



**The Heather Trust**  
Sustainable, Resilient Moorland



## **PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**29.02.24**

**ABERDEEN is hosting an international event this November dedicated to wildfires and how, as a global community, we can better prevent, plan and recover from the growing and devastating threat of wildfires and their wider consequences.**

To be held at P&J Live conference centre on 12 and 13 November, the *UK Wildfire Conference* is a globally-significant event which will explore the theme of “Resilience in a Changing World”. The conference will acknowledge the challenges that changing climate and the behaviours, expectations and attitudes of the public bring to an already complex situation.

With catastrophic wildfires wreaking havoc in Australia and Chile this February, there is a call for innovative and collaborative approaches to address the growing threat. However, organisers are keen to stress that wildfires are not just a risk to overseas communities. The spate of wildfires across Scotland from March to June 2023 - including many in the Scottish Highlands (Glenluig / Moidart – 3,500ha; Cannich – 1,100ha; Moy 132ha) involved hundreds of firefighters, gamekeepers, foresters and other estate staff and helicopters to tackle the blazes which generated plumes of smoke that were detected by Nasa satellites in space.

***At the time of writing, wildfires are sweeping across dry grass in Texas, forcing evacuation of the USA’s main nuclear weapons facility.***

Drawing in speakers, researchers and resilience experts from across the UK and internationally, the UK Wildfire Conference aims to inform and inspire the expected 300 delegates who will come from a diversity of backgrounds and interest groups.

Conference host The Scottish Wildfire Forum, together with event facilitators The Heather Trust, are ensuring the content will appeal not just to firefighters, but also land managers, regulatory and enforcement agencies, academics, environmental groups, community leaders, planners and more.

Michael Bruce, Vice-Chair of the Scottish Wildfire Forum said:

“The Forum was established at a wildfire conference held in Aberdeen in 2004 - almost 20 years ago - after a difficult wildfire season in 2003. In fact, that season included the largest recorded wildfire in the UK – a 7,000ha blaze at Ardnamurchan.

“In this anniversary year, we are honoured to host the 2024 conference that showcases the significant improvements in prevention, preparedness and response techniques that land managers and fire services are implementing across the world to improve resilience, in the face of increasing threats from wildfires in the UK.”

Katrina Candy, Director of The Heather Trust and Chair of the UK Wildfire Conference 2024 Steering Group said:

“Wildfires impact so many communities across the world, bringing with it devastation to both humans and wider biodiversity. A collaborative approach with sustainable objectives is key to building resilience. This autumn’s flagship event provides a platform for high calibre speakers, knowledge exchange and connectivity to progress research and translate that into positive action.”

More information and ticket purchasing is here: [Wildfire 2024](#)

Keynote speakers confirmed for the Conference include:

### **Tiago Oliveira**

Tiago Oliveira is a PhD and Forest Engineer with 30 years' experience in national and international activities, specialising in the topics of wildland fire risk management and governance. He was appointed, in the aftermath of the 2017 wildfire season, to lead the creation of the Integrated Rural Fire Management System in Portugal. He is also Chairman of the Board of the Portuguese Agency for Integrated Rural Fire Management.

### **Val Charlton**

Born in Scotland, Val Charlton has lived in South Africa for most of her life. Community-based fire management is her area of specialty, working with people that live in fire-prone landscapes across the globe. She promotes Integrated Fire Management practice to address landscape fire risks and hazards. This includes 20+ years of Wildland Urban Interface/Intermix facilitation in both urban and remote rural communities, collaborating with private landowners, government and conservation agencies in multi-stakeholder social ecology/economic projects in various countries.

### **Marc Castellnou**

Marc began his career in this sector as a firefighter in 1989. From there, he became a fire-ecology forester in 1997. He started his current position as Incident Commander and Wildfire Strategic Analyst at Catalan Fire Service in 1999. Since then Marc has created the GRAF teams (Forest Fire Area of the Catalan Fire and Rescue Service) and directed their division, along with establishing a prescribed burn plan and wildfire training programme. He is also involved in international support missions such as the EU ECPM as a wildfire expert.

### **Jim Savege**

Jim Savege took up post as Chief Executive with Aberdeenshire Council in February 2015. He is Returning Officer for Aberdeenshire Council and Clerk to the Lieutenancy of Aberdeenshire. He is Chair of the Scottish Resilience Partnership and a past chair of Solace Scotland, continuing to work across public services locally and nationally to ensure the most effective team approach.

### **Dewi Rose**

In his capacity as Chair of the England and Wales Wildfire Forum, Dewi champions a joined-up approach to ensuring that the UK is resilient to threats of wildfire. He is also Deputy Chief Fire Officer and Director of Service Delivery at South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, where he is responsible for risk reduction and fire control, as well as general operations.

### **ENDS**

**Caption – Wildfires occurred in many locations across the UK in 2023, some of which were close to urban fringes.**

For more information, contact:

Katrina Candy – [katrina.candy@heathertrust.co.uk](mailto:katrina.candy@heathertrust.co.uk); 07776 857222