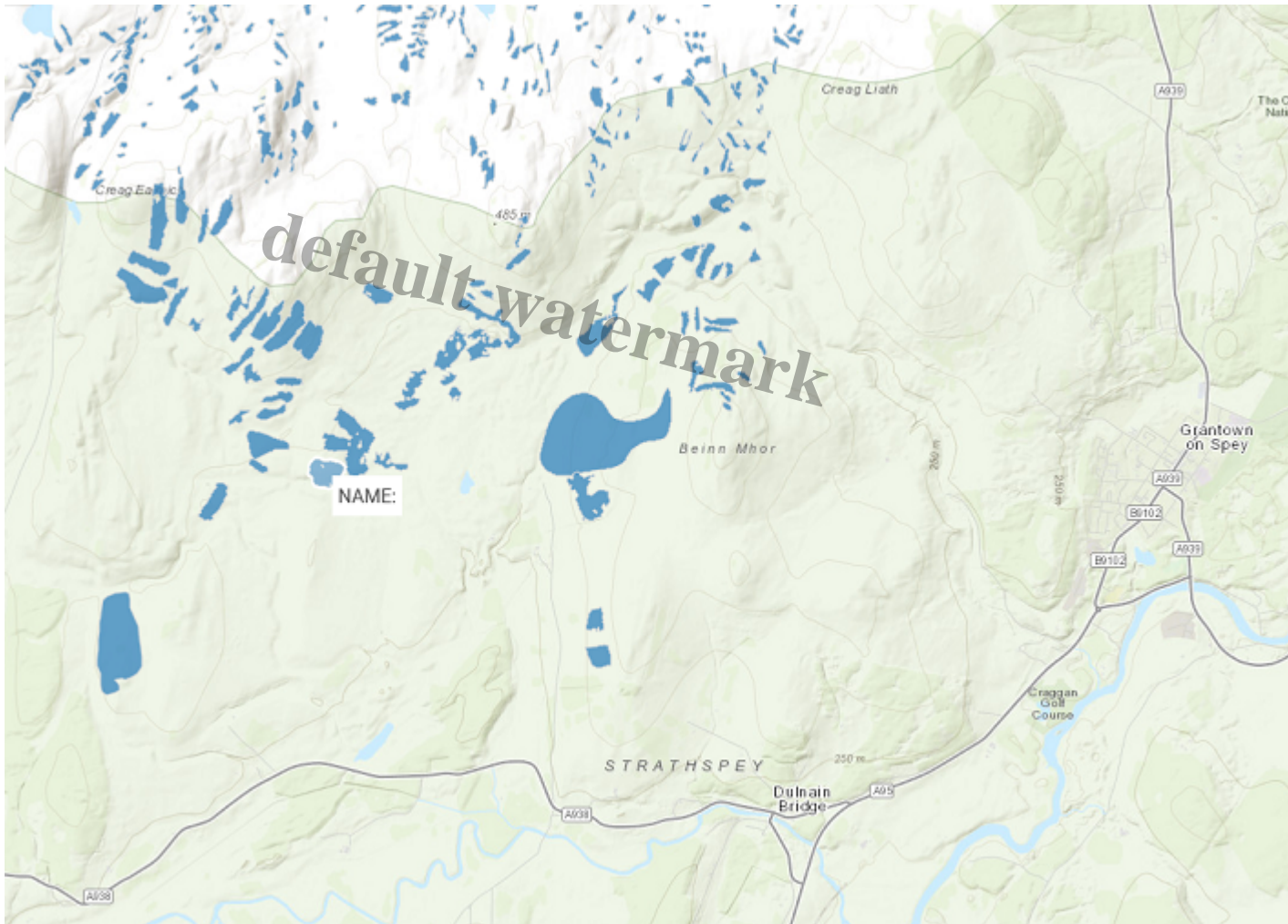


Why the ban on camp fires in the Cairngorms National Park maybe political rather than sustainable?!

## Description



Muirburn and wildfires on northern boundary of Cairngorms National Park 2018-24. The smaller patches show muirburn carried out according to "best practice" while the largest show wildfires. Map Credit NatureScot wildfire and muirburn database

NIMBYism and "Park politics" rather than fire risk is probably behind the move to ban camp fires ([see here](#)). My bet is that the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNP) has caved in to pressure from residents and sporting estates who are anxious to blame somebody else for the wildfire problem land managers have, by and large, created.

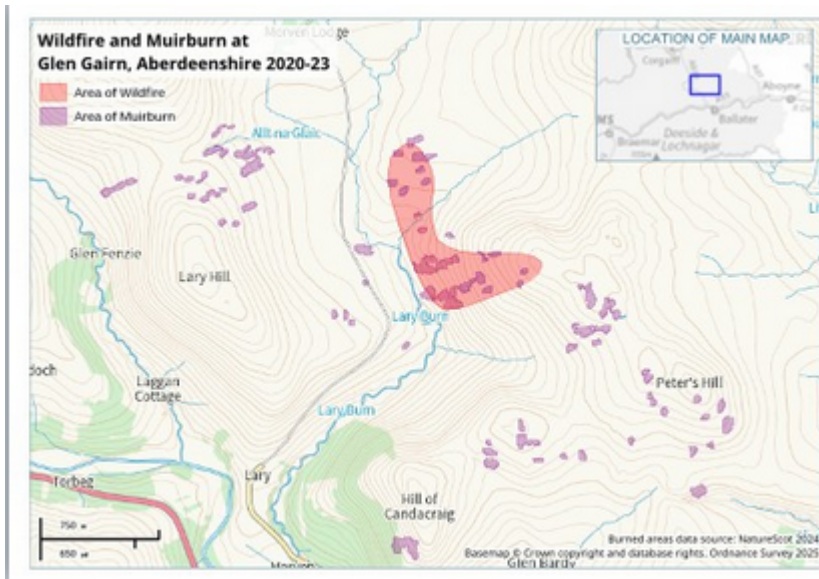


Muirburn and wildfires recorded in Glen More, which has the highest concentration of visitors in the National Park, 2018-24 – not a single blue patch. Map credit NatureScot wildfire and muirburn data base

There has been an recent influx of retired city folk to the Park, who are resident for at least part of the year, and the Park has become increasingly gentrified I wonder if this has also been a factor? Personally I would not be surprised if these new arrivals were also celebrating the decision to ban camp fires – perhaps in the hope it will put to an end to what they consider to be – anti-social behaviour – by campers?

In a political context the CNP obviously has a lot to gain from scapegoating campers by claiming without evidence that camp fires represent the greatest risk of wildfire within Park boundaries. And they mean business ..backing up this position with a ban which will be – enforced robustly with the help of Police Scotland and the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and enhanced patrols at key sites by rangers –. Interestingly landowners large and small are exempt from the ban, and remain free to have BBQs and set open fires during the high risk summer period.

But are wildfires actually caused by campers? My colleague Euan Stevenson and I analysed the most recent satellite-derived data from NatureScot ([see here](#)) to explore this question. We found that the main cause of wildfire in the CNP is not actually campers, but sporting estates. Only 9% of wildfire burns were likely caused by campers, whereas 71% were most likely caused by – muirburn gone wrong –.



Extract from analysis

Overall wildfire accounts for around 22% of the total area burned in the CNP in the last 5 years or so. Although this is higher than across Scotland as a whole, where 8% of the total area burned is due to wildfire, our research shows that it has little to do with camping and more to do with sporting estate management. (The ground vegetation type (Heather - Calluna vulgaris) and the drier climate prevailing in the CNP, compared to the north and west of the country are also explanatory factors).

Our findings raises challenging questions for CNP decision-makers as they would seem to cast doubt on the CNP's claim that camp fires are a major risk of wildfire. The CNP exists to promote outdoor recreation and camping, like grouse shooting, is an important recreational activity that creates seasonal jobs in the tourism sector locally. The CNP has a duty to act in a fair and balanced way when developing their policies to manage tourism and protect the environment and I am left wondering if they have failed in their duty on this occasion?

[This post first appeared on Prof MacMillan's linked-in feed. I have added two screenshots from the NatureScot wildfire and muirburn data base to illustrate the points he makes further Ed].

## Category

1. Cairngorms

## Tags

1. CNPA
2. fires
3. grouse moors
4. muirburn
5. sporting estates

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