

# Muirburn and Heather Cutting

**This is an old version of the page**

**Date published: 3 October, 2023**

**Date superseded: 15 December, 2025**

For recent changes to this guidance, please see the [bottom of the page](#).

**Please note, the information on this page relates to both Muirburn and Heather Cutting. However, Muirburn is currently suspended for new applications, therefore, only heather cutting can be included in new applications.**

If you plan to undertake muirburn at your own expense on a designated site (SSSI or European site) within your AECS application area, during the lifetime of the AECS contract, you **must** submit a Muirburn Plan, so that there is a record of where and when work will take place, to allow the case officer to assess whether this is appropriate to the site. You can only carry out the muirburn on an SSSI if you have NatureScot consent. For non-designated sites, you must provide detail within the Moorland management plan of any muirburn you intend to undertake.

For all proposed heather cutting, please provide details in the Muirburn & Heather Cutting Plan.

## Aim

The aim of this item is to manage heather moorland habitats through swiping or cutting to create blocks of heather at different growth stages.

Well-managed muirburn or cutting will help provide cover for birds and other wildlife.

You can combine heather cutting with [Lowland Bog Management](#)

## Eligibility

Land that is rough grazing with heather moorland is eligible.

You should not include types of land which the [Muirburn Code](#) specifies should not be burnt. This includes: peatland (with a peat depth greater than 50cm); shallow soils; steep gradients; bracken; wind-clipped vegetation; areas being used by protected species (birds and mammals); areas of scrub or adjacent to woodlands, watercourses or scheduled monuments. In addition, areas which have had peatland restoration carried out (including via Peatland Action funding) should not be included for a period of at least 10 years after restoration.

### Assessing your land eligibility

On moorland, you must combine this item with the [Moorland Management](#) option if deer or livestock are present.

## Application requirements

You must prepare a muirburn / heather cutting plan using the template below, which:

- Clearly identifies the management purpose and desired outcome(s).
- Details your rotation frequency (of at least 10 years) including a percentage of the total 'burnable' area. Detail on how the rotation frequency is determined ensuring all growth stages of heather are present within the holding, including areas which are not burnt retaining old, leggy heather.
- States the area in hectares you propose to burn or cut each year under this contract.
- Includes detail of areas which were burnt or cut in previous years.
- Details equipment which will be used as well as Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Considers risk management which informs decision making on the day of the burn. This will include detail on what information is gathered to determine if conditions are suitable, e.g. weather forecast and fire danger rating.

Identifies if you intend to have individual burns or cut areas of greater than one hectare (not recommended), you must also detail this in the plan. You must submit maps to support your plan which:

- identify habitat types
- identify fire-free areas
- detail areas where you can burn and/or cut
- indicate areas you intend to burn and/or cut, split by year of the contract.
- Identify areas which were burnt in previous years.



[Muirburn & Heather cutting plan \(MS Word, Size: 108.2 kB\)](#)

doc\_external\_url: <https://www.ruralpayments.org/media/resources/Muirburn-and-heather---Jan-2021.docx>  
[Plan template]

## Requirements

- you must burn or cut in accordance with the [Muirburn Code](#)
- fires or cut areas must not exceed 50 metres in width
- you must not burn within fire free areas, as detailed in your Muirburn Plan
- you must keep a record of the areas burnt or cut and identify their locations on a map
- you must maintain a diary

## Payment

You can claim £76.68 per hectare of completed burn or cut.

You can claim for up to one hectare per area burn or cut, unless you have prior approval as part of the application process to burn or cut areas larger than this. Payment will be limited to the agreed size of the burn or cut.

You must submit with your claim with a map which accurately identifies the locations burned or cut for which you are claiming payment.

## Inspections

The inspectors will check:

- the location and extent of the work
- you have burnt or cut in accordance with the Muirburn Code
- fires or cut areas have not exceeded 50 metres in width
- you have not burn within fire free areas, as detailed in your Muirburn Plan
- you have kept a record of the areas burnt or cut and identify their locations on a map
- you have maintained a diary

## Additional guidance

[Supporting guidance is available for this item.](#)

## Recent changes

Section	Change
Note at top of page	Muirburn is currently suspended for new applications <b>therefore, only heather cutting can be included in new applications.</b> You can only carry out the muirburn on an SSSI if you have NatureScot consent. For all proposed heather cutting, detail should be provided in the Muirburn & Heather Cutting Plan.
Aim	Removal of 'year round forage' and 'livestock' in terms of what well-managed muirburn or cutting will help provide.
Application Requirements	'Muirburn Plan' renamed to 'Muirburn and Heather Cutting' Plan 'or cut' added to fourth bullet

## Previous versions

[Previous versions of this page](#)

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