



Department
for Environment,
Food & Rural Affairs

Mary Creagh CBE MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Nature
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

[REDACTED] MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA
[REDACTED]

Your ref: SA32957
Our ref: MC2025/16725/TH

30 September 2025

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your email of 4 August on behalf of your constituent about wildfire, burning on moorlands and the licensing regime. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Defra acknowledges the increasing threat that wildfires can pose to our most vulnerable and important habitats, including peatlands.

Peat that is wet is less likely to burn during a wildfire, builds new peat and loses less carbon through oxidation, protecting the stored carbon of old and ensuring that the habitat persists. This is why it is vital that we protect these sites for future generations and why the recent public consultation on heather and grass burning considered the potential benefits of extending protections to a broader area of upland peat.

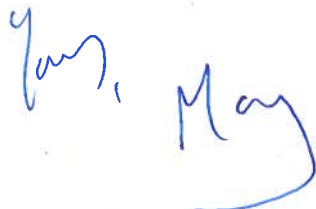
Whilst we acknowledge that prescribed burning burns the surface vegetation rather than the peat itself, the scientific consensus is that repeated burning risks permanently altering the species composition of healthy peatland habitats, making it difficult to restore to its natural hydrology and impossible to return it to its natural state. As prescribed burning is just one of several means to manage vegetation, we are encouraging landowners and land managers to use sustainable methods to manage habitat, restore their peatland and adopt good quality wildfire management plans.

However, the government recognises that in limited circumstances, where no feasible alternative exists, prescribed burning may still be necessary. As such, a licensing scheme exists to enable the Secretary of State to grant a licence to burn, where such a need can be evidenced.

In your constituent's case, one of the conditions to a licence being granted was to provide a detailed restoration plan, showing how the land could be moved away from the need to burn in future. Detailed advice and guidance were provided to the applicant by both Defra officials and Natural England but, despite this, the applicant's various iterations of the restoration plan did not meet the level of specificity required.

In a bid to further support applicants, we are revising the licence application guidance to include a template restoration plan and template wildfire management plan for applicants to populate.

Thank you for taking the time to contact me about this important issue about this important issue.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Mary', with a stylized flourish at the end.

MARY CREAGH CBE MP