

Nature



Future



Protect Nature for the Future

Petition – what are we calling for and why?

The devastating wildfire at Dunwich Heath has been heartbreaking.

In just a matter of days, a much-loved landscape was transformed. Precious wildlife habitat has been lost and a place where generations of people have walked, explored and made memories has been profoundly affected.

Sadly, Dunwich Heath is not an isolated case. Across the UK, wildfires, flooding, drought and other climate-related hazards are affecting wildlife sites, historic landscapes, coastlines, farmland, countryside, parks and green spaces. These events are putting increasing pressure on communities, nature, heritage as well as the emergency services that help keep people safe. Climate scientists have long warned that these risks will become more frequent and severe as our climate changes.

The National Trust is already working to help the places in our care adapt to these growing risks. But the scale of the challenge goes beyond any one organisation. Protecting people, places and nature will require stronger national leadership, long-term investment and support for communities and services on the frontline.

That's why we're calling on the Government to make three commitments.

1. Make climate resilience a national mission

Preparing for climate change must be a shared responsibility across Government.

We're calling for climate resilience to become a national mission, led by a Cabinet-level minister with responsibility for preparedness across Government and long-term investment.

This should bring together action across the Treasury, infrastructure, housing, health, education, nature, heritage, local government and emergency response, ensuring that climate resilience is built into spending decisions, policy-making and long-term planning.

The challenges facing people, places and nature are connected. The response should be too.

2. Invest in nature as essential infrastructure

Nature is one of our most effective tools for helping communities adapt to climate change.

Healthy peatlands, wetlands, rivers, woodlands and heathlands help store carbon, manage water, reduce flood risk, support wildlife and make landscapes more resilient to extreme weather.

We're calling on Government to invest in nature as essential infrastructure, supporting the restoration, resilience and long-term management of the natural systems that help communities adapt to climate change, reduce environmental risks and support wildlife.

Just as we invest in transport, energy and water networks, we should recognise that healthy natural systems are critical to the resilience and wellbeing of the country.

3. Support Fire and Rescue Services

Fire and Rescue Services are on the frontline of responding to wildfires and other climate-related emergencies. As these incidents become more frequent and complex, services need greater investment if they are to prevent, prepare for and respond safely and effectively.

We're therefore calling on Government to ensure that investment in wildfire resilience reaches local Fire and Rescue Services urgently, supported by sufficient, sustained long-term funding for specialist training, equipment and operational capacity. Recent steps to strengthen wildfire resilience are welcome, but frontline services need faster access to the resources required to meet growing risks as events this Summer have shown.

This should also include access to specialist wildfire capabilities, including a nationally accessible aerial firefighting capability. During the Dunwich Heath fire, helicopter support had to be sourced by the National Trust to assist firefighting efforts because no equivalent capability was quickly accessible to responding Fire and Rescue Services. Emergency services should be able to access such support rapidly when needed.

We're also calling on Government to publish an Integrated Wildfire Strategy and Action Plan bringing together prevention, preparedness, response and recovery across central and local government, emergency services, land managers, communities

and environmental organisations. The strategy should recognise the role that healthy, resilient landscapes play in reducing wildfire risk and set out coordinated action to better protect nature, heritage, communities and infrastructure. It should also ensure that local services have access to the data, national coordination, specialist capabilities and long-term support they need to prepare for and respond to the growing threat of wildfires.

Why Government action matters

We're already taking action to help the places in our care become more resilient, including restoring habitats, helping landscapes recover from climate impacts and using data and evidence to plan for future risks. But charities, land managers, communities and emergency services cannot tackle these growing risks alone. Meeting the challenge requires coordinated national action, long-term investment and political leadership.

Sign the petition

The fire at Dunwich Heath has shown what's at stake.

Add your name to the petition and call on Government to take action to protect people, places and nature from growing climate risks.