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Convener
Rural Affairs Committee
Scottish Parliament
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28 September 2026

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter of 16 September 2026 regarding the statement made to Parliament on 3 September 2026 following the Cairngorms wildfire. As indicated then, the Scottish Government and our partners remain committed to ensuring that lessons are identified from this incident and from other wildfire activity experienced across Scotland this year. This work will support improvements to operational arrangements and longer-term wildfire prevention, preparedness and response.

SFRS Review and Multi Agency Debrief

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is undertaking a comprehensive review and debrief process in collaboration with partner organisations involved in the response to the Cairngorms wildfire. The process includes internal operational debrief arrangements as well as a wider multi-agency review involving key responding organisations. SFRS has also commissioned an independently facilitated debrief to support organisational learning and provide additional assurance about the robustness of the process.

The review process will consider a range of issues, including operational command, resource deployment, communications, firefighter safety, the use of specialist and aerial assets, and engagement with local communities and resilience partners.

The multi-agency debrief, sponsored by Police Scotland, SFRS and the Highland Council, is scheduled to take place on 15 October 2026. Further work may be required following the debrief to assess the evidence, agree recommendations and complete the review report. We will provide the Committee with a further update once the timetable for completing that work has been confirmed.

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For clarity, the independently facilitated debrief forms part of SFRS's wider review and debrief process. The operational review will examine the response to the Cairngorms incident, while the Scottish Government's review of the Strategic Action Plan will consider the wider national arrangements for wildfire prevention, preparedness and response. There will be appropriate read-across between the two processes so that operational learning can inform the strategic review.

Review of the Strategic Action Plan on Wildfires

As set out in the statement to Parliament, a review of the current Wildfire Strategic Action Plan was requested to identify whether any further measures are required and to ensure that implementation remains proportionate to the increasing wildfire risk associated with climate change.

Importantly, this review is being undertaken alongside continued delivery of the existing Wildfire Strategic Action Plan. Work on the actions already contained within the plan continues whilst opportunities for further enhancement are considered. An initial review has identified a number of areas where additional focus has been prioritised, including:

- aerial firefighting support;
- public communications and awareness, including preventative communications;
- wildfire danger assessments (WDAs); and
- strengthened multi-agency communications and operational arrangements, including the multi agency Concept of Operations.

The review will also consider how future land management plans can support landowners to assess and improve their wildfire preparedness, including through managing fuel loads and creating effective, well-maintained firebreaks.

These priorities have been discussed with the Wildfire Strategic Oversight Group (SOG), which will continue to oversee delivery of the action plan. As the scope of the next phase of the review and wider engagement activity continues to be developed, a specific completion timescale has not yet been set. However, appropriate timescales will be agreed through the relevant governance arrangements as the work progresses, and it is expected that progress will be delivered on a number of the priority areas ahead of the 2027 wildfire season.

Stakeholder Engagement

The existing Strategic Action Plan was informed by extensive engagement following the 2025 Dava / Carrbridge wildfire. Building on that work, the current reviews will draw on evidence from public bodies, local partners, communities, land managers, businesses, volunteers and emergency responders. More recently, Ministers have continued to engage directly with those affected by the Cairngorms wildfire, including through site visits and discussions with firefighters, volunteers, land managers and partner organisations. This has also included attendance at the public meeting in Aviemore on 18 September to listen and discuss matters arising from the Cairngorms wildfire. Stakeholder engagement will include evidence gathered through operational and multi-agency debriefs, engagement with local communities and representative bodies, and the experience shared directly by land managers, businesses, volunteers and responders. The scope and format of further engagement will continue to be developed as the reviews progress, with the aim of ensuring that those directly involved in the response have an appropriate opportunity to contribute.

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As I said in my statement in Parliament, the Government and its partners are committed to ensuring the review is inclusive, drawing on the views of local communities, public agencies and the wide range of those involved in the wildfire response.

The findings from the SFRS review and debrief process will be used to inform improvements to wildfire preparedness and response arrangements ahead of the 2027 wildfire season. The Scottish Government will report the outcome of the Strategic Action Plan review and the resulting actions. This may include updates to the existing Strategic Action Plan and further reporting through the Wildfires Strategic Oversight Group and to Parliament.

Yours sincerely,



NEIL GRAY



JIM FAIRLIE

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