Fire Interdisciplinary Research on Ecosystem Services: fire and climate change in UK moorlands and heaths (FIRES)

SEMINAR 1

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

The University of Edinburgh, 31st March – 1st April 2008

Day 2, Session 3:

Breakout Group 1: The Evolution of Land Management Priorities

Rapporteur's Report of Discussion

Andrew Coupar, Scottish Natural Heritage

This breakout session was organised around 4 main questions. What are the priorities for UK moorland and heathland management? What flexibility is available for moorland managers? What knowledge gaps exist and how do we fill the gaps? What skills currently exist and/or are lacking within moorland and heathland management in the UK?

1. Priorities	Carbon, Climate change, Water Framework Directive (cost if don't comply - key driver), keeping the traditional aspect of burning and grazing, consequences of future changes to agriculture and sport, keeping designated sites in favourable condition, the retention of local communities and a viable rural economy. Access – Increasing pressure. Should this be free or can land owners charge? How will access change with climate change - more visits? A cultural divide in the use of the countryside still exists It is partially addressed by certain initiatives but Field Studies Council properties, for example, are limited therefore a possible education/awareness raising opportunity for land mangers exists. However, there is an urgent need to rationalise health and safety requirements. Rural support mechanisms – SRDP replacing Rural Stewardship Scheme etc. Renewable Energy – wind farm expansion includes threats and opportunities.
2. Flexibility	New local industries bringing greater need for farmers etc. to link business interests and utilise assets more effectively through e.g. farmers markets, sharing transport costs and cooperative establishments - local produce for local people. May lead to a rejuvenation of local slaughterhouses. Whisky industry may be a good marketing model for agriculture.
3. Knowledge	Better estimates for example, stock densities and area of burnt land are required getting information is still difficult. Solutions - remote sensing, land cover map, meta-estate burning plans, need for central collation of data Carbon research still limited by site dependency and short time series, variability according to land management needs defining – more research required.
4. Skills	Presently land managers policy officers all too specialised - there is a need for a broad, holistic and diverse management approach. For example, some game keepers may recycle bad practice in house, NGO's usually graduates and lack practical land management skills. Both groups need to exchange skills and need better communication. Adaptability is key. Demonstration Moor Days good knowledge dispensary and way of showing good practice – need to be wary of preaching to the converted. The challenge is to attract those who really need to be there. New blood seen as a way to revitalise communities but need income therefore a valuation tool for ecosystem services may be a necessary evil.