# National Trust and fire service issue wildfire alert following Box Hill blaze



In response to an alarming wildfire incident at the popular Box Hill beauty spot in Surrey, the National Trust and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service have issued a "Wildfire Aware" alert to residents as they prepare for a warm weekend. On Sunday, March 9, firefighters were called to contain a grass fire reportedly caused by four disposable barbecues. The fire affected a 20 by 20-metre area and posed a significant risk of spreading further, endangering wildlife and visitors alike.

Stephanie Fudge, the National Trust General Manager for the Surrey Hills, expressed gratitude towards the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service for their prompt action in extinguishing the flames, stating, “We’re hugely grateful to Surrey Fire and Rescue Service for putting out the fire; it could have been so much worse.” She highlighted the proximity of the fire to the busy Viewpoint at Box Hill, enabling the flames to be driven uphill by winds.

The aftermath revealed extensive damage to a section of the site’s rare and delicate chalk grassland, with evidence of charred remains of small mammals and lizards found at the fire site. With Box Hill being home to colonies of Adonis Blue butterflies, Fudge noted, “If the fire hadn't been put out when it was, it would have affected the population of this rarest species of blue butterfly.”

In total, four barbecue-related incidents were addressed on that same day at Box Hill. To mitigate future risks, the National Trust and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service are collaborating to reinforce the ban on barbecues across all National Trust sites, including Frensham Ponds and Box Hill. The message is clear: “Bring a picnic. Leave your barbecue at home,” Fudge implored.

The ongoing fire season poses a critical threat to both residential areas and biodiversity in the region. Fire Investigation Officer and wildfire expert, Matt Oakley, emphasised the swift nature of wildfires, which can be ignited by improperly extinguished barbecues, litter, or carelessly discarded cigarettes. He remarked, “Wildfires are easy to start and spread very quickly, often through BBQs not being extinguished properly, litter left on commons or heaths, or cigarettes being thrown out of cars or left on the ground.”

Recent data presented by Surrey Fire and Rescue Service indicate a concerning increase in wildfire incidents, with 577 recorded between 2023 and 2024. Such occurrences have become more frequent due to wetter winters and drier summers, which create ideal conditions for fires in the region's heathland areas, particularly near urban populations.

In light of these incidents, the public has been advised to adhere to several wildfire prevention measures, including avoiding open fires in the countryside, substituting barbecues with picnics, and disposing of litter properly. They are also encouraged to watch for advice signage at National Trust sites and to take proactive steps at home by clearing areas of fine fuel and understanding the threats posed by dense foliage and dry undergrowth.

As residents prepare for the warmer weather, the collaborative efforts between the National Trust and Surrey Fire and Rescue Service underscore the significant importance of vigilance and responsibility in preserving the region’s natural beauty and safety.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://news.surreycc.gov.uk/2025/04/01/surrey-fire-and-rescue-service-and-the-national-trust-urge-surrey-visitors-to-be-wildfire-aware-following-box-hill-fire/> - Corroborates the wildfire incident at Box Hill and the collaboration between Surrey Fire and Rescue Service and the National Trust to raise awareness about wildfires.
* <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/surrey/box-hill/> - Provides information about Box Hill, including its natural beauty and wildlife diversity, which is impacted by wildfires.
* <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/wildfire-aware> - Supports the National Trust's role in raising wildfire awareness and preventing such incidents across their sites.
* <https://www.surreyfire.gov.uk/> - Corroborates the Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's efforts in responding to and preventing wildfires in Surrey.
* <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/wildfires-what-to-do> - Provides general advice on how to prevent and respond to wildfires, reinforcing the measures suggested in the article.