

Scottish Wildfire Forum

2019 – 2021 Strategy

The Scottish Wildfire Forum (SWF) is committed to reducing the number and severity of wildfires in Scotland through collaborative working across all relevant sectors. The gradual increase in fuel loads in many parts of Scotland is also increasing the continuity of fuels. We therefore anticipate an increase in the size of fires as well as an increase in fire intensity, more severe fires with greater impacts. The risks of landscape scale high intensity, high severity fires are growing year by year.

The purpose of the SWF is to create a focus for joint working between all interested organisations within Scotland to develop wildfire initiatives that will reduce:

- the risks to firefighters and members of the public,
- the amount of damage to vegetation,
- the negative impact on property, assets and ecosystem services,

To limit and reduce the impact of wildfires experienced in Scotland the following strategy, built upon prevention and communication, has been developed. The strategic aims of the SWF compliment the Scottish Governments strategic objectives of “Safer and Stronger” and “Greener” and will strengthen the resilience of Scotland to the economic and social impact of wildfires.

Strategy Statement

To see a year on year reduction in the number and severity of wildfires in Scotland and to improve the management of the wildfire risk through research and education.

1. Prevention

We will identify areas of the highest hazards and risks of wildfire and work with land owners and managers to reduce the risk of wildfires.

1.1 Using an intelligence led approach we will identify and prioritise areas in Scotland that are vulnerable to wildfires. We will then engage with landowners and managers to provide advice and guidance on how to reduce the wildfire hazards and risks, and how to increase the resilience of the landscape to fire.

1.2 We will promote the Muirburn Code and other good practices of managing the wildfire risk to minimise the environmental, social and financial impact from wildfire.

1.3 Through local engagement we will promote the guidance in the Muirburn Code and other good practice to land managers with areas of land at risk.

2. Communication

We will develop a communications strategy that allows accurate information to be presented to land owners and managers and the public which provides information on the wildfire danger rating and advice on behaviours and activities in the affected areas.

2.1 We will develop a communications system that ensures that tailored information is provided to land owners and managers and to the public during periods of elevated risk. The information provided will highlight the areas at risk, the period during which the risk exists and what activities should be avoided or promoted as a result.

2.2 We will further develop and refine the Fire Danger Rating system to improve its accuracy with a view to establishing a common system that serves all of the UK. Research into the fuel types in Scotland and how they contribute to the ignition, propagation and intensity of wildfires will be pursued and the resulting information utilised to enhance the Fire Danger Rating System. We will co-operate with other countries with similar fuel types using similar systems to leverage efficiencies and common understanding.

2.3 We will work with the Scottish Government to better understand the risk that wildfire presents in Scotland and ensure that the likelihood and impact of wildfire is communicated to Regional Resilience Partnerships to allow coordinated plans to be developed to deal with the consequences of wildfires.

3. Education and Training

We will provide education to promote a common understanding of wildfire related issues and procedures including wildfire suppression, specialist equipment and the creation of fire plans, and encourage training opportunities for all sectors on the use of fire as a land management tool.

3.1 We will work with all sectors to further develop fire awareness education programmes to highlight the risks of wildfire and measures that can be taken to prevent it. These will be tailored to specific communities and user groups to ensure the message is appropriate and applicable.

3.2 We will promote sector specific training as well as joint training between key agencies. This training will focus on the collaborative approach needed to resolve larger wildfires, understanding of the responsibilities and limitations each agency has, and the importance of shared understanding and good communications between all agencies.