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8 Appendix 1 Aim of the Forum. Key Outputs and Results.
As Chair of the Scottish Wildfire Forum I am delighted to introduce the Forum’s first annual report. Although the Forum has only been in existence for a short time, the progress that has been made to date on numerous agenda items has been excellent and are witnessed within this report.

It would be remiss of me if I did not take this opportunity to give my personal thanks to a number of individuals whose hard work and dedication to the aims of the forum have assisted in making this first year the success it undoubtedly has been. Firstly, I would like to thank the Fire Authority and Chief Officer David Dalziel of Grampian Fire and Rescue Service for their continuing support of the Forum. Also Mark Jones, Garry Burnett and Lorraine Kemp for their unostentatious efforts both ‘Behind the scenes’ and administratively. Their commitment to the Forum assists me greatly as Chair. Finally, I would like to thank the members from all the various groups, bodies and agencies, particularly from the private sector, whose regular attendance at meetings and input to discussions have helped make this such a successful year. Given the evidence of this past year I feel I can confidently predict further success for the Forum during 2006 and beyond.

Jeff Ord
HMCIFS
November 2005
The Scottish Executive commissioned a climate study, which reported in 2003. Whilst the study was conducted primarily to assess the likely effects of rainfall in terms of flooding risks in Scotland’s conurbations, its findings make interesting reading from a fire manager’s perspective. The likelihood of wetter, warmer autumns and winters (creating a higher biomass fuel loading) and drier and hotter springs and summers tend to indicate an increase in likelihood, and severity, of wildfires.

Combining these climatic factors with increased public access to the countryside due to land reform legislation and increasing use of the countryside for recreation by citizens, more wildfires are predictable. Recognising that, even in current climactic circumstances, Scotland’s fire authorities are often “stretched” by large wildfire events. Certain fire authorities identified the need to develop partnerships with the land management community.

In October 2004 Aberdeen hosted a Wildfire Conference on behalf of Her Majesty’s Inspectorate of Fire Services. The conference covered many wildfire topics but all present agreed the need to produce a National Forum to investigate debate and comment on wildfire issues. It was envisaged that this Forum would also advise and influence appropriate stakeholder groups including Government Ministers.

The Forum was established and the inaugural meeting took place on December 2004 at Grampian Fire and Rescue Service’s Headquarters.

The meeting attracted a broad range of attendees with the following organisations present:

- Scottish Executive Environment & Rural Affairs Department (SEERAD)
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- Scottish Rural Property & Business Association (SRPBA)
- Forestry and Timber Association
- Forestry Commission
- The Cairngorms National Park
- The Heather Trust
- Chief Fire Officers Association
- National Farmers Union (Scotland)

The position of Chair is currently held by Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector of Fire Services for Scotland Mr Jeff Ord with the secretariat work being undertaken by Grampian Fire and Rescue Service, predominantly by Mr Garry Burnett, one of their officers.

Since its inaugural meeting in December 2004, the Forum has met three times, in March, June and September 2005. Meeting attendances and interest in the Forum have increased with the scope of the Forum flourishing in line with our strategic aims that were formally adopted by the group.

(see appendix 1) These three meetings have been extremely productive and the following paragraphs are intended to share some of the work in progress. Each issue will be preceded by its link to our Strategic Aims, which were agreed and adopted in June 2005.

ASSESSMENT OF WILDFIRE RISK - FIRE SERVICE EMERGENCY COVER TOOLKIT (FSEC)

The FSEC computerised toolkit is designed to assist fire authorities with the drive towards risk based planning of provision of emergency response. The toolkit allows risk to be identified and managed solutions added to decrease or control that identified risk. One of the first issues attended to by the Forum was an enquiry to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and in particular the department managing the Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) model.

The Forum enquired if FSEC would consider the design of a Wildfire model to ensure this risk was included in their suite of risk templates. The Forum felt that designing a ‘Wildfire Model’ would greatly benefit both land managers and fire authorities in identifying the wildfire risk and to ensure that risk was managed and resourced effectively. Currently FSEC are looking into the possibility of Wildfire modelling and may consider utilising expertise from the Forum to inform the work inherent on the project.

Phase 1 (Jan 2006)

- A five point weather index published daily on the Web providing 5 day predictions for Scotland.
- Fully monitored experimental fires in heather moorland to extend the current knowledge base.
- Web database for collecting validation data for heathland management and wildfires.
- Fuel moisture model for heather, relating moisture content to weather and site condition.
- Review of end user requirements and recommendations on implementing these.
- Pilot fire behaviour prediction system for muirburn published on web.
- Magazine and newspaper articles publicising project and requesting information
- Phase 1 report for external peer review.

Phase 2 (2007/08)

- Full validation of the fire weather index UK wide
- Full validation of the fire behaviour prediction for muirburn UK wide
- Pilot fire behaviour prediction system for other UK vegetation published on the web
- A fuel succession model for gorse that relates fuel development to fire hazard for use in the management of gorse in urban situations.
- Workshops and seminars for knowledge transfer
- Publications submitted to scientific journals and more popular media
- Final report for external peer review.

The forum sees this project complementing the FSEC ‘wildfire’ model and the MET Office Fire Severity Index. The Forum has set up a steering group (project team) to manage the project plan.

ASSESSMENT OF WILDFIRE RISK - FIRE DANGER RATING SYSTEM

The Forum has decided to support a Scottish Fire Danger Rating System designed to predict the severity of fire/weather conditions, currently being utilised in England and Wales. This project will build on MET office work already in progress. This project is being led by Forum members, Dr Colin Legg (University of Edinburgh), Mr Michael Bruce (Forestry and Timber Association), and Alan Motion/Karl Kitchen of the MET office.

The planning of this project is still in its infancy with funding still to be attracted, but if successful the project will be split into 2 phases. The project plan is shown below:
DEAR CHIEF FIRE OFFICER LETTER (DCOL) - FIRE PARTNERSHIPS

The Scottish Executive’s Justice Department, and Her Majesty’s Fire Service Inspectorate for Scotland, regularly give advice and guidance to Fire and Rescue Services and to Chief Fire Officers. This often takes the form of a ‘Dear Chief Fire Officer Letter’. Part of the Forum’s business was to help formulate guidance to Scottish Chief Fire Officers for further expansion and development of fire partnerships between local authority fire and rescue services and the land management community. The purpose of the DCOL is to encourage more efficient prevention, response and management of wildfire incidents in the future.

This guidance has been developed and supported by the Forum and is an element of CFOA’S (Scotland) business plan to create effective partnerships of this type in each fire authority’s area. This informative DCOL gives examples of ‘best practice’ taken from Fire Services already operating these Fire Groups. (Grampian and Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Services)

The main sections included in the letter are:
- Advantages of Fire Groups
- Forces for change
- Guidance
- Advantages for Fire and Rescue Services
- Fire Controls
- Information Packages
- Pre notification of muirburn
- Advantages for Land Managers
- Challenges in forming and maintaining Fire Partnerships
- Practical steps towards establishing a fire protection group
- Maintenance and Costs

It is intended that, in the future, the DCOL will be supported by a Fire Service Circular produced to ensure Fire Services include the Wildfire risk within their Integrated Risk Management Plans. The circular may offer guidance in the development of staff in wildfire firefighting and will ask Fire Services to carry out a training needs analysis of their staff in this subject area.

If development needs are identified the circular will point Fire and Rescue Services in the direction of training support i.e.:
- External Training Providers
- Supporting development module
- E-Learning platforms

A project has been instigated to assist with a communications framework regarding the above documents. The fairly limited project will have three strands to it:
- To raise awareness of the Wildfire issue
- To share good practice
- To assist with access to specialist training, including Assisting the Scottish Fire Service College in writing the sector competency for a Wildfire E-Learning module.
**WILDFIRE FIREFIGHTING**

The forum reviewed and endorsed the "AFAG 803 Firefighting" safety leaflet produced by the Health and Safety Executive for the forestry and land management sector. The leaflet will be published in January 2006 in both paper and electronic forms. To view or download the leaflet see: [www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/forindex.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/forindex.htm)

**INTERNATIONAL UPDATE**

The Forum was fortunate to have a member who has maintained a position of some influence in the international wildfire arena over the last 2 years. Mark Jones, currently chair of the International Firefighters Association Forest Fires Commission, represents the Scottish Executive's interests at the Global Wildland Fire Network, of which the UK is a member of the Baltic group. It is hoped that the UK's profile in this policy area can be elevated through Mark's continuing chairmanship of the Forest Fires Commission.

The Forum has therefore been influential in a number of international developments, including giving support to a funding bid to the EU “Leonardo” project for the purposes of development of an international Firefighter Safety Handbook.

One area that the Forum focussed attention on is the adequacy of the current data gathering arrangements within the UK fire sector for the purposes of international comparisons. This problem was highlighted by requests for national data submissions from the global wildfire network. The Forum has worked with the ODPM’s data management teams in order to highlight the challenges. Despite these difficulties, forum members have responded to some requests from the international community.

**WILDFIRE DATA GATHERING**

The group held its inaugural meeting in December and one of the matters discussed was the lack of national or local databases that could allow effective assessment of the scale of the wildfire problem within the UK, and also permit accurate comparisons to be drawn between the UK and other countries.

Future improved Wildfire strategies have to be informed by reliable historical statistical information and the Forum felt strongly about influencing future data collection strategies designed by the ODPM’s data team.

The lack of accurate statistical gathering concerns the Forum but it was refreshing to hear that proposals for a new recording system would identify primary and secondary ‘Wild grassland/heath fires and wild wood/forest fires.

Our Forum is extremely keen to ensure the ODPM Data Gathering Team remain involved with our work and would welcome attendance at any of our future meetings.
Future Developments

It is hoped that the work of the Forum will continue to flourish. It is the Chair’s wish that we follow our dynamic strategic aims, informing and assisting interested parties in Wildfire issues. Below is a bullet point synopsis of proposed future work at the Forum.

- **Education of a ‘cultural shift’ and to remain proactive in the face of predictive environmental and legislative change.**
- **To continue to inform and improve Data gathering and statistical recording.**
- **To continue to support the work of the Scottish Fire Danger Rating System.**
- **The development of a three year business ‘Action Plan’ identifying inherent funding issues.**
- **To continue to communicate with Scottish Executive Ministers.**
- **Openly focus on environmental issues regarding wildfire.**
- **Further development with other stakeholders.**
- **To build a Glossary of Terms.**
Background

The inaugural meeting of the Scottish Wildfire Forum took place in Aberdeen on December the 8th 2004. In debating the terms of reference of the forum, it was agreed that a generic set of strategic aims would be required. It was also agreed that a small working group, derived from the forum, would work together and finalise the proposed aims by end January 2005.

PROPOSED AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The current situation and challenges

In the hot and dry period of 2003, large areas of semi-natural vegetation, forests and other assets in rural areas were burned. Climate change scenarios indicate that there are likely to be more periods of dry and hot weather, especially during the spring and summer seasons, increasing the risk that more wildfires will occur.

The fuel load hazard is increasing in some areas, both in terms of fuel quantity and the continuity of fuels. This is due to reductions in: muirburn, agricultural and deer grazing pressure, and increases in the area of native woodlands. The outcome is that, when fires occur, fire intensities are higher. High intensity fires are more difficult, dangerous and expensive to extinguish and do more damage to the environment.

There were a variety of causes of the wildfires in 2003, with a worrying increase in wilful and malicious fire raising, but also from children playing with matches, bonfires, campfires, barbecues, cigarettes, electricity cables, steam trains and escapes from burning operations.

Appendix 1

SCOTTISH WILDFIRE FORUM
Strategic Aims

The increased access to the countryside that is enjoyed by our citizens, and the legislative changes that facilitate such access, make it seem more likely that, where fire conditions will support burning, these potential causes will continue to be significant in starting large fires.

Due to their specific risks and hazards, the effective extinguishments of wildfires often requires specialist equipment. The nature of the terrain and the high fire intensities that can be encountered present unique challenges for fire crews that have often been trained for fire in the urban, structural, environment.

The tool that the local authority Fire and rescue services rely upon is the fire tender which, having been designed ostensibly for the urban environment, is often not ideal tool for suppressing dynamic wildfires. Firebeaters, the other tool fire and rescue services tend to rely upon can only effectively cope with low intensity fires. Landowners support 2 key wildfire suppression resources: helicopter and All Terrain Vehicle (ATV) based fire-fogging units. The pilot and helicopter capacity suitable for fighting wildfires in the UK is limited. ATV fire fogging units have historically been used by gamekeepers (when muirburning) but have tended to stay within a limited geographic area.

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**FORUM AIM**

To create a forum between fire services, land management interests and agencies in Scotland that will develop and communicate wildfire protection strategies to ministers, stakeholders and the wider community.

**SUPPORTING OBJECTIVES:**

- To encourage relevant interest groups to join the forum.
- To identify key issues and priorities for partner agencies.
- To advise on safety issues.
- To minimise environmental damage.
- To stimulate research and development where necessary.
- To assist with policy development within partner agencies.
- To advise national policies, strategies, and action plans.
- To consult stakeholders.
- To communicate with Scottish Executive, Ministers, other stakeholders and the media.
- To assist with resources distribution where appropriate.
- To actively promote the work of the forum.

**SCOPE OF WORK**

- Identify suitable risk management systems for wildfire hazards and risks in Scotland.
- Develop a wildfire prevention programme including elements of education, elimination and enforcement.
- Improve wildfire suppression systems including fire plans, tactical skills, contextualised command skills, appropriate control room liaison, specialist equipment availability and mobility, and partnership arrangements.
- Develop and promote common understanding of issues, appropriate procedures and other responses.

**KEY OUTPUTS AND RESULTS**

- The collection of appropriate information to support the work.
- Agree and develop an action plan - identifying tasks, resources, responsibilities and timescales. This may necessitate the establishment of “task and finish” sub groups as deemed appropriate by the forum.
- Development of an appropriate Fire Danger Rating (FDR) system and Fire Behaviour Prediction (FBP) system for Scotland.
- An effective communication strategy that copes with the diversity of interests and the geographic spread of the threat.
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Minutes from Forum meetings
can be found at:
http://www.scotland.gov.uk/
Topics/Justice/Fire/15130/wildfireforum
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