# Major incident declared as deliberate wildfire engulfs Hilltown



A major incident has been declared following a significant wildfire that broke out on Sandbank Road in Hilltown, County Down, Northern Ireland, on Saturday afternoon. The fire is believed to have been deliberately set, leading to extensive operations by emergency services, including the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) and local police.

The blaze, which measures approximately two miles in length and encompasses a large area of forestry near the scenic Mourne Mountains, was reported shortly after 5:00 PM BST. Over 100 firefighters, supported by 15 fire appliances, worked through the night to manage the rapidly spreading flames. The harsh conditions, exacerbated by high winds, made firefighting efforts particularly challenging.

Aidan Jennings, the Chief Fire Officer of NIFRS, commented on the situation, stating, "The cause of this fire is believed to have been deliberate." He expressed gratitude towards the firefighters and support staff for their unwavering dedication, saying, "I would like to acknowledge the dedication and commitment of our firefighters, control room operators and support staff who have worked tirelessly in recent days to ensure the safety of our community across Northern Ireland."

In response to the threat posed by the blaze, several local residents were evacuated as a precautionary measure. NIFRS reported that by the early hours of Sunday, resources at the site began to be scaled back, with the fire largely brought under control by approximately 7:00 AM BST on Sunday.

The incident prompted a high volume of calls to the fire service, with Jennings detailing that between midnight on April 3 and midnight on April 5, a total of 741 calls were received at the regional control centre concerning various fires in the area. Just before 3:00 AM, police updated residents via social media, confirming that the main Hilltown to Rostrevor Road and Sandbank Road, which had been closed earlier due to the fire, were reopened to traffic.

The occurrence of this wildfire coincides with an amber wildfire warning issued by the National Hazards Partnership, which highlighted the increased risk of difficult-to-control fires during this period. Sky Watch NI, a humanitarian search and rescue charity operating in Northern Ireland, shared footage from the scene, emphasising the significant scale of the wildland fire and urging the public to avoid the area.

This wildfire forms part of an ongoing spate of similar incidents that have raised concern among local authorities and emergency services.

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishpost.com/news/arrest-following-large-mourne-mountains-fire-that-saw-homes-evacuated-288779> - This article confirms that a major wildfire occurred in the Mourne Mountains, specifically in Hilltown, with over 100 firefighters involved and the fire being declared a major incident due to its deliberate nature.
2. <https://news.sky.com/story/man-arrested-over-wildfire-that-triggered-major-incident-in-northern-ireland-13343017> - It supports the claim that over 100 firefighters and 15 fire appliances were deployed, and that the fire is believed to have been started deliberately, leading to the evacuation of local residents.
3. <https://www.itv.com/news/utv/2025-04-06/man-arrested-after-deliberate-fire-started-in-mourne-mountains> - This report corroborates the details of the fire's location, size, and the efforts by the NIFRS and local police, including the evacuation and later reopening of roads.
4. <https://www.noahwire.com> - This source does not provide additional information but is mentioned as the original provider of the report. It does not directly support specific claims about the fire without further context.
5. <https://www.justice.gov/archives/sco/file/1373816/dl?inline=> - This document is unrelated to the Mourne Mountains wildfire and discusses the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.
6. <https://immigrantjustice.org/sites/default/files/content-type/resource/documents/2018-10/NIJC%20Asylum%20Manual_final%2007%202018.pdf> - This document is also unrelated to the wildfire incident and focuses on asylum representation and procedures.
7. <https://www.mirror.co.uk/news/uk-news/hilltown-major-incident-declared-more-35002965> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
8. <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/c9dj5g2zq89o> - Please view link - unable to able to access data