



Forestry England

Consultative Panel Forestry England Update Sept 2026

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- Began with a vehicle fire on the A31 and quickly spread to become a major wildfire incident
- Multi-agency response with incredible support from the fire service and close collaboration across partner agencies.
- Fire services on site for 2 weeks
- Damaged over 100 hectares of heathland and woodland
- The areas will take several decades to recover



- On site 24 x 7 supporting the fire service
 - Access and navigations across the Forest
 - Cutting additional fire breaks as the fire direction evolved
 - Water bowsers and damping down
- Remained onsite after the fire service had left to check for hot spots
- Car park closures and public patrols for public safety
- PSPO enforcement - several incidents of BBQ use despite the highly risk



- Managing additional fire incident including several at Bolton's Bench
- Liaising closely with other key agencies regarding arson risk
- Forestry England owned campsites - temporary ban on cooking equipment and BBQs during in line with the level of risk.
- Wildlife rescue supported by our staff and ARC volunteers

Wildfire - Ecological impact



- Large sections of heathland burnt removing all vegetation including heathers, gorse and pillwort, a rare plant found in the New Forest.
- Burning deep into the ground the fire has eradicated layers of seed banks under the soils.
- A significant number of ancient beech and oak trees destroyed as the fire penetrated their root systems.
- Bogs in the area partially destroyed but some remain intact and helped to stop the fire spreading further.



- We are now working on plans to help the affected landscape to recover
- Drawing on considerable experience of restoring areas affected by fire including the large-scale heathland fire in Wareham, Dorset in May 2020.
- The site is very close to another area of forest damaged by a fire almost 40 years ago which has now been restored
- We plans to use cuttings from heather at this site to create a protective layer over the affected area to help the soils recover and reseed the site.



- Building in future resilience
- Plans to boost our ongoing programme of wetland restoration
- Helping the forest to retain more water in the summer and prolonged periods of drought.
- Ensuring it hold onto water in the winter and periods of prolonged wet weather - slowing the flow down stream and supporting the natural ecology of the flood plain and surrounding areas.



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Thank you