

## ANNEX A

<b>What</b>	Ministers will be taking part in a Ministerial Summit on addressing future wildfire risks.
<b>Where</b>	Grant Arms Hotel, Granttown-on-Spey PH26 3HF
<b>When</b>	<b>14 October 2024, 10:00-12:00</b>
<b>Key Message(s)</b>	<p>The focus of the summit is for stakeholders to share their views on addressing future wildfire risks. The co-chairs are Ms Brown and Mr Fairlie.</p> <p>We are in listening mode and want to hear your views on what is required to increase Scotland's resilience to wildfires.</p> <p>We are committed to taking action to mitigate the increasing risk of wildfire caused by climate change.</p>
<b>Supporting official</b>	<p>[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] – Wildlife Management Policy - [REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] [REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] – Head of Fire and Rescue Unit – [REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]</p>
<b>Briefing contents</b>	<p><b>Annex A:</b> Summit Invitees List <b>Annex B:</b> Background briefing <b>Annex C:</b> Chairs Agenda (attached separately) <b>Annex D:</b> Opening Speech – Siobhian Brown (attached separately) <b>Annex E:</b> Opening Speech – Jim Fairlie (attached separately) <b>Annex F:</b> Closing Speech – Jim Fairlie (attached separately) <b>Annex G:</b> Closing Speech – Siobhian Brown (attached separately)</p>

## Invitation List

<b>SG Staff and Government Agencies</b>	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] Diarmuid O'Neill	SG - Wildlife Management Policy SG - Director EnFor
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	SG - EnFor (minute taking)
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	SG - Head of Fire and Rescue Unit
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	Forestry and Land Scotland
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] Gordon Watson	Cairngorms National Park Authority LLTNPA
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] Robbie Kernahan	Scottish Forestry NatureScot
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	SEPA
<b>Fire experts and emergency services</b>	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] Jon Henderson	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
Michael Bruce	Firebreak Services
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	Police Scotland
Robert Scott	Her Majesty's Fire Inspectorate Service
Calum Kippen	Brightsparks burning techniques
Iain Hepburn	Brightsparks burning techniques
<b>Land managers</b>	
Ross Ewing	Scottish Land and Estates
Alex Hogg	Scottish Gamekeepers Association
Peter Clark	British Association for Shooting and Conservation
Andrew Connon	National Farmers Union for Scotland
Donna Smith	Scottish Crofters Federation
Jake Swindells	Scottish Countryside Alliance
Katrina Candy	Heather Trust
Nick Hesford	Game and Wildlife Conservation Trust
<b>eNGOs</b>	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] David Fleetwood	RSPB Scotland John Muir Trust
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	National Trust for Scotland
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	Scottish Ramblers Association
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)] Alan McDonnell	Scottish Countryside Rangers Association Trees for Life
<b>Others</b>	
Alastair Ross	Association of British Insurers (ABI) – Scotland representative
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	Highland Council

[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	Dumfries and Galloway Council
<b>Gamekeepers</b>	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	
[REDACTED: REGULATON 11(2)]	

## ANNEX B

### **Background Briefing**

Section 1: General Top Lines  
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### **Section 1: General Top Lines**

#### **MINISTERIAL WILDFIRES SUMMIT**

- We are holding this wildfire summit to talk about improving our preparedness for wildfires in the future.
- We are in listening mode today and want to hear your views on how we can better prepare for and respond to wildfires.
- We are incredibly grateful to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, gamekeepers, land managers, volunteers, partners, landowners, the extended local community, the wider land management sector and indeed to everyone who played a part in getting this spring and summer's wildfires under control.
- Alongside this Summit, SFRS and public agencies are conducting a series of a debriefs following the large scale wildfires across Scotland this year to help identify any lessons learned.
- We continue to work with SFRS to support full implementation of its wildfire strategy which will be completed during the course of 2025. It will see the continued roll-out this year of new equipment, vehicles and Personal Protective Equipment.

#### **SFRS TOP LINES**

- **The public are urged to never start a fire when a wildfire danger assessment is in place and during prolonged dry periods in areas such as forests, woods, farmland or peaty ground.**
- SFRS works with Forestry and Land Scotland, RSPB, landowners and communities to effectively respond to any wildfire incidents that occur to minimise their impact.

- The Scottish Government is working with SFRS to support full implementation of its wildfire strategy, which will see the continued roll-out this year of new equipment, vehicles and Personal Protective Equipment.
- The Service's planned spend is circa £1.6 million over the course of the 3 year roll-out of its strategy and it will continue to invest in the training and upskilling of staff in the years ahead.
- Within it, SFRS is adopting 'burn suppression' techniques such as those in use in the new Mediterranean-style specialist wildfire units.
- Due to extensive training and the use of new techniques, SFRS's ability to tackle wildfires has never been so advanced.
- SFRS remains fully ready and able to respond to any instance of wildfire that occurs across Scotland.

### **WILDFIRE STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION**

- The Chief Fire Officer has provided assurances to the Scottish Government that fire fighter safety is an absolute priority and both the specialist wildfire PPE and existing standard PPE in place is safe.
- The Scottish Government is working with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to support full implementation of its wildfire strategy this year. SFRS continues to invest significantly in equipment, vehicles, and training to strengthen its response to wildfires, particularly in rural areas. Over the past three years, planned spend of around £1.6 million has supported the roll-out of the Service's wildfire strategy, including:
  - Specialist wildfire PPE (400 sets): £300,000
  - 10 x All-terrain Vehicles (ATV) with specialist firefighting fogging units: £334,500
  - 10 x All-terrain vehicle trailers: £76,700
  - 10 x 4x4 towing vehicles for ATV: £440,500
  - 4 x 4x4 wildfire support vans: £318,800
  - Specialist wildfire equipment: £134,190
  - This is also supplemented by the creation of 14 wildfire tactical advisor roles around Scotland.
- Alongside this, SFRS has delivered a comprehensive programme of specialist training to ensure crews are fully prepared to tackle wildfires safely and effectively. This includes:
  - Tiered wildfire training through Learning Content Management System (LCMS), classroom sessions, and practical instruction;
  - Specialist equipment training covering ATVs, fogging units, suppression tools, leaf blowers and brush cutters;
  - Driver and operator training for 4x4 support units, trailers, and ATVs;
  - Prescribed burning training provided by external partners (approx. £180 per person); and
  - Wildfire tactical advisor training delivered in collaboration with Nottinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (Level 3 and 4 courses, approx. £2,000 per person).
- SFRS responds to wildfires using a 4-tiered system that includes the latest technology and techniques to safely bring an incident to a conclusion. The Service has strategically placed wildfire resources around Scotland ready to be deployed when required:

- Tier 1 fire stations: all staff are trained to firefight with hose, beaters and water backpacks.
- Tier 2 fire stations: there are twenty locations (New Galloway, Langholm, Fort Augustus, Kingussie, Aviemore, Kyle of Lochalsh, Fortrose, Gairloch, Dunbeath, Inch, Alyth, Callander, Coldstream, Lauder, Lybster, Balintore, Cromarty, Carrbridge, Newtonmore, Spean Bridge) - twelve in Highland and Islands - that use sprinter vans with leaf blowers, excavation tools and beaters. Four of these locations (Alford, Oban, Galashiels, Dornoch) also have a 4x4 van.
- Tier 3 fire stations: there are ten locations (Dumbarton, Kilwinning, Ballater, Elgin, Invergordon, Ullapool, Dunblane, Pitlochry, Stornoway, Musselburgh). - three in Highland and Islands - with all-terrain vehicles and fogging lance unit on trailer.
- Tier 4: fourteen Wildfire Tactical Advisors around Scotland and the national wildfire lead is based in Inverness. Wildfire Tactical Advisors are normally deployed to the incident scene, however often give advice first over the phone or radio direct to the scene before deployment (dependent upon travel time and scale of incident).

### **HELICOPTER DEPLOYMENT**

- **Operational decisions regarding the deployment of helicopters during wildfires are taken collaboratively between NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and property owners / managers of land and buildings at risk.**
- SFRS work closely with Forestry and Land Scotland, NatureScot and land owners / managers to determine the best strategy for tackling wildfires, including when to make best use of helicopters (if required).
- Close liaison with all partners continues at the wildfire incident site to help ensure helicopter resource(s), once arrived at the scene, are used as efficiently and effectively as possible.
- Where public land managed by FLS or NS, contains or is threatened by a wildfire, FLS and / or NS can fully fund, or contribute to, the cost of a helicopter.
- Private land owners can also fully fund, or contribute to, the cost of a helicopter. Depending upon the terms and conditions of their insurance policies, those costs may then be recouped.

### **COMMUNITY ASSET REGISTER**

- **SFRS frequently make use of the Community Asset Register which is a Scotland wide database of volunteers willing to help during an emergency.**
- The database plots assets on a map so if an emergency incident occurs, SFRS can identify those who could help.
- Assets can be people with either skills or equipment.
- It is currently managed and hosted by SFRS, but other organisations such as Police Scotland and local authorities can access it. • The register was launched in 2017, and is built on existing local databases.
- The Community Asset Register is a fantastic way to enable people to contribute to their local communities.

### **WILDFIRES LESSONS LEARNED**

- **SFRS carry out lessons learned exercises to review major incidents, including wildfires.**
- Lessons learned are considered by SFRS National Operational Assurance Board.
- Ms Gougeon and Scottish Government officials attended a Wildfire Summit in July 2023, hosted by Kate Forbes, to discuss further action on wildfire prevention and mitigation.
- Appropriate lessons learned are shared via Frontline Updates across SFRS.
- Lessons learned and best practice developed are also shared across the UK via the National Operational Guidance group with fire and rescue services across the UK to develop and continuously improve local policies and procedures.
- Strong emphasis has been placed upon the need for partnership working and engagement with various agencies and groups in the rural and land management sectors to capitalise on their existing networks, expertise and influence.
- This will not only enhance any intervention required, but provides a strong platform for preventative work including a joined-up approach to the use of Muirburn and prescribed burning.
- SFRS remains fully ready and able to respond to any instance of wildfire that occurs across Scotland.

## **Section 2: Biodiversity**

### **Biodiversity Top Lines**

- Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity sets a clear ambition to be Nature Positive: halting biodiversity loss by 2030 and restoring it by 2045.
- This is a crucial response to the global biodiversity crisis, with 11% of Scotland's species at risk of extinction, as reported in the 2023 State of Nature report.
- Scotland's biodiversity has been declining for decades, like most other industrialised countries. It is essential we take urgent action to tackle the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, to deliver a nature-positive, net zero world - and in a way that supports thriving communities.
- The climate crisis dramatically increases the risks of wildfire. Unlike some other countries, many of Scotland's native species are not well adapted to wildfire.
- Although some vegetation will regrow over time, the diversity of flora and fauna that we want to restore is not easily replaced. Wildfire therefore poses a very high risk to our strategic goals to restore and regenerate biodiversity in Scotland.

### *Why does nature matter?*

- The biodiversity crisis affects everyone - we all depend on biodiversity for providing our food, helping to prevent flooding and soil erosion, purifying our water, and contributing to our wellbeing by providing recreation and a sense of place.
- PwC estimated in 2023 that more than half of global GDP (55% or \$58trn) is dependent on nature and therefore exposed to risks relating to nature loss and degradation.
- Scotland's natural assets contribute more than £40 billion to the economy and support around 260,000 jobs – similar to those employed in oil and gas
- The 2025 World Economic Forum Global Risks Report finds that biodiversity loss is the second most significant risk over a 10 year period
- Globally, when they are functioning well, ocean and land ecosystems remove around 50% of human-made carbon dioxide emissions each year

### *What is the problem?*

- We are at a tipping point for Nature – it is in decline across the globe with around 1 million species already facing distinction. This crisis is caused by human activity, including pollution, climate change, the destruction of natural habitats, and unsustainable farming and fishing practices.
- The twin crises of climate change and nature loss are inextricably linked and we must tackle them together. Restoring nature will reduce carbon emissions, and tackling the climate crisis is essential if we are to prevent extinctions. We must be Net Zero AND Nature Positive.

### *What are we doing?*

- Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity, published in November 2024, includes:
  - The Biodiversity Strategy to 2045
  - Rolling six year Delivery Plans with cross- sectoral actions
  - Statutory nature restoration targets, via the Natural Environment Bill.

- The Strategic Framework marks a step change in ambition – business as usual is no longer sufficient.
- Scotland’s biodiversity strategy sets out our ambition to halt the loss of nature by 2030 and make significant progress to restoring nature by 2045.
- The Strategy’s outcomes will be delivered by a series of 6 year rolling delivery plans. The first plan includes over 100 ambitious actions to ensure we are on track to halting biodiversity loss by 2030
- The Natural Environment Bill will put in place statutory targets to restore and protect nature. It will also include provisions to modernise the way in which national parks and deer are managed; and provide powers to update environmental impact assessment and habitats legislation to support delivery of our net zero and biodiversity goals.
- We are investing more money in nature restoration – through our £65 million Nature Restoration Fund and our investment in woodland creation and peatland restoration.
- Our Facility for Investment Ready Nature in Scotland (FIRNS) is scaling up private investment in Scotland’s natural capital while generating a wider range of benefits that are shared in line with just transition principles.

#### *What happens if we don’t act now?*

- If we don’t take urgent action, nature in Scotland will continue to decline and important species will be lost forever.
- Our landscapes will become drier and at risk to the spread of invasive species. Flooding will be more extreme, affecting communities across the country. Traditional industries such as farming and fishing, and the communities that depend on them, will suffer, becoming less productive and less profitable.
- All of this will come at a financial cost – we will have to spend more and more resources managing an increasingly degraded landscape as well as losing some of our most useful assets in tackling the climate crisis.

#### *Conditions for Success*

- Our Strategy establishes an ambitious vision and a set of outcomes which will deliver that vision. But we also need to ensure we drive the change that will deliver this vision.
- The ongoing decline of biodiversity demonstrates that we must do a great deal more and at scale to ‘bend the curve’ of biodiversity loss.
- We have identified the following conditions for the successful delivery of our strategic outcomes:
  - **work more strategically and at scale**
  - **systematically mainstream biodiversity** across the wider policy landscape (e.g. agriculture, energy, housing, industry, education, health and transport)
  - **focus on ecosystem health** and landscape-scale regeneration alongside actions to support individual species
  - **ensure sufficient investment**, appropriately blending public and private funding
  - **strengthen accountability for delivery**, including evidence based monitoring frameworks and statutory targets to hold us to account.

- Our Strategic Framework approach will ensure that we move beyond ambitious words to a point where we mobilise actions and investment of sufficient scale and scope to deliver a nature positive future.

### **Section 3: Climate Change**

#### **Climate Change Top Lines**

**Climate change is on our doorsteps and driving more extreme weather in Scotland. Is it essential that, as a nation, we are adapting to these already present effects of climate change.**

- From floods to wildfires, storms to coastal erosion, climate impacts are already on our doorsteps. These sit alongside 'slower burning' impacts in areas like food security, supply chain resilience and soil quality.
- These trends are determined for decades to come.
- Advice from the Climate Change Committee could not be clearer: adapt now for the realities of +2 C of warming by 2050.
- We are stepping up on climate adaptation.
- Last year, the Scottish Government published the Scottish National Adaptation Plan (SNAP3). This plan sets out more than 200 actions that the Scottish Government is taking to address the impacts of climate change.
- SNAP3 is structured around five key outcomes to deliver a resilient, nature-positive and economically strong Scotland: 'Nature Connects', 'Communities', 'Public Services and Infrastructure', 'Economies, Business and Industries' and 'International Action'.
- We know climate change impacts us all, but not equally. That is why our approach to climate adaptation is rooted in communities and the places people live.
- The Adaptation Scotland programme is funded by the Scottish Government to support capacity building and action on adaptation by the public sector, businesses and communities in Scotland. This includes developing Scotland's pioneering regional approach to climate adaptation.
- Scotland is also the first UK nation to establish an adaptation monitoring framework, tracking 38 climate resilience indicators relevant to SNAP3 delivery. Our first Annual Progress Report was published on 16 June in Parliament.
- This report demonstrates a strong delivery record on our adaptation commitments in the first year of SNAP3.

## **Section 4: Air Quality (Public Health)**

### **Air Quality Top Lines**

- **If smoke is visible, people living and working nearby wildfires are advised to keep their windows and doors closed.**
- Initial shelter-in-place advice is generally issued by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and / or affected local authorities during wildfires.
- Territorial NHS Boards lead the public health response to fires in their area, including the provision of public health messaging and health advice.
- PHS can provide scientific advice and/or support to the Health Protection Teams (and others) to assist the public health risk assessment, management and communication. PHS can help to support and amplify agreed communications through its networks (where appropriate).
- If smoke is visible, people living and working nearby wildfires are advised to keep their windows and doors closed.
- Shelter-in-place guidelines provide essential steps to ensure safety during emergencies, such as natural disasters, wildfires or hazardous material incidents.

## **Section 5: Community Safety**

### **Community Safety Top Lines**

#### **FIREWORKS (BONFIRE NIGHT)**

- We have introduced proportionate, evidence-based measures with the powers available to us.
- These measures strike a balance between imposing restrictions and allowing informed individuals to use fireworks safely during periods of the year.
- We understand why there are a calls for a total ban on fireworks, however this is a reserved issue to Westminster and not currently within the Scottish Government's powers.
- Minister for Victims and Community Safety has met with the UK Government to discuss what more can be done on fireworks regulations. (26 Feb)
- Within our powers we have provided local authorities with powers to designate firework control zones, which ban the use of fireworks in local areas
- These were used for the first time in 2024 in areas across Edinburgh over the Bonfire Night period.
- We welcome that there will be Firework Control Zones in Glasgow and Edinburgh this coming bonfire period.
- In firework control zones it will be an offence for the public to use fireworks, and fireworks are only permitted to be used as part of a public display.
- Along with the other measures offered by the Fireworks and Pyrotechnic Articles (Scotland) Act 2022, they are an important tool to keep communities safe.
- We have provided financial support to local authorities to implement Firework Control Zones in areas where these are needed.

#### **PREPARATIONS FOR BONFIRE NIGHT 2025**

**The Scottish Government welcomes the significant amount of multi-agency partnership work by our emergency services, local authorities and wider community safety partners in preparation for the bonfire night period.**

- Operation Moonbeam – the well-established but evolving Police-led, multi-agency plan for the bonfire period – will be undertaken again this year.
- We value ongoing partnership work that takes place not only at this time but throughout the year.
- Prevention and diversionary work takes place in local communities, particularly those most affected by fireworks misuse and anti-social behaviour in previous years.
- The Scottish Government is working closely with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, sharing information on firework laws and regulations, and how the public can minimise the dangers and impact of personal firework use. This includes:
  - Updating the existing stakeholder toolkit and sharing with a broad range of stakeholders.
  - Refreshing social media assets and sharing organically through Scottish Government owned channels.

## **ANTISOCIAL BEHAVIOUR: GENERAL**

### **Police Scotland and local authorities lead on interventions to address antisocial behaviour.**

- They have a range of options and powers available for preventing and tackling antisocial behaviour in local areas; we support them record funding:
  - In 2025-26, we have increased police funding to £1.64bn, an increase of £90m on 2024-25, to support police capacity and capability; and
  - We are increasing the resources available to local government by over £1.1bn in 2025-26, a real terms increase of 5.5%.
- We established an Independent Working Group on Antisocial Behaviour in November 2023 to review what more can be done, including in the area of legislation for which the Government has responsibility.
- We will respond to its report shortly after consultation with COSLA and Police Scotland.

### **Section 6: Muirburn** **Muirburn Top Lines**

- Delaying the muirburn licensing scheme is a difficult but necessary decision to ensure there are no unintended consequences in regards to muirburns role in wildfire mitigation.
- Further discussions regarding the role of muirburn in wildfire prevention will take place at the upcoming Wildfire Summit.
- Muirburn is just one aspect of increasing wildfire risk in Scotland and should not be seen as a silver bullet. However, the increased wildfire risk in Scotland cannot be ignored and muirburn is a tool we cannot afford to lose.
- Work is needed to address the increasing wildfire risk from both a land management and an emergency response perspective.
- Ministers met with stakeholders on Tuesday 09 September to discuss the muirburn licensing scheme further and we agreed we need to be better prepared for the future threat of wildfires.
- When the licensing scheme comes in to effect NatureScot have provided those requiring a licence with all the tools to assess the land in line with the legislation and apply for a licence without undue burden.

- Ministers are pursuing a Scotland wide approach to the prevention and management of wildfire in readiness for next year's wildfire season, involving key internal and external stakeholders.
- The licensing scheme was due to come into force on 01 January 2026, however, this is being delayed until the start of the 2026/27 muirburn season to ensure the wildfire risk isn't increased by muirburn licensing.
- Ministers listened to those concerns following the recent wildfires and after careful consideration decided to bring the muirburn licensing scheme in to effect at the later date of 15 September 2026.

### **MUIRBURN LICENSING SCHEME**

- Ministers appreciate the concerns about muirburn licensing potentially increasing fuel loads and are keen to try to resolve that tension.
- However, there are some other real benefits to the licensing scheme such as the training and safety aspects and good practice which will help confidence in the work being undertaken.
- The purpose of the muirburn licensing scheme is 'to minimise risk of damaging effects and address potential benefits such as the reduction of fuel loads' (Werritty Report).
- It will ensure that muirburn is being undertaken in an environmentally sustainable manner, with due consideration of all the possible consequences.
- If it is undertaken without due consideration of all the possible consequences, it undoubtedly has the potential to have a serious negative impact on wildlife and the wider environment.
- However, the Scottish Government is aware that muirburn can also have a positive impact, creating beneficial habitats for certain species or helping reduce fuel loads and lower the risk of wildfires.
- We believe a licensing scheme will be helpful in enabling us to build up our evidence base by allowing us to monitor where muirburn is being undertaken and the purposes it is being undertaken for.

## **Section 7: Public Access**

### **Public Access Top Lines**

#### **Rights of Responsible Access**

- In 2024, 61% of adults visited the outdoors for leisure or recreation one or more times per week.
- Outdoor recreation is beneficial for health and well-being. It also provides opportunities for people to come into contact with, and increase their understanding of, the natural environment.
- The right of responsible non-motorised access to land, as set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC), is world-leading in terms of extent, scope and clarity.
- The SOAC sets out both how individuals should exercise their access rights responsibly and the responsibilities of landowners with respect to access rights. If a person's behaviour is criminal, you should contact the Police.

#### **Powers to exempt particular land from access rights temporarily; and Byelaws**

- Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 contains powers to allow Local Authorities to apply for the exemption of particular land from access rights.
- Such an order must follow public consultation and confirmation by the Scottish Ministers.
- Local Authorities may make byelaws which prohibit, restrict or regulate the exercise of access rights in order to preserve public order and safety, prevent damage, nuisance or danger, or conserve or enhance of natural or cultural heritage.
- The making of a byelaw under section 12 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act must follow public consultation and confirmation by the Scottish Ministers.

#### **Other powers to suspend rights of access locally or nationally**

- Section 11 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 sets out powers for Local Authorities to apply for the exemption of land from access rights.
- There are currently no wider powers to suspend rights of access and the Scottish Government has no current plans to introduce such powers.
- There is no evidence that suspending rights of access would prevent the kind of irresponsible or criminal behaviour which is already outwith existing provisions relating to rights of access.
- However, as the risks to the countryside and to rural communities in particular from wildfire grow, it is important to keep under review those steps that would best help prevent wildfires, and tackle them when they do break out.

## **Section 8: Emergency Response**

### **We continue our commitment to support the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to deliver the high standard of services required to keep Scotland safe with an overall budget increase of £18.8 million for 2025-26.**

- SFRS is undertaking a Service Delivery Review and the full public consultation that ran for 12 weeks closed on 17 September. No decisions have been made. There will now be an independent analysis ahead of SFRS Board decisions in December.
- Like all public services, it is right for SFRS to look at how its services are delivered to ensure value for the public purse. We continue to support SFRS to keep our communities safe, with a higher number of firefighters than other parts of the UK.
- The emergencies SFRS responds to have changed significantly over the years, for example dwelling fires have reduced by over 20% since 2013.
- Whilst house fires have reduced other incidents such as flooding and wildfires have increased which is why it is right that the fire service carefully considers how to adapt to the changing risks to remain effective and efficient, with firefighters in the right place at the right time.
- The Fire Brigades Union has previously been supportive of SFRS considering options to use existing resources more efficiently and effectively but is resistant to any reductions in firefighter numbers and is calling for more investment in the Fire Service.
- The budget for 2025-26 provides SFRS with an annual budget of £412.2 million which is over £97m higher than the equivalent budget in 2017-18.
- Since 2017-18 there have been substantial year on year increases in funding to support SFRS to create a modern and effective fire and rescue service.
- At 31 March 2024, there were 11.2 firefighters per 10,000 population in Scotland; 6.1 in England; and 10.3 in Wales.
- Firefighter pay, including maternity pay, is negotiated on a UK wide basis under a well-established collective bargaining process. Firefighters have accepted a 3.2% pay offer for 2025-26.

### **The public are urged to never start a fire when a wildfire danger assessment is in place and during prolonged dry periods in areas such as forests, woods, farmland or peaty ground.**

- We would like to commend SFRS and partners within the rural and land management sectors who ably assisted in dealing with the various wildfires which have occurred across Scotland this year.
- SFRS works with Forestry and Land Scotland, RSPB, landowners and communities to effectively respond to any wildfire incidents that occur to minimise their impact.
- The Scottish Government is working with SFRS to support full implementation of its [wildfire strategy](#), which will see the continued roll-out this year of new equipment, vehicles and Personal Protective Equipment.
- The Service's planned spend is circa £1.6 million over the course of the 3 year roll-out of its strategy and it will continue to invest in the training and upskilling of staff in the years ahead.

- Within it, SFRS is adopting 'burn suppression' techniques such as those in use in the new Mediterranean-style specialist wildfire units.
- Due to extensive training and the use of new techniques, SFRS's ability to tackle wildfires has never been so advanced.
- SFRS remains fully ready and able to respond to any instance of wildfire that occurs across Scotland.
- While clearly a matter for SFRS, the Chief Fire Officer has provided assurances to the Scottish Government that fire fighter health and safety is an absolute priority.
- Concerning the welfare of responders at the Dava wildfire: Across all locations, SFRS received support in the form of specialist vehicles and equipment, experienced personnel, and essential refreshments. As appropriate, these were deployed to ensure the safety of responders and address the priorities: protection of life, property, and the environment.

### **CRITICISM OF WILDFIRE RESPONSE – POST DAVA INCIDENT**

**We would like to extend our sympathies to all who were affected by the wildfires that occurred in late June and early July. We are grateful to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, gamekeepers, land managers, volunteers, partners, landowners, the extended local community, the wider land management sector and indeed to everyone who played a part in getting this spring and summer's wildfires under control.**

- SFRS is conducting a full debrief that will identify areas of good practice, any lessons learned and will inform next steps.
- It is important not to interfere with the operational decisions of SFRS, which is why we agree it is right that a full-de-brief to inform areas of good practice and lessons learned etc. is being independently undertaken.
- On the afternoon of Saturday, 28 June, SFRS Operations Control room in Dundee was alerted to two separate wildfires. The first was notified at 3.32pm and located beside the B9007 in an area to the southwest of Lochindorb. The second was notified at 5.50pm and located near the junction of the A939 and A940 at Dava. SFRS appliances were immediately mobilised to these locations.
- In both cases, additional appliances and officers were subsequently mobilised to meet the rapidly developing incident requirements.
- Due to the strong south-westerly wind, the fires progressed north-eastward, resulting in crews operating across geographically dispersed locations, which included the wider Lochindorb area and extended from Dava towards Dunphail, Paul's Hill, Dallas, and Knockando.
- Between Saturday, 28 June and Monday, 1 July, firefighting proved very challenging due to the dry vegetation, extremely windy conditions, and the inaccessibility of much of the terrain.
- Across all locations, SFRS received support in the form of specialist vehicles and equipment, experienced personnel, and essential refreshments. As appropriate, these were deployed to ensure the safety of responders and address the priorities: protection of life, property, and the environment.
- Landowners provided invaluable resources and support to SFRS. Their assistance with drones, estate workers with ATVs, and helicopters significantly complemented SFRS efforts on the ground and were very welcomed.

- A number of media statements were issued by SFRS advising nearby residents to keep their windows and doors closed.
- There were no mutual aid requests, however there was a concerted effort to assist with firefighting, with local landowners assisting SFRS with equipment and heavy agricultural vehicles to develop firebreaks.
- There were no injuries reported to authorities nor any damage to property, and although there have been a small number of evacuations and around 17 households temporarily off power and there were road closures in place, there were no significant care for people issues identified.
- The 17 households without power were reconnected on Wednesday 2 July.
- There was an issue around the mobilisation of helicopters with the capability to 'water bomb' (only on Sunday 29 June) as they were out filming for commercial companies. Come Monday 30 June, however, three helicopters were swiftly and successfully deployed.
- Scottish Ministers are holding a 'Wildfires Summit' on 14 October to which all key stakeholders will be invited to talk about improving our preparedness for such circumstances in the future.
- The summit will look at the importance of wildfires prevention measures, the appropriateness of our resources and their deployment to fight wildfires.
- SFRS is conducting a series of debriefs following the large scale wildfires across Scotland this year to help identify any lessons learned.
- The First Minister has asked the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs to undertake engagement with the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and all relevant Ministers to discuss the appropriateness of resources and their deployment to deal with wildfires.
- We continue to work with SFRS to support full implementation of its wildfire strategy which will be completed during the course of 2025. It will see the continued roll-out this year of new equipment, vehicles and Personal Protective Equipment.

### **SGORR ACTIVATION**

**The decision to activate SGORR will always involve a careful assessment as to whether activating SGORR provides sufficient value-add compared to other response mechanisms and whether the benefits of it justifies the additional burden on responders during that additional coordination.**

- Not 'activating' SGORR however does not mean SGORR officials are not directly and continually involved in situations.
- Throughout the Dava wildfires, SGORR officials were directly linked in with responders on the ground via Scottish Government Liaison Officers (SGLOs) who attended the resilience partnership meetings convened to deal with the consequences of the fires.
- SGORR officials fed information from the resilience partnership meetings directly to Scottish Government fire officials who were handling the Scottish Government response.
- Therefore, there was constant communication and officials were kept abreast of developments via regular telephone calls from the SFRS Senior Commander on the ground throughout the incident period and SGORR officials continuously assessed whether or not SGORR activation was required.

- Three daily situation reports were provided by SFRS which were sent to Ministers. On the basis of Scottish Government officials' engagement with responders throughout the event, directly with SFRS and via the resilience partnership, the assessment continued to be that activating SGORR would not significantly benefit the response, not least from a subsidiarity perspective.
- No requests were made for mutual aid or other support from Scottish Government.
- Circumstances which would have likely seen SGORR stand up include, but are not limited to, immediate risk to life and property; mass evacuations or other immediate care for people risks including any actions which might have necessitated the use of Emergency Alerts or military assistance; a request by local responders for support from the Scottish Government or indeed for SGORR to stand up.
- Thankfully there was no immediate risk to life or property and there were no large-scale evacuations required, though REST centres had been prepared as a contingency.
- There were no injuries reported to authorities nor any damage to property throughout these incidents, and although there was a small number of evacuations with around 17 households temporarily off power and road closures in place, there were no significant care for people issues identified.
- The 17 households without power were reconnected on Wednesday 2 July.

## **Section 9: CNPA Fire Byelaws**

### **Issue**

- Ministers have approved the introduction of new byelaws in the Cairngorms National Park that will prohibit outdoor fires and barbeques within the park between April-September, although camping stoves and gas barbeques will continue to be allowed.
- In 2023 alone, the Park Authority rangers dealt with 219 active fires and 678 fire remain sites.

### **Support**

- Public consultation by CNPA on the draft wording of the byelaws was carried out in 2024 and 79% of respondents indicated their support for the introduction of fire management byelaws.
- The byelaws alone (without enforcement) could increase public awareness (and ideally behaviour change), particularly in the context of increasingly dry summers and wildfire outbreaks.

### **Limitations**

- The Byelaws will make a wider contribution to wildfire mitigation – through limiting the use of fires and barbeques - however it is recognised that this will only address one facet of a growing issue.
- Currently, National Park byelaws are enforced through reports to the Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service. Through the Natural Environment Bill, which is currently at Stage 1, we are seeking powers for National Park authorities to be able to enforce byelaw infringements directly by issuing fixed penalty notices .

## **Background**

- CNPA's consultation on the draft byelaws received 1,664 online responses and 18 written responses. Of these, 1,571 (79%) respondents indicated their support for the introduction of fire management byelaws.
- SG then undertook an objection period on the draft byelaws after they were formally submitted by CNPA. This ended on 18 May 2025 and two objections were received. These related primarily to the importance of education as a deterrent.
- Cabinet Secretary RALRI has approved the byelaws to become effective from 01 April 2026