



**SCOTTISH WILDFIRE FORUM EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE
THURSDAY 21 JUNE 2018 AT 10:30 HRS
MORAY CONFERENCE ROOM
INVERNESS**

MINUTES

Present:

Bruce Farquharson (Chair)	BF	Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)
Michael Bruce	MB	Confederation of Forest Industries (Confor)
Andrew Denovan	AD	Highland Council
Robbie MacDonald	RM	SEPA
Janette Sutherland	JS	SAC
Ann McArdle	AM	Scottish Government
Mark Crowley	MC	Forestry
Graham Sullivan	GS	SNH
Eric Baird	EB	Scottish Countryside Rangers Association (SCRA)
Stephen Bray (via Telephone)	SB	MOD
Simon Thorp (via Telephone)	ST	Director of Heather Trust and Chairman of England & Wales Wildfire Forum
Helena Turnbull	HT	Note Taker
Kerry Mezals	KM	Note Taker

Item		Action
1.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE</p> <p>Apologies for absence were received from Dr Michael Foxley and Ian Wilson (NFUS).</p>	
2.	<p>MINUTES OF LAST MEETING AND INTRODUCTION</p> <p>The Minutes of the Last Meeting were read for accuracy and approved.</p>	

3.	<p>ACTION LOG</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 003 – Asset Database</u></p> <p>BF advised that the Asset Database, part of the Community Asset Register, is a database of external services called upon for additional assistance when SFRS is alerted to attend serious incidents, e.g. RTAs, Wildfires, flooding.</p> <p>The Asset Database is to be re-communicated to wider audiences with information on assets and specialist skills qualifications being entered through an on-line process. E-learning modules had to be undertaken and proof of qualification was necessary. He would provide further detail on exactly how to register on the database soon.</p> <p>He informed the meeting that the database had been utilised for recent wildfire incidents and also when the M8 had become snowbound.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 009 – Wildfire Tactical Advisor Role</u></p> <p>Together with the two TAs BF was developing an article which would describe what TAs are, and more specifically what they do. Once finalised he would compile a list of suitable publications to which the article would be disseminated, whether they be in the print, electronic or digital medium.</p> <p>MB suggested the use of Twitter, and BF advised he was in the process of setting up a Twitter account for SWF.</p> <p>BF asked the meeting to put forward suggestions for suitable publications.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 013 – SWF Memo of Understanding</u></p> <p>BF had reviewed the MoU and produced a draft Terms of Reference which had been circulated to Forum members. Once all feedback was received the final version could be agreed and signed off.</p> <p>Under this action BF asked Forum members to consider, and advise whether a separate MoU and ToR was required, or whether one document would suffice.</p>	<p>BF</p> <p>BF</p> <p>BF</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
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	<p><u>Action Log Number 015 – Communications Strategy</u></p> <p>To be discussed as an Agenda item.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 039 – Software Platform</u></p> <p>MB advised he had been in communication with Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA) the Data Holders of the pilot project conducted in 2014. The aim of the project was to produce a standard process for creating Fire Maps and seeing how they could be lodged in Control Rooms. However, it was found that the Control Rooms couldn't accept the data at the time. Now they can accept the data, and as it was such a successful pilot it should be revisited.</p> <p>BF suggested that CNPA could be invited to give a presentation at the next meeting.</p> <p>SB suggested it might be useful to consider the data that Northumberland FRS hold, and he could send BF a copy of that today if required.</p> <p>MB asked SB to confirm if the information was on Fire Procedures. SB replied that information was available on Fire Procedures and Mapping, and he would send copies to both BF and MB.</p> <p>BF advised that due to new GDPR rules any Fire Plan templates supplied would have to be redacted to remove private information.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 040 – Fire Plan Template</u></p> <p>BF would circulate a template soon.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 042 – Muirburn Code Review</u></p> <p>To be discussed further at Wildfire Seminar.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 044 – Controlled Burn Training Event</u></p> <p>MB requested this item be put back on the Agenda as Joint Training Exercises.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 045 – Fire Danger Warnings</u></p> <p>This would be discussed later.</p>	<p>SB</p> <p>SB</p> <p>BF</p> <p>HT</p>
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	<p><u>Action Log Number 046 – SWF Website</u></p> <p>This item was on the Agenda.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 047 – SWF Newsletter</u></p> <p>BF agreed the Newsletter, which would perhaps take the form of an E-zine, would be short and sharp and contain the TA article, once finalised. At that point the SFRS media team could perhaps advise on how to best use the available streams of communication.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 048 – Asset Database (Duplication of 003)</u></p> <p>Item closed as duplication of Action Log Number 003.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 049 – Wildfire Tactical Advisor Role</u></p> <p>BF advised this item should remain open as the article is yet to be finalised.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 050 – Emergency Planners</u></p> <p>BF noted that work undertaken in rural Wiltshire by the Environment Agency covered flooding and air hazard monitoring, but should it also be extended to cover Wildfire risks?</p> <p>AD advised EPs were working to get communities to produce their own resilience plans and they could include reference to Wildfires within the plans.</p> <p>It was agreed this item would be closed.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 051 – Fire Plan Template</u></p> <p>In light of recent GDPR this item can't be progressed until documents are redacted. BF to progress</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 052 – Membership – Executive + General Committees</u></p> <p>Everyone agreed that this would evolve over time, but the general consensus was we were making progress. BF would welcome feedback from all Executive Committee members.</p>	<p>BF</p> <p>HT</p> <p>HT</p> <p>HT</p> <p>BF</p> <p>ALL</p>
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	<p><u>Action Log Number 053 – Wildfire Research Meeting</u></p> <p>MB reported that Rob Gazzard (Forestry Commission England) has been calling for Wildfire research to be undertaken, but there seems to be a lack of interest in doing this in Scotland.</p> <p>RM suggested looking at the Centre of Resilience as he believed they had money to fund research, but whether or not it had already been spent was another thing. He would check on the situation and report back.</p> <p>BF proposed that the SWF might be in the position to initiate or sponsor some research, but we would have to identify precisely what research was required.</p> <p>MB spoke about Scottish Justice Department/SNH research project called the Firebeaters Project (2006-08). It tested the Canadian Fire Danger Rating System (FDRS) that is in use by the Met Office. The Canadian system is the most widely used FDRS in the world, but as it didn't deal with shrub fuel fires, as in the UK, it would have to be adapted. One area where progress could be speeded up is with grass fuels.</p> <p>GS believed it might be helpful to look at the wider aspects of Wildfire, rather than deal with specifics; throw everything into the pot and then work backwards.</p> <p>BF asked everyone to consider suitable research projects and forward them to him before the next meeting.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 054 – UK Risk Register – Wildfire Position</u></p> <p>MB believed it would be helpful to provide background on this policy, and who holds sway with it, so it would be the subject of discussion at a later time. AM would update the meeting at a later juncture.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 055 – SWF Website – Feedback</u></p> <p>Remove as duplicate.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 056 – SWF Planner</u></p> <p>BF required comment and suggestions on the planner circulated.</p>	<p>RM</p> <p>ALL</p> <p>ALL</p>
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	<p><u>Action Log Number 057 – SLE Wildfires in Scotland Information Sheet</u></p> <p>Amended from SLA to SLE (Scottish Land and Estates). MB indicated SLE have agreed that the leaflet can become a SWF leaflet.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 058 – SFRS Transformation</u></p> <p>BF would provide a brief update later in the meeting.</p> <p><u>Action Log Number 058 – Firewise – Urban Heath Partnership</u></p> <p>To be discussed later.</p>	BF
4.	<p>TERMS OF REFERENCE (ToR)</p> <p>BF advised he had incorporated all comments received from SWF members and together with a few tweaks the final document should be ready soon. There were a couple of style issues, but these had been overcome.</p> <p>MB felt that the document required more hooks, e.g. damage to property, assets, etc. to pull people in earlier.</p> <p>There were no objections to the document in general, so BF would finalise and distribute shortly.</p>	BF
5.	<p>SWF ACTION PLAN</p> <p>BF’s strategy for production of the action plan was based on a “need to know how to get to where we want” basis, following and being in accordance with the principles of the ToR.</p> <p>MB noted that it was difficult to populate the planner with no common understanding of the context. Having a common understanding of fire and wildfire techniques to fight fires was essential as was the knowledge of growth of vegetation that increased the risk of landscape fires. Some mitigation measures work, and some don’t.</p>	

	<p>EB remarked that there seemed to be no mention of prevention. It would be better to include FP as a remit and illustrate how to do it, e.g. change land, Muirburning, etc. Prevention must be included in the MoU and the ToR.</p> <p>MC enquired as to the real issues that were involved; how much land is being burned, and is there a cost to the public? If people are unaware of the issues themselves then we can't provide guidance on how to prevent them. He believed these issues should be covered in the ToR: that should be the starting point.</p> <p>BF advised the information is held in a number of different places, ICR systems, and disparate locations. It would be a full time job locating all the elements.</p> <p>MC asked exactly what the legislation surrounding Wildfire is and was advised by GS it is summarised in the Muirburn Code. The information is available and there is an absolute need for it to be accessible: the only problem is how to pull all those strands together.</p> <p>MC commented he hadn't before considered Scotland as one of the Wildfire nations, thinking more of Australia, America, Canada, and BF advised that currently Scotland is at the top of the European Wildfire activity.</p> <p>MB concurred that the UK Wildfire activity has been the subject of discussion in Europe. Scotland's percentage of Wildfire activity in the UK as a whole is high with low density of population, social stress and poverty in those areas.</p> <p>MC enquired about the threat to people by Wildfire and BF advised the recent incident at Torrion covered 1,500 hectares, and although it would be a massive undertaking to revegetate the land, there were no deaths or significant injuries.</p> <p>SB commented that Rob Stacey held UK-wide Wildfire information, captured on behalf of Northumberland FRS. This could be utilised if required.</p> <p>MC believed it would be necessary to promote the costs, injuries and causes of Wildfire to raise awareness of the issue, and make it more relevant to people.</p>	
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	<p>BF concluded discussion on this issue by suggesting there was no easy view on exactly how to develop the strategy, but identifying the strands with the highest value was required. This could perhaps be achieved with a workshop on the way forward taking place at the next meeting.</p> <p>BF to distribute information to all members before the next meeting.</p>	<p>BF</p>
<p>6.</p>	<p>COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY</p> <p>BF remarked that we need to streamline our channels of communication to make distribution of information more efficient and more effective. SFRS has a trigger to reach and how information is cascaded out to groups and in what format. If this could be tailored precisely all communication would be more effective.</p> <p>The distribution of MB’s FDR notices, e.g. is constantly evolving, but as various groups are building more effective distribution channels for their own information we can piggy back onto their improvements.</p> <p>Information e-mailed to SNH’s generic mail box is automatically cascaded to all operational managers and national nature reserves, and MB thanked GS for his help in ensuring that contact group is maintained so well it is always completely up-to-date.</p> <p>RM advised the SEPA contact group is also well maintained and he would provide the address to MB for future communications.</p> <p>JS noted that the more organisations and groups become aware of the FDR notices then the more they would want to receive it.</p> <p>BF advised the meeting that it had taken almost 5 years for the SWF to get rid of the single point of failure in communication of the FDR notices and remove the burden from MB’s shoulders.</p> <p>MC agreed a partnership approach had to be devised and EB commented that it would be helpful to see the “tree” and identify where the gaps are. What do people do with the information they receive? This might also identify training needs.</p>	<p>RM</p>

	<p>RM was surprised a professional body, i.e. SFRS Media Team, hadn't been utilised to produce the communications strategy, but as MB pointed out the Landowners and Countryside Associations had more knowledge about which groups should be receiving information.</p> <p>MC noted that when a Wildfire occurs SFRS is ultimately responsible as responder, so shouldn't it be producing information under its own auspices?</p> <p>ST commented that the networking between the EWWF and Director of Moorland Management is excellent and could hopefully be replicated by Scottish groups. Secondly, it would be useful to reshape the information you are distributing to be more intelligible and relevant to more people.</p> <p>MB explained the very specialist knowledge required to produce the Fire Danger Rating notices, and how it involves constantly evolving indices.</p> <p>GS believed that the problem lay in how to interpret EFFIS and the Fire Danger Rating notices to make them more relevant. It would be impossible to produce separate FDR notices for each individual group, but changing just headlines, e.g. "If you are a Farmer" or "If you are a Recreational User" might go some way to ensuring the information is read more widely.</p> <p>BF to produce a "tree" which would be circulated to members for their consideration and comment on perceived gaps and suggestions on suitable recipients.</p> <p>JS asked whether Muirburn going wrong, or being carried out incorrectly is a Wildfire, because if it was done correctly there would be no Wildfire.</p> <p>ST replied that Muirburn and Wildfire are separate, but they are joined at the hip; Muirburn can be used as the preventative part of Wildfire: prescribed burning is the right way to increase prevention.</p> <p>GS added that according to records 50% of Wildfires are caused by Muirburn going wrong.</p>	<p>BF ALL</p>
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	<p>JS believed more positive communications messages were required, and that they should be communicated more carefully.</p>	
7.	<p>WILDFIRE RISK ON SCOTTISH RISK REGISTER</p> <p>BF explained the UK Government Risk Register is to be complemented by a Scottish Risk Register which for the first time would include a section on Wildfire, which BF was happy to assist with in its compilation. He then introduced Ann McArdle (AM) from the Scottish Government who provided an overview.</p> <p>AM explained a Scottish Risk Assessment would be compiled for use by emergency responders. Previously it had included 10 risks for Scotland, including colds, winds, snow, etc. Wildfire would now be included as a hazard on the register, which would cascade down from National Resilience, to regional and then local resilience. There are 3 regional resilience partnerships.</p> <p>The SWF has to come up with a “worst case” Wildfire scenario because if we can tackle that we can tackle anything.</p> <p>BF referred to the “Are We Ready” Preparing Scotland website and agreed to circulate a link to all meeting members. He also suggested that a workshop could be bolted onto the seminar that had been proposed for Dingwall or Fort William where the scenario could be discussed.</p> <p>BF and AM would discuss further off-table so a formulated plan is available.</p> <p>MB enquired what information was required before the event and AM agreed to share the methodology and obtain information from the UK Risk Register to use as a starting point.</p>	<p>BF</p> <p>BF/AM</p> <p>AM</p>
8.	<p>FIRE DANGER RATING SYSTEM – UK APPROACH</p> <p>This item had been discussed earlier in the meeting, but there were a couple of additional points made.</p> <p>BF re-iterated that up until now the whole production and communication of the FDR notices relied on MB and this would have to change. MB produced the information for Scotland and Northern Ireland. Andy Elliott covers England and Wales. Ciaran Nugent covered Republic of Ireland. Work needed to be undertaken to get the FDRS agreed and the fire danger class bands changed.</p>	

	<p>ST noted that a system should be adopted for use across the entire UK. Different parts of the UK might have different adaptations. In order to increase preparedness across the country something useful needs to be developed for farmers, crofters, land managers, etc.</p> <p>BF agreed the subject was very complicated and the aim is to do all we can right now. There will be much negotiation and compromise across different agencies required before anything is resolved.</p> <p>MB commented that there are 5 different systems in use in the UK at the moment, all based on the Canadian Fire Weather Index (FWI) system. Resilience is improving with the three key people interpreting FWI information are now communicating better because they are all working and reviewing a South African FDRS platform called the Advanced Fire Information System.</p> <p>The five FWI based systems in use in the UK now are: Met Office Fire Severity Index (MOFSI) Met Office Daily Hazard Assessment – natural hazards partnership European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) Advanced Fire Information System (AFIS)–</p> <p>Met Office – produce the raw weather data for all these platforms. Met Office is owned by the MOD and is a commercial organisation that charges for the data it provides</p> <p>Everyone working in the area are self-taught experts in using indices to forecast wildfire risks.</p> <p>GS re-iterated the thresholds for banding had to be agreed. SNH uses the EFFIS based assessments produced by MB but that could fail in different parts of the country. Across the UK the thresholds could be different. We could keep them the same but then the vegetation in the South West and North East are different.</p> <p>He felt there was a general lack of information on vegetation, fuel and ignition points, and in order to remedy this SNH has contributed funding towards a suitable FDR system.</p>	
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9.	<p>INITIAL REVIEW OF 2018 SPRING FIRE SEASON</p> <p>BF noted that whilst there hadn't been a large number of fires, those fires had been massive and very intense. SFRS had to ask the landowner to deploy helicopters during the Torridon wildfire, and together with other incidents Scotland featured the largest area of land burned in Europe to date.</p>	
10.	<p>FIRE SEMINAR</p> <p>BF had yet to confirm the venue for the proposed seminar where Muirburn will be discussed and the bolt on workshop to formulate a worst case Wildfire scenario for the Scottish Risk Register.</p> <p>JS reported that training courses were being run in Skye and Lewis and she would happily use SWF information during them.</p>	
11.	<p>A.O.C.B.</p> <p>ST advised the meeting that the next UK Wildfire Conference was set for 18 December and he would be happy to recruit volunteers and contributions from Scotland.</p> <p>BF advised the meeting that SFRS and Northumberland FRS were carrying out a joint exercise to test inter-operability and he would report the findings at a later juncture.</p> <p>Additionally, under the Service Transformation banner, he reported the roll-out of the new Rapid Response Units (RRUs) would be undertaken imminently.</p> <p>These appliances feature cold cutting equipment and would prove useful for Wildfire incidents. A strategy for stations with a dedicated wildfire response is being produced for consideration by the SFRS Strategic Leadership Team.</p>	BF
12.	<p>DATE OF NEXT MEETING</p> <p>End of September was mooted as a possible time for the next meeting, but BF would distribute a Doodle Poll to identify the best date.</p>	BF