Informal Seminar on Wildfire Risk in the UK

"Knowledge for wildfire" is a hub for practitioners and academics alike and its activities are both formal and informal. So the NERC funded Knowledge for Wildfire ran an informal seminar to share know-how on wildfire risk in the UK. The seminar ran jointly between Manchester University, Manchester Metropolitan University and Stephen F. Austin State University, Texas on Tuesday 10th June.

The workshop had a strong local focus with an emphasis on research in the Peak District. Gail Millin-Chalabi of MIMAS spoke on "Detecting Moorland Burn Scars and their Persistence in the Landscape using Synthetic-Aperture Radar". SAR techniques have the advantage that they can see through cloud and smoke and scan landscape at day or night. Differences in moisture content helps to reveal wildfire burn scars. The technique works very well on the peat of the Peak District.

Dr Gina Cavan spoke on her work on the "Spatial analysis of reported wildfires in the Peak District moorlands" with Julia Mcmorrow and Sarah Lindley. The paper considered the advantages of using experts as a basis for eliciting wildfire risk, alongside more 'objective' techniques using statistical analysis, where the quality of the fire data itself may be open to question.

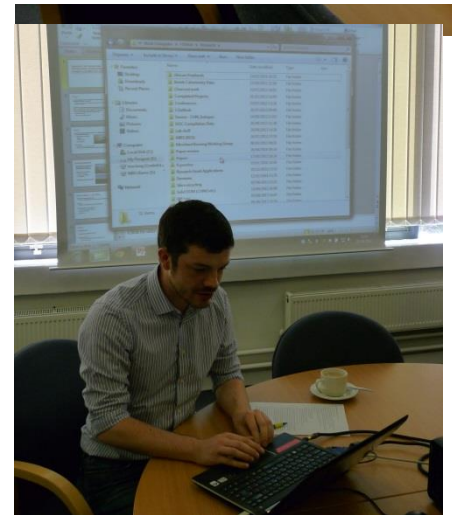*Dr Gina Cavan presenting her work on wildfire mapping*

Jonathan Aylen spoke on work with Julia McMorrow and Dr Aleks Kazmierczak on developing "Wildfire Threat Analysis" in UK conditions, focussing on their NERC funded case study of Crowthorne Forest on the Berkshire/Surrey border done in collaboration with the Forestry Commission. Wildfire Threat Analysis is a GIS-intensive technique which assesses the risk of wildfire ignition, the potential hazard of the fire spreading and the values at risk, including property, infrastructure, well-being and ecosystem damage.

There is a need for more evidence on the flammability of vegetation in the UK, both in terms of key vegetation types and time of year. Dr Gareth Clay outlined plans to gather systematic data through a series of experimental burns

By Jonathan Aylen, Manchester Business School

Dr Gareth Clay presenting future research plans on experimental burns

A well-deserved lunch for the group! (Left to right: Amy Brennan (SFASU), Gina Cavan (MMU), Kevin Albertson (MMU), Brian Oswald (SFASU)