

## **SOAC part 5 - Lighting Fires**

The approaching autumn means colder nights, and the temptation to huddle round a fire. When fires get down into the soil they can burn for weeks with no sign, and flare up again causing huge amounts of damage to the vegetation and killing many animals. They can be catastrophic! The Code advises that the use of a stove for cooking should be chosen in preference, and open fires should not be used at all during dry periods. At all times consider the effects on the animal, plants and fungi that only grow on deadwood. Ash is a fertiliser. Upland ecosystems are largely low fertility systems and adding ash by lighting fires can have an effect long after you leave. At lower altitudes invasive plants such as Rosebay Willowherb (Fireweed) can take over. So think carefully about lighting fires, whether you really need to and whether you can genuinely leave absolutely no sign of a fire having been there.

There are laws older than the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 that make lighting fires in some circumstances a criminal offence. This applies where it may give reasonable cause for concern, endangering people or property and near a private road, enclosed land or near a plantation.