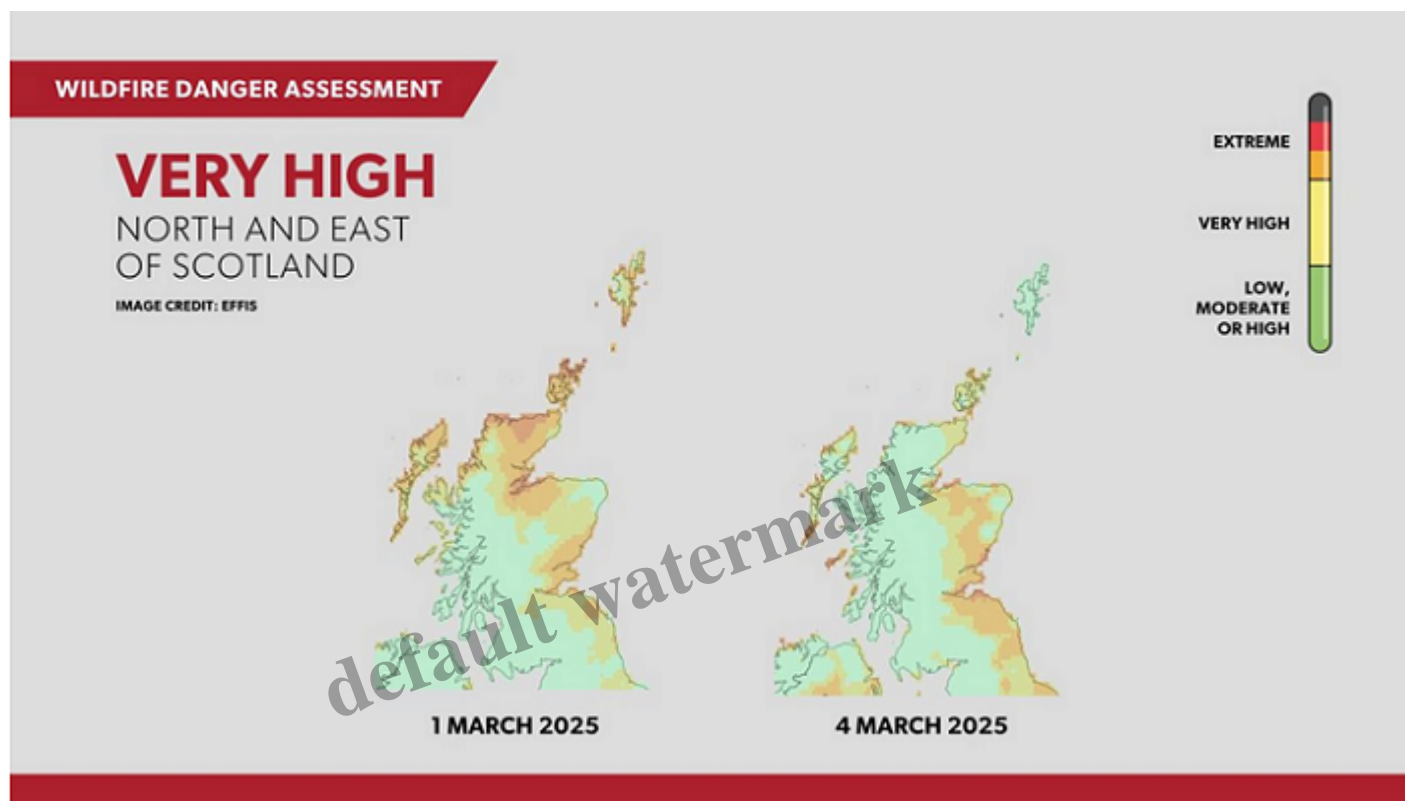


Muirburn in the Angus Glens during the period of very high fire risk

Description

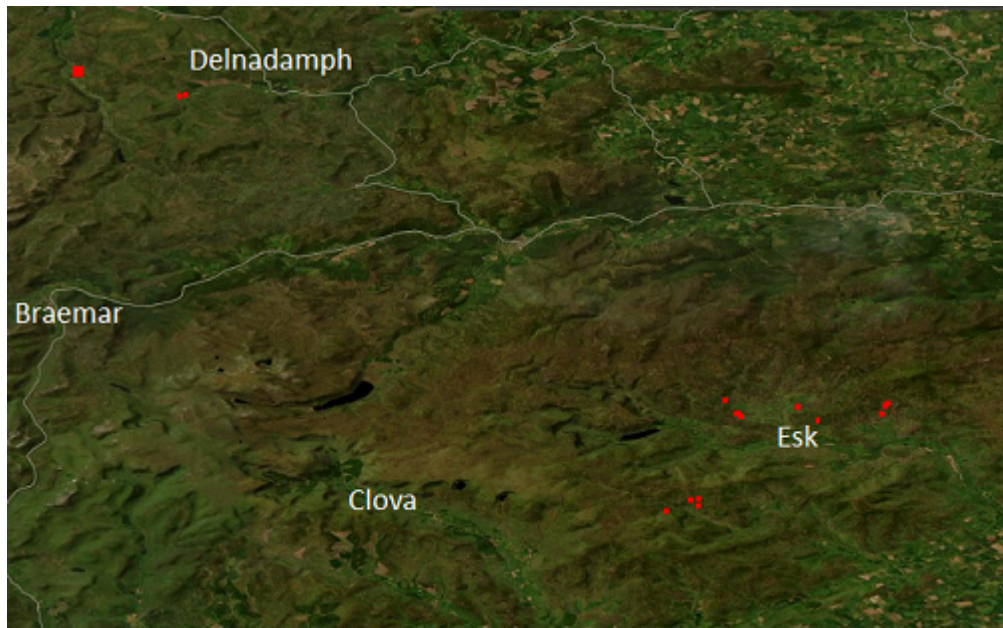


Graphic credit Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Following my post yesterday on King Charles' muirburn at Delnadamph ([see here](#)), I am very grateful to Jamie Mann, an investigative journalist at the Ferret, for alerting me to NASA's Fire Information for Resource Management System (FIRMS) database ([see here](#)). FIRMS records satellite observations of fires, however caused, across the world. Satellite technology now has a 50% chance of recording fires as small as 1m² at night and 4m² in the day.

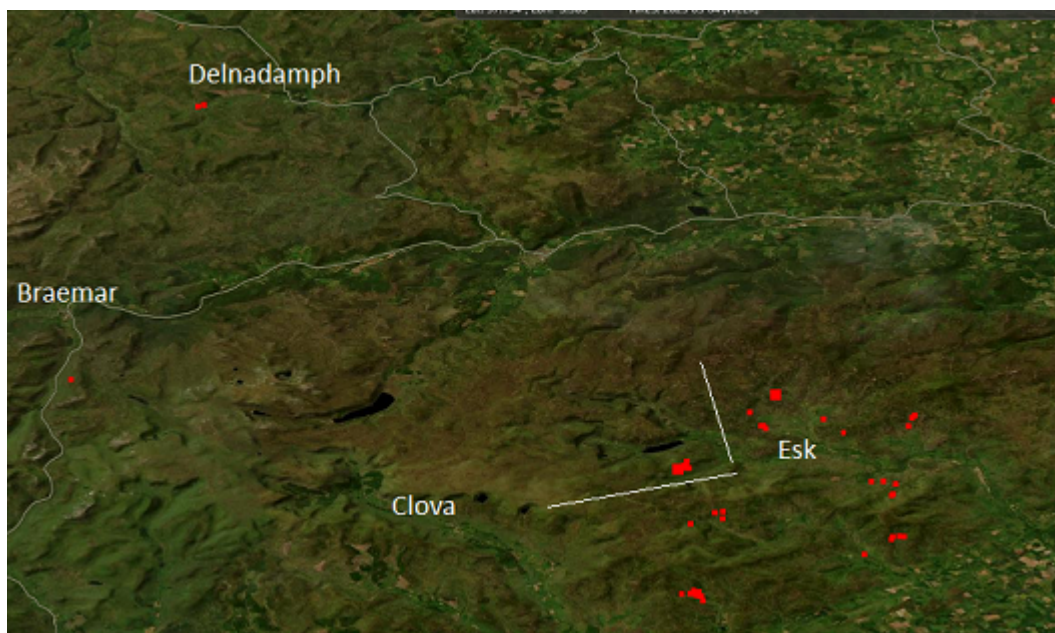
FIRMS is a very rich source of information, showing the extent of fires across the world, including oil wells out to sea (145,000 gas flares detected 2013-23) and along with that a sense of how much carbon is being released into the atmosphere through open burning. It also allows anyone interested to track muirburn.

FIRMS confirms the muirburn which took place at Delnadamph last week (the red square to the left was on the Glenavon Estate):



Fires recorded by Firms in the eastern Cairngorms area for the seven days until 28th February (until 26th there had been no fires). Map, annotated with place names. Map and data credit, NASA.

FIRMS also provides evidence for all the other muirburn that has recently taken place in Scotland. From it you can see that the greatest concentration of fires over the last ten days, in both Scotland and the Cairngorms, has been in the Angus glens – mostly just outside the Cairngorms National Park boundary.



Fires that were recorded for the week until Tuesday 4th March. Map and data credit NASA. My white lines are to demarcate the fires which took place within the Cairngorms National Park (above and to the left) from those that did not.

FIRMS shows the muirburn started in the Angus Glens on 27th and 28th February but increased significantly AFTER the SFRS issued their very high fire risk warning for the period 1st – 4th March. This proves that a significant number of other grouse moor owners, besides King Charles, allow their staff to ignore fire warnings and burn in very dry conditions, which is also contrary to the Moorland Code.

It provides further proof, as if more was needed, that the voluntary approach to improving grouse moor management simply doesn't work. This evidence of reckless muirburn adds weight to the argument in my last post that the SFRS should be given the statutory power to ban ALL fires at times and in areas where they judge there to be a high fire risk. FIRMS would make it very easy for the SFRS to monitor and enforce such a ban

Moreover, once the muirburn licensing scheme has been introduced ([see here](#)) and the Moorland Code has been put onto a statutory footing, FIRMS would make it easy for Scottish Ministers to monitor other aspects of the code, from not burning on peatland to not burning in winds over 12mph (which was ignored by King Charles' staff). All Scottish Ministers would need to do is combine the data from FIRMS with other data, such as the James Hutton Research Institute's soil maps or the Met Office's data on wind speed .

With all the new technology and the Scottish Government now employing a record number of civil servants ([see here](#)) – up by 1,800 staff in the last four years – its clearly not a lack of resources that is preventing the Scottish Minister responsible, Mairi Gougeon, from implementing the muirburn provisions of the Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Act 2024. So why the delay?

Category

1. Cairngorms
2. Other parts Scotland

Tags

1. CNPA
2. grouse moors
3. muirburn

Date Created

March 5, 2025

Author

nickkempe