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Perceptions of landscape and fire in the Cairngorms

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Background and Justification

The use of fire as a management tool in moorland areas is controversial, both within the Cairngorms and worldwide. Conflicts amongst those who seek create "natural" landscapes

and those who are more attached to tradition and economic productivity are current problems concerning different stakeholders in Scotland. Participatory land management

strategies have been recognised as vitally important to resolve such conflicts but a first stage in this process must be to understand the perceptions of the different stakeholder groups

and individuals involved (Dougill, et al. 2006). Only by understanding each others starting point can meaningful dialogue be developed.



fireBeaters

Stakeholder Methodology

Key stakeholders were sought using snowball sampling (i.e. Conservation Bodies, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Gamekeepers, Foresters and Ecologists). Ten semi-structured interviews were arranged. Data were analysed using qualitative methods.

Results

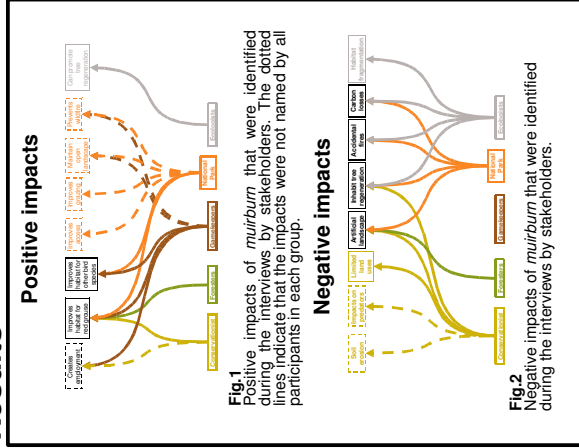


Fig.1 Positive impacts of muirburn that were identified during the interviews by stakeholders. The dotted lines indicate that the impacts were not named by all participants in each group.

Fig.2 Negative impacts of muirburn that were identified during the interviews by stakeholders.

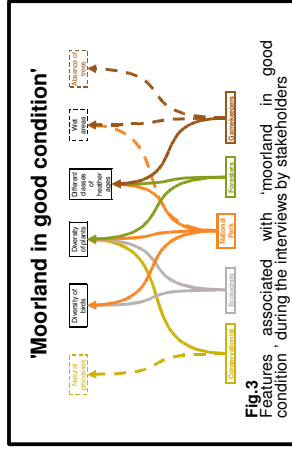


Fig.3 Features associated with 'moorland in good condition' during the interviews by stakeholders

Visitor Methodology

The visitors' perceptions of fire and moorland landscapes were obtained using a questionnaire. 102 questionnaires were completed. Data were analysed using both qualitative and quantitative methods.

Results

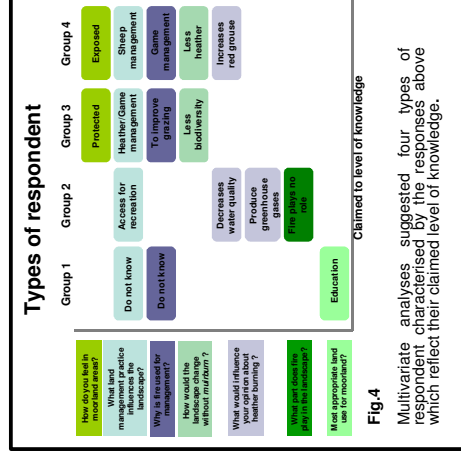
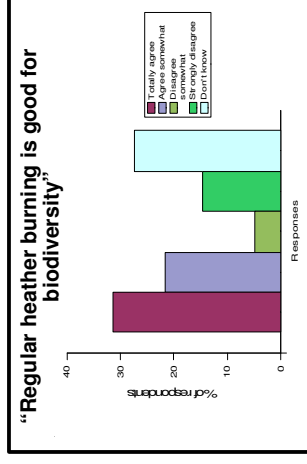
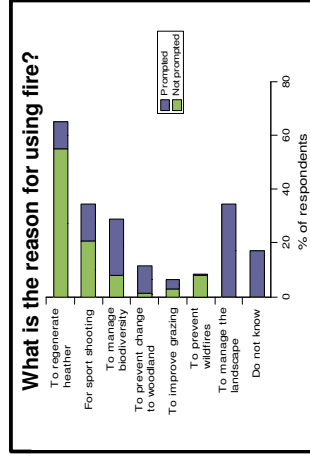
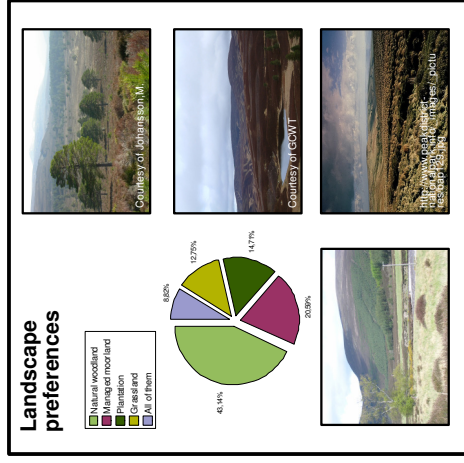
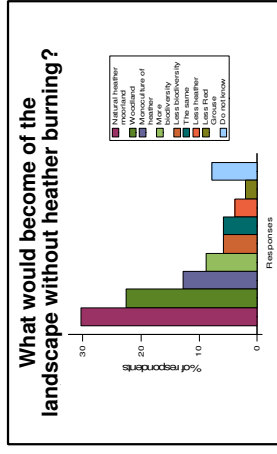


Fig.4 Multivariate analyses suggested four types of respondent characterised by the responses above which reflect their claimed level of knowledge.

Conclusion

It is clear that there is little agreement between the different stakeholder groups over the meaning of terms like 'moorland in good condition' and that care must be taken to avoid misunderstanding in dialogue between the

different groups. The diversity of views is unlikely to be resolved so there must be space for a diversity of management practices. Different levels of knowledge held by visitors suggest that some of them are well aware of the management

requirements of the moorland landscape while others who claimed to have little understanding are more influenced by perceived negative aspects. Education on land management issues and the landscape they are visiting are important when

opinions of the general public are to be taken into account in future land management strategies.

A. J. Dougill, E. D. G. Fraser, J. Holden, K. Hubacek, C. Prell, M. S. Reed, S. Stagl, L. C. Stringer (2006) Learning from Doing Participatory Rural Research: Lessons from the Peak District National Park. Journal of Agricultural Economics 57 (2) 259-275.