

The Role of Managed Fire on Ecosystem Services of UK Moorlands and Heathlands

Impacts on Recreation and Tourism

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Approach

- Literature concentrates on impacts of wild fire, reduction of risk, temporary restrictions on recreational access for safety (S25, CROW 2000 England and Wales)
- My presentation draws on previous work on 'wildland' and landscape/recreation perception

The Wildland Debate in Scotland

- No pristine wilderness – ‘Wilderness is in the eye of the beholder’ (Aitken 1977)
- Acceptance that [in this context] ‘natural’ = heavily influenced by humanity
- Ecological and spiritual dimension
 - Minimal human intervention
 - Respect for natural processes (Taylor, 2005)
- Scenic quality – bias in Scotland to protecting the remoter North and West

NTS Wildland Policy 2002

- “Relatively remote and inaccessible, not noticeably affected by contemporary human activity, and offering high quality opportunities to escape from the pressures of everyday living and to find spiritual and physical refreshment”.
- Unna’s 10 principles (1937)
 - Enhancers and detractors

Visitors' Expectations of Artefacts

(Sidaway, 1997)

- Location: remote areas associated with naturalness
- Incongruity: impacts of pastoral and recreational activities pass unnoticed, industrial activities are incongruous
- Venerability and habitat recovery and acceptable
- Awareness of impacts low if scale and frequency low

Visual 'detractors' in the landscape

- New buildings, tracks, concrete & metal structures, pylons
- Older structures (even mine workings) become part of heritage and are revered
- Intensive agriculture and afforestation – Sitka plantations
- Acceptance of 'People like Us' (unrecorded encounters) – trampling damage to tracks accepted (up to a point)
- Intrusion of Tourists (People not like us) and their noise and clutter
 - Ski tows – funicular
 - Motor sports – trail riders

Continuity in use of the land

- Ordinary people have to make a living
- Farming, grazing, herding sheep with dogs
- Shepherds on quad bikes? (you have to move with the times)
- Landscape quality may depend on variety of colours and textures provided by controlled burning and recovery of heather (North Pennines)

Impact on Tourism (Bryden 1999)

- “Forget the castles, forget the towns and villages. The spectacular Highlands are all about mountains, sea, heather, moors, lochs and wide open spaces” (Lonely Planet)
- Disappointments = poor path quality, litter and erosion (Herries 1998)
- Improvements for some activities can affect others (walkers/mountain bikes; access tracks for shooting).

Burning Questions 1

- Is burning perceived as management practice or an act of God?
- Is dependence of moorland on the burning regime understood by visitors?
- Is it perceived as temporary (heather always recovers) or permanent?
- Is shooting perceived as sport of 'People like Us or other people : the sport of the landed gentry?

Burning Questions 2

- Is burning of lowland heathland perceived in the same way as moorland?
 - Accessibility and proximity to urban areas
 - Because of higher risk of wildfire

Terms of Reference

- To identify main issues in the context of recreation and tourism, including:
- Short term impacts, e.g.
 - Visual effects - black scars
 - Enjoyment – smoke
- Long term effects on landscape
- Implications of changes in burning regime (frequency, intensity, size, season)
- Gaps and Priorities for future work

Access Legislation

- CROW 2000 England and Wales
- Open access land defined and mapped
- Restrictions include essential land management (S.24) and grounds of safety or fire risk (S.25)
- LRA 2003 Scotland
- Access rights to all land exercised responsibly (defined in SOA Code)
- Landowners to use and manage land responsibly and to respect rights of access

Wildland in Scotland

- Ecological and spiritual dimension
 - Minimal human intervention
 - Respect for natural processes (Taylor, 2005)
- NPPG14: Natural Heritage
 - Uninhabited and often relatively inaccessible countryside where the influence of human activity on the character and quality of the environment has been minimal (Scottish Office, 1998)

About Roger Sidaway

- Honorary fellow at Edinburgh University
- Independent consultant, trainer and lecturer
- Research on environmental impacts of recreation
- Advisor to HoC Environment Committee
- Author of *Resolving Environmental Disputes* (2005)