

Firefighters urge public to pay close attention to wildfire danger



The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is appealing to everyone in the countryside to pay close attention to wildfire danger warnings as weather forecasters predict dry and windy conditions in the coming days.

A high pressure system is dominating the UK's weather and this has historically been linked to elevated wildfire behaviour at this time of year.

Whilst no specific wildfire warnings are in place forecasters have advised that the situation, which has the potential to bring dry continental air to Scotland, is likely to persist for the coming week.

SFRS Deputy Assistant Chief Officer Andy Coueslant, the chair of the Scottish Wildfire Forum, said raising awareness is key to reducing the risk.

He explained: "Wildfire conditions have the potential to change markedly from day-to-day depending on the wind direction and it's all-the-more important people are vigilant and act responsibly while this period of high pressure affects the country.

"Many rural and remote communities are hugely impacted by wildfires, which can cause significant environmental and economic damage.

"Livestock, farmland, wildlife, protected woodland and sites of special scientific interest can all be devastated by these fires, as can the lives of people living and working in rural

communities.

“Human behaviour can significantly lower the chance of a wildfire starting and also help us to bring those that do happen under control, so it’s crucial people act safely and responsibly in rural environments and follow the countryside code.”

The public can help prevent wildfires by making sure they dispose of litter and smoking materials carefully while in rural areas.

There are a number of things land managers can do to help prevent wildfires, including strict adherence to the Muirburn Code, which applies to the controlled burning of heather within the permitted season.

Further advice is available on the Your Safety section of the SFRS website, www.firescotland.gov.uk, where links can be found to both the Muirburn Code and the Scottish Outdoor Access Code.

Many wildfires are started deliberately or are due to careless, reckless or irresponsible behaviour.

Anyone who sees someone acting suspiciously, recklessly or irresponsibly in the countryside should contact Police Scotland on 101 or pass information anonymously to Scotland Crimestoppers on 0800 555 111.