

Manchester's wildfire research underpins Peak District's "Be Fire Aware" interactive educational tool

Research by MBS' Jonathan Aylen has been used to develop Centrepiece, an interactive real-time fire risk tool. The tool was the star of the show when the Peak District National Park's Moors for the Future partnership launched their "Be Fire Aware" publicity campaign, designed to show visitors of all ages the risk and consequences of accidental wildfires.

The interactive fire risk tool uses a continuous feed from a local weather station to provide up-to-the minute estimates of current fire risk at all points in the Dark Peak area. It is based directly on published work in the *Journal of Environmental Management* on "Forecasting the outbreak of moorland wildfires in the English Peak District". The work was carried out by Jonathan alongside Julia McMorrow (Geography, SEED), and Gina Cavan and Kevin Albertson from Manchester Metropolitan University.

Wildfire research and management have gone hand-in-hand in the Peak District – the unique wildfire database maintained by the Peak District Fire Operations Group since 1976 was the starting point for both the mapping and forecasting research.

The exhibit developers, Wide Sky Design, have now combined the forecasting and mapping research to show visitors when and where risk is highest. It also allows them to explore fire risk history across the moors back as far as 2003.

The real-time fire risk map is available for the public to use at Moorland visitor centres at Edale and Fairholme, which attract over

80,000 visitors a year. The display also features an interactive map with links to stories and video clips, and a Fire Ranger 'Snakes and ladders' game. The exhibit was funded as part of the European Union MoorLIFE project. The aim was to make the science accessible to visitors of all ages, and ultimately to help reduce the number moorland wildfires. It received an enthusiastic response at the launch for school children in mid-July.

The display was formally launched on 31 July by representatives of Moors for the Future Partnership, the National Park, the England and Wales Wildfire Forum and the Chief Fire Officers Association. Speaking for Moors for the Future Partnership, Debra Wilson said this real-time educational tool is the first of its kind in the UK. It combines weather and geographical data to give an immediate picture of the relative fire risk across the moors.

An article on the real-time fire risk display will appear in next month's *Fire Times*, a widely-circulated publication for fire professionals.