

Forest of Dartmoor





The Forest of Dartmoor covers 11,170ha in the centre of Dartmoor, surrounded by the home commons.

Made up of a rolling plateau broken up by river valleys and rocky tors.

Main habitats - blanket bog, wet and dry heath and acid grassland, all of which are dominated to some degree by *Molinia*.

Entered a 10 year ESA agreement in 2001.

Following 2 large wild fires on the South Moor Natural England felt our ESA was unsustainable if these fires continued.



The Forest of Dartmoor Fire Management Plan

A partnership was formed to develop the Forest of Dartmoor Fire Management Plan

Partners

Dartmoor Hill Farm Project
Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue
Service

Forest of Dartmoor Commoners
Association

Duchy of Cornwall
Dartmoor National Park Authority
Ministry of Defence
Natural England

It sets out

Responsibilities
of the partners

Fire
Equipment
available

Maps showing
access points,
accessible water
sources, fire
breaks

Actions to
aid fire
prevention

Insurance

Hazards and
risks when
fighting
moorland
fires

Rules of
Engagement

Call out
systems

Commoners Fire Party

30 Commoners
Turn out when called
Maintain correct PPE
Maintain fire fighting
equipment
Attend annual training

Training - Run by the fire Service

Covers
Fuel types light (grass)
medium (bracken, heather, gorse)
heavy (trees, dense scrub)
Influential factors – wind
slope
aspect
Chain of command

L - Lookouts
A - Awareness
C - Communication
E - Escape routes
S - Safety zones

Most of the Forest
is remote and
inaccessible.
We tried different
fire fighting
techniques



After spending all day flogging with fire beaters we decided there must be a better way



Not just
exhausting but
ineffective



03-Apr-07 13:21

We went to a local company and asked them what they could design. They came up with fogging machines to go on quad bikes.

The petrol driven pressure washer is strapped to the front rack of the bike

The water tank goes on the back rack



A complete
game changer.

Experience of
Dartmoor is still
needed to travel
safely





We also carry out controlled swaling.



SWALING CHECK LIST

Who you need to contact before you swale

Plan your swale. Where, when

Control your swale. Manpower, equipment, firebreaks

Other considerations. Landscape, Wildlife, Neighbours, Public Safety

Legal Requirements

SWALING CHECKLIST



Before burning you must telephone:

- 1 **Police**
08452 777444
Ask for the Force Enquiry Centre
- 2 **Devon Fire and Rescue Service**
01392 872200
Ask for the Control Room
- 3 **English Nature**
01392 889770
If the burn is to take place in a Site of Special Scientific Interest
- 4 **Dartmoor National Park Authority**
01626 832093

Making these phone calls will help to ensure that no officers are sent to put your fire out.

Your local contacts:

.....

.....

.....

The Legal Requirements

The burning, not only of heather and grass, but also gorse, bracken and bilberry, is controlled by the *Heather and Grass, etc (Burning) Regulations 1986*.

- ◆ Burning is allowed only between: 1 October - 15 April in upland areas. The National Park Authority recommends no burning after 31 March to prevent harm to nesting birds.
- ◆ Outside these dates burning is allowed only under licence issued by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra).
- ◆ Permission of the owner must be gained.
- ◆ At least 24 hours but not more than 7 days notice of intent to burn must be given in writing to the owners and occupiers of the land concerned and persons in charge of adjacent land.
- ◆ You must not start burning heather, grass, gorse, bracken or bilberry between sunset and sunrise.
- ◆ You must ensure that sufficient people and equipment are on hand to control the burn.
- ◆ You must take all reasonable precautions to prevent injury or damage.
- ◆ You must not cause a nuisance through the creation of smoke. This is an offence under the *Clean Air Act 1956*.
- ◆ You must contact English Nature if burning on a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
- ◆ Under the Dartmoor Commoners' Council's Regulations, arising from the *Dartmoor Commons Act 1985*, no person or local Commoners' Association shall burn moorland where heather is present on the commons exceeding an area of

9000 square metres at intervals of less than 12 years, nor where the distance between burns in any one year is less than 150 metres. No person or local Commoners' Association shall burn moorland where dead grass, bracken or gorse is present on any common land unit over an area exceeding 50 acres (20 hectares) or 25% of the area of that common land unit whichever shall be the less and such burning shall take place at intervals of no less than 3 years.

Points to Remember

Planning

- ◆ Burn in accordance with an approved long-term Fire Plan for your area, drawn up to meet agricultural and environmental objectives.
- ◆ The Fire Plan should include a programme of essential burning on a sound rotation basis and include the creation of firebreaks where necessary.
- ◆ Plan individual burns sensibly by relating size of area to manpower availability, safety requirements and forecasted weather conditions.
- ◆ Plan to avoid burning at weekends or public holidays if possible.

Timing

- ◆ Burn when there is a gentle breeze.
- ◆ Make an early start.
- ◆ Stop and re-assess if conditions change.

Place

- ◆ Choose with care the best spot to start the fire, to ensure the fire doesn't spread too quickly.
- ◆ Burn small areas at a time, paying particular attention to the optimum width of the burn.

(cont.)

Firebreaks

- ◆ Use firebreaks, choosing natural boundaries for the burn wherever possible.

Control

- ◆ Have sufficient manpower and equipment.
- ◆ Appoint one person to be in charge.

Landscape and Wildlife

- ◆ Take account of wildlife habitats.
- ◆ Avoid spoiling the landscape and environment.

Neighbours

- ◆ Keep them informed and take account of their property and interests.

Public Safety

- ◆ Avoid creating hazards to road users and the public.

Prosecution

- ◆ A breach of the *Heather and Grass etc (Burning) Regulations 1986* may on conviction result in a fine of up to £1000.
- ◆ For SSSIs failure to give written notice to English Nature can result in a fine up to £2500 under the *Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981*.

Insurance

- ◆ Dartmoor Commoners' Council insurance will not cover public liability for damage to property arising out of swaling unless the Fire Service is advised in advance of each instance of swaling.



Positive lessons/good practice

Enough people and Equipment

Don't light too big an area at once

Observe weather conditions

Create firebreaks

Use natural firebreaks where possible

Collaboration with Fire Service

Roll out Forest plan to all Commons

All work together, share equipment, help each other

Challenges/issues

Sudden changes in the weather

Too much vegetation, fuel load

Not enough grazing

Allowed size of burn

Liability and penalties

Maintenance of equipment

Deep peat

Resources to lead Fire Liaison Group

SSSI consent

Create joined up plans covering all commons