

United Utilities Impact Statement for the purposes of supporting a PSPO application.

United Utilities is a major landowner in the North West and we manage much of the land effected by the recent fires at Winter Hill in 2018 and Darwen Moor in 2020.

We have critical water resources and operational assets in these two areas, many of which were severely impacted by the fires, including Water catchment land, Woodland and forest, access and recreational infrastructure and impounding reservoirs. UU principally owns much of this land to gather water for drinking water purposes – during both events, the water quality received at our downstream reservoirs was adversely impacted, with noticeable deterioration that required more intensive treatment at the receiving water treatment works.

Much of the land UU owns is tenanted for farming purposes, both fires impacted our farm tenants significantly, much of the fencing erected to manage stock was destroyed, the grazing areas decimated and stewardship subsidies lost due to the damage caused. This infrastructure had to be replaced, leading to ongoing costs post fire.

During both incidents we provided large numbers of people and assets, including helicopter with water bucket, several contractors with various machinery including excavators, tankers, bulldozers, flails, tractors and bowsers and water relay systems. These assets helped with the logistics of getting water up onto the hill, and also played a vital role in creating breaks in strategic locations ahead of the fire to prevent it from travelling any further.

We also provided a large team of look outs situated at strategic locations around the wider area to report new fires or flare ups on winter hill and surrounding sites

Over 1400 hectares of Winter Hill SSSI, in Lancashire was affected by the fire in 2018, impacting on the interest features of the site including acid grassland - blanket bog, Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland, coniferous woodland, dwarf shrub heath, fen marsh and swamp, neutral grassland and standing open water. The wild fire has resulted in many hectares of land becoming structurally unstable as habitats have been affected and there are large areas of bare earth including bare peat. The fire has resulted in loss of habitat and the area affected poses a risk of deterioration to water quality in surrounding water bodies.

Since 2018, UU has been working with Natural England, the EA and our partners to restore the hydrology and the habitats on Winter Hill and Darwen Moor to prevent the risk of deterioration to the surrounding waterbodies and where possible provide improvements to the SSSI status.

Both fires resulted in significant costs for UU, an approximate summary of these costs is detailed below.

Winter Hill	Darwen moor
UU staff time (<i>significant, work continues on sites in terms of restoration</i>)	UU staff time (<i>significant, work continues on sites in terms of restoration</i>)
Helicopter - £250,000	Helicopter - £60,000
Contractors - £65,000	Contractors - £61,000
Restoration of fire breaks - £32,000	Restoration of fire breaks - £13,000
Fence restoration - £80,000	Fence restoration - £90,000
Track restoration - £60,000	Track restoration - £15,000
Habitat and vegetation restoration - £50,000	Habitat and vegetation restoration - £15,000

UU was greatly impacted by both recent fires at Darwen and Winter Hill, but you don't have to look too far into the past to see this is not a new issue. Fires have been deliberately started on our land many times before – quite often due to carelessness or deliberate actions taken by others. These fires have significant, long lasting effects on our people, our assets, our tenants and the many varieties of wildlife that enjoy these spaces.

We absolutely support the notion of introducing PSPO's to areas at significant risk of fire, we believe these orders have the ability to greatly reduce the risk of fires starting, and provide a greater level of protection and, crucially, enforcement powers to prevent large scale fires occurring on our land.

Water Catchment Manager
United Utilities