

## ANNEX A

A small amount of information has been withheld under Regulation 10(4)(e) (internal communications). This exception is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exception. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exception. We recognise that there is some public interest in releasing the information as part of an open, transparent and accountable government. However, this is outweighed by the greater public interest in allowing Scottish Government officials a private space to share advice for the purpose of deliberation on any given policy.

A small amount of information has been withheld under Regulation 10(5)(f) (third party interests). This exception is subject to the 'public interest test'. Therefore, taking account of all the circumstances of this case, we have considered if the public interest in disclosing the information outweighs the public interest in applying the exception. We have found that, on balance, the public interest lies in favour of upholding the exception. We recognise that there is some public interest in releasing the information as part of an open, transparent and accountable government. However, disclosure of this particular information would, or would be likely to, prejudice substantially the confidentiality of said information and the interests of those providing information to the Scottish Government in confidence.

Additionally, a small amount of information has been withheld from the documents provided under Regulation 11 – Personal Data as it contains personal information and disclosing it would contravene the data protection principles in Article 5(1) of the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) and in Section 34(1) of the Data Protection Act 2018. This exception is not subject to the 'public interest test'.

Minister for Victims and Community Safety  
Ministear airson Luchd-fulaing is Sàbhailteachd  
Choimhearsnachd  
Siobhian Brown MSP/BPA

T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot

Richard Lochhead MSP  
richard.lochhead.msp@parliament.scot

Our Reference: 202500483848  
Your Reference: Wildfires - Richard Lochhead

16 September 2025

Dear Richard,

Thank you for your letter of 4 September, addressed to the Cabinet Secretary for Justice and Home Affairs, regarding your constituent's proposal to adapt small aircraft to help tackle wildfires across Scotland. As Minister with portfolio responsibility for fire and rescue matters, I am replying to you.

Scottish Ministers have recently gone on record to give their thanks for the help and support the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) clearly received from the absolutely vital role that volunteers, partners, landowners, gamekeepers, the extended local community and the wider land management sector played in bringing the wildfires in Highland and Moray under control. The local knowledge of key individuals was no doubt paramount in the provision of skills and knowledge sharing and the technical expertise rendered on the incident ground. Their assistance with drones, all-terrain vehicles, and helicopters significantly complemented the SFRS efforts on the ground.

The Scottish Government is working with 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; and  
This is also supplemented by the creation of 14 wildfire tactical advisor roles around Scotland.

As you will appreciate, operational decisions as to how SFRS tackles wildfires are a matter for the Service. Your constituent may however find section 8B9 (Aerial Suppression Tactics) in the Wildfire Operational Guidance useful. Your constituent might also be interested to learn more about the Community Asset Register (CAR) which SFRS hosts and manages. The CAR is a Scotland wide database of volunteers willing to help during an emergency and it is routinely updated when new assets become available, noting assets can be people with either skills or equipment. The database plots assets on a map so that when an emergency incident occurs, SFRS are able to quickly identify those who could help.

SFRS recognises that the wildfire environment is unique in firefighting as it is one where collaborative response work with landowners and other non-government agencies is inherent to the way the Service responds. My officials have liaised with SFRS on [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] proposal and [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] is happy to discuss it further with him if he so wishes. [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] e-mail address is [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@firescotland.gov.uk and has been advised that Mr Brown may be in touch.

I hope you find this reply helpful.  
Yours sincerely,

**SIOBHIAN BROWN**

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Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity  
Ministear airson Àiteachas agus Comas-ceangail  
Jim Fairlie MSP/BPA  
T : 0300 244 4000  
E : scottish.ministers@gov.scot



Alexander Burnett MSP  
Robyn.Fairley@Parliament.scot  
Our Reference: 202500485564

Your Reference: Wildfire management insurance  
1 October 2025

Dear Alexander,

Thank you for your letter of 19 September regarding what insurance provision the Scottish Government offers or facilitates for people tackling natural disaster and wildfire incidents.

The Scottish Government does not operate a compensation scheme for those affected by wildfires. Standard UK home insurance policies generally cover fire damage to both the building and its contents. Coverage can include structural repairs, personal belongings, damage caused by emergency services, and temporary accommodation if required.

During a large multi agency incident a local Emergency Liaison, Local or Regional Resilience Partnership (RRP) may be stood up by any agency. These are established by multi-agency partnerships comprising representatives from local public services, including emergency services, local authorities, the NHS, and others. These partners, known as Category 1 Responders, are mandated by the Civil Contingencies Act. RRP's also collaborate with Category 2 responders, such as utility companies and the Highways Agency, to ensure comprehensive preparedness, response and recovery to emergencies.

The Bellwin Scheme allows Ministers to make additional revenue support available to councils to assist with their immediate and unforeseen costs in dealing with the aftermath of emergency incidents. The key criterion of the Scheme is to safeguard life and property, and prevent suffering or severe inconvenience. The Scheme addresses revenue and uninsurable expenditure incurred within a two month period from the date of the incident. Payments are only made once the Local Authority has exceeded its annual Bellwin Threshold which represents 0.2% of their net revenue budget for the year in question. This is the amount Local Authorities are deemed to set aside to cover unforeseen emergencies across each financial year.

As you may be aware, Scottish Land and Estates (SLE) is to administer grant funding of up to £10,000 from the Cairngorms National Park Authority to replace equipment damaged during efforts to combat the wildfires in Carrbridge and Dava. We owe gratitude to the gamekeepers, land managers and all who worked with them to extinguish the wildfires at Dava and Carrbridge, which were still smouldering three weeks later when I met them on the hillside to survey the damage.

I hope these grants will help repair the damage done to their machinery in getting the fires under control and demonstrate how they are recognised as absolutely vital in protecting our landscapes from fire. We will continue to work together to be sure we are better prepared for the growing threat of wildfires.

Yours sincerely,  
**JIM FAIRLIE**

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### Introduction

As I draw this debate to a close, I want to thank colleagues across the chamber for their thoughtful contributions. I was grateful to have been able to meet land management stakeholders last Tuesday to reflect on the horrendous damage caused by wildfires earlier in the year, which I have seen for myself in Carrbridge.

The focus of that meeting was largely around muirburn but we all agreed we need to be better prepared for the future threat of wildfire, made worse by climate change.

The increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires in Scotland is not just a seasonal hazard. It is a stark warning. These fires are placing immense pressure on rural communities and our emergency services - devastating our landscapes, threatening biodiversity and damaging critical infrastructure.

## Context

Some parts of Scotland are uniquely vulnerable. Our rural terrain, rich biodiversity, and extensive peatlands are both ecologically precious and highly susceptible to fire. When peatlands burn, they release large amounts of carbon, undoing years of work in a matter of hours. Restoring these landscapes not only reduces fire risk, but also strengthens our carbon sinks and supports our climate aims.

I want to also acknowledge the positive benefits which can come from controlled burning to create fire breaks and the important role they play in tackling wild fires. We must strike a balance which recognises the critical role of land managers and their knowledge of landscapes.

We have also heard today about the devastating impact on biodiversity. We've heard about the strain placed on our emergency services, and the immense pressure put on local communities.

## Support for SFRS

We must ensure that land management practices are sustainable, that public awareness campaigns are robust, and that our emergency services are properly resourced.

That is why 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.

SFRS have fourteen specialist Wildfire Tactical Advisors deployed around Scotland and SFRS also frequently make use of the Community Asset Register, particularly at wildfire incidents. This is a Scotland wide database of volunteers willing to help during an emergency. The database plots assets, which can be either skilled people or equipment, on a map so if an emergency incident occurs, SFRS can identify those who could help.

Building upon the Community Asset Register, work is also underway to develop a specific online training module to facilitate the use of local people such as gamekeepers at wildfire incidents. SFRS and the Scottish Wildfire Forum continue to seek improvements on how local people can be utilised at wildfire incidents in a safe and managed way, and provide advice and support to not only Local Authorities, but any agency or individual who seeks it. The Community Asset Register is a fantastic way to enable people to contribute to their local communities.

The Service's planned spend is £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.

Further to this, we are providing grant funding of up to £10,000 from the Cairngorms National Park Authority to compensate rural businesses for damage to equipment. It is absolutely vital to replace damaged equipment in order to be ready for future wildfires, which are sadly becoming more common.

## Next steps

I visited the aftermath of the wildfire events at Carrbridge and I personally spoke with gamekeepers at the Scone Game Fair about their experiences in the days following the wildfire events at Dava and Carrbridge. Let me be clear: wildfires are an issue which needs to be taken seriously and this Government is committed to ensuring mitigation is in place through the right planning, the right investment, and the right leadership.

After listening to stakeholders regarding their concerns on muirburn licensing I delayed implementation until 01 January to ensure gamekeepers and land managers can continue to manage land appropriately in light of the increased wildfire risk.

We'll be continuing to listen to stakeholders and experts over the coming weeks. The Scottish Multi-Agency Resilience Training and Exercising Unit Debrief will take place on 25 September. This will bring all partners together involved in preparedness and response to these wildfires in order to carry out a full independent review, to identify any lessons learned and inform areas of good practice.

Then a Ministerial Debrief from SFRS will take place on 1 October, led by Ms Constance, with myself and Ms Brown in attendance.

Following that, a "Cross Public Sector Wildfires Meeting" with Scottish public bodies and stakeholders will take place on 9 October to look at what more can be done regarding the prevention and management of wildfires in readiness for next year's wildfires season.

Finally a "Ministerial Wildfires Summit" will take place on 14 October, which all key stakeholders will be invited to. Discussion at this summit will be on improving preparedness for such circumstances in the future.

### Closing

In closing, I want to take a moment to put on record my thanks 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.

The Scottish Government will continue to engage and is committed to taking action to tackle the very real wildfire threat facing us.

**Word count – approx. 910 @140 wpm = 6.5 mins**

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|--------------|--|
| <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>  |

|                                   |   |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| <p><b>Key Message(s)</b></p>      | <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>  |
| <p><b>Supporting official</b></p> | <p>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] – Wildlife Management Policy -<br/> [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]<br/> [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] – Head of Fire and Rescue Unit –<br/> [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]</p>   |
| <p><b>Briefing contents</b></p>   | <p><b>Annex A:</b> Summit Invitees List<br/> <b>Annex B:</b> Background briefing<br/> <b>Annex C:</b> Chairs Agenda (attached separately)<br/> <b>Annex D:</b> Opening Speech – Siobhian Brown (attached separately)<br/> <b>Annex E:</b> Opening Speech – Jim Fairlie (attached separately)<br/> <b>Annex F:</b> Closing Speech – Jim Fairlie (attached separately)<br/> <b>Annex G:</b> Closing Speech – Siobhian Brown (attached separately)</p> |

## Invitation List

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

|   |   |
|---|---|
| [REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>Eric Baird<br>Alan McDonnell   | Scottish Ramblers Association<br>Scottish Countryside Rangers Association<br>Trees for Life   |
| <b>Others</b>   |   |
| Alastair Ross<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>Harper Loonsk  | Association of British Insurers (ABI) – Scotland representative<br>Highland Council<br>Dumfries and Galloway Council<br>Highland Adapts |
| <b>Gamekeepers</b>  |   |
| [REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)]<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION<br>11(2)] |   |

## Background Briefing

Section 1: General Top Lines  
 Section 2: [OUT OF SCOPE]  
 Section 3: [OUT OF SCOPE]  
 Section 4: Air Quality (Public Health)  
 Section 5: [OUT OF SCOPE]  
 Section 6: Muirburn  
 Section 7: [OUT OF SCOPE]  
 Section 8: Emergency Response  
 Section 9: [OUT OF SCOPE]

## 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.
- SFRRS remains fully ready and able to respond to any instance of wildfire that occurs across Scotland.

**Section 2:[OUT OF SCOPE]**

**Section 3: [OUT OF SCOPE]**

## **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: [OUT OF SCOPE]**

## **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.

[OUT OF SCOPE]

**Section 7: [OUT OF SCOPE]**

## **Section 8: Emergency Response**

[OUT OF SCOPE]

**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: [OUT OF SCOPE]

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### Wildfire Summit – Annotated Agenda

Date: 14 October 2025

Time: 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Location: Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey

Theme: Strengthening Collaboration and Preparedness for Wildfire Resilience

#### 1. Welcome & Introductions (10:00 – 10:10)

Speakers: Mr Fairlie and Ms Brown

##### Chair Notes

- Welcome attendees and thank them for their participation.
- Opening speeches – Annex D Ms Brown – Annex E Mr Fairlie.
- To save time, outline that if attendees can introduce themselves when they speak rather than going round the room.
- Introduce key speakers and explain the structure of the session, details below:
  - We will have three organisations speaking at today’s event. Starting with speakers from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, who are providing an overview of future plans and direction at SFRS.
- Followed by a presentation from Colin Mclean, Cairngorms National Park Authority, who will talk us through wildfire planning and mitigation strategies at CNPA.
- Finally, we’ll hear from Diarmuid O’Neill (Director of Environment and Forestry at the Scottish Government), on insights and shared actions following last week’s Cross Public Sector Wildfires Meeting.
  - There will be time for some questions following each presentation.
- At 10:55 we will then split into two breakout groups covering Risk reduction, Readiness and Response. These discussions will take place for one hour.
  - We will then begin to wrap up and close the Summit at 12:00.
- Encourage active participation, especially during breakout discussions. Today’s Summit is about hearing from you. We’re here to listen, learn, and take forward what emerges from these conversations.

#### 2. Presentations (10:10 – 10:55)

10:10 – 10:25 - Scottish Fire and Rescue Service: Priorities, Partnerships, and Progress

Speaker: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and Jon Henderson (SFRS)

##### 1.1.1 Chair Notes:

- Invite [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and Jon to present.
- After the talk, allow 2–3 minutes for clarifying questions.
- Prompt: “What recent successes or challenges should we be aware of?”

10:25 – 10:40 | Wildfire Planning and Mitigation Strategies within the Park

Speaker: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (CNPA)

##### 1.1.2 Chair Notes:

- Introduce [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and highlight CNPA’s role in wildfire mitigation.
- Encourage attendees to consider how park-level strategies can be scaled or adapted.
- Optional prompt: “How can these strategies be integrated with national efforts?”

**10:40 – 10:55 | Key Outcomes from the Public Agency Meeting**

Speaker: Diarmuid O’Neill (Scottish Government)

1.1.3 Chair Notes:

- Invite Diarmuid to share insights and shared actions.
- Emphasize the importance of inter-agency collaboration.
- Suggested follow-up: “What are the next steps for implementing these outcomes?”

**3. Breakout Discussion (10:55 – 11:55)**

**10:55 – 11:55 | Breakout Discussion**

Format: Two groups chaired by Mr Fairlie and Ms Brown

1.1.4 Chair Notes:

- Divide attendees into two balanced groups.
- Each group will cover three focused areas (detailed below)
- Provide printed discussion prompts.
- Time check at 11:45 to begin wrapping up discussions.

1.1.5

1.1.6 Discussion Focus Areas:

|  | <b>Discussion Focus</b>  |
|--|--|
| <b>1. Risk Reduction</b><br><br><b>10:55 – 11:15</b> | <p>Risk Reduction – Systems, training, land management, public awareness, legislation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How can we minimise risk through improved systems and coordination?</li> <li>• Are there gaps that could reduce risk during response around: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Training</li> <li>○ Equipment</li> <li>○ Protocols</li> </ul> </li> <li>• What actions need to happen now to best prevent wildfires in Scotland in the future? Please think about what needs to happen, for example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Is more research needed in this area?</li> <li>○ Is it worth exploring heightening press/radio/social media/TV/targeted streaming platform ads etc. prior to next year’s wildfire season?</li> <li>○ Consideration of proactive containment of wildfires through sensible land management and fire mitigation to be integrated and planned for at an estate level;</li> <li>○ Building in natural ‘fire breaks’ by managing growth of vegetation, dividing up large areas and introducing ploughed fields, man-made trenches, peatland restoration or low-level planting can prevent massive spread across large areas;</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Further introduction of by-laws and bans across local authorities;</li> <li>○ What engagement is now required with insurers?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>3. Readiness</b><br><b>11:15 – 11:30</b> | <p>Readiness – Capacity, technology, volunteer resilience, asset deployment.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● What sustainable capabilities are needed to manage wildfires in Scotland?</li> <li>● Please think about what needs to happen, for example: Are there capacity issues in terms of two/several large fires burning simultaneously – if so, what are the solutions? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ How resilient is the volunteer-based model in rural and remote areas. How can we address any issues with this?</li> <li>○ Consideration of costs / benefits of possible solutions and use of new technologies (i.e. drones, tracked vehicles etc.);</li> <li>○ Airborne assets (e.g. helicopter procurement, prioritisation and deployment);</li> <li>○ Use of weather trackers;</li> <li>○ The resilience of the existing wildfire alert / wildfire danger assessments system.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> |
| <b>3. Response</b><br><b>11:30 – 11:45</b>  | <p>Response – Real-time coordination, leadership roles, and sector contributions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How can we improve coordination across agencies during active incidents? What tools or systems are missing?</li> <li>● The ongoing work partnership approach and work of the Scottish Wildfire Forum</li> <li>● Who leads on which element?</li> <li>● What can your contribution be at sector/organisational level?</li> </ul>   |
| <b>4. Close</b><br><b>11:45 – 11:55</b>     | <p>Close breakout discussions</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Go over key points and insights with group</li> <li>2. Highlight areas for note taking</li> </ol>  |

## 5. Closing Remarks and Next Steps (11:55 – 12:00)

Speaker: Mr Fairlie and Ms Brown

1.1.7 Chair Notes:

- Summarise key themes and insights from the breakout groups.
  - Outline next steps:
    - Notes from each of the breakout groups will be collated and summarised.
    - SG will be using the information from today alongside the other feedback sessions to inform a strategic approach to wildfires in Scotland.
  - Closing speeches - Annex F Mr Fairlie – Annex G Ms Brown.
  - Thank speakers and attendees for their contributions.
-

## ANNEX D

### **Wildfire Summit - Opening Speech [Approximately 2.5 minutes]** **Siobhian Brown - Minister for Victims and Community Safety**

Good morning, everyone. I want to begin by thanking you all for being here today. Your attendance reflects the shared commitment we have to tackling the growing challenge of wildfires across the country. The work we're undertaking together to better recognise, understand, and respond to this evolving threat is not only timely, but essential. Wildfires are increasingly becoming part of our climate reality, and that demands stronger collaboration, thoughtful preparation, and a collective sense of responsibility. I'm truly grateful for the expertise, insight, and time each of you brings to this conversation.

We are incredibly appreciative 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.

The Scottish Fire Rescue Service is conducting a series of a debriefs following the large scale wildfires across Scotland this year to help identify any lessons learned.

With this, we will continue to work with the Rescue Service 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 training to strengthen its response to wildfires, particularly in rural areas.

These investments along with our ongoing work that has brought us to this Summit today. As the climate crisis intensifies, the nature risk in Scotland is evolving, with drier summers, record-breaking high temperatures and unpredictable weather patterns becoming our reality - all of which contributes to increasing the risk of wildfires. The action we take now, through investment, policy and collaboration will determine how resilient our nation is over the years ahead.

Of course, the progress we've made and the progress still to come, depends on partnership. It takes all of us working together to meet the challenges of climate change and wildfire risks. Collaboration is at the heart of this effort today and it's something we're all deeply committed to. I'm pleased now to hand over to my co-chair, Jim Fairlie, Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity.

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## ANNEX E

### **Wildfire Summit - Opening Speech [Approximately 2 minutes]** **Jim Fairlie - Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity**

Thank you, Ms Brown.

Wildfires are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change and extreme weather. Tackling climate change is essential to protect our communities, infrastructure, and environment. But even as we push for global action, we must improve how we prevent and respond to wildfires here in Scotland.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority is leading with Scotland's first fire management byelaw, restricting open fires and barbecues. The Cairngorms Park Authority's climate adaptation fund has also delivered over £600,000 in grants for fire equipment and training. Its partnership with Scottish Land & Estates to replace damaged gear shows how local expertise and resilience can support faster, more effective responses.

Fuel load management and muirburn licensing are also vital. As many of you will be away the delay to the muirburn licensing scheme was 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 today but 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.

Scotland urgently needs a national wildfire plan that strengthens inter-agency coordination, addresses equipment requirements, and integrates land use data.

Today's Summit shows we have access to a wealth of expertise and experience across many backgrounds – from fire response to land management, community resilience, nature, and climate science. By bringing together this range of knowledge and perspectives, we are building the foundations for a stronger, more co-ordinated approach to tackling wildfires. I hope today we can embrace that fully leading to real, focused action.

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## **ANNEX F**

### **Wildfire Summit - Closing Speech**

**Jim Fairlie - Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity**

Thank you all for being here today.

As Minister representing Rural Affairs, I want to express my deep appreciation to everyone who's contributed to this summit — land managers, gamekeepers, community representatives, and environmental experts. Your proposals and insights have been thoughtful, practical, and rooted in real experience.

Wildfires pose a growing threat to our landscapes, biodiversity, and rural livelihoods. What we've heard today — from ideas on land use and vegetation management to community-led prevention — gives us a strong foundation to build on.

We've delayed the muirburn licensing scheme to ensure your voices are properly heard, and today's discussions reaffirm how important that decision was. We will continue to work with you to shape policies that are effective, fair, and grounded in local knowledge.

Thank you again for your leadership and your commitment. Together, we're making Scotland's rural areas more resilient and better prepared for the future.

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## ANNEX G

### **Wildfire Summit - Closing Speech**

#### **Siobhian Brown - Minister for Victims and Community Safety**

As Minister responsible for Scotland's fire and rescue services, I want to thank our emergency responders, planners, wildfire experts, and community partners for the proposals you've brought forward today.

This year's wildfires have shown us how quickly conditions can change — and how vital it is to be ready. Your contributions on equipment, training, coordination, and community engagement will help shape how we strengthen our national response. We're committed to supporting the full rollout of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's wildfire strategy, and your input today will help us do that in a way that's informed, responsive, and joined up across sectors.

We're also expanding the Community Asset Register and developing new training modules to harness local expertise safely and effectively — ideas that came directly from conversations like these.

Thank you again for your dedication and your partnership. Scotland is safer because of the work you do, and we're proud to stand with you in meeting this challenge.

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### **Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands**

|             |   |
|-------------|---|
| <b>What</b> | Cabinet (General CAE speaking notes and background) |
| <b>Who</b>  | Scottish Government Cabinet                         |
| <b>When</b> | Tuesday 30 September – 0930                         |

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Agenda</b>   | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. [OUT OF SCOPE]</li><li>2. [OUT OF SCOPE]</li><li>3. [OUT OF SCOPE]</li><li>4. <b>Civil Contingencies Risk and Preparedness Arrangements in Scotland (<i>Paper SC(25)99</i>) Annex A</b></li><li>5. [OUT OF SCOPE]</li><li>6. [OUT OF SCOPE]</li><li>7. [OUT OF SCOPE]</li></ol> |
| <b>Briefing</b> | <p>Annex A - Civil Contingencies Risk and Preparedness Arrangements in Scotland</p> <p>[OUT OF SCOPE]</p> <p>[OUT OF SCOPE]</p>  |

## Civil Contingencies Risk and Preparedness Arrangements in Scotland

### Speaking Points (if required)

N/A

### Background

Officials continue to work across RALRI and with **Crisis Preparation Oversight Group** (CPOG) to develop means to prevent and mitigate against known threats, including animal disease outbreaks, and to minimise the impacts of other factors which may affect farming, land use, food security and animal welfare including those related to adverse weather. This includes Director ARE, Chief Veterinary Officer and Director EnFor being identified as the Senior Strategic Leads in the CPOG structure for animal health, food and environment (Annex A of the paper).

[OUT OF SCOPE]

Following the significant wildfires at Dava and Carrbridge this summer, officials and Ministers are taking several actions across September and October 2025 to understand exactly what is required to increase our resilience to wildfires. This includes actions regarding both wildfire prevention and wildfire response.

The following will take place in the coming weeks:

- The Scottish Multi-Agency Resilience Training and Exercising Unit debrief will take place on 25 September. This will bring all partners together involved in preparedness and response to these wildfires to carry out a full independent review, to identify any lessons learned and inform areas of good practice.
- Then a Ministerial Debrief from SFRS will take place on 1 October, led by Ms Constance, with Mr Fairlie and Ms Brown in attendance.
- Following that, a “Cross Public Sector Wildfires Meeting” with Scottish public bodies and stakeholders will take place on 9 October to look at what more can be done regarding the prevention and management of wildfires in readiness for next year’s wildfires season.
- Finally, a “Ministerial Wildfires Summit” will take place on 14 October, which all key stakeholders will be invited to. Discussion at this summit will be on improving preparedness for such circumstances in the future.



**land management sector and indeed to everyone who played a part in getting this spring and summer's wildfires under control.**

- SFRS are conducting a full debrief that will identify areas of good practice, any lessons learned and will inform next steps and the Chief Fire Officer has confirmed he will respond to the letter from Mr Ewing.
- 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 our 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' in the coming weeks 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 (including myself) 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.

**The Preparing Scotland suite of guidance does not assign evacuation responsibilities to a single entity. Instead, it outlines a multi-agency approach aligned with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, where responsibilities are shared among Category 1 responders (such as local authorities, emergency services, NHS bodies) and Category 2 responders (such as utilities and transport providers).**

- Evacuation decisions are made locally, based on risk assessments and the specific circumstances of the emergency.
- The lead responder (usually the police or fire service depending on the nature of the incident) will typically make the initial decision to evacuate, based on advice from, and in consultation with other agencies such as local NHS Board (Director of Public Health) and SEPA.
- The decision must consider:
  - ✓ Safety of the public;
  - ✓ Scale and nature of the threat;
  - ✓ Availability of shelter and transport;
  - ✓ Impact on vulnerable groups; and
  - ✓ Whether sheltering in place might be safer than evacuation.
- Local Authorities typically lead on evacuation planning and coordination, especially in terms of shelter and welfare..
- Health Boards are responsible for ensuring continuity of care and safe evacuation of healthcare facilities.
- Resilience Partnerships (RP) support coordination across agencies, where appropriate, that is when the scale dictates the need for an RP. Not all incidents do. Evacuations occur fairly routinely and are managed at an operational level without a higher lever of coordination required.

**Background**

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.

Kind regards,  
Morven

*You can reach me on eMail or Teams please.*

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (she / her)  
Head of Strategy, Collaboration and Operations | Fire and Rescue Unit | Safer Communities Directorate  
The Scottish Government | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 15:45

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Dava Residents – Wildfire.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[OUT OF SCOPE]

The Preparing Scotland suite of guidance does not assign evacuation responsibilities to a single entity. Instead, it outlines a multi-agency approach aligned with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, where responsibilities are shared among Category 1 responders (such as local authorities, emergency services, NHS bodies) and Category 2 responders (such as utilities and transport providers).

However some general lines on evacuation are:

- Evacuation decisions are made locally, based on risk assessments and the specific circumstances of the emergency.
- The lead responder (usually the police or fire service depending on the nature of the incident) will typically make the initial decision to evacuate, based on advice from, and in consultation with other agencies such as local NHS Board (Director of Public Health) and SEPA
- The decision must consider:
  - ✓ Safety of the public
  - ✓ Scale and nature of the threat
  - ✓ Availability of shelter and transport
  - ✓ Impact on vulnerable groups
  - ✓ Whether sheltering in place might be safer than evacuation
- Local Authorities typically lead on evacuation planning and coordination, especially in terms of shelter and welfare..
- Health Boards are responsible for ensuring continuity of care and safe evacuation of healthcare facilities.
- Resilience Partnerships (RP) support coordination across agencies, where appropriate, that is when the scale dictates the need for an RP. Not all incidents do. Evacuations occur fairly routinely and are managed at an operational level without a higher lever of coordination required

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Unit Head: Civil Contingencies Sector Support  
Civil Contingencies Division / Strategy and Delivery Directorate

Mobile: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Email: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

SGoRR Duty Officer pager: sgorrduty@onpage.com (not for routine business)



**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 14:51

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** FW: Dava Residents – Wildfire.

Hi both,

Just wondered if you'd be able to provide me with lines on the below by 4.30pm today?

Many thanks,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 13:30

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Cc:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: Dava Residents – Wildfire.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Copying @[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] and @[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] who have oversight of our engagement with this partnership structures and can provide advice.

Regards

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

**[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]**

Unit Head – Scottish Government Resilience Room (SGORR), Communications and Communities | Civil Contingencies Division | Strategy and Delivery Directorate | The Scottish Government

Mob: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | @ReadyScotland | ready.scot

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 13:28

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>







M: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] | E: MinisterforVCS@gov.scot

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@parliament.scot> **On Behalf Of** Ewing F (Fergus), MSP

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 11:03

**To:** Stuart Stevens <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@firescotland.gov.uk>

**Cc:** Local Police Commander, Highlands and Islands <highlandislandlocalpolicecommander@scotland.police.uk>; Chief Executive (chief.executive@highland.gov.uk) <chief.executive@highland.gov.uk>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>; Minister for Victims and Community Safety 2024 <MinisterforVCS@gov.scot>

**Subject:** Dava Residents – Wildfire.

**Importance:** High

Stuart Stevens  
Chief Fire Officer  
SFRS

Dear Chief Officer,

**Re: Dava Residents – Wildfire.**

I am writing as the constituency MSP for Inverness and Nairn having had discussion with a resident in Dava Moor, to understand the horrific experiences she and her neighbours underwent, in the wildfire that occurred in late June and early July. This was of course the worst in our recorded history.

The reason that I am writing to you , and copying this to the Chief Constable and the Chief Executive of the Highland Council, as well as the Ministers for Farming and Fire, is that the residents feel that when the fire was waging, they, as local residents, have been wholly ignored, and neglected and their interests, lives and properties having been ignored.

Residents are grateful to the local fire crews who, on the Sunday, fought the blaze as it advanced towards homes, working alongside gamekeepers on the moor behind. Their efforts undoubtedly protected lives and property. However, this response only followed a direct call from a neighbour, and serious concerns remain about the overall handling of the incident.

On the Saturday, when the fire spread rapidly in high winds, no water was applied and no action taken to protect properties such as Bank Cottage. Residents wish to know who made that decision, and why gamekeepers – who had arrived with equipment – were prevented from assisting when they could have made a difference.

More generally, at no stage were residents provided with information or advice, despite repeated requests. No welfare checks were made, families had to evacuate themselves, and many were left isolated without power, landlines, or mobile coverage. They later discovered that CNPA offices were being used as a command centre, but no effort was made to communicate with them.

My constituents at Dava Moor therefore seek clarification on the following: why no firefighting action was taken on the Saturday; why gamekeepers were turned away; whether military or national assistance under MACA was requested; why aerial support was delayed; whether communications failures were anticipated; whether an internal review has been commissioned; and what thresholds exist for escalating wildfires to national or military level. They also wish to know which authority is responsible for evacuation decisions, how SFRS, Police Scotland and the Council coordinate to protect residents, and how communication will be guaranteed in future.

This wildfire was a traumatic experience, and residents feel they were left unsupported and ignored at a time of extreme danger. My constituents now wish for clear information to be published on who leads evacuation decisions, how agencies will work together in future wildfires, and how communication with rural residents will be maintained when networks fail.

I would be keen to work with you to provide a better service for rural residents in future wildfires, as, sadly, it is almost inevitable that these will occur.

Thank you.

Yours sincerely,

Fergus.

**Fergus Ewing MSP**

Independent Member of Scottish Parliament for Inverness and Nairn  
Office of Fergus Ewing MSP, 112 Church Street, Inverness, IV1 1EP

Telephone: 01463 713 004



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[OUT OF SCOPE]

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**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] **On Behalf Of** Fairlie J (Jim), MSP

**Sent:** 14 October 2025 10:44

**To:** Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity

**Subject:** FW: Muirburn and wildfires

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gmail.com>

**Sent:** 11 October 2025 08:08

**To:** Fairlie J (Jim), MSP <Jim.Fairlie.MSP@Parliament.scot>

**Cc:** Grahame C (Christine), MSP <Christine.Grahame.msp@parliament.scot>

**Subject:** Muirburn and wildfires

**CAUTION:** *This e-mail originated from outside of The Scottish Parliament. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the*

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>What</b>                | The Minister will be providing the opening and closing speech for the Members Business Debate on Community Safety [??]  |
| <b>Where</b>               | Debating Chamber, Scottish Parliament   |
| <b>When</b>                | <b>01 October 2024, 16:30-17:40</b>   |
| <b>Key Message(s)</b>      | Scotland is a safe place to live and grow up in:<br>Safe from violence<br>Safe from disorder<br>Safe from assault<br>Safe from abuse                                  |
| <b>Supporting official</b> | tbc   |
| <b>Briefing contents</b>   | <b>Annex A:</b> FMQ style top lines<br><b>Annex B:</b> Hot topic Q&A (to follow)<br><b>Annex C:</b> Background<br><b>Annex D:</b> Speaking note (attached separately) |

*content is safe.*

Dear Mr Fairlie (and Ms Grahame as my constituency MSP),

I was extremely disappointed to hear of Scottish Government's U-turn on muirburn. Such an unnecessary backwards step generally but giving wildfires as the reason was particularly frustrating. This has already been researched - we already have the evidence on this. Furthermore, I'm sure the irony of the Aberdeenshire wildfire on the same day as your announcement, isn't lost on you. It clearly demonstrates that muirburn causes wildfires and that estates can't be trusted to follow their own voluntary code of practice.

You have the bill and you have the evidence, please, please, just get it done!

Regards,

---

**WILD FIRES**

### **WILDFIRES - GENERAL**

**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.**

- I 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.

## **MINISTERIAL WILDFIRES SUMMIT**

### **Scottish Ministers are holding a wildfires summit on 14 October to talk about improving our preparedness for wildfires in the future.**

- 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 series of 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.

## **MUIRBURN**

### **Muirburn is just one aspect of increasing wildfire risk in Scotland and should not be seen as a silver bullet.**

- Work is needed to address the increasing wildfire risk from both a land management and an emergency response perspective.
- I fully understand the concern around muirburn from practitioners, however the licensing scheme and surrounding legislation was heavily scrutinised prior to being passed by the Scottish Parliament.
- 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.
- I appreciate not everyone agrees with the science on muirburn on peatlands but this was thoroughly consulted on and debated during the lead up to and passage of the Bill.
- It is vital to bear in mind, however, that NatureScot have the ability to licence the undertaking of muirburn for wildfire prevention.
- We 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.

## **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
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- 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.

## **AIR QUALITY / WILDFIRES**

**If smoke is visible, people living and working nearby wildfires are advised to keep their windows and doors closed.**

- In unusual situations, the air in Scotland can pick up particulate matter from Saharan Dust storms or wildfires (burning either at home and abroad) which can affect air quality.
- Initial shelter-in-place advice is generally issued by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and / or affected local authorities during wildfires.
- Shelter-in-place guidelines provide essential steps to ensure safety during emergencies, such as natural disasters, wildfires or hazardous material incidents.
- NHS Boards lead the public health response to fires, including the provision of public health messaging and health advice.
- Public Health Scotland can, however, provide scientific advice and / or support to Health Protection Teams (and others) to assist the public health risk assessment and can help support, amplify and agree communications through its networks (where appropriate).

## **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.

## **CRITICISM OF WILDFIRE RESPONSE**

**We would like to extend our sympathies to all who were affected by the wildfires that occurred in late June and early July. I am 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 are conducting a full debrief that will identify areas of good practice, any lessons learned and will inform next steps and the Chief Fire Officer has confirmed he will respond to the letter from Mr Ewing.
- 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.
- 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 our 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.
- 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.
- Scottish Ministers are holding a 'Wildfires Summit' in the coming weeks 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 a debriefs following the large scale wildfires across Scotland this year to help identify any lessons learned.

**The Preparing Scotland suite of guidance does not assign evacuation responsibilities to a single entity. Instead, it outlines a multi-agency approach aligned with the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, where responsibilities are shared among Category 1 responders (such as local authorities, emergency services, NHS bodies) and Category 2 responders (such as utilities and transport providers).**

- Evacuation decisions are made locally, based on risk assessments and the specific circumstances of the emergency.

- The lead responder (usually the police or fire service depending on the nature of the incident) will typically make the initial decision to evacuate, based on advice from, and in consultation with other agencies such as local NHS Board (Director of Public Health) and SEPA.
- The decision must consider:
  - ✓ Safety of the public;
  - ✓ Scale and nature of the threat;
  - ✓ Availability of shelter and transport;
  - ✓ Impact on vulnerable groups; and
  - ✓ Whether sheltering in place might be safer than evacuation.
- Local Authorities typically lead on evacuation planning and coordination, especially in terms of shelter and welfare..
- Health Boards are responsible for ensuring continuity of care and safe evacuation of healthcare facilities.
- Resilience Partnerships (RP) support coordination across agencies, where appropriate, that is when the scale dictates the need for an RP. Not all incidents do. Evacuations occur fairly routinely and are managed at an operational level without a higher lever of coordination required.

## **WATER SAFETY/DROWNING PREVENTION**

### **SFRS CONSULTATION AND FUNDING**

#### **SG COMMITMENT TO SFRS**

**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.

|                            |   |
|----------------------------|---|
| <b>What</b>                | Douglas Ross MSP and Fergus Ewing MSP requested meeting on the Scottish Government's current work, policies, and future plans regarding wildfires and muirburn following on from the recent wildfire events and visits at Carrbridge and Dava in the Highlands.   |
| <b>Where</b>               | Room TG.23<br>Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh  |
| <b>When</b>                | 09 October 2025<br>09:00 – 09:45  |
| <b>Why</b>                 | Attendees wish to better understand the government's strategic approach, operational readiness, and any planned measures to mitigate risk and improve response capability.<br><br>This also serves as an opportunity to set out the new timeline for the muirburn licensing scheme.<br><br>MiCase Ref: 202500479992 |
| <b>Supporting official</b> | [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] – Mobile No. [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]<br>[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] – Mobile No. [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  |
| <b>Briefing contents</b>   | <b>Annex A:</b> Key Messages/Top Lines<br><b>Annex B:</b> Hot Topic Q&A<br><b>Annex C:</b> Background<br><b>Annex D:</b> Previous Engagement  |

**Key Messages/Top Lines**

**MUIRBURN**

**Muirburn is just one aspect of increasing wildfire risk in Scotland and should not be seen as a silver bullet.**

- Work is needed to address the increasing wildfire risk from both a land management and an emergency response perspective.
- I fully understand the concern around muirburn from practitioners, however the licensing scheme and surrounding legislation was heavily scrutinised prior to being passed by the Scottish Parliament.
- I met with stakeholders last month (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.
- 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.
- It is vital to bear in mind, that NatureScot have the ability to licence the undertaking of muirburn for wildfire prevention.
- There are options to bring forward the licensing scheme to ensure we do not lose the benefits whilst also being sensitive to increases in fuel load which may increase wildfire risk.
- We 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.

**[OUT OF SCOPE]**

- [OUT OF SCOPE]

**Implementation Date**

Following discussions with a number of stakeholders and experts over recent weeks, I have decided to delay implementation of the muirburn provisions until the start of the next muirburn season in Autumn 2026.

This decision will provide us with the time and opportunity to carefully consider the upcoming changes to muirburn and how these changes can be brought forward in a way which does not adversely affect our ability to prevent and respond to wildfires.

Wildfires as I saw this summer, are very damaging to our precious peatland carbon stores and further discussions on this issue will take place with key stakeholders and at the Wildfire Summit on 14 October.

**MINISTERIAL WILDFIRES SUMMIT**

**Scottish Ministers are holding a wildfires summit on 14 October to discuss improving our wildfire preparedness, prevention and response in the future.**

- 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 series of 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.
- A wide range of stakeholders have been invited to the Summit including land managers and gamekeepers.
- MSPs and media have not been invited as this is an opportunity for experts and those in the know to share knowledge and contribute to improvements in our wildfire preparedness, prevention and response.
- **If pressed** – This is a serious issue and the experts invited to the Summit reflects that. The Summit isn't going to be hijacked by a few politicians as opportunity for political grandstanding.

## **WILDFIRES - GENERAL**

**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.
- 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.

## **RURAL COMMUNITIES**

**Many remote and rural communities are hugely impacted by wildfire incidents, which can cause significant environmental and economic damage.**

- This needs to be achieved whilst maintaining the safety of firefighters and communities.

- SFRS works closely with a number of key partners to establish a common understanding on the risk, prevention measures, and response procedures to wildfire in Scotland.
- SFRS works closely with land managers, communities and other safety partners to prevent these incidents ever occurring.

## **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:

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## **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.

## **AIR QUALITY / WILDFIRES**

**If smoke is visible, people living and working nearby wildfires are advised to keep their windows and doors closed.**

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- Shelter-in-place guidelines provide essential steps to ensure safety during emergencies, such as natural disasters, wildfires or hazardous material incidents.
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## **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.

## **SUPPORT FOR SFRS**

### **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.**

- 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.
- SFRS is undertaking a Strategic Service Review. There has been a full public consultation that is currently being independently analysed. No decisions have been made.
- 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 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.
- SFRS continues to respond to every emergency incident with the appropriate level of resources.
- SFRS's targeted approach to risk and allocation of resources overtook the focus given to response times some years ago. It is important to focus on outcomes as there can be a variety of reasons why response times vary, particularly in remote and rural areas.
- SFRS staff health and safety is a top priority. Any decision that SFRS makes regarding paying private companies to deal with a specific health and well-being related issue is an operational matter for SFRS.

## Hot topic Q&A

**Q: I am concerned that proposed the muirburn licensing scheme will result in increased fuel loads due to the reduction of muirburn taking place therefore increasing the likelihood of wildfires. My constituents won't put their lives at risk if they are not going to be listened to.**

Muirburn is just one aspect of increasing wildfire risk in Scotland and should not be seen as a silver bullet. Work is needed to address the increasing wildfire risk from both a land management and an emergency response perspective.

I am aware of the concerns raised by land managers and gamekeepers, I met with them recently to hear their views on how best to take forward our plans around muirburn licensing given the increasing prevalence of wildfire events.

I have since taken the decision to delay implementation of the muirburn provisions until the start of the next muirburn season in Autumn 2026.

This decision will provide us with the time and opportunity to carefully consider the upcoming changes to muirburn and how these changes can be brought forward in a way which does not adversely affect our ability to prevent and respond to wildfires.

**Q: Without muirburn how will landowners be able to create firebreaks?**

I want to also acknowledge the positive benefits which can come from controlled burning to create fire breaks and the important role they play in tackling wild fires.

The new legislation and muirburn code which has been drafted in partnership with landowners and has recently been published on the NatureScot website allows for this.

We must strike a balance which recognises the critical role of land managers and their knowledge of landscapes.

**Q: How will land managers be compensated for their efforts to fight the wildfires in Scotland, some of these people had expensive equipment damaged in the process.**

I have been assured that the Cairngorms National Park Authority will offer a grant to Scottish Land and Estates who will then administer grant funding of up to £10,000 to gamekeepers and landowners involved in the response to the Highland wildfires. This will help to replace equipment damaged during efforts to combat these wildfires.

**Q: How are you going to prevent wildfires in the future?**

I visited the aftermath of the wildfire events at Carrbridge and I personally spoke with gamekeepers at the Scone Game Fair about their experiences in the days following the wildfire events at Dava and Carrbridge.

Let me be clear: wildfires are an issue which needs to be taken seriously and this Government is committed to ensuring mitigation is in place through the right planning, the right investment, and the right leadership.

Given the extensive parliamentary and media scrutiny regarding wildfires this year, the Scottish Government continues to engage with a range of relevant stakeholders on wildfire preparedness, prevention and response.

Scottish Ministers will hold a wildfire summit on 14 October. The focus of the summit will be improving our preparedness for wildfires in the future.

**Q: The key failure which I have picked was the lack of availability of helicopters. That needs to be remedied so that there are a sufficient number available on demand. I presume such a facility would require to be purchased, either by SFRS or SG.**

The Scottish Fire and Rescue (SFRS) Incident Commanders (IC) liaise with landowners and responsible persons at operational incidents. Helicopter availability for wildfire response is determined by contractual arrangements between landowners and helicopter providers.

The SFRS IC coordinates their deployment as part of the wider firefighting strategy working in close liaison with a range of partners, including landowners, agencies, and local communities, to minimise the impact of wildfires. Some estates may have this support resource built into their fire plan/insurance policies. If a resource is available and contracted, then contact is made between the IC, wildfire tactical adviser, pilot and estate, to agree a joint tactical firefighting plan and the provision of strict control measures to ensure safe systems of work.

During the recent wildfire incidents in the Highlands and Moray area, three helicopters were deployed across a range of locations to support firefighting efforts.

## **Background**

### **Muirburn Licensing Scheme**

We had previously set out to Parliament our intention to bring the provisions in the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Act 2024 relating to the muirburn licensing scheme in to force on 01 January 2026.

The muirburn licensing scheme is intended to support our aims to tackle the climate emergency, by regulating muirburn in an effort to limit damage to peatland. However, wildfires are one of the biggest risks to our climate action efforts and it is therefore considered appropriate to take the additional time to ensure the licensing scheme is workable and effective.

Following this year's wildfires, and increased concerns from stakeholders about the interaction between muirburn and wildfire mitigation the Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity agreed to delay the introduction of the licensing scheme until later in 2026.

This will be communicated to stakeholders via GIQ and subsequent news release on 9 October 2025.

### **Recent Wildfires**

You recently visited the area affected by the recent wildfires in Carrbridge and Dava on Thursday 17 July 2025. Officials had previously attended the site on the invitation of the Muirburn Code Working Group on 9 July 2025.

The local conditions gave rise to very high fire risk – tinder dry ground, which has had less than average rainfall almost every month in the last year, and a strong and changing wind which led to rapid and sometimes unpredictable movements in the blaze. In this case there were 3 local fires, all having a different cause of ignition – inadequately set campfire, agricultural burning and coastguards flare.

The agricultural fire (Auldearn) was quickly brought under control and wouldn't be noteworthy except for the proximity in time/geography to the other two fires; the 'coastguard' fire (Lochindorb) was the largest and came from a secondary ignition several days after an initial fire – it seems that local efforts were gradually bringing that under control, but it was only with the evening rain that the active fire was finally put out. The third (Dava – campfire) was the one closest to Grantown and seems not to have been under control when the rain came – in the absence of which could have been very dangerous.

In total ~10,000 Hectares have been burned. Some areas at both Dava and Lochindorb were still smoking on 13 July.

It is worth noting that the fire went through muirburned areas, even if more slowly, as well as areas not muirburned. Whilst land managers often express that muirburn prevents catastrophic damage from wildfires. However, on this occasion Some of the worst damage was done in areas which would not currently be subject to muirburn

(within immature woodland for instance) and the evidence showed that burning on the open moor had been done within the last 2 or 3 years, at best it only slowed the fire.

For these and other reasons, wildfire mitigation thinking needs to be in broader terms. This includes provision of proper equipment, coordination of resources e.g. RAF helicopters at Lossiemouth, retaining of essential skills to manage and prevent fires.

### **Officials Visit – Doune Estates (Wind Farm)**

Officials recently visited Doune Estates on 19 August 2025 where forest managers from Moray Estates were present and provided anecdotal information that the fires were dictated by wind patterns and luckily avoided patches of grouse moor by chance.

### **Peatland**

- Scotland has around 2 million hectares of peat. However, around 70% of Scotland's peatlands are degraded through drainage, extraction, overgrazing, burning, afforestation, development and acid deposition.
- Degraded peat offers fewer benefits and emits carbon, worsening the climate emergency. In 2023, degraded peatlands released 6.1 MtCO<sub>2e</sub> – around 16% of Scotland's total emissions.
- Protecting, managing and restoring degraded peatlands returns the many benefits they can offer: capturing and storing carbon; supporting nature and biodiversity; reducing risks of flooding and wildfires; and improving water quality.
- Healthy resilient peatlands therefore have a central role in mitigating and adapting to the linked climate and nature emergencies.

### Reasoning for Restricting Muirburn on Peatland

At the time of instructing the Wildlife Management and Muirburn Bill, the reasons for why a stricter test was required for making muirburn on peatland were based on a report conducted by NatureScot. This is summarised below:

*In response to the lack of scientific consensus the Scottish Government asked NatureScot to commission a report to review the current evidence from the research conducted on muirburn and the impacts of the activity on carbon stores, implications for the wider environment and wildfires. The review reached the following conclusions:*

#### **Relationship to wildfire**

- *There is evidence that muirburn causes a proportion of wildfires that occur on moorland, however, there remains uncertainty regarding this proportion and the purpose for which muirburn is being undertaken.*
- *Insofar as muirburn does influence (reduce) fuel load, this indicates a plausible mechanism through which muirburn may influence the intensity of wildfires.*

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## Previous Engagement

On 18 September 2025, the Minister for Agriculture provided the closing speech for the Members Business Debate on the increasing frequency and intensity of wildfires (S6M-18710). Both Douglas Ross MSP and Fergus Ewing MSP contributed to the debate.

### Other Ministerial business on wildfire

- A general question (S6O-04946) was recently lodged by Fergus Ewing and answered on Thursday 18 September:

*To ask the Scottish Government, in light of reports that the worst wildfires ever recorded in Scotland affected the areas around Dava, Lochindorb and Carrbridge this summer, what discussions the rural affairs secretary has had with ministerial colleagues regarding potentially commissioning an independent review of wildfire management practices.*

- Ministers met with SFRS on 8 October to be updated on the independent debrief following the wildfires this year. The debrief is being independently conducted by SMARTEU (Scottish Multi-Agency Resilience Training and Exercising Unit) and is expected to report and make recommendations at the end of October.
- The Scottish Government is hosting a wildfire summit on 14 October, co-chaired by the Mr Fairlie and Ms Brown. The focus of which is addressing future wildfire risks.
- The Scottish Conservative Party have made a request for a statement from the Scottish Government on wildfires (response and preparedness) in Moray and Highlands. This has been accepted but will be scheduled for a date following the wildfire summit in October.

## Recent Engagement

Mr Fairlie met with stakeholders including SLE and SGA on 3 June 2025 to discuss concerns raised by stakeholders in relation to bringing into effect the muirburn licensing scheme in time for the 2025/26 muirburn season. This included concerns around wildfire and increasing fuel load as a result of the restrictions.

Mr Fairlie then met with a wider cohort of stakeholders on 9 September 2025 to discuss the muirburn licensing scheme in relation to wildfire concerns.

### **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)**

SFRS met with Mr Ewing on 25 August 2025. To set the context and background for the discussion, SFRS provided an overview of the SFRS Wildfire Strategy, their operational response to wildfires, their preparedness work in terms of developing modelling / forecasting capability in conjunction with academia and an overview of their data recording and reporting processes for wildfires. Summary readout provided by SFRS as follows:

#### **1. Muirburn Legislation.**

Mr Ewing stated he voted against the recent Muirburn Legislation and had concerns about it. SFRS reiterated their view that Muirburn is an important element in terms of preventing wildfires and wildfire spread.

## **2. Availability of Helicopters**

Mr Ewing asked if the responsibility and cost of requesting helicopters to assist at wildfire incidents should rest with SFRS should Scottish Government provide funding for that. SFRS stated they would welcome any discussion on further funding to enhance and improve the delivery of our Wildfire Strategy. They also informed Mr Ewing that they are beginning to research the potential use of drones as part of their wildfire response.

- SFRS have not asked Scottish Government for funding for dedicated SFRS helicopters, however we would be content to discuss any proposals with SFRS and partners etc. and this is something that is going to be raised at both the Scottish Public Sector Stakeholder event (9 October) and the Ministerial Wildfires Summit (14 October).

## **3. Access to Water Supplies**

Mr Ewing raised a point on access to water supplies in remote rural locations when dealing with wildfires and the challenges that presents. SFRS provided an overview of the different levels they have at their disposal to ensure provision of water at wildfire incidents, such as water within appliance water tanks, water relays (ferrying water to the scene of the incident), use of open water sources and the potential to deploy water bowsers or High Volume Pumps.

## **4. SFRS Role at Wildfires**

Mr Ewing asked about the role of SFRS at wildfire incidents, stating he had heard that they did not engage in frontline firefighting at the Dava/Carrbridge incident. SFRS stated that was not the case and was an unfair statement, they provided context the Dava/Carrbridge incident was reported as seven separate incidents, therefore SFRS had seven different response locations, and any perception of their role would depend on the time and situation at a specific point in these incidents. SFRS also stated that for safety reasons, firefighters would not go onto moorland/hillsides in the hours of darkness. Mr Ewing accepted this and acknowledged he had not considered it from this perspective.

## **5. Road Access to High Risk Areas**

Mr Ewing stated he was aware of two high risk wildfire areas where there is only one single track road in and out of the area and that these areas on occasion can have thousands of visitors. He raised concerns about the potential for gridlock conditions should these areas require to be evacuated due to a wildfire and that could potentially hamper access for responders and put the public at risk. He asked if SFRS had any thoughts on that. SFRS stated this would be a consideration and issue for Local Resilience Partnership and something that should be considered through community risk and resilience planning.

## **6. Reduction in Gamekeepers**

Mr Ewing stated that he believed there would be a decline in the number of gamekeepers across estates in Scotland partly due to potential changes to Sporting

Legislation, and asked if SFRS had concerns about that given the role they play in response to wildfires. SFRS simply reiterated that gamekeepers do play a vital role in a partnership/multi agency response to wildfires due to their expertise and knowledge of the land and terrain.

### **Wildfire SMARTEU Briefing – Meeting with SFRS and Officials, 30 September**

The official debrief with Ministers and SFRS was held on 8 October (this was moved from 1 October) with the caveat that we are not expecting the full report from SMARTEU until the end of October, therefore we must not pre-empt what is going to be in that final report. However a summary of the debrief was provided to Fire and Rescue Unit officials on 30 September and the key themes from that summary are as follows:

- There was a good cross representation from partners, although slightly disappointing in terms of landowners representation. SMARTEU are going to follow that up with an opportunity for them to contribute to the debrief via email, to try and capture their thoughts and views.
- Further to the introduction of new byelaws in the Cairngorms National Park that will prohibit outdoor fires and barbeques within the park between April-September, stakeholders raised a point about whether the Scottish Government will consider a national approach or framework in relation to this.
- There was some concern expressed in relation to policies on tree planting and muirburn. Stakeholders noted that such policies were in fact increasing the fuel load for wildfires.
- There was discussion around ownership of land, and where land is potentially leased back, where does the liability lie for ground maintenance and maintaining that.
- There was discussion surrounding the resilience of the Wildfire Danger Assessments (WDA) process/system.
- SFRS expects to see testing and exercising feature in the SMARTEU debrief in an attempt to gauge what preparedness looks like.
- There was discussion on the command and control logistics during a wildfire incident and how comms and engagement can be strengthened during an incident with the key stakeholders. SFRS confirmed it expects some form of evaluation of communications surrounding wildfire events to be a recommendation to come out of the formal SMARTEU debrief.
- There was discussion on the use of helicopters. SFRS confirmed the positive buy-in from the two helicopter companies themselves.
- SFRS is looking to establish a new and emerging risks group within the organisation, with SG representation, along with the National Fire Chiefs Council and a number of other external partners - BESS sites, electrical infrastructure, flooding etc would all feed into that group, to help drive forward a lot of these different new and emerging risks in terms of whatever policy elements may be required.

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Saughton House  
Broomhouse Drive  
Edinburgh  
EH11 3XD  
forestry.gov.scot  
Email: scottish.forestry@forestry.gov.scot  
Tel: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Chief Executive: Paul Lowe

[REDACTED:  
REGULATION 11(2)]  
[REDACTED:  
REGULATION  
11(2)]@gmail.com

Our ref: 202500485142

Date: 24 September 2025

Dear [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Thank you for your email of 17 August 2025 about Muckrach and wildfires. As the Director responsible within Scottish Forestry, I have been asked to respond on their behalf.

As I set out in my last response to you we take your concerns seriously and so I was pleased that you were able to meet for the morning with senior members of Scottish Forestry to discuss and view your concerns over the woodland creation at Muckrach. I also know that you have received a comprehensive reply on wildfires from my colleague [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], Head of Forest Sector Development, which covered the need for public and private sectors to work together and the recently announced additional funding and support for fighting wildfires.

We recognise the increasing threat wildfires pose to woodlands and as you indicate we request that applicants plan for wildfires when developing their woodland creation proposals. We have recently published further practical guidance on this which can be found here [Forest planning to minimise wildfire risk in Scotland](#) which is helping us improve the focus on this issue within forestry.

As you indicate, we need coordinated planning and response to wildfires and as such we are very supportive of the integrated wildfire management plan which the Cairngorms National Park Authority are drafting.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], Conservator for Highland and Islands, has been keeping you updated regarding the progress being made with these actions. I wanted to reassure you that we will continue to monitor the site and ensure all the remedial works are completed and trees killed by the fire replaced.

Yours sincerely

Brendan Callaghan, Director of Operational Delivery

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## **SFRS – APR Wildfire Presentation**

### **Slide One – Previous Years Stats**

Over the past decade, Scotland has seen a notable increase in both the frequency and scale of wildfires.

While some years, such as 2024 saw a decline due to exceptionally wet conditions, the overall trend has been upwards, particularly in the Highlands and Aberdeenshire, which have faced some of the largest and most protracted wildfire incidents in recent times.

The rise is widely attributed to climate change, which has led to warmer drier Springs and reduced ground moisture creating ideal conditions for ignition and fire spread. When we consider and analyse data from the past 10 years we can see an increase in the size and scale of wildfire incidents and as a result an increase in the length of time we resources committed to resolving wildfire incidents.

### **Slide Two – This Years Stats**

This year to date we have recorded a total of 231 wildfire incidents. With a sharp spike in activity in April, within the traditional wildfire season.

This year's activity level is the highest it's been in the past 10 years, and the total number of wildfires in the first 8 months of this year is around 60% higher than any previous full year.

That activity level clearly requires a significant response from the service, particularly our On Call Duty System in rural parts of the country. The month of April saw an increase of 144% in On Call activity due to the spike in wildfires.

At the recent Dava and Carrbridge wildfires in the Highlands we had 34 fire appliances and other resources in attendance at the peak of the incident.

So far this year we have had Wildfire Danger Assessments in place for a total of 59 days, 16% of the year, which is a significant period of time where areas of the country are at heightened risk of wildfires.

### **Slide Three – Partnership Working and Information Sharing**

We recognise that wildfire prevention and response can't be tackled in isolation and a collaborative approach is essential, especially with the land management sector, to ensure that efforts are aligned and effective.

Through strong partnerships, we can agree on prevention strategies and co ordinate response efforts more efficiently.

The Scottish Wildfire Forum is central to that and has a broad range of key stakeholders represented on the forum.

*For example:*

- *SFRS*
- *Cairngorms National Park Authority*
- *Forestry and Land Scotland*
- *The Heather Trust*
- *Nature Scotland*
- *Scottish Gamekeeping Association*
- *Scottish Crofting Federation*
- *Scottish Land and Estates*
- *Scotland's Regional Moorland Groups*
- *SEPA*
- *Scottish Forestry*

The forum ensures the public and partners are informed on prevention and risk information in the shape of Wildfire Danger Assessments, highlighting areas most at risk.

The forum also ensures best practice is shared across the land management sector in relation to Muirburn, which is an important tool in preventing wildfires. The forum enables SFRS to engage with land management partners to co ordinate and deliver prescribed burning training for SRFS personnel during Muirburn season.

That allows us to deliver joint training exercises with partners which strengthens inter agency co ordination and builds trust across the forum.

As part of the commitment to information sharing, we ensure that multi-agency de-briefs are conducted following incidents and lessons learned and recommendations are feedback to all stakeholders, helping improve wildfire preparedness and future response.

#### **Slide Four – Prevention (22 Week Campaign and Wildfire Partner Toolkit)**

We continue to promote key prevention messages across our social media channels to educate people how to behave responsibly when outdoors.

We also sign post people to our website where they can learn what causes wildfires and how to prevent them.

In 2024 we revised our wildfire prevention material and expanded our webpage from one to seven themed pages, this supports our 22 week prevention campaign which covers the wildfire season. We have continued to see significant increased traffic and engagement on our wildfire webpages.

As part of that we have a Wildfire Partner Toolkit which provides education and awareness materials for wider use and encourages community and partner involvement in prevention activities.

#### **Slide Five – Prevention (Local Initiatives)**

Sharing a prevention message broadly and consistently is key, and we are committed to doing that as part of our wider wildfire strategy.

Using local initiatives with partners allows us to tailor messaging to local risks and conditions, reach audiences who may not engage in national campaigns and it also helps build trust and confidence within local communities.

### **Slide Six – Prevention** (National, Regional and Local Media)

Engaging multiple media platforms ensures our wildfire prevention messages are widely seen and heard.

National media allows us to reach a broad audience, regional media allows us to focus on areas experiencing heightened wildfire risk, and local media allows us to connect directly with residents.

### **Slide Seven – Response** (Our Approach)

When we launched our wildfire strategy in 2023, it was backed with a significant investment of £1.6m.

This funding supported the procurement of all-terrain vehicles, specialist equipment and training programmes to ensure our crews are prepared and equipped to deliver our wildfire response capability.

In January this year we completed Level 2 Wildfire Training for all Tier 2 and Tier 3 stations, and have introduced technical burning (prescribed burning) as a proactive tool for wildfire management.

Our training programme over the past 18 months has included:

- Tiered learning via online, classroom and practical sessions for Tier 2 and 3 stations. 35 stations in total.
- Specialist equipment training for All Terrain Vehicles, Fogging Units and Suppression Tools.
- Prescribed burning training delivered by an external provider.
- Wildfire Tactical Advisor training in collaboration with Nottingham Fire and Rescue Service.

Much of this training is delivered in house, embedding expertise and building resilience within the service, ensuring sustainability.

Wildfires often require significant resources and co-ordination. That's why our partnerships with the landowners and land management professionals are so vital. Their local knowledge of the terrain, vegetation and access routes is invaluable as part of a multi partner response.

Operationally we have adopted a four-tier approach to wildfire response, ensuring the right resources are in the right place at the right time.

### **Slide Eight – Response** (Implementation of SFRS Wildfire Strategy)

**Tier One** – All stations trained in basic wildfire suppression.

**Tier Two** – 25 stations have received additional wildfire training and specialist PPE. Four of these stations have received 4x4 wildfire support vans.

**Tier Three** – 10 stations have received additional wildfire training and specialist PPE, and are equipped to respond with All Terrain Vehicles.

**Tier Four** – 14 Wildfire Tactical Advisors, officers that have undergone specialist training and support wildfire incidents across the country.

This structure allows us to scale our response based on the severity and complexity of the incident.

Incident Command structures are stood up to support activity nationally when demand levels require that. This is delivered through our Incident Support Rooms, which ensure strategic resource cover moves are made to meet wildfire and business as usual demands, relief strategies are put in place to support protracted wildfire incidents and that welfare arrangements are also in place to support personnel attending wildfire incidents.

### **Slide Nine – Look Forward**

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)], our wildfire capability lead, is a member of a number of forums across the UK, Europe and America, this ensures SFRS are sighted on and aware of any developments and improvements in new wildfire tactics, new technologies and emerging challenges and trends, such as Urban Wildfires.

Through our Operations and Preparedness Functions we have started to explore wider potential use of drones at wildfire incidents, engaging with the National Fire Chiefs Council and participating with ongoing research at Trondheim University in Norway.

We are currently scoping out a project to develop a system that will assist us in forecasting and modelling wildfires. This is being progressed with a combination of SFRS data supplemented with academic support from Edinburgh University.

Whilst our wildfire strategy is delivering progress through targeted investment, enhanced training and operational response capability and strong partnerships.

It's crucial that we continue to engage and learn more about wildfires from an international perspective, we continue to look and invest in new technologies and systems to improve our response to wildfires and continue to work in partnership with key stakeholders through the Scottish Wildfire Forum, to ensure that the Service and Scotland is best prepared to prevent and respond to wildfires in the next 10, 20 30 years, therefore mitigating the devastating impact they can have on local communities and the environment.

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**From:** Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 11:11

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Jeanette Campbell <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Director of Safer Communities <DirectorofSaferCommunities@gov.scot>; Mo Rooney <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Environment and Forestry Director's Office <enfordo@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

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**Subject:** RE: S6M-18710: Emma Roddick: Increasing Frequency and Intensity of Wildfires

See below additional points raised by Emma Roddick MSP.

Response from [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] below - much as I expected and I'll be talking a lot about this on Thurs:

1. Produce a wildfire plan for Scotland and as part of that introduce a ban on campfires and bbqs nationwide during the summer and during periods of high fire risk. Would need a change to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. The changes in climate mean the approach to recreational fires agreed over 25 years ago is not appropriate anymore. This will take a bit of time so we can learn from the experience in the Cairngorms as the byelaw is introduced next year (hopefully). Might need legislative change so perhaps an amendment to the Land Reform Bill or Natural Env Bill at stage 2?
2. Contract centrally through SG a helicopter provider to provide assistance to wildfire fighting that has priority over commercial flights. The lack of helicopter capacity at a crucial point was one of the reasons why the Carrbridge fire got away.
3. Need to look at the kit that SFRS have and strategically how they interact with the mutual assistance provided by gamekeepers etc at an estate level. Needs a review to make sure that the approach is fit for the future and that the level of resource is able to be deployed appropriately and safely as wildfires become more prevalent in Scotland. There are a few ideas kicking around on this but they need more work before being aired publicly.

I think it would be good to have noted that the work in the Cairngorms NP is beyond anything happening in the rest of Scotland. Still more to do but I think there are good blocks to build on in the CNP.

Final thing would be that the byelaw consultation in 2024 received a total of 1,664 online responses and 18 written responses. The headline overview of the consultation was as follows:

Main types of respondents were local residents (58%), visitors (31%) businesses (11%) and land managers / workers (10%).  
79% of all respondents supported the introduction of a byelaw, 16% were against and 5% were unsure.

**Ian Muirhead**

Special Adviser to the First Minister  
Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

*Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot).*

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 10:28

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Jeanette Campbell <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Director of Safer Communities <DirectorofSaferCommunities@gov.scot>; Mo Rooney <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Environment and Forestry Director's Office <enfordo@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: S6M-18710: Emma Roddick: Increasing Frequency and Intensity of Wildfires

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

I've added some further additional information below which may be helpful to further address Ian's request.

Kind regards,  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

*You can reach me on eMail or Teams please.*

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
Head of Strategy, Collaboration and Operations | Fire and Rescue Unit | Safer Communities Directorate

The Scottish Government | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1  
3DG  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION  
11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 09:27

**To:** Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED:  
REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for  
Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Jeanette Campbell <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of  
Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Director of Safer Communities  
<DirectorofSaferCommunities@gov.scot>; Mo Rooney <[REDACTED:  
REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION  
11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Environment and Forestry  
Director's Office <enfordo@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION  
11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED:  
REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald  
Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED:  
REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>;  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION  
11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED:  
REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
<[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION  
11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: S6M-18710: Emma Roddick: Increasing Frequency and Intensity of  
Wildfires

Thanks Ian.

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

I've added to Ian's requests re. additional intel where I can and have brought in other  
officials who I believe lead on SOAC and wild camping.

Kind regards,  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

*You can reach me on eMail or Teams please.*

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]  
Head of Strategy, Collaboration and Operations | Fire and Rescue Unit | Safer  
Communities Directorate  
The Scottish Government | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1  
3DG  
[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

**From:** Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 09:07

**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Jeanette Campbell <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Director of Safer Communities <DirectorofSaferCommunities@gov.scot>; Mo Rooney <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Environment and Forestry Director's Office <enfordo@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: S6M-18710: Emma Roddick: Increasing Frequency and Intensity of Wildfires

[OUT OF SCOPE]

- [OUT OF SCOPE]

## **BANNING OF DISPOSABLE BBQS**

### **Banning the sale of disposable barbecues is beyond the legislative competence of the Scottish Parliament.**

- [OUT OF SCOPE]
  - SFRS works closely with key partners, including land managers and communities, to establish a common understanding of the risks, prevention measures and response procedures to wildfires.
  - SFRS provide further advice regarding wildfires, how to prevent wildfires and stay safe, on their website: Scottish Fire & Rescue Service - Wildfires.
  - [OUT OF SCOPE]
- Wild camping – bye laws.

Think this is for [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]/ [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] / [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] (so have brought them in).

- Issue of helicopter support and the need for this to be more flexible i.e. pre-emptive drops of water etc.

SFRS) Incident Commanders (IC) liaise with landowners and responsible persons at operational incidents. Helicopter availability for wildfire response is determined by

contractual arrangements between landowners and helicopter providers. The SFRS IC coordinates their deployment as part of the wider firefighting strategy working in close liaison with a range of partners, including landowners, agencies, and local communities, to minimise the impact of wildfires. Some estates may have this support resource built into their fire plan / insurance policies. If a resource is available and contracted, then contact is made between the IC, wildfire tactical adviser, pilot and estate, to agree a joint tactical firefighting plan and the provision of strict control measures to ensure safe systems of work. During the recent wildfire incidents in the Highlands and Moray area, three helicopters were deployed across a range of locations to support firefighting efforts.

SFRS are members of a number of forums across the UK, Europe and America, ensuring SFRS are sighted on and are aware of any developments and improvements in new wildfire tactics, new technologies and emerging challenges and trends, such as Urban Wildfires.

Through the SFRS Operations and Preparedness Functions, they have started to explore wider potential use of drones at wildfire incidents, engaging with the National Fire Chiefs Council and participating with ongoing research at Trondheim University in Norway.

## **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.
- Education angle i.e. on responsible access – outdoor access code etc.

Think this too is for [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] / [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] / [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

### **Ian Muirhead**

Special Adviser to the First Minister  
Rural Affairs, Land Reform & Islands.

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

*Scottish Ministers, Special advisers and the Permanent Secretary to the Scottish Government are covered by the terms of the Lobbying (Scotland) Act 2016. See [www.lobbying.scot](http://www.lobbying.scot).*

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Sent:** 16 September 2025 08:49

**To:** Ian Muirhead <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Minister for Agriculture and Connectivity <MinisterforAC@gov.scot>

**Cc:** Jeanette Campbell <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Director of Environment & Forestry <director.enfor@gov.scot>; Director of Safer Communities <DirectorofSaferCommunities@gov.scot>; Mo Rooney <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Environment and Forestry Director's Office <enfordo@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; Donald Henderson <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>; [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>

**Subject:** RE: S6M-18710: Emma Roddick: Increasing Frequency and Intensity of Wildfires

Thanks Iain,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] I've updated below and added in some other content to cover Iain's additional comments.

Clearly we don't want to get into too much specifics, but the point you make Iain re. lines of communication being slow in a fast moving situation (which needs to change) will no doubt be captured and discussed at the SMARTEU debrief, with this point likely being one of the actions for change (without pre-empting the outcome of course).

Hopefully this covers things for the purpose of the debate.

Kind regards,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

*You can reach me on eMail or Teams please.*

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Head of Strategy, Collaboration and Operations | Fire and Rescue Unit | Safer Communities Directorate

The Scottish Government | St Andrews House | Regent Road | Edinburgh | EH1 3DG

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

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[OUT OF SCOPE] [OUT OF SCOPE]

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Summary of briefing provided by stakeholders

### **RSPB Scotland**

#### **Summary of key points**

- Urgent Need for a Coherent Wildfire Strategy: Scotland requires a robust, long-term plan to mitigate wildfire threats, as climate change is increasing their frequency and intensity.
- Holistic Approach Over Fuel Load Focus: Wildfire mitigation must balance biodiversity and climate concerns—overemphasis on fuel load reduction risks ecological damage and perpetuates environmental problems.
- Landscape Restoration Builds Resilience: Restoring habitats like peatlands and native woodlands enhances wildfire resistance, supports biodiversity, and contributes to climate goals.
- Prevention Through Public Engagement: Raising public awareness and changing behaviours—especially in high-visitor areas—is essential to prevent wildfires before they start.
- Support for Fire Services and Land Managers: Increased resources are needed for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to collaborate with land managers on proactive wildfire mitigation across Scotland.

### **Scottish Land and Estates**

#### **Summary of key points**

- Carrbridge-Dava Wildfires Were Unprecedented: Scotland's largest wildfire event burned over 11,800 hectares, released 0.59 megatonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, and pushed UK fire emissions to a 23-year high.
- Fuel Load Management Is Crucial: Managing combustible vegetation through muirburn and cutting is the only controllable factor in wildfire behaviour, but new legislation may restrict these practices.
- [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(5)(f)]
- [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(5)(f)]
- [REDACTED: REGULATION 10(5)(f)]

### **Ramblers Scotland**

#### **Summary of key points**

- Higher fire risk comes from a range of factors including changing climate, the way land is managed and careless behaviour.

- The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) and associated guidance highlight the risk of fire and situations in which fires should not be lit. A more concerted effort on education and engagement is urgently needed to ensure that SOAC messages are heard and understood by a wider audience.
- The forthcoming Cairngorms National Park seasonal byelaw on fires is an opportunity to assess objectively the benefits and risks of a prohibition-based approach.
- The start of muirburn this winter, at the very least, throws into sharp relief the consistency of public messaging on fire risk while people see large scale fires on open hillsides.

## **National Farmers Union for Scotland**

### **Summary of key points**

- NFU Scotland is concerned about the increased frequency and intensity of wildfires in Scotland. The devastating impact these events have on the environment, economy and communities is of great concern.
- We will continue to work with stakeholder organisations and government to help with the future prevention of wildfires, while producing food, supporting rural communities, enhancing biodiversity, and reducing climate emissions.
- The role of actively managed livestock grazing is critical in reducing wildfire risks by preventing vegetation from going rank, thereby reducing fuel load, whilst also helping create the right habitats for a greater abundance of biodiversity.
- The Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Act introduces a requirement for anyone carrying out the practice of muirburn to obtain a licence before doing so. We, along with some other rural organisations, shared some concerns regarding the proposed licensing scheme and the muirburn code and we welcomed a delay to the licensing scheme to January 2026.
- There are many reasons, including conservation benefits, why experienced and professional land managers carry out muirburn in rotations of between 15-20 years. We are advising our members on the new rules and continue to advocate that muirburn is an important land management tool which can bring benefits to our heather moorland, biodiversity, and the prevention of wildfire. The practice can reduce the fuel-load on moorland areas, which could prevent the risk of a severe wildfire incident and the new licensing scheme should not impact this important work.

## **World Wide Fund for Nature Scotland (WWF Scotland)**

### **Summary of key points**

- [OUT OF SCOPE]
- The number of wildfires we have seen already this year needs to be a wakeup call. These fires not only destroy valuable habitats but threaten the livelihoods of thousands who rely on the land.
- [OUT OF SCOPE]

- Climate and Wildfires: Scotland's changing climate is increasing wildfire risks, threatening habitats and livelihoods, and urgent action is needed to meet carbon budgets and restore ecosystems to reduce future fire severity.
- [OUT OF SCOPE]
- [OUT OF SCOPE]
- [OUT OF SCOPE]

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**From:** Rory Hadden <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@ed.ac.uk>  
**Sent:** 10 October 2025 11:57  
**To:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Re: Recent wildfire publications

Hi [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

I can certainly edit some literature together specific to Scotland in the next day or two and get it across to you. Would it also be useful to include other areas of similar terrain/vegetation/fire danger etc?

Thanks  
Rory

**From:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>  
**Date:** Friday, 10 October 2025 at 09:14  
**To:** Rory Hadden <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@ed.ac.uk>  
**Cc:** [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)] <[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot>  
**Subject:** Recent wildfire publications  
Hi Rory,

Great to meet up with you earlier this week.

I mentioned that a wildfire policy meeting was happening yesterday. One of the action points that came out of that meeting was to derive a list of recent relevant publications on wildfire risk in Scotland. I was wondering with your work whether you had a such a list we could draw from please?

Thanks,

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

[REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]

Principal Science Adviser (Biodiversity, Water and Chemicals)  
 Rural & Environmental Science and Analytical Services (RESAS)/\_Roinn  
 Sheirbheisean Saidheans is Sgrùdaidh na Dùthcha is na h-Àrainneachd  
 Directorate for Environment and Forestry  
 The Scottish Government

email: [REDACTED: REGULATION 11(2)]@gov.scot

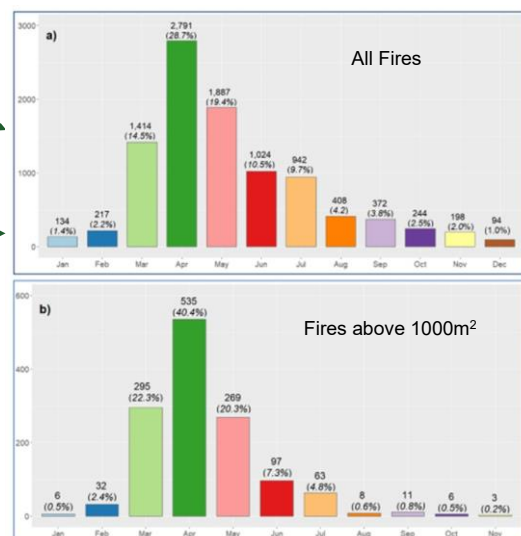
## Current and future wildfire trends

**Annual trends** - No clear trend in wildfire occurrences (although dataset is imperfect)

**Seasonal trends** - Clear signal for seasonal trend with most fires occurring in the spring (March-May) (Making extended season this year exceptional)

**Future trends?** - A number of modelling studies show an increasing risk of wildfire under future climate change

- SG funded study shows increasing dry days and potential extension of wildfire season
- Met Office work demonstrates increasing summer fire risk at both 2°C and 4 °C warming



## What work have we funded, are we funding and we are proposing to fund?

### Previous work



[Work by The James Hutton Institute analysed fire Incident Reporting Data to gain insights on how wildfire start, spatial variability and assess trends](#)



[Researchers at the JHI attempted to adapt the Canadian fire rating system to create a wildfire rating system for Scotland](#)

### Current work



[Research at JHI is assessing how climate change may impact future wildfire risk including:](#)

- Assessment of fire risk of different habitats
- Societal perceptions of wildfire risk and mitigation behaviours
- Development of new fire probability models

### Future work?



[Prof Rory Hadden](#) (Uni of Edinburgh) will be starting a fellowship with us in January to assess current state of knowledge and develop future research questions



[We are developing our next Strategic Research Strategy](#) that has questions on wildfire modelling and future risk