



Cumbria Fire & Rescue Service

Wildfire Strategy

2019/22



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Introduction

Cumbria is an area of outstanding natural beauty, one that attracts huge loyalty from local people and worldwide visitors. Cumbria is the second largest County in England and covers 689,000 hectares, including a coastline of 245km and accounts for a staggering 48% of the land mass in the North West. The County boundary is naturally defined by the Irish Sea to the West, from the Solway Firth to Morecambe Bay, with the Scottish border to the North and the Pennine hills to the East. There are 6 districts within the County: Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland.



The topography of Cumbria is striking. Along with 16 significant lakes, the County is also home to the Cumbrian Mountains. These contrasting geographies form the showpieces of the Lake District National Park, the largest National Park in England. Although sporadic, recent years have shown marked increases in numbers of wildfires in the UK, in particular, during prolonged dry periods. The deployment of resources to this type of incident can have an impact on numbers of appliances available for the other incident types. This can result in stretched resources and potentially increased attendance times to other incident types and the agreed attendance times.

Wildfires, including woodland fires and wildfires on other land cover types, are uncontrolled vegetation fires. Although they can start naturally, the majority are caused by people, either accidentally or deliberately. The increase in leisure use of open access land for tourism in Cumbria also increases the risk of wildfires starting. Depending on the location, Wildfires can impact on transport network and power lines, damage property and businesses, affect tourism and recreation, and threaten people's lives.

Evidence exists where Wildfires have caused damage the natural and historic environment, released carbon dioxide stored in vegetation and soils which contributes to climate change. It is believed that carbon dioxide release could have a negative impact on the environment. There is potential for destructive wildfire events to increase in frequency in the UK due to increased land use pressure and climate change. It is also believed that increased numbers of visitors to Cumbria could result in an increased number of Wildfire events.

Wildfire Definition

National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP) fires:¹

The National Operational Guidance Programme uses this definition for wildfire so that they are differentiated from smaller incidents if they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- It involves a geographical area of at least one hectare (i.e. at least 10,000 square metres)
- It has a sustained flame length of more than 1.5 metres
- It requires a committed resource of four or more fire rescue service appliances
- It requires resources to be committed for six or more hours
- It presents a serious threat to life, environment, property and infrastructure

Primary fires: Primary fires are potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property and meet at least one of the following conditions:

- Any fire that occurred in a (non-derelict) building, vehicle or (some) outdoor structures
- Any fire involving fatalities, casualties or rescues
- Any fire attended by five or more pumping appliances.

Aim



To provide a strategy for prevention, protection and response activities in order to reduce the impact and consequences of Wildfire related incidents on the local communities and the environment.

¹ <https://www.ukfrs.com/guidance/wildfires>

Objectives

- Prevention – a reduction in preventable Wildfire related Emergencies and increased awareness through the communities of Cumbria
- Response and Resilience – Resourcing and responding to Wildfire related incidents
- Protection – Working with partners to reduce the impact of Wildfire related events

These objectives will be underpinned by working with partners, other agencies and the communities we serve.

This Wildfire strategy defines Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) approach to the prevention, protection and response to a range of Wildfire related emergencies, and is related to risk process identified through our Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP). The IRMP also provides a detailed risk analysis through our Risk Based Evidence Profile (RBEP) and station risk reviews to ensure that CFRS has the right resources, at the right time in the right places.

This evidence based approach enables us to identify and understand the different types of Wildfires and allows us to prioritise the risks associated with these types of fires. It also identifies the risks related to the environment, enables us to outline how we will contribute, collaborate and coordinate with partners. This should help to reduce the effects of this threat and allow us to respond efficiently and effectively.

Legal

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004² places a legal requirement for any Fire and Rescue service to make provisions for extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of a fire.

The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England³ also states that: “Every fire and rescue authority must assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national in nature from fires to terrorist attacks. Regard must be had to Community Risk Registers produced by Local Resilience Forums and any other local risk analyses as appropriate”.

The Framework does not define fire and rescue related risks but it can be assumed that Wildfire related risks are amongst them. Due to the magnitude and likelihood of many Wildfire related risks, CFRS provides appropriate resources to respond to Wildfire related incidents. It also recognises that preventing such risks from materialising is more effective than just responding to incidents that occur.

The Health and Safety at Work Act (HASAWA) 1974⁴ provides the legal framework to promote, stimulate and encourage high standards of health and safety in places of work. It protects employees and the public from work activities. For the fire and rescue service attending incidents, the incident ground becomes the workplace.

² <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/21/section/7>

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fire-and-rescue-national-framework-for-england--2>

⁴ <http://www.hse.gov.uk/legislation/hswa.htm>

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004⁵ places a duty on CFRS to prepare for emergencies, warn the public and provide advice if an emergency is likely to occur or has taken place.

Landscape Considerations

Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the world today. Rising global temperatures are already blamed for influencing changes in weather patterns, rising sea levels and increasing the frequency and intensity of extreme weather.

Landscape considerations include:

278 Sites of Special Scientific Interest = 514 square miles

Other areas of protection:

- Special Areas of Conservation
- Special Protection Areas, etc. = 888 square miles

460 square miles of Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority areas at risk from wildfire Including:

- Grassland
- Heathland
- Mire/Fen/Bog
- Trees
- 261 square miles forest/woodland
 - 10% of Cumbria
 - 50% of woodland in NW England
- 74 square miles Forestry Commission

The Forestry Commission England (FCE) produced a report showing the Wildfire statistics for England for 2009-2017⁶. Appendix 1 provides an overview of these findings. This data has been produced by the analysis of incident data for all wildfires drawn from the Home Office's Incident Recording System (IRS).



⁵ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2004/36/notes/division/5/2?view=plain>

⁶ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/forestry-commission-england-wildfire-statistics-for-england-2009-10-to-2016-17>

Response - CFRS Wildfire Resources

Training

Our Wildfire strategy details four levels of wildfire training for various specialist roles:

- Wildfire Awareness – all operational personnel
- Basic Wildfire Operator – all wildfire teams
- Initial Wildfire Managers – all Flexi- Duty Officers
- Advanced Wildfire Managers – 2 x Flexi-Duty Officers
- Off road 4x4 driver – drivers at wildfire stations
- Unimog 4x4 driver – drivers at Unimog stations
- Ignition Supervisor – determined by CFRS needs.

To achieve the training for the roles above CFRS have utilised both external and internal training.

Due to the unpredictability of the UK weather and the seasonal restrictions placed on live burning across the UK and Europe it has been necessary to undertake training for Advanced Wildfire Managers. Ignition Supervisors will be trained where required to suit the needs of Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS).

Benefits have been gained from experiencing wildfires and prescribed burning of vegetation using experienced international partners. The level of specialist expertise will be maintained in line with the identified need in the Integrated Risk Management Policy (IRMP).

Wildfire training has been carried out with other specialist teams across the UK and Europe.

A recent development has been the use of straw burns for demonstration purposes which extends our opportunities to undertake live burn training in controlled conditions.

Appliances and Equipment

Dedicated wildfire teams using specialist equipment, protective clothing and training are established at:

Fire Station Location	Wildfire Unit	Wildfire Response
Ambleside	Landrover	Wildfire Team
Windermere	Landrover	Wildfire Team
Appleby	Land Rover/Unimog: Depends on the time of year*.	Wildfire Team
Whitehaven	Land Rover/Unimog: Depends on the time of year*.	Wildfire Team
Sedbergh	Landrover	Wildfire Team
Silloth	Landrover	Wildfire Team
Keswick	Landrover	Wildfire Team
Millom	Landrover	Wildfire Team
Grange		Wildfire Team

*The Unimogs stationed at Whitehaven and Appleby are resourced in collaboration with Cumbria County Council (CCC) Highways team. They use them as snow ploughs and gritters in the winter months between April and September.



The Land Rovers and Unimogs are equipped with a range of tools and equipment not found on standard fire appliances.

Wildfire protective clothing is provided for specialist teams and Managers as wearing structural fire kit at wildfire incidents adds to the risk due to heat stress. The joint design and procurement of this clothing was undertaken jointly with Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service.

The provision of Wildfire teams allows crews in inappropriate clothing to be changed with Wildfire personnel in the correct clothing which will reduce the risk to firefighters. Wildfire teams will also reduce the numbers of appliances attending as more advanced firefighting techniques can be adopted requiring fewer personnel. This improves the resilience of the Fire Service to undertake its normal work when attending Wildfires.

Responding to Wildfire

The response for wildfire teams is based on the concept of a team consisting of around 8-10 members. This fits in with the principles of the safety protocols and tactics being adopted by CFRS. Therefore an equipped Wildfire team would consist of the crews of a specialist Wildfire vehicle and a supporting Fire Engine from a Wildfire station. Mobilising options are based on the nearest specialist Land Rover or Unimog going first followed by the next nearest available supporting Wildfire Fire Engine which may or may not be from the same station.

We will work with external agencies with an interest in Wildfire including:

- Lake District National Park
- National Trust
- Moorland Association
- Forestry Commission
- MoD
- Mountain Rescue
- Natural England
- Cumbria Police
- Environment Agency
- Cumbria County Council
- United Utilities
- Local communities

Our Wildfire Plans, in which members of the community provide risk information for CFRS, are available on the mobile data system on fire appliances. The key objective of community groups is to continue to maintain the risk information in the form of Wildfire Plans.

Internal Liaison

Similar to other specialist functions within CFRS, a Wildfire operations group, comprising of the lead wildfire managers including representatives of each locality, sits to monitor and review wildfire incidents, procedures, equipment and training to ensure that arrangements are functioning well and continue to develop. This forum will promote our organisational assurance and learning.

National Liaison

Due to the significant risk of Wildfires across Cumbria and the amount of investment made by the Service, CFRS is seen as a key wildfire player in the UK and we are represented on the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Wildfire Group. CFRS contributed to the Wildfire Guidance developed by the Scottish Government⁷. We will attend the biennial Wildfire Conference and any national/international seminars that will support our aims and objectives.

Procedures

CFRS has adopted the procedures now contained in the National Operational Guidance Programme (NOGP) and the Scottish Government Wildfire Guidance. The two key items being the Wildfire Prediction System (WPS) and the LACES safety protocol. These form the core of the training within CFRS and will continue to do so.

⁷ <https://www2.gov.scot/Resource/0043/00436138.pdf>

Climate Change

Due to the future predictions for climate change it is believed that the number and intensity of wildfires is likely to increase given the predictions in the UK. This can be seen through an upwards trend in recent years of hot dry spells which results in spells of intense Wildfire activity such as in 2017-18.

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment 2017 Evidence Report⁸ shows a direct link between our environmental actions and the increasing number of hot and dry summers in the UK. This will inevitably lead to more Wildfire periods due to the weather conditions. We have supported North West fire services in dealing with their Wildfires. This occurred during the hot summer of 2018 where we provided Wildfire teams and resources to support Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service in dealing with large Wildfires.

Geography

The following information provides an overview of the geographical make up and population of Cumbria.

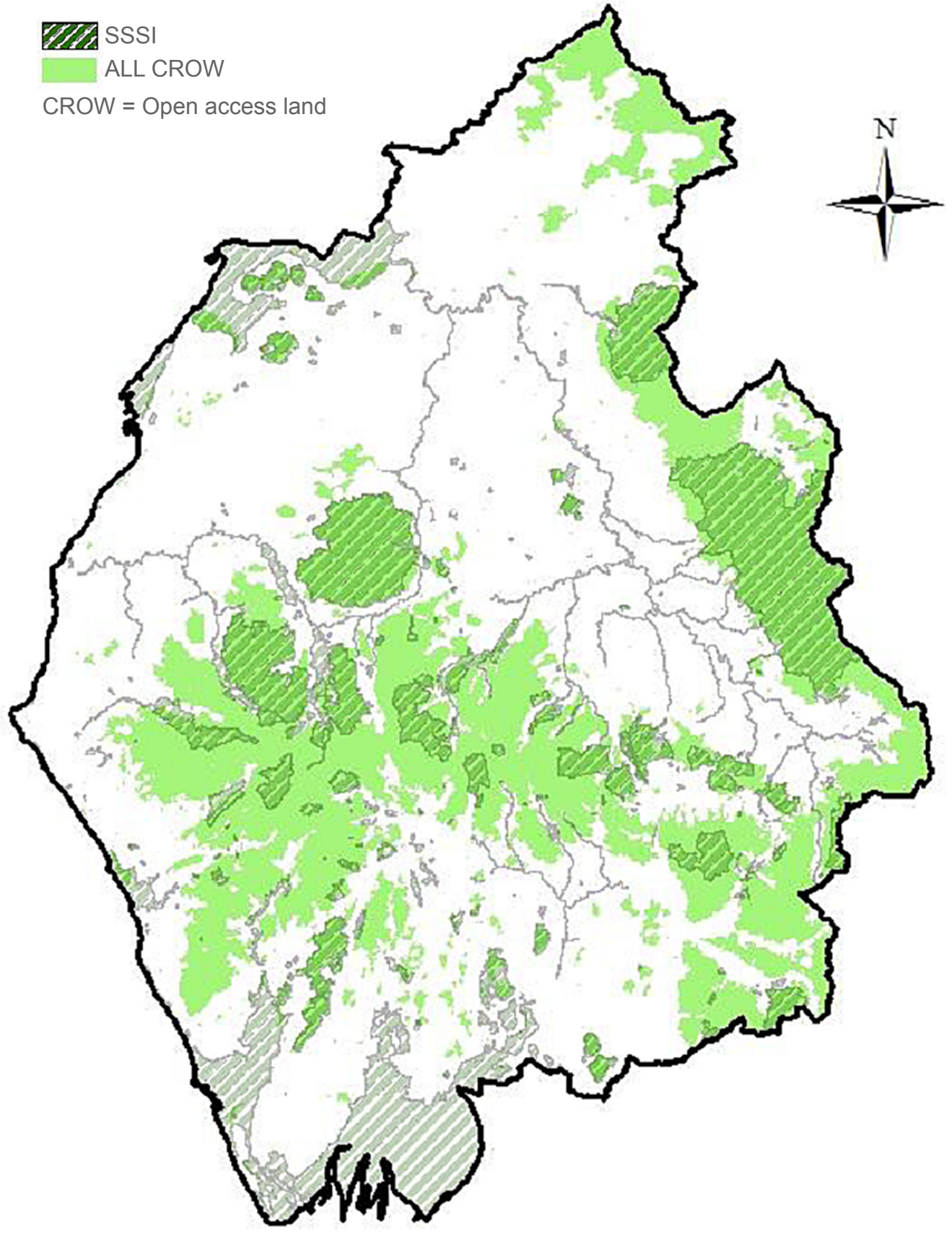
- Cumbria
 - 2613 square miles
 - 80 miles long
 - 60 miles across
- Open Access Land – Countryside Rights Of Way Act (CROW)
 - 825 square miles
- Lake District National Park
 - 885 square miles
- Yorkshire Dales National Park
 - 82 square miles
- Population
 - Around 500,000 people



⁸ <https://www.theccc.org.uk/tackling-climate-change/preparing-for-climate-change/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2017/synthesis-report/>

The map below shows where the people will be out in the countryside in particular. Areas allowing CROW and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are a magnet for locals and tourists alike.

Countryside Rights of Way and Sites of Special Scientific Interest



Reducing the number of Wildfire related emergencies continues to be a priority for CFRS. Whilst seasonal campaigns to reduce Wildfires has been coordinated nationally, there still continues to be an increase in Wildfire related incidents during prolonged dry periods. Ongoing provision of education and fire safety communications will continue to prevent and reduce occurrences of Wildfires in the countryside.

The England and Wales Wildfire Safety Forum⁹ is a multi-agency stakeholder group of public, private and third-sector parties established to address wildfire issues. The forum is a voluntary strategic body, independent of government, created to expand knowledge and understand of wildfire. The overall purpose of reducing the harmful impact of wildfires by promoting joint working and collaboration is key.

Moving Forward

Maintenance of Skills

The current strategy identifies the levels of wildfire training in CFRS from awareness to burn supervisor. These broadly fit in with the National model including the NOS's and suit CFRS's specific requirements. The numbers of personnel trained should be maintained for Wildfire teams, initial Wildfire managers, advanced Wildfire managers and burn supervisors.

All levels should maintain their skills specific to their levels of training. :

- Wildfire awareness
 - o Maintain skills through local training and exercises
- Wildfire teams
 - o An initial course for new personnel
 - o Maintain skills through local training and exercises
- Initial Wildfire Managers
 - o An initial Wildfire Managers course
 - o Maintain skills through training and exercises
 - o Attend a refresher course
- Burn Supervisors
 - o An initial Burn Supervisor course
 - o Maintain skills through training and exercises
- Advanced Wildfire Managers
 - o An Advanced Wildfire Managers course
 - o Maintain skills through training, exercises and national forums
 - o Attend a refresher course.

The NFCC Wildfire forum will ensure that there is effective liaison and exchange of information between the England and Wales Wildfire Forum (EWWF), Scottish Wildfire Forum (SWF) and other relevant organisations and agencies so as to maintain appropriate situational awareness.

⁹ <https://www.northumberland.gov.uk/Fire/Wildfire.aspx>

Key areas of Delivery 2019-2022

Response and Resilience

We will continue to work with partners, community and other agencies to ensure that we have the right resources in the right place at the right time with a highly skilled a competent workforce. This will ensure an efficient, effective and collaborative approach to Wildfire related incidents

Protection

We will continue to work with our partners, local and national forums to ensure that areas of high wildfire risk will be targeted.

Prevention

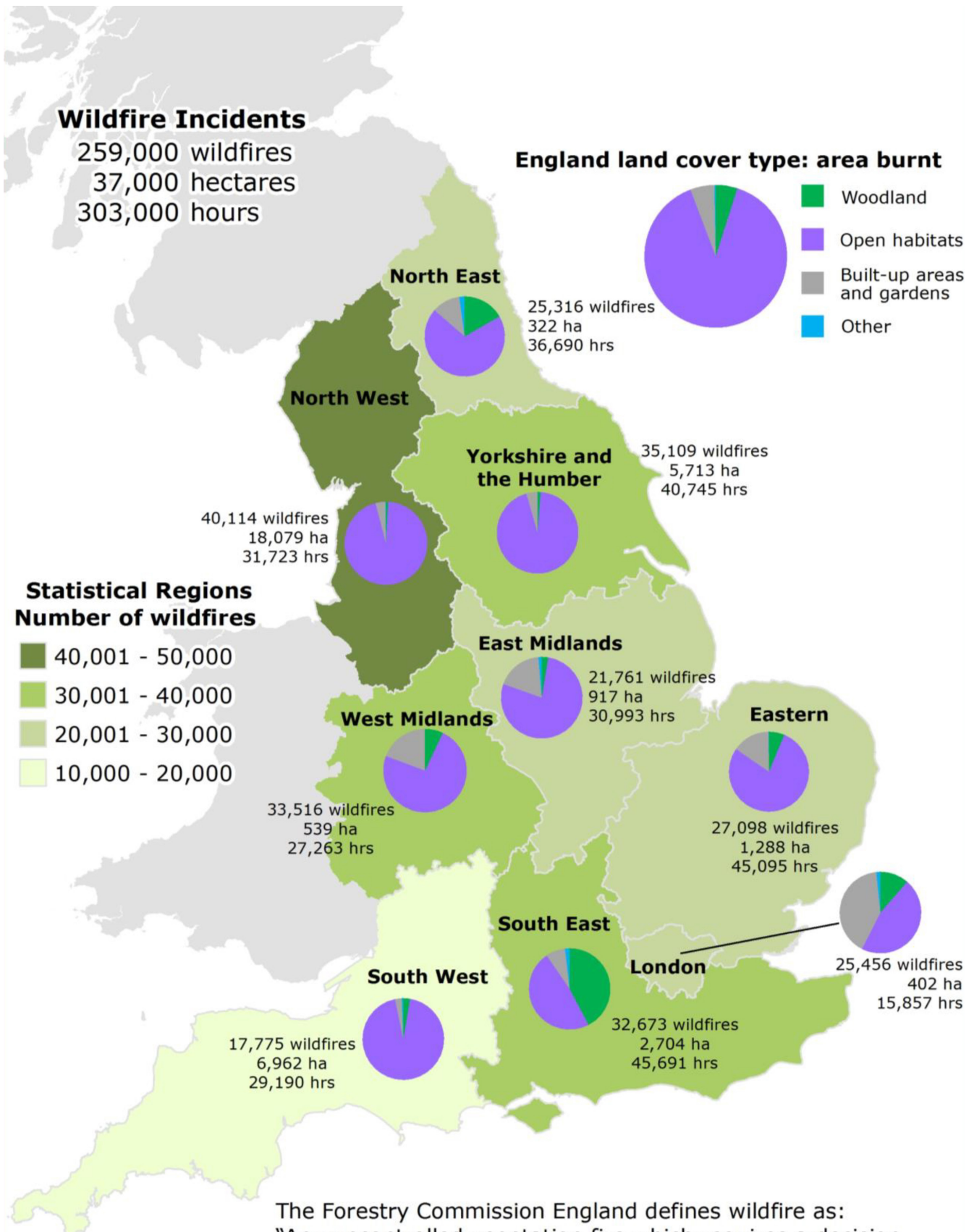
We will continue to support local rural groups, forge links with and offer of advice and assistance to reduce Wildfire incidents.

We will continue to work with our partners and the local communities to ensure are communities are supported and informed of the risks associated with Wildfire related incidents. We will continue and build upon targeted education initiatives to reduce the potential impact of Wildfire incidents and enhance community's awareness of associated risks. To achieve this we will utilise local and national forums who will provide suitable resources and information.

We will carry our training and developing our skills in this area. We will exercise our Wildfire resources to make sure that we can deploy them effectively when and where required. This will provide us with an assurance that we are providing the best possible service to the public..

Overview map and tables about wildfires in England

Overview Map of Wildfire Incidents by Statistical Regions, 2009-10 to 2016-17



The Forestry Commission England defines wildfire as: "Any uncontrolled vegetation fire which requires a decision, or action, regarding suppression."