

05 February 2026

Foss House
Kings pool
1-2 Peasholme Green
York
YO1 7PX

Andrew Gilruth
agilruth@moorlandassociation.org

Dear Mr Gilruth

Access to Information Request – Request no EIR2026/00223

Thank you for your request for information, which we received on 8 January 2026. Your request has been considered under the Environmental Information Regulations 2004 (the EIRs).

You asked for the following information:

I am seeking information relating to the peer-review process used for Natural England Evidence Review NEER155 (“Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water”).

Draft copies of the report were reviewed by a panel of external reviewers. The report was also peer reviewed internally within Natural England.

Please provide the following:

1. Peer-review framework and scope

a) Any written brief, terms of reference or guidance provided to peer-reviewers for NEER155.

There was no specific brief, terms of reference or guidance provided to the panel of external reviewers, or internal reviewers, other than a request to review the report. Therefore, Regulation 12(4)(a), Information not held, applies.

b) Any review templates, questions, scoring frameworks or checklists used as part of the peer-review process.

There were no review templates, questions, scoring frameworks or checklists for reviewers to complete. Therefore, Regulation 12(4)(a), Information not held, applies.

C) Documents defining which materials were subject to peer review, including whether this included:

- * the full draft report,**
- * evidence summaries, and/or**
- * study quality or ranking assessments.**

There were no documents defining which materials were subject to the peer review. Therefore, Regulation 12(4)(a), Information not held, applies.

However, we can confirm that reviewers were sent draft copies of the report. Scores for study quality (internal validity) and external validity were included in the report text. Individual study

quality assessment forms were not sent to reviewers. We interpret 'evidence summaries' to refer to sections 4-11 'summaries of recent evidence'. These formed part of the draft report which was reviewed.

2. Peer-reviewers

a) The number of peer-reviewers involved.

Five reviewers made up the external expert panel. A colleague of one panel member contributed additional comments on specific aspects of the report. Nine members of Natural England staff also provided comments on drafts of the report. A final, additional external reviewer provided comments, edited and proof-read the final draft report.

b) For each reviewer, their institutional affiliation at the time of review (names not required).

Details of the external expert panel are provided in NEER155 on page 3 under the heading 'External expert review group' ([An evidence review update on the effects of managed burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water - NEER155](#)). Details of other reviewers who provided comments are given in on page 3 under the heading 'Acknowledgements'.

3. Governance and sign-off

a) Documents describing the internal governance or quality assurance process used to manage peer review for NEER155.

The NEER155 report followed the Natural England's standard process for technical publications. The internal guidance for this process is documented and provided in the attached zip file named 'EIR2025_00223 Internal'. The Publication Submission form is also attached providing information in scope of your request regarding the QA process. Some of the information is redacted as it falls under EIR Regulation 12(3) – Prohibition on disclosure of personal Information. See further details regarding this exemption in Annex A below. [Please Note: NE disclosed 145 pages of information in this EIR. The Annexes to the Moorland Association letter, are its own Annexes and these are elements of that full EIR contents. All 145 pages are available if Defra or NE wish to see them]

To summarise the peer review process, external scientists with relevant expertise were identified, contacted and asked if they would review the report, then they were sent the draft. Comments were received back, considered and addressed before the report was finalised. The draft report was also reviewed by a number of Senior Specialists within Natural England. The final report was signed off / approved by a Principal Specialist within Natural England. The report was then subject to the Natural England internal Technical Publications Cross Cutting Assurance Network review before final sign off for publishing.

b) Records confirming completion and sign-off of the peer-review process.

Natural England has undertaken a search and can confirm that it does not hold documents confirming completion and signoff of the peer-review process. However, we can provide correspondence confirming that individuals completed their reviews and provided their comments. These are provided to you in both the attached zip files (split by External and Internal). Some of the information is redacted as it falls under EIR Regulation 12(3) – Prohibition on disclosure of personal Information. See further details regarding this exemption in Annex A below.

Please note that the information we have supplied to you is subject to copyright protection under the Copyright Designs and Patents Act 1988. You may re-use this information (not including logos) free of charge in any format or medium, for the purposes of research for non-commercial purposes, private study, criticism, review and news reporting. You must re-use it accurately and not in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Natural England copyright, and you must give the title of the source document/publication. However, if you wish to re-use all or part of this information for commercial purposes, including publishing and the information is not covered by the [Open Government Licence](#) you will need to apply for a licence. Applications can be sent to Enquiry Service, Natural England, Foss House, Kings Pool, 1-2 Peasholme Green, York, YO1 7PX.

This information may also contain third party copyrighted material and you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned before you re-use it.

As you may be aware, under the legislation should you have any concerns with the service you have received in relation to your requests and wish to make a complaint or request a review of our decision, please contact foi@naturalengland.org.uk and we'll arrange for a colleague to conduct an internal review. Under Regulation 11(2) this needs to be done no later than 40 working days after the date of this letter.

If you are not content with the outcome of that complaint or the internal review, you may apply directly to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the Commissioner cannot decide unless you have exhausted the internal review procedure provided by Natural England. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at: <https://ico.org.uk/global/contact-us/> or call on 0303 123 1113 (local rate), www.ico.org.uk.

Yours sincerely

Access to Information Team
Legal, Governance and External Affairs
Natural England
foi@naturalengland.org.uk

Enc

Annex A (NE's internal Annex A to its EIR letter)

Regulation 12(3) - Personal Information

The names, signatures, contact details and other identifiers of private individuals and staff members in certain circumstances are considered by Natural England to be personal information as defined by the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018.

The First Data Protection Principle says that personal data shall be processed lawfully, fairly and in a transparent manner. Guidance published by the Information Commissioner, states that when considering fairness in relation to disclosing personal information under FOIA and EIR it will usually mean considering:

- whether the information is sensitive personal data;
- the possible consequences of disclosure on the individual;
- the reasonable expectations of the individual, taking into account: their expectations both at the time the information was collected and at the time of the request; the nature of the information itself; the circumstances in which the information was obtained; whether the information has been or remains in the public domain; and the FOIA and EIR principles of transparency and accountability; and
- any legitimate interests in the public having access to the information and the balance between these and the rights and freedoms of the individuals who are the data subjects.

When personal information is collected from individuals by Natural England, we do not inform them that the information will remain confidential or that it may be released, however, we believe that there is an expectation of confidentiality.

We consider that there is no overriding legitimate interest in the personal information being made public.

The release of personal information and any subsequent contact may cause unnecessary or unjustified distress or damage to the individuals if released. Natural England is, therefore, satisfied that the redacted parts of the information requested fit the definition of personal data and that its release would be 'unfair' under the meaning of the first Data Protection Principle and should not be released.

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: NE burning evidence review update [notification to external reviewers of revised timescale and responses]
Date: 30 September 2024 10:38:49

[REDACTED] for info.

Just to let you know that I emailed the external expert reviewers for the burning ER update report last week to inform them of the revised timetable (see below).

So far, I've had responses back from three of the five reviewers which were generally positive over being able to respond relatively quickly after receiving the report around 14 October as follows: [REDACTED] "No problem - will await the document"; [REDACTED] "Hopefully that should be ok - thanks for the advance warning"; and [REDACTED]: "Good to hear from you. I'd be happy to give it a final review from the 14th October. I'm away [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] anyway so the two week timetable fits nicely".

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 23 September 2024 15:32
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: NE burning evidence review update

Hi [REDACTED]

Apologies for the delay in providing an update on the burning evidence review update.

As you may have guessed, progress has been delayed for a variety of reasons, but this is to let you know that the aim is to send a complete version for a technical edit and proof reading around 14 October with a target turnaround of two weeks.

Due to time pressure to publish the report, our intention is to also send it to you and the other reviewers, including internally, at the same time. It would be very helpful if you could add any final comments quickly, ideally to the same timescale. Bearing in mind the technical edit and proof reading being undertaken and that you have already commented on much of the main part of the text, **we are not expecting further detailed comments at this stage.** Rather we want to give you the opportunity to see the final version and make any more major comments you may have.

We realise that you may not be able to comment to this tight timescale. I would be grateful if you could let me know if this is the case so that we can consider how we might be able to address this when I return from leave next week.

Thank you for your inputs to the review to date.

Best wishes



Sent from [Outlook for iOS](#)

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: NEER155 / TP7022: Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water
Date: 20 December 2024 15:47:18
Attachments: [NEER155 - FINAL DRAFT - 06-12-2024 - Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity carbon and water - ian C v1.docx](#)
[image001.png](#)

Hi

Here is some comments and thoughts, happy to discuss in next year

Have a great Christmas

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 December 2024 08:56

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Subject: NEER155 / TP7022: Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water

Dear All,

Technical report **NEER155 Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water** is under review from **06/12/2024 to 27/12/2024**. A copy of the report is attached.

Please submit any responses by adding comments to the Word document and returning to me by **06/01/2025**. Please do not make changes to the document itself.

Note: only respond if you are providing constructive feedback. A nil response will be taken as an assumption that you do not object to the report being published.

If you receive this email as Bcc you are a member of the [Technical Publications Quality Assurance Network](#). If you would like to remove yourself from the network you can do this on the network page or contact NE Publications (publications@naturalengland.org.uk).

Please forward this email to anyone who might have an interest in this report.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Specialist – Upland Habitats

Science / Chief Scientists Directorate

Natural England

[REDACTED]

www.gov.uk/natural-england

REPORTING A WILDLIFE POISONING INCIDENT? Please call 0800 321 600 (freephone)

In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing.

Annex D

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: NE burning evidence review update
Date: 08 November 2024 14:38:08
Attachments: [Burning ER late draft revised update 5nov24 jw.docx](#)
[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Many thanks for including me in this email. I missed the original email from [REDACTED] on this report because I was on [REDACTED]

I have just scanned through the document looking for mention of palaeoecology specifically, as this is my research area. I think some really useful trends have been identified from the studies included and the summaries are useful. There are many other palaeoenvironmental studies that could be of interest.

We include and present charcoal fragment counts in all pollen studies, but the word “fire” or “burning” may not appear in the title of the paper because it hasn’t been the main focus of the study, but the charcoal data are still presented and are part of interpretations. I’ve attached a few papers that may be relevant:

- A really useful study by Althea Davies (2016) for the Peak District that shows vegetation regime shifts following fire events and the point at which shifts can become permanent in a landscape.
- I’ve also attached a paper from work Ralph Fyfe and I carried out in Wales where charcoal records are included for 5 peat coring sites (Woodbridge et al., 2012)
- and another based on a sediment core from a reservoir on Dartmoor (Woodbridge et al., 2014).
- I’ve also been carrying out on-going work on peatland fire in the palaeo record in the Peak District. At the moment this is unpublished, but I can share findings if this is useful.

While searching for palaeoecology sections in the report, I made a few small edits to the attached version just in case this is useful. One thing I noticed is that ‘paleo’ has been spelt using the USA spelling instead of UK spelling ‘palaeo’. Pollen records capture vegetation change up to around a 5 km area surrounding the coring site (depending on the openness of the landscape), but charcoal records are likely more local to the coring location.

I noticed the report is also about biodiversity. Understanding the drivers of past biodiversity trends has been a recent focus of our palaeoecological research. I’ve attached 2 papers that make use of ~300 UK pollen datasets and other palaeo archives to explore biodiversity trends and historic drivers in case this is of use. Perhaps it would be worth mentioning in the report somewhere that palaeoenvironmental data could also have potential to inform on biodiversity management.

I hope some of this is useful. Please let me know if any further information would be helpful.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, November 7, 2024 10:01 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: NE burning evidence review upadate

Hi [REDACTED]

With apologies for the further delay, attached is a relatively near complete but not yet edited, so still quite a 'drafty' version of the upland peatland burning evidence review update report.

There are a few sections that still need reviewing internally and in places completing, especially the appendices, and the whole report is still undergoing an edit, proof-read and further consideration of comments. The 'evidence statements' in Section 13 Summary and conclusions have only just been drafted (and are still to be done for vegetation and wildfire) so will be further reviewed.

As I previous mentioned, we are not expecting further detailed comments at this stage. Rather we wanted to give you the opportunity to see a more complete version and to make any more major comments you may have.

There is pressure to complete the report as soon as possible, so I'm sorry to say that we will need any comments by the middle of next week (of 11 November) if we are to be able to take them into account before it goes into our internal publication process/review. Apologies if this short timescale doesn't give you time to comment further, but no problem if this is the case. Nevertheless, if there are any major thing(s) of concern after next week then please still let me know anyway.

I've copied [REDACTED] in on this as some time ago she asked my colleague, [REDACTED], about the review and he suggested that I would send her a copy. Clearly it's still a draft but I'll send you both a copy when it's finalised.

Annex E

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: NEER155 / TP7022: Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water
Date: 24 December 2024 17:05:41
Attachments: [image001.png](#)
[NEER155 - FINAL DRAFT - 06-12-2024 - Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity carbon and water \[REDACTED\] CrossCuttingReview.docx](#)

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for sending this round. I attach the report with my comments. I would caveat my comments on the document with that they were done as I read – so very much an instinctive view – and in the main suggestions for changes. I have not had the chance to review every part of the doc given its length and the time I had to do it but have spent the best part of today on it (not a brag honest – just to give context).

There are a few things that do need addressing so do please come back to me if you need help on that – some are obvious like Table numbers etc.

In terms of reviewing this for publication and any associated risk I would make the following comments:

1. The review is expertly conducted, with methods by and large very clearly explained. I have made some suggestions where a few tweaks could be made to tighten this up as methodology is a clear place where folks can pick apart the findings. I'd be especially keen to see some greater description of the inclusion and exclusion criteria as I didn't get a feel that I could recreate this review based on that section.
2. The review is extensive, sets out the questions well and is apparently comprehensive in its narrative. This results in a long review with lots of narrative. While this is ostensibly a good thing, as we do need to say what the studies have shown – the amount of narrative will potentially open opportunities for others to critique what we have said. I do welcome this in many ways – it is the scientific method after all -but we should be aware of that and prepare for it.
3. Building on this – I found section 12 and 13 summarising the evidence and conclusions to be brilliant. This is especially true of section 13 – I just wish I had read it sooner right at the beginning of the report. And then let the narratives fill in the gaps for me where I wanted or needed. I want to know right away that the Butler did it! Please consider how this could be achieved. Also on section 12 – I think we could make our assessment of the confidence of the evidence in the table much clearer here – we use the word strong on some occasions but don't describe it on others. Can this be addressed- perhaps by adding a column to describe this in the terms described elsewhere in the report.
4. Finally again building on that. I want to know at the end of each relevant section how well the question has been answered (for example the end of section 4, 5 onwards etc). Given the size of the review many folks may just jump to the relevant section. Using the stuff from section 13 again would help here. I almost don't mind repeating it in these sections even though we have summarised it brought it together.

5. Finally - and outside the scope if this review – [REDACTED]

See you in 2025!

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 06 December 2024 08:56

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: SM-NE-Publications (NE) ; [REDACTED]

SM-[REDACTED]

Subject: NEER155 / TP7022: Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water

Dear All,

Technical report **NEER155 Update to Natural England Evidence Review on the effects of burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water** is under review from **06/12/2024 to 27/12/2024**. A copy of the report is attached.

Please submit any responses by adding comments to the Word document and returning to me by **06/01/2025**. Please do not make changes to the document itself.

Note: only respond if you are providing constructive feedback. A nil response will be taken as an assumption that you do not object to the report being published.

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Please forward this email to anyone who might have an interest in this report.

Many thanks,

[REDACTED]
Specialist – Upland Habitats

Science / Chief Scientists Directorate

Natural England

[REDACTED]
www.gov.uk/natural-england

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In an effort to reduce Natural England's carbon footprint, I will, wherever possible, avoid travelling to meetings and attend via audio, video or web conferencing.

Page 1 - Technical publications – self service guidance

This page provides guidance on how to create and publish Natural England technical publications. Preparing evidence reports for publishing is now a self-service process.

TECHNICAL PUBLICATIONS SELF SERVICE TOOLKIT

Outputs for all our evidence projects should be published in the appropriate format and to the appropriate standard. We want to be transparent and open about our evidence and ensure that our published evidence can be used by others to benefit the environment. This document has been produced for Project Officers to assist in publishing their own evidence.

Click on the steps to open the guidance.

STEP ONE

I HAVE A REPORT TO PUBLISH - WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW?

STEP TWO

REGISTERING ON THE TECHNICAL INFORMATION EXCHANGE

STEP THREE

WHAT CATEGORY DOES MY REPORT FALL INTO?

STEP FOUR

BRANDING

STEP FIVE

DEFRA PRESS OFFICE AND THE PUBLICATION PROFORMA

STEP SIX

SETTING UP EVIDENCE PROJECT & PUBLICATION DATABASE & TRIM

STEP SEVEN

CROSS CUTTING REVIEW

STEP EIGHT

FINAL SIGN OFF

STEP NINE

ACCESS TO EVIDENCE CATALOGUE & PUBLISHING

STEP TEN

AFTER PUBLISHING

STEP ELEVEN

COMMUNICATING OUR EVIDENCE



TECHNICAL
PUBLICATION
LINKS


Whenever possible our evidence should be published externally in the appropriate format and to the appropriate standard, not just to support our work, but also so it can be used by others to benefit the environment. It is extremely important that our

evidence is published and made available to not only the organisation but the public.

Accessibility guidance

All documents published on the Access to Evidence catalogue from 23rd September 2018 **must now be accessible**. This is not just good practice, it is a legal requirement. If you ask us to publish a document that is not accessible, publication will be delayed until the issues are fixed or we may be unable to publish in that format.

The Accessibility documents policy and statement can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/natural-england/about/accessible-documents-policy> 

Guidance on producing an accessible publication is provided at [Step Four - Publishing standards](#) and further guidance on accessibility is on the Defra intranet at:

<https://intranet.defra.gov.uk/how-to/correspondence/publishing-govuk-intranet/publishing-standards/accessibility/>

This guidance must be followed in the order it is displayed below. Please read the guidance fully before contacting the Publications mailbox (publications@naturalengland.org.uk) with any queries.

Technical Publications Self Service Steps

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step One - The technical review](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Two - TIE Registrations](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Three - Report types](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Four - Publishing standards](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Five - the publication submission form](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Six - Setting up Evidence Project Database, Project Database, and Report Number](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Seven - Cross Cutting Review](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Eight - Final Sign Off](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Nine - Access to Evidence catalogue and publishing](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Ten - After publishing](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Step Eleven - Communicating our Evidence](#)

[Natural England Technical Publications - Technical Publication Links](#)

Natural England Technical Publications - Step One

- [Discuss this wiki](#)
- [Edit wiki content](#)
- [Print](#)
- [Wiki alert](#)

Step One - The technical review

This section provides details on the 'technical review', the first stage of the publications process that every technical report must go through prior to publishing on the [Natural England Access to Evidence Catalogue](#).

The purpose of the technical review is to ensure the report is technically correct and robust. As Project Officer you should agree with the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) what level of quality assurance a project should be working to. **This should be agreed as part of the project development and approval process before the work begins.** For more information on the role of the Project Manager and SRO see the [project management page](#).

For projects that have already begun please consider, and agree, the level of quality assurance that should apply, at the earliest practical stage. Where contractors are employed, the contract should state that before a report is accepted by Natural England, a draft should be submitted for technical review. Work should not be accepted and paid for until it has been technically reviewed and any necessary amendments made.

The 4-tiered approach to quality assurance

The quality management standard sets out a 4-tiered approach to quality assuring our work: self-assessment, internal peer review, high level internal peer review, and external/independent peer review. It is important to note that the higher levels of quality assurance should be preceded by lower tiers, for example self-assessment and internal peer review precede high level internal peer review. The final level you decide to use will vary depending on the circumstances. Non contentious work that

is using existing survey or scientific methods will need a lower level of review than contentious or novel work.

It is your responsibility to identify who will carry out the assurance and to request time from them to do this. If you cannot find an expert in the specific subject of the report for internal review then contact Natural England principal and senior specialists who will at least be able to comment on methods, procedures and the robustness of the evidence.

Tier 1: Self-assessment

This is appropriate for routine work which is of low impact and risk. This level of quality assurance will be used by everyone in the first instance to check the quality of the work. It is not sufficient for technical publications.

Tier 2: Internal peer review

All publications published on the Access to Evidence Catalogue require at least this level of review. The quality assurance will be carried out by one or more colleagues with relevant expertise, such as a team/expert/specialist, an expert/specialist from another team or the line manager/team leader.

Tier 3: High level internal peer review

Most technical reports will require this level of quality assurance before publication, which is for projects with a high potential impact or risk. This is generally undertaken by an expert outside of the immediate area of work, including a Principal Adviser/Specialist, the High Risk Case Panel, an appropriate Manager, Director/Deputy-Director of the Chief Scientist Directorate.

Tier 4: External / independent peer review

External / independent peer review is the highest level of quality assurance. It should be used where there is a high level of transparency required due to the potentially high impact of the publication, including where there is a risk to our reputation or a high level of novelty or technical difficulty. It will be carried out by qualified technical experts and be independent of stakeholder and other interests.

Natural England Evidence reviews

For Natural England Evidence Reviews, the methodology itself also needs to be reviewed at this stage by a Principal Specialist or a Director/Deputy-Director in the Chief Scientist Directorate to ensure it meets evidence review standards.

Confirmation that the methodology has been reviewed and approved should be included in the 'Publication Submission Form' submitted at [Step 5](#).

Where the methodology used does not meet the standards required for an evidence review, it may be possible to publish the report as a different publication type, such as a commissioned or joint report instead.

Next step: [Step Two: Technical Information Exchange registrations](#)

Back to the [Technical Publications guidance homepage](#)

Last updated 2024/04/18 by 

Publication submission form

Submission details

NE Project Manager Name	
Report contact	
Date of submission	06/12/2024 (edited 18/02/2025)

Report details

Title of the report	An evidence review update on the effects of managed burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water
Report type	Natural England Evidence Review (NEER)
Who are the target audiences of the report?	Primarily peatland land managers, practitioners, academics, regulators and stakeholders with an interest in how peatland land management practices affect ecosystem services and natural capital.

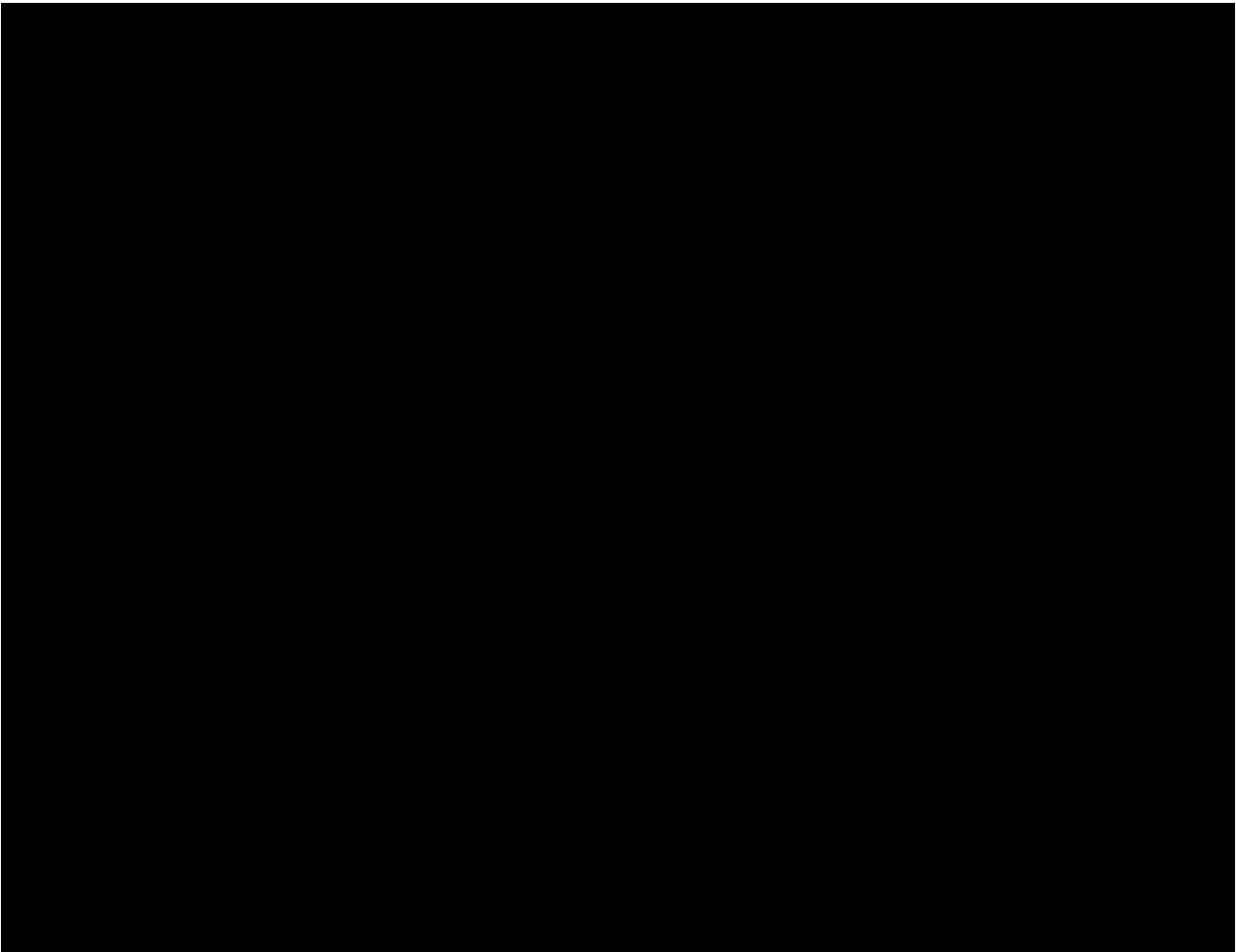
Quality assurance

Level of technical review (e.g., Tier 3)	Tier 4
Technical Sign-off 1	<div></div> <p>Principal Specialist – Synthesis, Chief Scientist Directorate, Knowledge into Practice Unit Natural England</p>
Technical Sign-off 2	<p>Prof. <div></div></p> <p>Dr. <div></div></p> <p>Prof. <div></div></p> <p>Prof. <div></div></p> <p><div></div></p> <p>Dr. <div></div></p>
Has the methodology been reviewed to ensure it meets evidence review standards (applicable to Natural England Evidence Reviews only)?	Reviewed by <div></div>
Does the report meet Natural England Publishing Standards and have accessibility guidelines been followed?	<p>Y</p> <div></div>

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

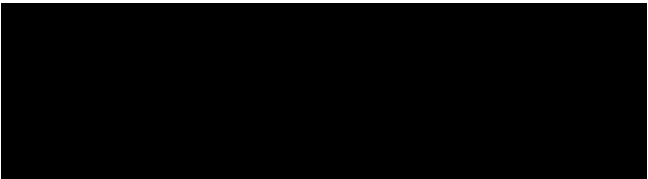


Publication date

Preferred date of publication	14/01/2025-07/03/2025
Please specify why you have chosen the preferred publication date (e.g., to align with an event, site of special scientific interest (SSSI) notification, etc.) and what flexibility you have.	

Sign-off

To be completed once the form has been reviewed and submitted.

Senior Adviser - Publications	
CSD Comms	

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>

Sent: Thursday, November 7, 2024 10:01 PM

To: [REDACTED]

Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: NE burning evidence review upadate

Hi [REDACTED]

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As I previous mentioned, we are not expecting further detailed comments at this stage. Rather we wanted to give you the opportunity to see a more complete version and to make any more major comments you may have.

There is pressure to complete the report as soon as possible, so I'm sorry to say that we will need any comments by the middle of next week (of 11 November) if we are to be able to take them into account before it goes into our internal publication process/review. Apologies if this short timescale doesn't give you time to comment further, but no problem if this is the case. Nevertheless, if there are any major thing(s) of concern after next week then please still let me know anyway.

I've copied [REDACTED] in on this as some time ago she asked my colleague, [REDACTED], about the review and he suggested that I would send her a copy. Clearly it's still a draft but I'll send you both a copy when it's finalised.

Annex I

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: Fw: NE burning evidence review update
Date: 04 December 2024 15:01:25
Attachments: [Deshmukh et al Nature 2023.pdf](#)

Hi [REDACTED]

Sorry, I meant to forward these brief comments from [REDACTED] to you before.

I've tried to address his comments in the report apart from the last one on CO2 uptake by heather (above ground biomass) "may not be (probably isn't) indicative of peat C accumulation" (as in his cropped example paper) and wondered whether we might be able to add a brief sentence on it in the C section as it seems a good point to make.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Sunday, November 10, 2024 13:46
To: [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>
Subject: RE: NE burning evidence review update

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks for sharing this. It's looking quite tidy now, and impressively comprehensive (to the extent that there are studies out there to work with). I won't pretend to have read it end to end but what I read looked good. A few very minor things:

- Could you amend my affiliation to [REDACTED]
- In 4.12, 'liked' should be 'linked'
- In 6.27, I think it would be more accurate to say "This was hypothesised to be a result of dilution by ash and therefore does not *necessarily* indicate a change in overall carbon stock"

Finally, I'm not sure if there are any studies that would allow a reliable calculation to be made but it's maybe worth emphasising that an ecosystem in which the biomass is removed periodically (via burning or harvesting) will look like a carbon sink for the period when the vegetation is regrowing, whereas over the full rotation it is a source. We see this in arable soils over a growing season, but the attached Acacia plantation example might be the closest analogue to a grouse moor – see the blue line in Extended Fig 1. We had to spend a couple of years explaining to the plantation managers that even though their flux tower was measuring CO2 uptake, that didn't mean that the peat was sequestering carbon. Once the trees got cut down and went into the paper mill they got it. I don't think you'd suggested anything that's inconsistent with this, but it's maybe worth emphasising that elevated CO2 uptake by heather a few years after a burn may not be (probably isn't) indicative of peat C accumulation.

Cheers,



Annex J

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004 <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>
Date: 14 March 2024 14:42:13
Attachments: [~WRD0000.jpg](#)
[image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[Burning ER draft Dec 2023 \[REDACTED\].docx](#)

More comments in. Have rattled [REDACTED] cage as well. Hopefully [REDACTED] will get his comments in tomorrow.

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, March 14, 2024 2:26 PM
To: [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>
Subject: Re: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>

Hi [REDACTED]

I apologise for my delay in getting back to you with the review - this semester has been one I wish not to repeat. I attach a version with some comments (to be honest, there are not many as I do think you've done a very good job pulling it all together).

In short, I think it's incredibly comprehensive which should be applauded, but in a way, this might be it's downfall in some places as it is quite difficult to interpret/follow. Evidence is presented from studies as simply 'this study looked at X' and sometimes its shown as 'this study looked at X and found Y and Z'.

The coding system you have used for evidence does it make it hard to read paragraphs in places. I was wondering who the intended audience of a report like this is? I fear the stylised 'EV++' etc after every reference is very hard to follow (I'll admit I stopped looking at it eventually as my brain couldn't keep track).

I also had a question around the methodology/criteria and what was included. The report states that wildfire is excluded, but there are some papers from wildfire studies used? I think there needs to be some clarity around this.

As you mentioned previously, the full draft has not been completed, so again, it's hard to give a complete overview, but I'm hoping my comments are useful. I would be happy to look over it again in future if that is helpful.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk)>

Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2024 10:27 AM

To: [REDACTED]

Subject: RE: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>

Phew!

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: Wednesday, March 6, 2024 10:14 AM

To: [REDACTED] <[\[REDACTED\]@naturalengland.org.uk](mailto:[REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk)>

Subject: Re: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004

<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>

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The PO has come through now.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Annex K

From: [REDACTED]
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: FW: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004 <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>
Date: 07 April 2024 14:50:13
Attachments: [image001.jpg](#)
[image002.jpg](#)
[Review \[REDACTED\].An evidence review update on the effects of managed burning on upland peatland biodiversity, carbon and water.docx](#)

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, April 5, 2024 3:58 PM
To: [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>
Subject: RE: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>

Hi [REDACTED]
So so sorry for the delay here. Along with you a range of different things that have been competing for my time recently. Attached are my comments on the work. I hope these are useful to you all. Great work pulling this all together.
Any questions at all then do please let me know.
[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]@naturalengland.org.uk>
Sent: Tuesday, March 5, 2024 1:14 PM
To: [REDACTED]
Subject: Updated Evidence Review on the effects of managed burning upon peatland biodiversity, carbon and water NEER004
<https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5978072>

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Dear [REDACTED]

Hopefully you will have received the [Purchase Order relating to your review of the updated evidence review on the impacts of burning on peatlands](#), if not, it should arrive in the next few days.

There have been many competing work areas which is why we have not yet been able to send through the remaining parts of the report: Introduction, Methods, Conclusions and Appendices. It is still our intention to do this as soon as possible. In the meantime, it would be extremely helpful if you could send through your comments on the main text as soon as you are able. You will still have the opportunity to see the report as a whole when it is completed.

It would also be helpful to know when you could send through your comments on the main text. I am attaching the main text that was sent previously.

Thanks very much for your support with this work.

Best wishes,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Principal Specialist Farmland and Nature Recovery

Habitats Team, Chief Scientist's Directorate, Floor 5, Quay House, 2 East Station Road, Fletton Quays, PE2 8YY. [REDACTED]

<http://www.gov.uk/natural-england>



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