

Moors in Calderdale and further afield continue to have “controlled burning” techniques used to engineer optimal breeding habitat for game birds for the purpose of shooting, we believe less dangerous cutting techniques would suffice.

There has been an attempt, through voluntary initiatives, to scale back—to reduce and eventually eliminate—the burning of fragile and important peat ecosystems, but that has not proven 100% successful as had been hoped.

In Calderdale we know that the burning of valuable moorland has a broad range of ecological impacts including degrading peatlands, releasing harmful gasses into the atmosphere, putting added pressure on our fire services and decreasing biodiversity whilst possibly contributing to flooding in communities downstream.

We have seen at least 4 catastrophic floods and countless “near misses” over the last 8 years alone, many properties are still recovering from the February event and are looking towards us for leadership and a wider catchment plan.

Calderdale is rich in blanket bog and working with our partners from Yorkshire water, Moors for the future, other NFM groups and landowners we are keen to protect it.

We were one of the first councils in England to declare a “Climate Emergency” recognising the severe risk our landscape has based on a rapidly changing climate. We built on that by instilling that priority in all council functions and projects, we look towards local, national and international intelligence as we move towards a carbon free Calderdale. The Committee on Climate Change recently recommended that a moorland burning ban is introduced within the year.

We recognise how some irresponsible people are taking BBQs on to moorland so took steps using PSPOs to help safeguard against such actions, however controlled burning has also continued Putting extra pressure on already stretched blue light services. Because a lot of this moorland sits above flood-prone areas, where the damaged peatland hills are no longer acting as an effective flood barrier for the region, this means the possibility of further run-off water into our vulnerable downstream communities. We need a wider catchment plan to make sure we are providing resilience through both civil engineering projects and Natural Flood Management.

Many residents and businesses across Calderdale have aired concerns that burning has increased in severity in recent years with the smoke polluting communities and entering properties.

We recognise the good partnership work being done between landowners and partners to help mitigate flood risk and urge a move towards less environmentally damaging cutting rather than hazardous and controversial burning. The Council also welcomes the Government's decision to legislate to end burning because the alternative approach of voluntary agreements simply has not worked.