



Current County planning arrangements and how can parishes prepare for wildfire incidents?

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Wildfire Ready Herefordshire
Council and Parishes Working Together | 7 September 2026



On This Day

In History

September 7,
1940





BLACK SATURDAY: THE FIRST DAY OF THE BLITZ

The first mass bombing raid on London of the Second World War came on 7 September 1940. Hundreds of German planes dropped bombs on the docks in east and south London, killing 430 Londoners. There was carnage, fear and spirited resistance. The Blitz had begun.

Key location:

Docklands, east
London

Key dates:

7 September 1940



Hitler Will Have to Break Us or Lose the War



Interestingly for tonight's discussion, the response involved not only professional emergency services but communities themselves. People using local organisation, communication, and voluntary effort alongside the statutory response

This became an enduring example of community resilience and determination in the face of extraordinary adversity

What I want to cover

A bridge between the County response and practical parish preparedness

- Briefly introduce our draft Herefordshire Council Wildfire Response Plan
- Show how it links to existing emergency, heat, rest-centre and communications arrangements
- Explain what the Council does when wildfire consequences require wider coordination
- Introduce the Parish Wildfire Planning Template
- Leave parishes with a small number of practical actions they can take now

The central message

This is not about asking parishes to become emergency responders. It is about connecting trusted local knowledge and community networks to established statutory arrangements.

Our draft Wildfire Response Plan

A short operational addendum to the Herefordshire Heat Health Plan

- Sets out Council preparedness, public health protection, evacuation and welfare support, communications, continuity and recovery
- Builds on existing Council and multi-agency plans rather than duplicating them
- HWFRS retains responsibility for firefighting and fire-ground operations
- Escalation is based on consequences — not fire size alone
- Designed for annual pre-season review and review after significant incidents or exercises

HEREFORDSHIRE COUNCIL**Wildfire Response Plan
Addendum to the Herefordshire Heat Health Plan**
Draft for consultation**Version 0.1 | August 2026****Purpose**

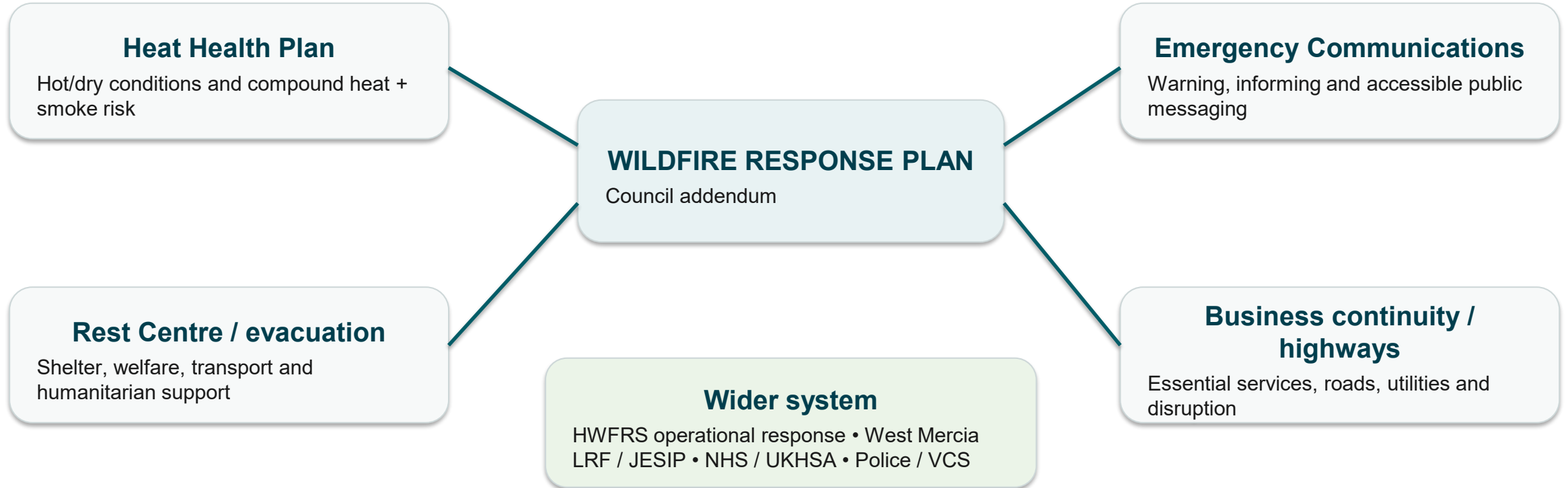
A short operational addendum setting out Herefordshire Council's arrangements for preparedness, public health protection, evacuation and welfare support, communications, continuity and recovery during a significant wildfire.

This document complements existing Council and multi-agency emergency plans. It does not replace the operational procedures of Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS).

Artificial intelligence was used to support the preparation of this document. Human oversight was applied throughout the process, and final decisions, interpretations, and conclusions were made by the author.

The plan sits within existing arrangements

Wildfire is an addendum — not a stand-alone command structure



Activation and escalation

Figure 1. Wildfire escalation and response pathway



Key triggers and information

Met Office forecasts • Heat-Health Alerts • drought/dry vegetation • HWFRS intelligence •
fire behaviour and smoke plume • evacuation need • critical infrastructure impacts

Escalation is dynamic: move up or down according to risk, impacts and multi-agency assessment.

Figure 1. A dynamic Green-Amber-Red-Recovery framework for local authority escalation.

When wildfire becomes a wider Council incident

Our focus is on consequences for people, services and communities

Life safety

Support emergency services and multi-agency coordination

Evacuation & welfare

Transport, rest centres, shelter and humanitarian support

Public health

Smoke, heat and vulnerable populations; liaison with UKHSA/NHS

Warning & informing

Timely, accessible and geographically specific messages

Continuity

Highways, social care, critical services and infrastructure

Recovery

Safe return, restoration, psychosocial support, learning

Wildfire resilience is a shared endeavour

Different partners bring different strengths

HWFRS

Operational management
Firefighting & rescue
Fire behaviour & safety

Herefordshire Council

Coordination
Welfare & rest centres
Public health, highways,
comms, recovery

Health partners

Public Health local leadership
UKHSA specialist advice
NHS continuity & vulnerable
patients

Parish & town councils

Local knowledge
Trusted networks
Community support
Amplify verified messages

The parish role complements — it does not replace — statutory responders.

Why parish and town councils matter

Prepared communities respond faster and recover better



- Closest to their communities
- Local knowledge of places, people, routes and practical constraints
- Trusted relationships and communication channels
- Ability to connect residents, volunteers and community organisations
- Can provide reliable local intelligence and amplify verified messages

Start with one question

If help was delayed, what could our community safely do for itself?

Parish Wildfire Planning Template

A practical tool — not a new statutory requirement

- Can stand alone or sit within an existing Community Emergency Plan
- Helps identify local wildfire risks, assets and practical actions
- Prompts mapping of access/evacuation issues, vulnerable settings and critical infrastructure
- Builds a simple communications plan using trusted local channels
- Includes actions before, during and after wildfire plus an initial action card
- Safety first: parish volunteers do not fight wildfires or enter fire/smoke hazard areas



Parish Wildfire Planning Template

Wildfire Ready Herefordshire: Council and Parishes Working Together

This short template is designed to help parish and town councils identify local wildfire risks, community assets and practical actions before, during and after an incident. It can be used as a stand-alone aide-memoire or incorporated into an existing Community Emergency Plan. It does not replace Herefordshire County plans or emergency service procedures.

Safety first. Parish councils and community volunteers should not fight wildfires, enter fire or smoke hazard areas, or obstruct emergency operations. During an incident, follow instructions from the emergency services.

1. Plan details

Parish / town council	
Plan owner / lead	
Deputy / alternative contact	
Date prepared	
Last reviewed	
Next review due	
Existing Community Emergency Plan?	Yes / No - if yes, where is this wildfire section held?

2. Our local wildfire risk

Briefly describe the areas and circumstances where wildfire could create the greatest local consequences.

Higher-risk land / locations	e.g. woodland, grassland, heath, agricultural land, common land
Seasonal / weather factors	e.g. prolonged heat, drought, dry vegetation, strong winds
Access / egress constraints	e.g. narrow lanes, single access roads, bridges, difficult terrain
Potential smoke impacts	e.g. settlements, schools, care settings, main roads
Other local concerns	

How can a Parish prepare?



How can a parish prepare?

Seven practical, proportionate steps

- 1 Know your local risks
- 2 Map important places, people/settings and assets
- 3 Nominate a lead and deputy; agree how to activate
- 4 Plan how verified information will be shared
- 5 Build on existing community emergency arrangements
- 6 Share, test and refresh the plan
- 7 Keep it simple, safe and proportionate

Minimum useful plan

Named lead + contact tree + local risks +
available assets + activation triggers

When an incident happens

Lead locally. Stay in your lane.



BE VISIBLE AND REASSURING

Listen for local needs and pass reliable intelligence through agreed responder channels.

SHARE VERIFIED MESSAGES

Use trusted parish channels and keep messages consistent with the Council and emergency services.

SUPPORT SAFE COORDINATION

Activate volunteers only for agreed, safe tasks; signpost residents and keep a simple log.

DO NOT

Direct emergency operations, enter unsafe areas, share unverified information or duplicate statutory responsibilities.

A simple Before – During – After framework

The template turns preparedness into practical actions

BEFORE

- Review contacts and risks
- Promote prevention messages
- Keep local risk/asset information current
- Know how you will receive and share official information
- Consider a short tabletop exercise

DURING

- Call 999 if needed
- Follow emergency-service instructions
- Do not enter fire/smoke hazard areas
- Provide local intelligence when requested
- Share verified warnings and welfare information

AFTER

- Share verified recovery information
- Identify community-level concerns
- Support reassurance and recovery where appropriate
- Participate in debrief
- Update the plan and contacts

Some points for parishes to consider

Start small — build on what you already have

- Nominate a parish lead and deputy for community resilience
- Use the template for a short 60-minute discussion with councillors / volunteers
- Mark the highest-consequence local locations, routes and community assets
- Check how you would communicate with residents — including people who are not online
- Connect wildfire planning to your existing Community Emergency Plan
- Share questions, local intelligence and learning with Herefordshire Council

Five questions to test your plan

Can we contact the right people?
Do we know our highest-risk locations?
Can we reach people offline?
Can we help without interfering?
Would a new volunteer understand the plan?

Working together for a wildfire-ready Herefordshire

County plans provide the framework.
Parishes provide the local knowledge that makes preparedness real.

Thank you for your attention