# Ni Water enforces temporary BBQ ban amid highest wildfire risks in Northern Ireland



NI Water has enacted a temporary ban on barbeques and open fires at its publicly accessible sites, including the popular Silent Valley Mountain Park, due to heightened wildfire risks this season. This decision follows the issuance of an amber wildfire warning, a significant indicator that conditions are ripe for what could become uncontrollable fires. Although the warning was briefly lifted, forecasts suggest that it could return to amber, underscoring the serious threat posed by the current dry, warm weather.

The region recently experienced several wildfires ignited during a prolonged stretch of dry weather, particularly affecting grassy areas and gorse in Northern Ireland, including parts of Counties Antrim and Down. Fire crews were deployed to tackle multiple incidents, highlighting the growing concern for public safety and environmental stability. Patricia McKee, facilities senior manager at NI Water, remarked, “Wildfires not only pose a risk to human life, wildlife, and the environment but also to our drinking water catchment areas.” She emphasised the need for caution, attributing much of the wildfire risk to activities such as littering and the use of disposable BBQs.

The precautionary measures taken by NI Water are part of a broader initiative to engage the public in wildfire prevention. In tandem with the temporary ban, an advisory note will be distributed to visitors as they enter the parks, detailing safety measures and the importance of preserving the natural environment that characterises areas of outstanding beauty. According to NI Water, the situation will be reassessed at the end of May, with updates to be communicated through social media and their website.

The amber wildfire alert has been echoed by other public authorities, including the Natural Hazards Partnership, which noted an increased risk of difficult-to-control wildfires due to dry soils and vigorous winds. This year alone has seen over 100 wildfire incidents in Northern Ireland, prompting calls from multiple agencies—including the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and the Police Service of Northern Ireland—for heightened vigilance among residents and visitors alike.

In a concerted effort to combat these incidents, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has initiated a programme aimed at reducing the irresponsible use of disposable BBQs across its land. This initiative involves monitoring public spaces, designating specific areas for BBQ usage, and providing proper disposal bins to alleviate the pressure on the environment and diminish the wildfire hazard.

The current weather conditions, described as the warmest May on record, have elevated fire risks, particularly in areas such as the Mourne Mountains. Officials have urged the public to remain cautious and conscious of their actions that could inadvertently ignite fires in these sensitive areas. As Northern Ireland grapples with the dual threats of environmental protection and public safety, the collaborative efforts of NI Water and local councils signify a proactive approach to mitigating the dangers of wildfires.

The importance of safeguarding both human and ecological health cannot be overstated. As McKee noted, “We don’t want to spoil anyone’s fun but we all need to work together to protect this precious area.” The understanding and cooperation of the public will be crucial in navigating the challenges posed by this season’s extreme weather and accompanying wildfire risks.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6
2. Paragraph 3, 4
3. Paragraph 5, 6
4. Paragraph 4
5. Paragraph 5
6. Paragraph 6
7. Paragraph 5

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

## Bibliography

1. <https://m.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-water-bans-bbqs-and-open-fires-at-its-sites-over-wildfire-risk/a1558812650.html> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.niwater.com/news-detail/12715/Amber-Wildfire-Warning/> - NI Water has reissued its appeal to the public to be aware of the potential dangers of littering, using disposable BBQs, and burning waste, following the Natural Hazards Partnership's upgrade of the wildfire warning to Amber for Wednesday to Sunday. The warning indicates an increased risk of difficult-to-control wildfires due to fine dry weather and stronger breezes. NI Water emphasizes that wildfires pose risks to human life, wildlife, property, the environment, and drinking water catchment areas. The public is urged to report any deliberate setting of fires to the PSNI, as it is a criminal offence.
3. <https://www.niwater.com/news-detail/12714/Be-Vigilant-Urges-NI-Water-as-Natural-Hazards-Issue-Yellow-Wildfire-Warning/> - NI Water urges the public to be vigilant as the Natural Hazards Partnership issues a Yellow Wildfire Warning for Northern Ireland, effective from Tuesday 19th March 2025 through Friday. The warning is prompted by fine and dry weather conditions, with breezy conditions expected to exacerbate the potential for wildfires to spread. NI Water highlights the risk to human life, wildlife, property, the environment, and drinking water catchment areas, particularly in the Mournes region, and advises visitors to exercise caution and report any deliberate setting of fires to the PSNI.
4. <https://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/ni-council-curb-bbq-use-27521152> - Newry, Mourne and Down District Council has approved the development of an awareness program to curb the use of disposable BBQs on its lands following significant wildfire destruction in its Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The council aims to address concerns over irresponsible use and disposal of single-use BBQs, which have caused environmental damage and injuries. The initiative includes monitoring and challenging people, designating areas for BBQ use, and providing proper disposal bins to reduce the risk of wildfires and associated hazards.
5. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/wildfire-risk-in-mourne-mountain-areas-following-warmest-may-on-record/a1451149027.html> - Visitors to Mourne mountain and other similar areas in Northern Ireland are being warned to be wary of wildfires following the record-breaking warm weather experienced last month. NI Water has issued a reminder to anyone planning to visit mountain areas to take special care, as these areas are home to much of the region’s drinking water. The risk of wildfires is increased due to strong wind conditions and activities such as littering, use of disposable BBQs, and burning of waste.
6. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/wildfire-warning-amid-dry-spell-after-100-ni-incidents-in-three-months/1471109952.html> - A warning has been issued about the danger of wildfires in Northern Ireland after more than 100 incidents in the past three months. Multiple agencies, including the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA), the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS), and the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI), are urging the public to act responsibly and be vigilant for wildfires, especially over the May bank holidays. Wildfires can spread rapidly on dry ground, posing risks to the public, property, firefighters, and important habitats and species.
7. <https://www.niwater.com/news-detail/12302/NI-Water-Warns-against-Wildfire-Risk/> - As Northern Ireland enters the warm weather, NI Water is reminding visitors to mountain areas, particularly the Mournes, of the real risk of wildfires. The dry weather increases hazard warnings for wildfires, with the risk heightened due to strong easterly wind conditions and activities such as littering, use of disposable BBQs, and burning of waste. NI Water emphasizes that wildfires pose risks to human life, wildlife, property, the environment, and drinking water catchment areas, urging the public to exercise caution and report any deliberate setting of fires to the PSNI.