



Media notification – Immediate release

The Langholm Moor Demonstration Project (LMDP) has been granted the first out of season muirburn licence in Scotland and is set to burn heather at the earliest opportunity. However, strong winds and rain have currently hampered the moor's plans to apply this management technique which will greatly enhance the heather growth.

The project

The LMDP was launched on 20 September 2007 by Michael Russell MSP Minister for the Environment in the Scottish Government.

This ten-year project will:

- aim to establish a commercially viable driven grouse moor. Within the time frame of the project, it is the intention to sell driven grouse days producing an annual income in excess of £100,000 to help defray some of the cost of the conservation management of the moor of around £300,00 per year
- aim to restore an important site for nature conservation to favourable condition
- seek to demonstrate whether the needs of an economically viable grouse moor can be met alongside the conservation needs of protected raptors, especially the hen harrier.

The Project is a unique partnership, comprising: Scottish Natural Heritage, Game & Wildlife Conservation Trust, Buccleuch Estates, RSPB and Natural England. The first of the project's three-yearly reviews has just been published within which an objective of improving the heather quality following damage by heather beetle was highlighted. Muirburn is an effective way of mitigating the damage by heather beetle and, in the LMDP's case, a tool to reduce invasive plant species such as *Molinia caerulea* – a species-poor acidic grass.

Licencing

The Wildlife and Natural Environment Act 2011 introduced several changes to the legislation governing muirburn. One of these was to allow the possibility of carrying out muirburn outwith the legal muirburn season, under licence.

The muirburn season runs from 1 October in any year to 30 April in the following year. The season exists to ensure that muirburn is only carried out during the time of year when the potential for muirburn to damage economic, social, and environmental interests is minimised.

However, there may be exceptional circumstances where muirburn has a specific purpose which can only be achieved by burning in the period from 1 May to 30 September in any year, and that specific purpose cannot be achieved by burning within the muirburn season. From 1st August 2011 it became possible to apply for a licence to carry out muirburn out of season for the following purposes:

- a) conserving, restoring, enhancing or managing the natural environment;
- b) research; or
- c) public safety.

Examples might include burning to create a suitable seedbed at the appropriate time of year for natural regeneration of adjacent native woodland, or scientific research into the consequences for dry heath of muirburn in September.

For further information please contact the project manager Graeme Dalby on: 07912 515074