

Management of Fire Breaks

Extracts from Nibblers online discussion group June 2006

Both Brownsea Island and Studland Heath are reviewing the way in which fire breaks are managed on heathland and woodland. Does anyone know / recommend best practice which can be adopted when planning how to do fire break management - not only from a fire control perspective but also from a nature conservation / access / landscape / archaeological conservation perspective?

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Yes, but it is years out of date.

The Americans have been doing controlled burns for years and I have a tome called the sixth annual Tall Timber Fire Ecology Conference #6 dated March 6-7 1967. Tallahassee Florida. Presumably they have been continuing this research and so you may be able to get info off the net.

The key bit is to set fires frequently when there is not enough twigs and rubbish to take the trees with it so that there is no longer trash to make a fire risk. It is important to do this when the humidity and wind speed are right.

Wildlife benefits in the US but what parallels can be drawn is something else again.

The usual crap you will have to overcome is what happens if it goes wrong and you find you have started a wild fire and who is responsible and what about insurance. Here we have an adjacent common with views of the Cotswolds and down to Somerset and up to the Brecon Beacons. Scrub natural regen timber is progressively blotting out these views and so we need some good hot burns but you can do it in Africa and the US but not here it seems.

Good luck, you will need it, as your first fire will be the hairy one as there will be too much trash. Obviously you set fires along a track and maybe burn the grass in the middle to start with, and then light on the windward side of the track so the fire creeps up wind making a bigger break.

Ask the Fire brigade to do it as an exercise !

Happy haze
Richard

Hello David

Try a Google search for "The Heather Burning Code". This will bring up all sorts of useful info for you and available DEFRA downloads on good practice and methods plus recommended burn size.

This link will be one of them <http://www.defra.gov.uk/rural/uplands/burning.htm>

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