Website

5.4.1 A technical hiccup with the site had prevented progress since the last meeting, but this has now been sorted. The intention remains to place the text version of the Code on the website so that it can be used for promotion.

5.4.2 Some video clips had been provided from the filming carried out for the Gift of Grouse. In principle, this was supported as a very good way to explain and promote best practice techniques and demonstrate the range of equipment available for muirburn activity.

- The Code cannot use video clips unless the correct PPE is worn.
- The best approach may be to commission video clips especially for this role, to allow all the correct procedures and precautions to be demonstrated.
- Costs will be investigated. This is unlikely to be something that can be carried out within the budget for the review. It will be suggested as part of the development work.

6 Workshops

6.1 The plan for the workshops

6.1.1 The proposed aims for the first three workshops were discussed.

6.1.2 It is important that the workshops focus on obtaining the views of delegates about muirburn and the role of the Code.

- Some explanation of the content will be required, but promotion of the Code will follow publication.

6.1.3 The outline for the topics to be covered during the workshops was also presented. This plan for the meeting is still developing and it is likely that the number of topics to be covered will be refined and reduced.

6.1.4 Tim Baynes and Michael Bruce volunteered to speak at the workshops.

6.1.5 The approach to be adopted at Battleby will be agreed in a conference call to be held after the first three workshops.

6.1.6 Attendance at the workshops is currently: Carfraemill – 21, Sleat – 26, Edinglassie - 20, Battleby – 17; numbers are still increasing.

6.1.7 There is a shortage of farming input at Carfraemill and Edinglassie. The Hopes Estate will be contacted for Carfraemill (**Action: Tim Baynes**) and NFUS / NSA will be contacted (**Action: Director**)

6.2 The workshop questionnaire

6.2.1 The purpose of the questionnaire is to capture views from the delegates that can be fed into the report from the workshops.

6.2.2 The Importance Score is an initial attempt to apply weighting to the responses. As was pointed out during the meeting, this cannot be applied to all the questions.

- 6.2.3 For ease, the questions have been framed to require a Y / N answer, with some space for additional comments.
- The aim is to make it possible to answer the questions quickly, without requiring a lot of thought or writing.
- 6.2.4 Some space has been included at the bottom of the questionnaire to allow free text.
- There was concern that the amount of space for free text is not adequate.
 - More detailed feedback, over and above the detail that can be recorded on the form will be encouraged by conversation or e-mail.
- 6.2.5 Further refinement will take place.

7 Planning the promotion of the Code after Publication

- 7.1 Views on the best way to achieve this will be gathered during the workshops.
- 7.2 A range of activities is likely to be considered to include promotion events, presentations at meetings, networking and social media.
- 7.3 Steering Group members were asked to consider the options for discussion during and after the workshops. Costed recommendations will be included in the final report to Scottish Government.

8 Next steps

- 8.1 A revised draft of the Code will be prepared for issue on 30th January. **Action: Director**
- 8.2 A conference call is planned with Susie Turpie & Andrew Coupar on Tuesday, 31st January 2017. **Action: Director**
- 8.3 Doodle Polls will be circulated to members of the Steering Group for:
- 8.3.1 A Conference call before Battleby workshop – Monday, 6th March / Friday, 10th March will be proposed.
- 8.3.2 Steering Group meeting – Tuesday, 21st March / Thursday, 23 March will be proposed.

9 Summary of Actions

Ref	Item	Action
4.3	NTS comments to be re-submitted	Richard Luxmoore
4.4	Move checklist	Director
4.5	Move some of the detail in the burning section into a separate additional guidance document 'Planning for Burning'	Director
4.6	Produce cutting checklist as separate additional information document	Director
5.2.2	Produce initial draft of Muirburn for Management of Grazing to circulate with next draft of code on 30 th January	Richard Luxmoore
6.1.7	Contact to be made for farming input at Carfraemill and Edinglassie workshops with The Hopes Estate and NFUS/NSA	Tim Baynes Director

8.1	Produce revised draft of the code for issue on 30 th January	Director
8.2	Conference call with Susie Turpie and Andrew Coupar on 31 st January	Director

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Status of Actions from the Meeting held on 14th December 2016

Ref	Item	Action	Status
2.3	Draft Burning Plan	Director / Michael Bruce	Drafted
2.4	State danger of burning activity in burning plan	Director	Completed
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	Completed
2.8	Revise and circulate Peatland Additional Information to sub-group for comment	Director	Completed
2.9	Produce additional guidance to cover muirburn for management of grazing	Richard Luxmoore	
3.1	Invite organisations to co-host workshops	Director	SCF – no response
3.3	Confirm Steering Group attendance at workshops	Director	Completed
3.5	Circulate flyer for workshops	Director	Completed