



Department  
for Environment  
Food & Rural Affairs

## Guidance

### Checking the peat depth is <40cm prior to undertaking a burn on moorland.

This guidance is intended to assist moorland managers who wish to undertake a vegetation burn which they believe does not require a licence under The Heather and Grass etc Burning (England) Regulations 2021, but where there is shallow peat and they wish to collect evidence to show that the peat depth at the location of the burn is 40cm or less.

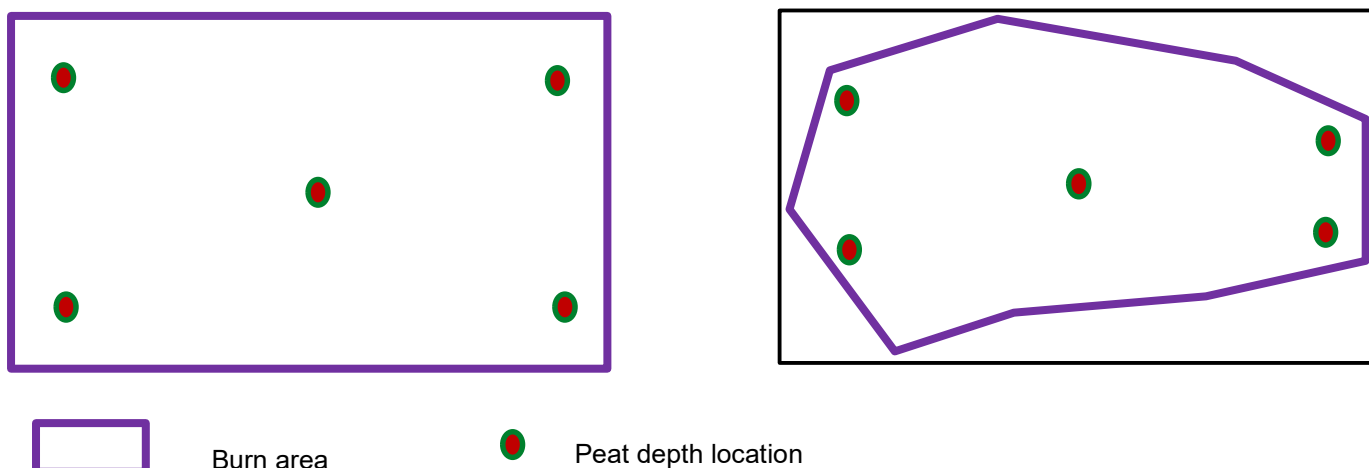
This is not a mandatory process but will help show that reasonable steps have been taken to comply with the regulations.

When burning vegetation on peat 40cm or less, you must ensure that all other necessary permissions (e.g. SSSI consent from Natural England) are in place.

#### **For burns that are 0.25ha (e.g. 50m x 50m) or less**

1. Take a photograph of the equipment you are using to collect peat depths (e.g. measuring stick). One photograph per person per day is sufficient if collecting evidence for several burns in one day.
2. At the location of the burn, establish where the four corners and approximate centre point will be. If the shape of the burn is irregular, use the outer edges (see Figure 1). Where you cut round the proposed burn, you will be able to predict the area affected. If you are not cutting round the burn, base the area to be affected on best judgement.
3. At each location, record the GPS location (either using an app or 8 figure grid reference) and take a peat depth measurement.
4. If the peat depth is more than 40 cm at any of the points, a burn must not be undertaken without a licence as set out in The Heather and Grass etc Burning (England) Regulations 2021.

Figure 1. Diagram showing approximate locations for peat depth measurements for a regularly (left) and irregularly (right) shaped burn.



### For burns that are over 0.25ha (e.g. 50m x 50m)

Repeat the steps above for every 0.25ha of the proposed burn (e.g. twice for burns up to 0.50ha, three times for burns up to 0.75ha etc.)

### Frequently Asked Questions

- Q. Do I need to check peat depth on dry heath?  
A. If you are confident that the area you are burning is not on peat then you are less likely to need to check peat depth but be aware that some areas of peat have heath-like vegetation.
- Q. Why do I need to measure peat depth at each burn?  
A. Peat depth varies from place to place, sometimes over short distances.
- Q. Why do I need to check depth five times in each burn site?  
A. Peat depth varies from place to place, sometimes over short distances and one measurement may be misleading.
- Q. Why do I need to avoid burning if just one of the measurements is over 40cm?  
A. If one measurement shows a reading of over 40cm, this indicates that there may be patches of deep peat throughout the area you are looking to burn on.
- Q. Can I adjust the location of the burn to avoid small areas of peat over 40cm?  
A. It is up to you to ascertain that any burning is carried out in compliance with the Regulations.