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Andrew Gilruth
Chief Executive
Moorland Association

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9 September 2025

Dear Andrew,

Following today's public announcement, I am writing to update you on the changes the government has decided to introduce through the Heather and Grass etc. Burning (England) Regulations 2021.

We have [published a response to the consultation](#) which details the thorough review of all the consultation responses received, including that from the National Gamekeepers Organisation, and the outlines the decisions taken.

Under the new Regulations, protection will now be broadened to all peat deeper than 30cm in Less Favoured Areas, unless subject to a license.

The grounds for applying for a licence have been amended with the removal of ground (d) (inaccessibility of mechanical cutting equipment), the amendment of ground (a) to include for historic sites, and a new ground for research or education purposes. The grounds for applying for a licence are now as follows:

- a) To conserve, enhance or manage the natural or historic environment
- b) For the safety of people (this could be an individual or a group of people)
- c) To reduce the impact of wildfire
- d) For research or education purposes

Based on responses through the consultation, we will not be mandating within the Regulations compliance with the upcoming Heather and Grass Management Code or the requirement to have attended a suitable wildfire training course prior to acting under licence.

These regulatory changes will be made via statutory instrument, which has been laid today, with the changes coming into force on 30 September 2025. Any burning in Less Favoured Areas on peat deeper than 30cm will require a licence from that date.

Protecting England's peatlands from unnecessary burning is essential to its restoration and recovery. As you will be aware, 80% of England's peatlands are degraded, with rotational burning contributing to their decline in upland areas. Prescribed burns also carry an inherent risk of wildfire, with this risk increasing because of climate change.

Having considered the wildfire concerns raised through the consultation responses, I hope you and your membership will be reassured by the following:

- **Licencing regime will continue:** Land managers and owners can still apply for a licence to burn, including to reduce the impact of wildfires.
- **Simpler application process:** We have reviewed the current system and made changes to make it clearer for applicants, but also to ensure a determination can be made more quickly.
- **Improved guidance:** We have now published revised guidance to support applicants through the process. Based on stakeholder feedback, we've added templates for wildfire management and restoration plans to provide greater support and clarity on what information will be necessary to provide when applying and mitigate delays. The updated guidance can be found here - [Heather and grass burning: rules and when you need a licence - GOV.UK](#)

I understand that you may have concerns about the impacts this may have on your members. If you would find it useful, I would be happy to set up a meeting to discuss the changes and how we can help your members navigate the system.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Edwards', with a stylized, cursive script.

Gabrielle Edwards
Deputy Director, Access, Landscape, Peatland and Soils
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs