NORTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

Langdale/Fylingdales Moor Wildfire

Major Incident Debrief

Progress. People. Community.

YORK & NORTH YORKSHIRE COMBINED AUTHORITY

Foreword from Chief Fire Officer Jonathan Dyson

This report provides an evidence-based account of North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service's response to the Fylingdales Moor wildfire, an incident of significant scale, complexity and duration that required a sustained, coordinated multi-agency response.

Operating in challenging terrain and extreme environmental conditions, our officers and crews, working alongside regional and national partners, farmers, gamekeepers and many others, acted decisively to protect life, critical infrastructure and communities. The absence of loss of life or damage to residential property represents a significant outcome.

Informed by operational data and structured debriefs aligned to the College of Policing protocols, this report offers a clear and objective assessment of our response. It identifies effective practice, while also setting out areas for improvement. This reflects our commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous organisational learning.

While the response was effective, incidents of this nature reinforce the need to continually strengthen our preparedness, interoperability and coordination. We will ensure that learning is not only identified, but embedded, translating into practical, sustained improvements in how we plan for and respond to complex, protracted incidents.

The findings will be driven forward through a targeted programme of improvement, delivered within established governance arrangements to ensure clear oversight, accountability and measurable progress.

I would like to formally recognise the professionalism, resilience, commitment and the vital contribution of partner agencies, farmers, gamekeepers, contractors, the Ministry of Defence, the Local Resilience Forum, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor and our local communities. Their collective support and collaboration were critical to the outcome achieved and reflects the strength of partnership working across York and North Yorkshire, providing a firm foundation on which to build for the future.

Contents

1 Introduction

1.1 NYFRS Context, Role and Capability

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS) operate across England's largest county by area, covering approximately 8,600 square kilometres. The Service area encompasses highly diverse risk environments, including extensive rural communities, large areas of moorland and peatland, a significant stretch of coastline, and the City of York, a dense, historic urban centre with a resident population and a substantial daily influx of visitors. The North York Moors attract over nine million visitors per year.[1]

Emergency response across this geography is delivered through mixed duty systems, combining wholetime, day crewed, On-call and volunteer resources, supported by specialist capabilities.

On-call firefighters and those in volunteer roles, typically have separate primary employment. They provide emergency response for NYFRS by responding from their home or workplace when alerted, alongside their main occupation. Collectively, On-call firefighters account for over half of the Service's operational workforce and are fundamental to maintaining effective emergency response across rural and remote areas, where a wholly wholetime presence would be neither proportionate nor financially sustainable.

This operating model offers flexibility and strong community integration, particularly through On-call and volunteer provision in rural and remote locations. However, it also presents inherent challenges in sustaining prolonged, resource intensive incidents, especially where demand extends over multiple weeks, alongside maintaining effective cover across a very large geographic area.

The response to the Fylingdales Moor wildfire demonstrated both the strengths of this model; adaptability, local knowledge and workforce commitment and the pressures placed upon it during a protracted major incident.

Understanding this geographic and operational context is essential when assessing the response, ensuring that any learning reflects both operational performance and the practical realities of delivering emergency services across a large, complex and predominantly rural county that also contains distinct urban risk.

1.2 Purpose of the Debrief

This debrief provides a structured and evidence-based assessment of the Fylingdales Moor wildfire, drawing on operational data, incident logs, decision records and multi-agency contributions. It brings together perspectives from across command levels and partner organisations to present a comprehensive account of the incident.

Its purpose is to capture and consolidate learning from a complex and protracted wildfire event, identifying what worked well, recognising where challenges were encountered and ensuring that key lessons are clearly articulated and evidenced.

In doing so, the debrief seeks to:

- Capture effective practice across operational, tactical and strategic levels
- Identify key learning and areas for improvement
- Inform future preparedness, planning and operational response
- Strengthen organisational and system-wide resilience to increasingly complex wildfire incidents.

The report underpins transparency and accountability, providing assurance to stakeholders, partners and the public that the response has been subject to thorough scrutiny.

1.3 Overview of the Incident

In August 2025, North Yorkshire experienced one of the largest and most complex wildfires recorded in England, affecting at its peak, approximately 25 square kilometres of moorland and forestry across Fylingdales Moor and the surrounding Langdale Forest.

Spring 2025 was officially recorded by the Met Office as the warmest and sunniest spring on record, followed by the hottest summer on record. Prolonged drought conditions resulted in critically low fuel moisture levels across heather, grass and peat, leading to a county wide hosepipe ban implemented on 11 July 2025. These factors, combined with variable and, at times, extremely strong wind conditions, created an environment highly conducive to ignition and at times rapid fire development. Despite proactive prevention measures and education, a fire started in a remote, hard-to-reach rural area and later developed with unprecedented speed and energy, due to atypical climatic, environmental and geographic conditions.

Once established, the fire spread across extensive, continuous fuel beds of heather and peat within a landscape of limited natural or constructed firebreaks. Fire behaviour was influenced by both surface fuels and deep subsurface peat, exceeding 1.5 metres in depth in some locations. This enabled sustained underground burning and, at times, unseen fire spread beneath the surface, significantly increasing the complexity of the response.

The remote nature of the incident ground, limited access routes, water availability and lengthy travel times increased the operational challenges. These factors became a challenge due to the elongated nature of the incident, requiring alternative tactical, logistical and environmental approaches throughout. Aerial support, including helicopter deployment, was used to support situational awareness and

1 **Tourism facts and figures | NYMNP**

as a fire suppression tactic across inaccessible areas, complementing ground based firefighting tactics.

The greatest challenge faced during the incident, however, was that parts of the affected moorland had previously been used as a military training area, primarily during the Second World War, with some military activity continuing into the late 1940s and 1950s. This resulted in the presence of both exploded and unexploded ordnance (UXO) across the landscape. As the fire progressed, the heat transfer through the peat led to 'cooking off', exploding of the UXO, necessitating a fundamental shift towards defensive firefighting tactics. The large number of potential UXO's across such a large area, without defined and detailed mapping, meant that typical offensive moorland firefighting tactics were not acceptable for responder safety as detailed in **National Operational Guidance**.

The proximity of RAF Fylingdales, a site of Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) and international defence, elevated the strategic importance of the incident from an early stage. This proximity directly influenced priorities, risk management decisions and the early involvement of national stakeholders.

The risk of the fire potentially spreading to RAF Fylingdales land, led to an initial make pumps 20 (fire appliances) request and the early declaration of a Major Incident.

Managing this risk required a prolonged, coordinated and adaptable multi-agency response, drawing on local, regional and national resources.

1.4 Langdale Timeline

First Call
26 June 2025

Call received into fire control room that there is a lot of smoke north of Dalby Forest. Fire crews attend.

Handover
4 July 2025

Formal handover form completed and incident is handed over to Forestry England.

Fire Flare Up
11 August 2025

Calls received to reports of a fire in the forest and moorland near RAF Fylingdales. Fire crews attend and report that the fire has breached the fire break, with approximately one to two acres of forest on fire.

Major Incident Declared
13 August 2025

Wind drives the fire towards RAF Fylingdales.

A make pumps 20 message sent and assistance is requested and received from neighbouring Fire and Rescue Services.

First UXOs cook offs.

Fire Near Flask Inn
14 August 2025

Calls received by fire control room to a separate seat of fire approximately 3km away (near the Flask Inn). Fire crews attend and contain the fire.

SCG Held
15 August 2025

First Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) takes place.

Fire Spread
25 August 2025

Fire progresses rapidly and travels a considerable distance in a northerly direction. It jumps significant fire breaks including the B1416.

Evacuations
26 August 2025

Evacuation of local businesses.

National Assets Requested
27 August 2025

National assets are requested by the Chief Fire Officer.

National Assets Arrive
28 August 2025

National assets begin to arrive in North Yorkshire.

Fire Contained
29 August 2025

The fire is contained and there has been no further spread for over 48 hours.

Roads Reopen
1 September 2025

The A171 and B1416 roads reopen with 30mph speed limits in place.

Containment
4 September 2025

The fire has been contained for 8 days. Crews continue to monitor and deal with flare ups. The national assets leave over next 24 hours.

NYLRF Major Incident Status Ends
5 September 2025

Major incident status for all agencies apart from NYFRS ceases.

Response phase handover to the 'recovery' phase.

30mph Restrictions Lifted
19 September 2025

30mph restriction on sections of the A171 and B1416 removed.

Major Incident De-escalated
23 September 2025

The major incident status is de-escalated.

Fire crews continue to monitor the area daily.

Stop
22 December 2025

No longer an active incident and NYFRS checks at the site end.

1.5 Scale and System Impact

The Fylingdales Moor wildfire was a large-scale and protracted incident requiring a coordinated, whole-system response over an extended period. The scale of activity demanded sustained multi-agency coordination, national support and significant organisational resilience.

At its peak, on the 25th-30th August the response involved the deployment of large numbers of fire appliances, specialist wildfire resources and national resilience assets. This was supported by engagement with over 30 partner agencies across local, regional and national levels, alongside specialist capabilities including wildfire Tactical Advisors and enhanced logistical support.

At the same time, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service maintained core service delivery across the county. During the main wildfire period, the Service responded to 453 additional incidents, supported by 41 regional mutual aid resources.

This dual demand placed considerable pressure on resources, command capacity and organisational resilience, flexibility across duty systems and strong regional support to maintain service continuity.

Overall, the incident highlighted the scale at which modern wildfire events can impact not only operational response, but the wider community and local resilience forum system.

1.6 Outcome

Despite the scale, duration and complexity of the incident, the overall strategic objectives were delivered, through a successful multi-agency response, which were: to prevent loss of life, serious injuries to responders or members of the public, prevent damage to property and minimise the impact on the local economy and communities. Critical national infrastructure, including RAF Fylingdales, was protected, alongside effective safeguarding of communities, property and key assets.

This assessment does not diminish the very real damage caused by the incident, nor the disruption and distress experienced by affected communities. The Service recognises the significant environmental, archaeological, economic and personal impacts of the wildfire, including harm to extensive areas of moorland, habitats and wildlife, where recovery is likely to take considerable time. It also acknowledges the impact on residents, landowners, land managers and local businesses, particularly those whose livelihoods depend on the land, with restoration and recovery forming a central focus of ongoing multi-agency efforts.

2 Timeline

2.1 First Incident 26/06/2025 and 04/07/2025 (NYFRS in attendance)

On 26 June 2025, reports of smoke in a remote forested area prompted North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service attendance. The location was remote and difficult to access, requiring approximately 30 minutes travel from the nearest road access point, with dense vegetation, uneven peat ground conditions and limited water availability restricting the movement of personnel and equipment. As a result, the fire proved challenging to fully extinguish, with evidence of deep seated burning within peat deposits and sustained fire spread through surrounding vegetation.

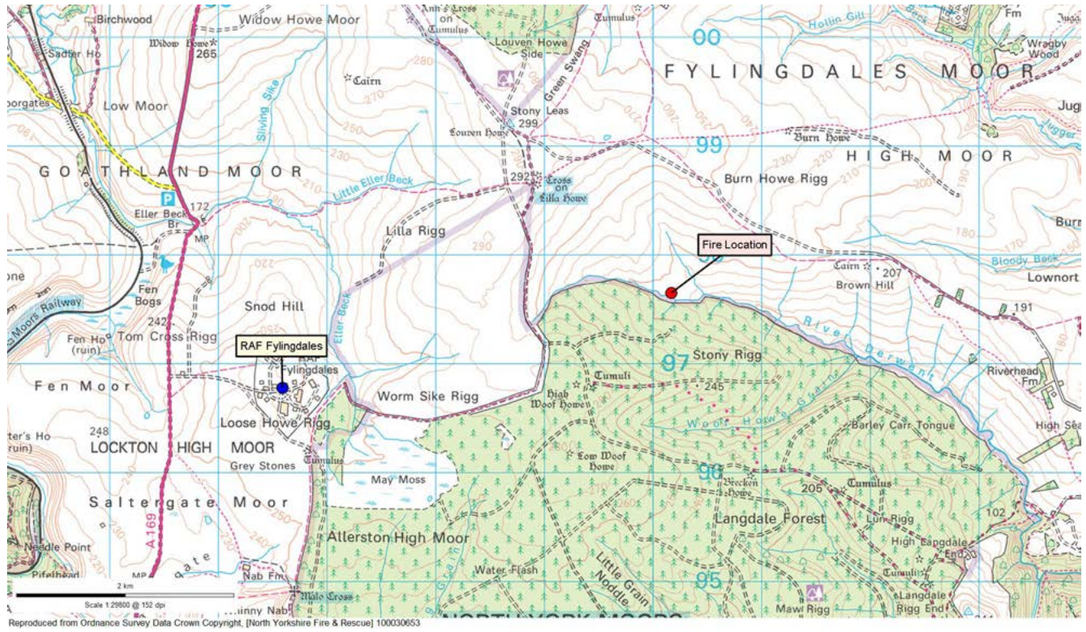
Firefighting tactics focused on the creation of engineered and natural fire breaks, including excavated tracks, drainage works, and use of the River Derwent, to contain the fire within a defined area.

Once the fire had been assessed as contained within these established control measures, a formal external handover was completed on 4 July 2025, transferring responsibility for the incident to Forestry England.

At 10:54 on 4 July 2025, the handover form was formally completed, and by 16:42 the same day it had been issued electronically to Forestry, confirming acceptance of responsibility.

The external handover process is an established NYFRS procedure used where a fire cannot be fully extinguished but is contained within control lines and can be safely managed by a responsible landowner or agency under a “watching brief.”

Map to show location of RAF Fylingdales



The handover documentation outlined that:

- The assessment at that stage was that the fire was contained within established firebreaks, alongside arrangements for continued monitoring and reassessment
- NYFRS would not remain on site and would only re-attend if:
  - the fire breached control measures, and
  - a 999 request for assistance was made.

From this point (4 July 2025), NYFRS were no longer in continuous attendance at the incident, with operational responsibility formally transferred to Forestry England. Subsequent NYFRS involvement was therefore limited to reactive attendance only, in line with the agreed handover protocol and only when requested or if escalation occurred.

2.2 Subsequent Monitoring Phase (4 July – 11 August 2025) (FRS not in attendance)

Ongoing communication between Forestry England and NYFRS ensured that the situation was continually assessed. Control logs confirm multiple contacts between NYFRS and Forestry England between 4 July and 11 August. Forestry England attended site as appropriate and provided updates to inform whether Fire and Rescue Service intervention was required.

On multiple documented occasions, NYFRS received confirmation that the site was being monitored regularly and were informed by Forestry England that NYFRS attendance was not required.

2.3 Escalation and Major Incident Declaration (11 – 14 August 2025) (NYFRS back in attendance)

In the early evening of 11 August 2025, NYFRS resources were mobilised to a separate incident within the area. Whilst enroute, crews observed visible smoke originating from the location of the previous Langdale / Fylingdales Moor fire. In line with established operational procedures and dynamic risk assessment principles, the crews informed Fire Control and requested permission to divert temporarily to investigate the smoke plume and assess whether there had been any change in conditions at the previously contained fire ground.

On arrival at the previous fire location, crews confirmed that the fire had breached the previously established firebreak within the forestry area, indicating that containment had been lost. This prompt identification enabled NYFRS to rapidly escalate the response, mobilise additional resources and re-establish firefighting operations at an early stage. The actions taken by crews and Fire Control reflected the importance of maintaining situational awareness during periods of prolonged hot, dry and windy conditions, where wildfire behaviour can change quickly and previously contained areas can deteriorate unexpectedly.

By 12 August, the fire had moved beyond the confines of the forest and spread into the open moorland. The presence of large volumes of continuous vegetation fuel and very few natural barriers meant the fire spread more quickly and covered a much larger area. At this point, NYFRS convened a Multi-Agency Advisory Teleconference (MAAT) in accordance with the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) Response to Major and Critical Incidents (RMCI) arrangements to facilitate multi-agency coordination and situational awareness.

On 13 August, despite the operational measures in place, the incident escalated as wind-driven fire behaviour increased the rate of spread. As wind conditions continued to shift, the fire was driven towards Critical National Infrastructure (CNI) at RAF Fylingdales, significantly elevating the risk profile. In response, an assistance message was sent from the on-scene Incident Commander to Fire Control, requesting resources to be increased to 20 fire appliances, supported by specialist equipment. A major incident was initially declared due to the potential risk of the fire spreading towards the CNI of RAF Fylingdales. This was developed to include the life, community, environmental and economic risks posed by the fire.

This facilitated a rapid scale-up of the operational response and triggered increased support from neighbouring fire and rescue services, including Cleveland, County Durham and Darlington, Humberside and West Yorkshire. Sections 13 and 16 arrangements[2] had been in place from the outset of the incident, allowing fire and rescue services to provide mutual assistance and shared support during emergencies; however, at this stage the escalation of the incident required a significantly greater draw on these resources. This enabled neighbouring appliances to be mobilised both to the incident ground to support firefighting

2 Sections 13 and 16 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 allow Fire and Rescue Services to provide mutual assistance and enter into agreements for shared support, resources and service delivery during emergencies and periods of increased

operations and to maintain business as usual fire cover at NYFRS stations.

As fire crews tackled the fire, an explosion was witnessed on scene from a military device buried in the moorland which had ‘cooked off’ and exploded on the incident ground, leading the Incident Commander to withdraw crews from high-risk areas of the moorland and revert to defensive firefighting tactics. A multi-agency meeting was held on scene, bringing together key agencies to understand this risk. During the meeting, a second UXO cooked off.

The Incident Commander requested the attendance of the Ministry of Defence’s (MOD) Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) team to attend scene[3]. It was confirmed that the explosions were caused by buried munitions, reflecting the site’s historic use as a Ministry of Defence training range. Archived records were unable to provide sufficient detail to identify the precise locations where munitions may be present across the moorland[4].

Because of this a defensive risk assessment approach was required for containing and extinguishing the fire.[5] From this point, standard, trained methods of offensive moorland firefighting were significantly constrained and no longer viable due to the elevated safety risks.

Following the discovery of UXO on scene, alternate tactics were deployed to suppress fire spread. This included the commissioning of a helicopter, initially by Forestry England, then NYFRS and the use of heavy machinery to create further surface firebreaks.

The combination of these tactics ensured that fire suppression efforts could continue despite the significant risks posed by buried munitions. Coordination between agencies, including Forestry England, NYFRS, and MOD EOD teams, was essential to maintain safety and operational effectiveness throughout this challenging phase of the incident.

demand.

3 JESIP Joint Doctrine: The Interoperability Framework.

4 MOD Guidance for Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Explosive Ordnance Disposal.

5 NFCC National Operational Guidance (NOG) – Hazardous Materials and Explosives.

By the evening of the 13 August, the fire was brought under control and contained to an area approximately 5 square kilometres, which represented the maximum area of fire spread, against natural boundaries. NYFRS retained a significant presence to monitor the fire and extinguish any areas where the wind caused the fire to flare up.

2.4 Second Incident (14 August 2025)

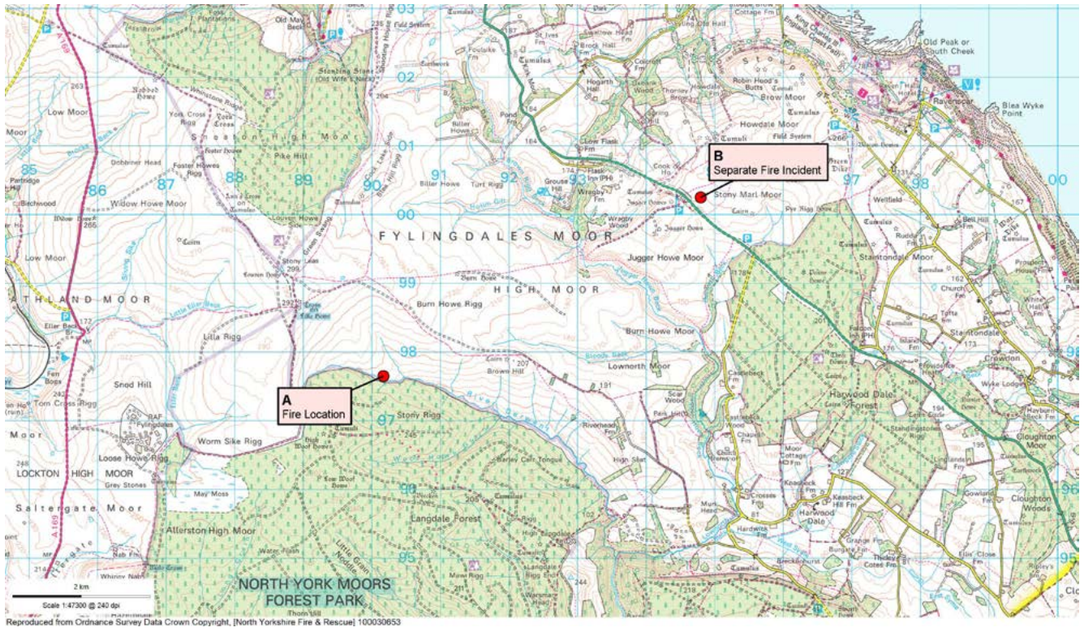
Whilst NYFRS was committed to the Fylingdales Moor major incident, Fire Control received reports during the evening of 14 August 2025 of a further moorland fire to the east of the A171 near the Flask area. This was a separate and geographically distinct seat of fire, approximately three kilometres away.

The Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) meeting held on 14 August 2025 provided continued multi-agency situational awareness, coordination and information sharing. Discussions included the impact of concurrent incidents on emergency service resources and the arrangements required to maintain an effective response across both incidents.

The incident, near the Flask Inn, was attended by six NYFRS appliances, supported by officers and members of the local farming community, whose local knowledge and availability of equipment assisted the response greatly. Due to the proximity of the fire to east coast residential areas, there was a significant risk of rapid fire spread, necessitating decisive and assertive firefighting actions.

The fire was successfully extinguished through early intervention, preventing escalation and mitigating the risk to life and property. Despite the pressure on resources caused by the concurrent major incident, command, control and coordination were maintained effectively.

Geographical relationship between the second incident (B) and the main fire (A)



Location of the second incident at the Flask Inn

The cause of this fire is known to have been the careless disposal of smoking materials, most probably by a bystander who had stopped their vehicle at the roadside to observe the main incident and subsequently disposed of a cigarette in dry vegetation. This incident further emphasised the heightened wildfire risk created by extreme environmental conditions and the dangers posed by seemingly minor acts of carelessness during periods of prolonged heat and drought.

2.5 Containment and Managed Stability (15–24 August 2025)

The first Strategic Coordination Group (SCG) meeting for the incident took place on 15 August 2025.

In line with established arrangements, North Yorkshire Police chaired the first SCG, with NYFRS and Emergency Planning representatives briefing partner agencies and government representatives on the developing situation and ongoing risks. Although the overall fire area had not significantly increased since the evening of 13 August, the scale and complexity of the operational challenge remained substantial and required a sustained multi-agency response.

The SCG agreed a containment strategy focused on the use of prioritised control lines and firebreaks to limit further fire spread where appropriate. The Tactical Coordination Group (TCG) was tasked with progressing this approach, supported by a logistics cell responsible for developing options, coordinating resources and assessing practical delivery requirements. Supporting actions included the establishment of a communications cell, early recovery planning activity and continuation of helicopter support arrangements, including the transfer of existing helicopter coordination from Forestry England.

The Chief Fire Officer also engaged early with MHCLG to progress a Bellwin application, supported by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, recognising the exceptional and prolonged nature of the incident and the associated financial impact on the Service.

At the incident ground, NYFRS maintained a sustained and significant operational response, supported by neighbouring fire and rescue services through mutual aid arrangements. Operational priorities remained focused on containing the fire, protecting life and property, and preventing escalation towards RAF Fylingdales. Helicopters and heavy machinery continued to support suppression activity and the development of control lines, while aerial operations also provided valuable situational awareness across the extensive incident ground.

To complement NYFRS's own nationally accredited Wildfire Tactical Advisor (WTA), additional WTAs were mobilised through National Resilience arrangements. These Tactical Advisors carried out regular structured assessments of wildfire conditions and fire behaviour using SMEAC reports[6], providing clear and safety-critical advice to the Incident Commander and Incident Management Team throughout the incident.

SMEAC reports between 18 and 24 August consistently assessed the fire as low intensity but high-risk due to its overall complexity. While a broad range of risks existed across the incident ground, three factors were particularly influential in shaping tactical decision-making during this phase.

The first was deep-seated peat fire, particularly towards the west and in the direction of RAF Fylingdales, where fire burning below the surface had the potential to spread unseen and re-emerge.

The second was the risk of surface fire spread across large areas of unburnt heather, particularly to the north, where there were limited natural or man-made firebreaks.

6 SMEAC – A structured operational briefing model used during wildfire and other emergency incidents, covering Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and Command, to support clear communication, coordinated activity and informed decision-making.

The third was the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO), which restricted safe access to parts of the incident ground and significantly constrained tactical options, requiring firefighting operations to be carried out from established tracks and controlled access points.

To ensure safe and effective operations, Incident Commanders applied WTA advice alongside National Operational Guidance (NOG), which emphasises proportionate and risk-based decision-making, safe access and egress, and avoiding unnecessary exposure of personnel during wildfire operations.

Forward planning during this period also considered forecast weather conditions, including the potential for a change in wind direction around 25 August. In response, operational activity was adapted to strengthen containment measures in sectors considered most vulnerable to changing fire behaviour.

Within the northern sectors, WTA assessments, supported by ground investigation, contractor testing and thermal imaging, identified relatively shallow peat conditions and limited evidence of subsurface fire spread beneath the established track network. As a result, the primary risk in these areas was assessed to be surface fire spread through unburnt heather rather than deep peat ignition.

Based on this assessment, a fuel separation strategy was adopted. Existing tracks were used as primary control lines and widened through surface fuel removal and scraping to create more substantial barriers. These measures were supported by increased firefighting resources, third-party water carriers and sustained damping operations along vulnerable sections of the control line. Continuous monitoring, including drone heat mapping and visual observation, was used to identify hotspots and support tactical decision-making.

Taken together, these measures reflected a proactive and risk-informed approach aligned to WTA advice, National Operational Guidance and forecast weather conditions. As a result, the fire remained contained within the same overall area between 13 and 24 August.

2.6 Escalation – Wind-Driven Fire Behaviour (25 August 2025)

Over the Bank Holiday weekend, on the 25 August, a significant change in wind direction and wind strength led to a rapid escalation in fire behaviour. The potential for deteriorating conditions had previously been identified through TCG and SCG processes, resulting in additional resources and reinforcement activity being deployed in advance. This included the use of Argocats, 4x4 wildfire vehicles and Land Rovers for tactical suppression, alongside daily drone heat mapping to identify hotspots and support targeted intervention activity. Due to the ongoing UXO risk, firefighting operations remained restricted to established track access only.

Areas of moorland that had shown little or no visible flame activity for over 10 days were reignited by extreme wind conditions, resulting in a rapidly developing flame front to the north of the incident ground. Despite strengthened containment measures, the fire displayed extreme and uncharacteristic behaviour, including intense ember transfer and fire tornados, with embers travelling a significant distance beyond the established control line. This exceeded the planning assumptions of experienced WTAs and operational commanders.

The northern control line had been established based on WTA assessments that identified surface fire spread as the primary risk in this area, rather than deep peat fire spread beneath the control line. The control strategy therefore focused on fuel separation, widening existing tracks, sustained damping operations and continuous monitoring. These measures had remained effective for approximately 10 days prior to the escalation.

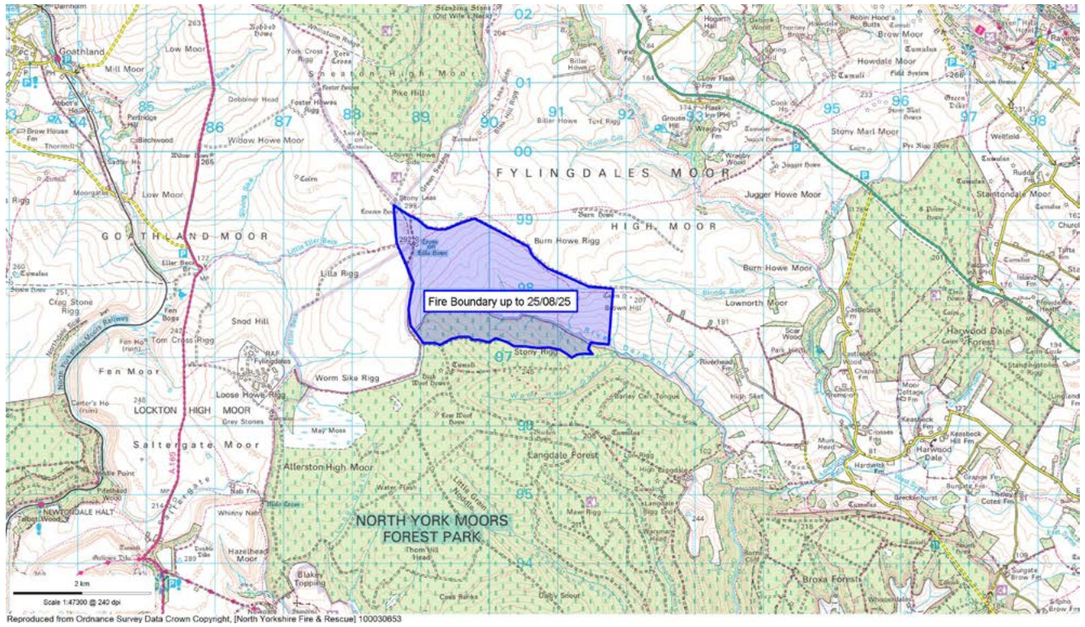
However, the combination of extreme wind conditions, dry fuels and continuous heather allowed the fire to breach the control line through wind-driven ember transfer into unburnt vegetation beyond the break. This represented a significant turning point in the incident, escalating it from a large but locally managed wildfire into an incident of unprecedented scale and complexity.

Once the fire breached the control line, it entered a large area of continuous moorland fuel, with very limited natural or man-made barriers. The absence of effective breaks allowed the fire to spread rapidly under the prevailing wind conditions.

Further resources were prioritised to the breach in an attempt to contain the fire. However, the speed and intensity of fire spread, combined with UXO-related access restrictions, meant crews could no longer safely operate directly against the advancing fire edge in some areas. To maintain firefighter safety, resources were repositioned several kilometres ahead of the fire to more defensible locations, where operations could be re-established in front of the projected fire spread.

Crews worked to identify and utilise available landscape features, ultimately using the B1416 corridor as a stronger and more defensible control line to limit further progression of the fire.

Blue area shows scale of incident up to the escalation on the 25 August



2.7 Peak Response Phase (26 – 30 August 2025)

This period marked the peak of the incident, with a significant increase in both the scale and complexity of the response. Large number of fire appliances and specialist wildfire resources continued to be deployed, supported by National Resilience4 assets and assistance from other fire and rescue services.

National Resilience support was primarily requested to provide relief and recuperation for NYFRS crews. Given the duration and intensity of the incident, this enabled local crews to rest and recover, helping to maintain safe and sustainable operations over a prolonged period, while also supporting stability in local fire cover.

The request for National Resilience assets required significant planning and engagement. As well as allowing other Fire and Rescue Services the time to seek volunteers and assess their ability to release assets for a number of days, there was significant logistical planning required to facilitate a National Resilience deployment. This included sourcing a suitable location for the Strategic Holding Area (SHA). This pre-planning commenced on the 25th August and the formal request was made on 26th August once all the logistics had been completed and the Pickering Showground location secured.

During this time, the fire spread quickly to the north, increasing the size of the incident and requiring earlier plans and assumptions to be reviewed.

The extreme intensity of the fire was clearly demonstrated when it reached the B1416. This public highway comprises a solid, engineered tarmac surface approximately six metres wide, with a constructed depth of over half a metre, forming a substantial non combustible subsurface barrier.

Roadside verges further reduced the available fuel load, extending the effective fire break to almost nine metres in width, although in places vegetation had encroached into what would otherwise be a sterile zone. Despite these features, and under the prevailing conditions, the fire was able to breach the corridor.

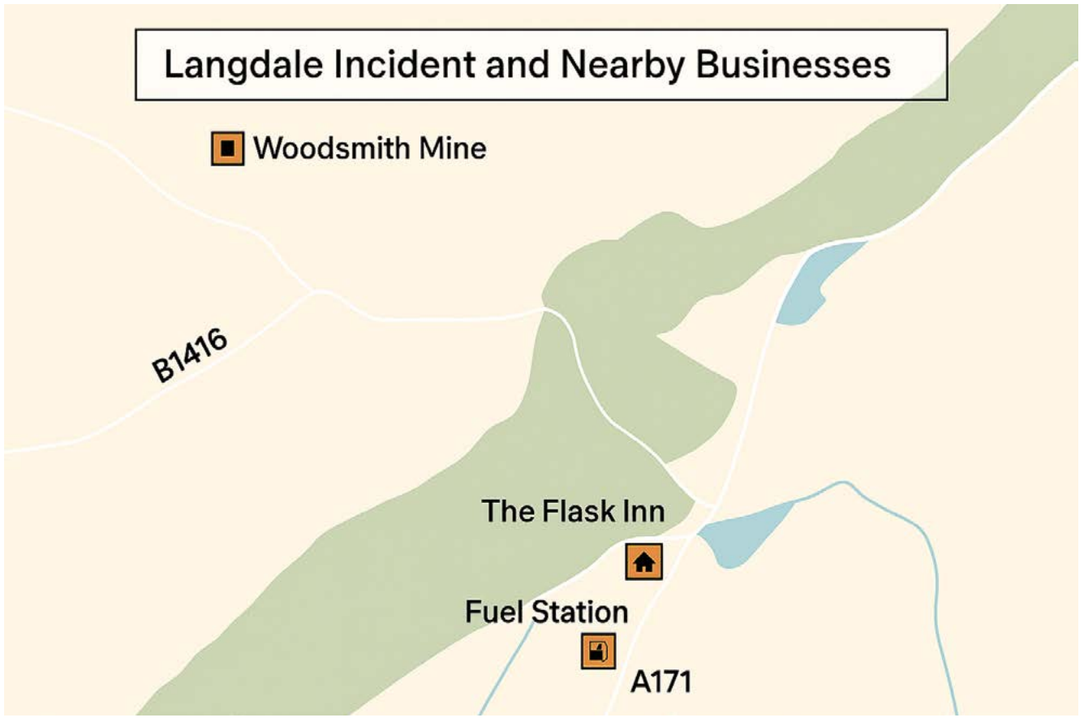
This behaviour illustrates the severity of the fire intensity, particularly the influence of strong winds transporting heat and embers across a barrier that would ordinarily be expected to impede fire spread. This context is important when considering the effectiveness of control measures. Where a barrier of this scale and construction proved insufficient, it indicates that trenching alone, especially of lesser width and depth, would not have been effective in isolation.

In response to the escalating risk, operational tactics were reviewed and adapted through close coordination with partner agencies. Control measures were strengthened; resources were re allocated to priority risk areas and clear, pre-agreed thresholds were established for any precautionary evacuation activity. These arrangements were governed through regular Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) meetings, with strategic oversight provided by the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG).

The response was underpinned by established multi-agency arrangements, which were expanded as the incident developed. These arrangements enabled the effective integration of partner agencies, specialist advisers, contractors and the local farming community and supported the coordination of logistics, welfare and resource deployment across a wide geographic area.

Public communication formed a critical element of the response. Communities were kept informed of developing conditions, including road closures and any potential requirement for evacuation. Communications activity was

Diagram show the location of nearby business and road network



coordinated across partner agencies to ensure consistency, accuracy and public reassurance, supporting informed decision making while avoiding unnecessary alarm during a dynamic and evolving situation.

After the escalation, the fire continued to follow the natural shape of the moorland as anticipated by Wildfire Tactical Advisors (WTAs) and local landowners.

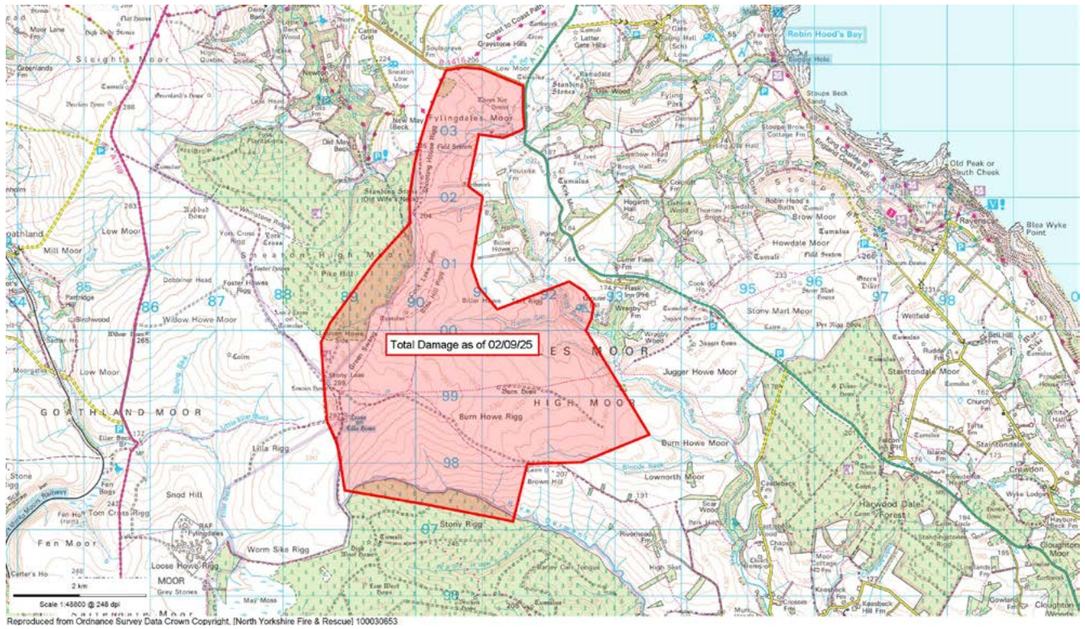
NYFRS took a clear, risk-based approach, focusing on protecting people, communities and key infrastructure, with efforts concentrated around the A171.

This included planning for evacuations and, where required, taking precautionary action to keep the public safe. Grouse Hill Caravan Park was successfully evacuated, while the coordinated efforts of fire crews and local farmers prevented the fire from breaching the site boundary and impacting the properties. Flask Caravan Park and the Flask Inn were also evacuated as a precautionary measure to ensure the safety of residents, visitors and staff.

In addition to evacuating some buildings and businesses in the immediate risk area, the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) undertook substantial work during this period to identify vulnerable people and develop precautionary evacuation plans, despite the assessed risk of fire spreading to East Coast communities such as Whitby and Robin Hood's Bay remaining very low.

By focusing on the areas of greatest risk, crews alongside partners were able to slow and contain the fire. Working with the landscape was key to limiting the impact of the fire and preventing more serious consequences.

Red area shows the total damage spread from 25th August up to the 2 September



2.8 Re-stabilisation Phase (31 August – 2 September 2025)

The combination of sustained firefighting activity and improving environmental conditions supported a gradual transition towards stabilisation. By this stage, fire behaviour had moderated, enabling increased levels of control to be established across the incident ground.

The containment strategy implemented integrated direct firefighting activity with targeted control measures in priority areas. This included continued damping down of active fire fronts, reinforcement of established control lines with surface fire breaks and focused intervention where residual heat and subsurface burning continued to present a risk.

Ongoing engagement at Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) ensured that resources remained aligned to priority risks and that conditions were subject to continuous reassessment.

Strategic oversight was sustained to support decisions on resourcing and to manage the phased transition from response to recovery.

2.9 Transition to Recovery (From 5 September 2025)

As fire behaviour reduced and containment held, the incident transitioned from active firefighting into a considered recovery phase. Operational priorities centred on the identification and management of residual hotspots, particularly areas of deep seated heat within peat, which continued to present a risk of re ignition. This required sustained monitoring, damping down and coordinated working with landowners, contractors and partner agencies. The continued presence of unexploded ordnance within parts of the incident footprint further influenced how activities were undertaken and required ongoing liaison with the Ministry of Defence and specialist advisors. Major Incident status was maintained throughout this period to retain access to National Resilience assets and enable the rapid reintroduction of resources at scale if required.

Resources were progressively scaled back in a controlled and risk-informed manner, undertaken in coordination with farmers and land managers, with a gradual reduction in resources. This ensured that appropriate operational cover and monitoring arrangements remained in place where required, while capacity was released back into wider service delivery.

With the onset of wetter and colder conditions further reducing residual fire activity, confidence increased that active incident command arrangements were no longer required. However, Major Incident status was maintained to retain access to National Resilience assets and enable the rapid reintroduction of resources at scale if required.

Following extended monitoring and assurance activity, the incident was formally closed on 23 December 2025, when a stop message was issued, marking the conclusion of NYFRS's command, control and coordination of the incident.

NB Whilst referenced later within this report, detailed recovery arrangements are not explicitly covered and will instead form part of the separate LRF debrief reporting.

3 Wildfire Risk Pre-Planning

3.1 Prevention and Preparedness

Prevention

Wildfires are a recognised and prominent risk within North Yorkshire, with climate related incidents formally assessed and highlighted in NYFRS recently updated Community Risk Profile. In response, NYFRS prevention teams deliver targeted, intelligence led and seasonal activity to raise awareness of wildfire risk, particularly during periods of elevated environmental conditions.

This includes a strong summer wildfire prevention campaign which has run for several years, making proactive use of social media to share key safety messages and practical advice with those most likely to be affected. Campaign activity has historically been primarily social media focused, although the introduction of a dedicated Communications Officer post will strengthen the Service's ability to deliver more targeted and coordinated public safety campaigns in future.

During the 2025 wildfire season, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service issued a dedicated summer safety press release on 1 May 2025 ("Stay Safe this Summer") alongside ongoing wildfire prevention messaging through its website and social media channels. Between 1 April and 12 August 2025, the Service published multiple Facebook and Instagram posts providing wildfire safety advice as part of Prevention's wider wildfire and water safety campaign.

The Service also maintains a dedicated wildfire information page and a specific "Be Moor Aware" wildfire campaign page on its website, providing seasonal advice, prevention messaging and guidance for residents and visitors.

Communications activity has additionally included television and radio interviews during periods of heightened wildfire risk, helping to extend reach and strengthen public awareness.

While there is currently no single national wildfire campaign equivalent to nationally coordinated initiatives such as Water Safety Week, national resources are available through the Fire Kills outdoor safety toolkit, which Services can adapt and supplement locally to reflect regional risk profiles and seasonal conditions. As such, this remains an area where there is opportunity for continued development and greater national consistency in public wildfire prevention messaging.

Preparedness

Alongside prevention activity, NYFRS has proactively invested in preparedness and operational capability to ensure an effective response to wildfire incidents. This includes the development of off road and specialist wildfire capability, enabling crews to access and operate safely in remote and challenging environments.

The Service has four specialist wildfire stations, each equipped with off road vehicles and dedicated wildfire equipment, including Argocats at three strategically located sites. This capability significantly strengthened its ability to intervene early and effectively. In response to the growing frequency and complexity of such events, in 2024 NYFRS identified the need to develop an in service national Wildfire Tactical Advisor (WTA) role, further enhancing specialist operational decision making and command support.

What Went Well

- Wildfire risk clearly recognised and assessed
- Prevention activity targeted, seasonal, and intelligence led
- Strong summer wildfire awareness campaign
- Effective use of social and broadcast media
- Significant specialist wildfire investment
- Four dedicated wildfire stations established
- Strategic off road and Argocat capability
- Improved early intervention in remote terrain
- Enhanced command support through WTA role development.

Learning Opportunities

- Conduct a structured review of prevention and preparedness to ensure arrangements fully reflect the learning and emerging risks highlighted by this incident
- Feedback the need for a national wildfire campaign.

3.2 Pre-Incident Planning and Risk Information

The incident reinforced the critical need for comprehensive and systematic pre-planning when managing large-scale and complex wildfire situations, especially in environments where risk is influenced by factors such as fuel load, terrain, weather conditions and site-specific hazards. The operating environment posed intrinsic challenges aligned with established wildfire risk profiles, including widespread and continuous fuel beds, few natural firebreaks, remote locations, and restricted access and exit routes. Existing arrangements enabled early understanding and management of known key risks, supporting informed initial decision making and progressive tactical development as the incident evolved. However, the scale, duration and severity of the incident exceeded previous planning assumptions, particularly in terms of fire behaviour, resource demand and operational endurance. While the likelihood of wildfire had been well recognised, the incident demonstrated that the potential impact and consequence were greater than previously experienced and modelled. The major cause of this was the presence of additional risks such as the unexploded ordnance buried under large parts of the moorland and the significant level of heather across the land.

This provides a clear opportunity to strengthen how wildfire risk is reflected within Local Resilience Forum (LRF) arrangements and the Community Risk Register, ensuring that both likelihood and severity are appropriately weighted. Reviewing the scoring and assumptions associated with wildfire risk will support proportionate planning, prioritisation and resource alignment across partners, reflecting the evolving nature of climate driven events.

The incident also highlighted opportunities to enhance multi-agency pre-planning through greater alignment of planning assumptions, similar to established approaches for other high-impact risks such as flooding. This includes developing a shared understanding of high-risk wildfire environments, encompassing fuel characteristics, terrain, access constraints and anticipated fire behaviour, supported by the pre-identification of potential control lines, access routes and suitable logistical or staging locations.

Engagement with landowners, environmental specialists and partner agencies proved highly valuable as the incident developed. Learning from this incident indicates that earlier and more structured engagement mechanisms, where practicable, could further strengthen preparedness and situational awareness during the early stages of future incidents.

The availability and accessibility of site specific risk information also emerged as an important consideration. While complex risks associated with defence land near RAF Fylingdales, critical infrastructure and historic land use were managed effectively as awareness developed, the incident reinforced the benefit of ensuring such information, including the potential presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO), is readily accessible and shared at the outset to support early situational awareness and decision making.

Overall, the incident demonstrated that NYFRS had a strong and credible foundation of preparedness, capability and risk awareness. The learning identified represents an opportunity to refine and mature existing arrangements, ensuring that future planning assumptions fully reflect the potential severity and operational complexity of large scale wildfire incidents in a changing climate.

What Worked Well

- Established off road and wildfire response capabilities enabled safe and effective firefighting in remote terrain
- Engagement with landowners, partners and specialists provided valuable insight into access, terrain and evolving risks
- Local knowledge, including from On-call and volunteer crews, enhanced understanding of site specific hazards.

Learning Opportunities

- Review and update wildfire risk assumptions within the Community Risk Register, supported by a more structured, LRF led multi-agency wildfire pre-planning approach, including training and exercising
- Enhance shared understanding of high-risk wildfire environments, including fuel load, terrain and access constraints
- Build on the existing Fire Operations Group (FOG) concept to strengthen wildfire pre-planning and develop a multi-agency framework for coordinated preparedness and response.

3.3 Training and Development

The incident demonstrated a high level of professionalism across all levels of the Service. Operational personnel, commanders and specialist roles applied their training effectively within a complex and evolving environment, adapting to rapidly changing conditions while maintaining a safe and proportionate response. The overall outcome, no loss of life, no injuries, and protection of critical national infrastructure, reflects the strength of this capability and the effectiveness of decision-making under pressure.

NYFRS entered the incident with established preparation and training arrangements, supported by recent wildfire continuous professional development (CPD) and defined incident command training pathways. This ensured that commanders operating at all levels had an appropriate foundation of knowledge aligned to identified risks.

Pre-existing investment in wildfire capability, including training an in-house Wildfire Tactical Advisor (WTA) contributed positively to the overall effectiveness of the response. The WTA provided structured, evidence-based guidance through SMEAC briefings, which enhanced situational awareness and supported both tactical and strategic decision-making. This contributed to increased confidence and consistency across command levels.

The incident also demonstrated the value of multi-agency training and well established professional relationships. Existing collaboration through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), supported by joint local training – including JESIP[7] training for all incident commanders, Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG[8]) training for middle managers and Multi Agency Gold Incident Command (MAGIC[9]) for strategic leaders, enabled effective interoperability, shared understanding and coordinated working throughout the response.

While all personnel have knowledge and understanding of wildfire risk, regularly refreshed through a structured competency framework, practical experience varied.

Station personnel based in moorland risk areas were more likely to have real world operational exposure, particularly to deep seated peat fires and rapid fire spread in remote terrain, conditions that are inherently difficult to replicate through simulation. However, there is an opportunity to explore how we may strengthen experience across the wider workforce – particularly for personnel with more limited exposure due to the absence of comparable risk or operational wildfire demand within their station areas.

While officers demonstrated a good level of experience, this incident identified an opportunity to further strengthen confidence through additional education and development in the application of back burning[10] tactics.

Looking ahead, the incident reinforces the need to continue evolving knowledge, competence and training in line with emerging risks. Wildfires are becoming more complex, influenced by climate change, land management practices and changing fire behaviour. This requires a shift from traditional assumptions towards a broader, more adaptive understanding of wildfire dynamics, drawing on national and international learning.

Overall, the Service demonstrated a strong foundation of knowledge and competence, which was instrumental in achieving a safe and effective outcome. The learning identified provides a clear opportunity to broaden specialist knowledge, improve consistency across the workforce, and ensure that training and development continue to evolve to meet the increasing demands of large-scale and protracted wildfire incidents.

7 JESIP – A national framework that supports effective multi-agency interoperability during major incidents.
8 Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) – A multi-agency group that coordinates and oversees the tactical response to an incident, translating strategic intent into operational activity.
9 MAGIC (Multi Agency Gold Incident Command) – A multi-agency training programme for strategic (Gold) commanders, focused on leadership, decision making and interoperability during major incidents, in line with JESIP principles.
10 Back burning – A controlled technique where fire is deliberately used to remove fuel ahead of a wildfire, reducing its intensity and spread when it reaches a control line.

What Worked Well

- Strong levels of professionalism, knowledge and competence were evident across operational, command and specialist roles
- Established wildfire CPD, incident command pathways and in-house Wildfire Tactical Advisor (WTA) capability supported assured decision making
- Effective multi-agency working was enabled through established LRF relationships and joint training, including JESIP, TCG and MAGIC.

Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen workforce experience by expanding targeted training and exercising for personnel with limited exposure to large scale wildfire incidents
- Enhance confidence in back burning tactics through additional education, development and scenario based learning
- Evolve training and competence frameworks to reflect increasing wildfire complexity driven by climate change, land management practices and changing fire behaviour.

4 Fire Behaviour and Environmental Conditions

4.1 Fire Behaviour, Peat and Fuel Characteristics

Throughout the incident, responders faced highly variable fire behaviour and rates of spread. Shifting wind direction and strength, combined with heat and very dry fuel conditions, led to rapid and occasionally unpredictable fire development. These factors significantly complicated containment efforts and increased risk to responders.

Fire behaviour was driven by the interaction between surface fuels and peat. Vegetation such as grass and heather supported fast-moving surface fire, while underlying peat acted as a deep, carbon rich fuel capable of burning at high temperatures for prolonged periods. This created a dual challenge of rapid surface spread alongside deeper, sustained burning. Peat fires can smoulder unseen and reemerge beyond visible fire edges, making detection and full extinguishment difficult. As a result, operations required a flexible approach that balanced immediate firefighting with longer-term containment, cooling and monitoring.

Terrain and land conditions further influenced fire development. Extensive areas of continuous moorland fuel, with few natural or man made firebreaks, allowed fire to spread with limited interruption. Wind and slope effects also contributed to increased fire speed and intensity in certain locations.

At times, the fire exhibited more extreme behaviour. Intense heat generated strong upward air movement, influencing local wind conditions across the fireground. This led to erratic fire behaviour, including sudden changes in direction and the movement of burning material ahead of the main fire front, causing new ignitions beyond established control lines.

In some areas, site specific hazards, including the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO), further restricted access and reduced the range of tactical options available, necessitating a cautious and controlled approach to ensure responder safety. The incident also highlights the potential influence of evolving land management practices. The introduction of the Heather and Grass Management Code 2025 may affect fuel continuity in similar environments, with implications for future fire behaviour.

More broadly, the incident reflects a growing trend associated with climate change. Warmer temperatures, prolonged dry periods and reduced soil moisture dry out vegetation and peat, making fires easier to ignite and sustain for longer. These conditions extend the wildfire season and increase both the speed and intensity of fire spread. Lower humidity and more variable weather patterns can also cause sudden changes in wind direction, further increasing unpredictability.

At larger scales, wildfires can begin to influence their own local conditions. Intense heat generates strong updrafts that draw in surrounding air, creating localised winds that can change direction and intensity around the fireground. In more extreme cases, this can lead to fire driven cloud systems and localised microclimates, increasing the potential for rapid escalation. Such behaviour was observed during this incident.

These risks are particularly relevant in North Yorkshire, given the scale of its moorland, peatland and National Park environments, including the North York Moors and Yorkshire Dales. These landscapes contain large areas of continuous fuel, often in remote locations with limited access, increasing both the likelihood of wildfire and the potential for rapid and sustained fire spread.

There is therefore a need to revisit planning assumptions and draw learning from regions with more frequent large scale wildfires. Adapting to this changing risk profile will support more informed planning, improved preparedness, and safer, more effective operational response.

What Worked Well

- Strong recognition of complex fire behaviour, with tactics adapted effectively to both surface and peat fire dynamics
- Flexible, risk-based approach balancing immediate firefighting with longer-term containment and monitoring
- Clear prioritisation of responder safety in a hazardous and unpredictable environment
- Effective use of local intelligence, including terrain, weather and site-specific risks such as UXO.

Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen understanding and planning for extreme, rapidly changing wildfire behaviour, supported by improved use environmental data and predictive modelling
- Review and update planning assumptions to reflect the increasing likelihood of high-intensity, fast-moving wildfires, incorporating learning from international incidents and evolving land management practices
- Ensure off-scene command structures such as TCG and SCG maintain a clear focus on strategic intent and co-ordination, enabling on-scene commanders and subject matter experts to lead tactical decision-making, with an approach that remains adaptable to rapidly changing conditions.

4.2 Land Management

The incident reinforced the importance of the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Wildfires Position Statement[11], which identifies wildfires as a growing national resilience risk and emphasises land management, fuel reduction, partnership working and shared responsibility as critical to prevention, preparedness, response and long-term resilience. It also highlights that wildfire risk cannot be addressed by Fire and Rescue Services alone, requiring coordinated action from landowners, land managers, environmental agencies, infrastructure operators and wider resilience partners.

The incident demonstrated the significant influence of infrastructure, assets and operational activities across the landscape, including those of DEFRA, water companies, renewable energy providers, utility organisations and other rural stakeholders. While roles differ, collective engagement proved valuable in strengthening resilience, improving situational awareness and supporting multi-agency learning. There is ongoing opportunity to enhance collaboration in areas such as access, water availability, environmental considerations, infrastructure resilience and information sharing.

Fire behaviour during the incident was strongly influenced by extensive, continuous heather and grass fuels, particularly under prolonged dry and windy conditions. This continuity contributed to rapid fire spread, high-intensity and complex containment challenges. In line with the NFCC position statement, the incident highlighted how vegetation management, fuel loading and landscape design directly affect wildfire risk and operational tactics, including the effectiveness of control lines and opportunities to slow fire progression.

Limited natural or pre-existing fuel breaks reduced containment options, requiring crews to create intervention opportunities through direct firefighting, surface scraping, targeted suppression and the establishment of control lines where possible to disrupt fuel continuity and support containment.

The incident also reinforced the important role of landowners and land managers in contributing to wildfire resilience. Consistent with NFCC guidance, this responsibility is shared and should be proportionate and risk based. It does not require wholesale vegetation removal, but includes maintaining awareness of wildfire risk, engaging with fire and rescue services, considering fuel loading and vegetation continuity, maintaining access where practicable, understanding water availability, supporting control features, reporting emerging incidents and contributing to planning and operational activity through local knowledge.

NYFRS retains its statutory and moral responsibility to deliver prevention and risk reduction activity. However, the scale and complexity of wildfire risk requires this to be supported through partnership working, early engagement, shared situational awareness and joint planning with landowners, environmental agencies and resilience partners.

The incident highlighted the benefits of strengthened collaboration across fire and rescue services, land managers and Local Resilience Forum partners. Sharing operational learning on fuel load, vegetation management, terrain, access, water supply and control line effectiveness will support improved preparedness and response.

Learning should inform the continued development of risk-informed wildfire planning across North Yorkshire, including greater NYFRS involvement in identifying high-risk areas, pre-incident planning and providing operational insight into land management and fuel

11 **Wildfires position statement – NFCC.**

reduction. This aligns with the NFCC position that effective wildfire mitigation depends on shared responsibility, multi-agency collaboration and a stronger focus on land management within long-term resilience planning.

What Worked Well

- Adapted effectively to differing fuel risks, managing both surface and subsurface fire behaviour
- Used targeted tactics to create windows of opportunity and establish control lines
- Maintained operational flexibility, adjusting approach as fire behaviour changed
- Demonstrated strong situational awareness, using terrain, fuel and fire behaviour to inform decisions
- Worked closely with partners and landowners to improve access, share knowledge and support control measures.

Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen consideration of fuel continuity and load within assumptions pre-incident planning and risk assessments
- Build on the existing Fire Operations Group (FOG) concept to strengthen wildfire pre-planning, bringing together partners to develop a coordinated multi-agency approach that aligns operational preparedness with land management and vegetation risk
- Incorporation into LRF planning: Ensure fuel-related risks and land management factors are strengthened within Local Resilience Forum risk assessments and multi-agency planning.

4.3 Command and Control

Command and control arrangements provided an effective framework to manage a complex, large-scale and protracted incident. A clear structure through SCG, TCG and incident ground command supported the successful delivery of strategic priorities, including the protection of life, property and critical national infrastructure.

Decision making was supported by Wildfire Tactical Advisors (WTA) and specialist input, with SMEAC briefings and structured tactical advice providing increasing assurance as the incident developed. The response was further supported by the establishment of a number of specialist multi-agency cells, which provided additional capacity, coordination and specialist expertise.

On scene situational awareness was established early in the incident, despite a range of challenges including limited access, a lack of detailed pre-existing intelligence, communication limitations such as poor mobile phone and Wi-Fi coverage, and the dispersed nature and pace of fire development. To help overcome these constraints, additional measures were introduced, including the use of aerial capabilities such as drones with thermal imaging and Starlink, a satellite based communications system that provided reliable internet connectivity in areas with limited or no conventional network coverage.

Managing a large and geographically dispersed incident area required sustained focus on control of the incident ground. Multiple access points, difficult terrain and heightened public interest placed pressure on outer cordon[12] arrangements; however, these were strengthened through the multi-agency framework, supported by enhanced signage and coordinated media messaging.

Overall, the Incident Command Unit functioned well throughout the incident, with crews assigned to the unit performing to a high standard, whilst also identifying some areas for improvement and learning.

The scale and duration of the incident, combined with the volume of briefings and number of partner agencies involved, placed pressure on the unit's capacity to support both command functions and large multi-agency briefing activity. To address this, a portacabin was established on scene, which proved highly effective and should be considered as part of future arrangements for prolonged and complex incidents.

The prolonged nature of the incident also impacted the availability of staff trained to operate the Command Unit, limiting opportunities for rest and recuperation. As a result, there were periods where the unit was crewed by staff with more limited familiarity of its full functionality, which at times affected the level of support that could be provided.

As the incident progressed situational awareness and coordination improved through enhanced arrangements, including setting up multiple Forward Control Points, which strengthened coordination, logistics and control.

The Strategic Holding Area (SHA) enhanced relief planning, enabling local crews to obtain much needed rest and recuperation.

Whilst the volume, frequency and consistency of handovers, briefings and reporting required careful management throughout the incident, the introduction of enhanced electronic documentation, including end of shift summaries, electronic Analytical Risk Assessments (ARAs) and shared mapping hosted on Microsoft Teams, strengthened

12 Outer cordon – The outer cordon defines the wider controlled perimeter around an incident area. It is used to manage public access, maintain safety, support traffic management and enable effective multi-agency coordination, while allowing inner operational areas to be managed safely and without interference.

situational awareness both on and off scene. This improved continuity and alignment across command levels through increased real-time access to information and is recognised as positive learning to be carried forward into future practice.

The scale and duration of the incident required a high degree of flexibility within command arrangements. Officers undertook multiple operational and functional roles, with a high frequency of incident meetings alongside on-scene operational demand demonstrating significant adaptability and commitment. However, the sustained nature of this demand at times impacted welfare and created challenges in maintaining clear separation between tactical and operational responsibilities, particularly during periods of heightened activity.

This demand also fed into Operational Assurance. While the Service has established operational assurance arrangements, dedicated on-scene monitoring was limited during this incident due to its scale and the associated resource demands. Officers who would typically undertake this function where required to fulfil multiple roles across command, coordination and wider organisational responsibilities.

However, assurance was provided through the use of Wildfire Tactical Advisors and the check and challenge processes within multi-agency Strategic Coordinating Groups (SCG) and Tactical Coordinating Groups (TCG).

What Worked Well

- Clear and effective command structure
- Strong use of Tactical Advisors and structured SMEAC briefings to support decision-making
- Ability to adapt command arrangements as the incident escalated, including re-sectorisation and repositioning
- Introduction of Forward Control Points and the Strategic Holding Area (SHA), significantly improving coordination and control
- Effective use of electronic documentation and shared platforms to enhance situational awareness and continuity
- High levels of flexibility and adaptability demonstrated by officers and command teams
- Operational assurance maintained through WTA input and structured SCG/TCG challenge processes.

Learning Opportunities

- Consider building additional physical capacity (e.g. portable briefing and command facilities) into standard arrangements for prolonged and complex incidents.
- Improve resilience within Incident Command Unit staffing
- Review officers undertaking multiple operational and functional roles simultaneously
- Strengthen the resilience of on scene operational assurance arrangements
- Continue to embed and modernise the use of technology and digital platforms to support situational awareness, coordination and continuity during large scale incidents.

4.4 Fire Control

During the main wildfire period, Fire Control continued to manage the demands of the major incident whilst also coordinating the response to 453 additional incidents across North Yorkshire and the City of York. This included supporting the rotation and welfare of crews, maintaining liaison with operational commanders and partner agencies, and coordinating 41 regional mutual aid resources during a period of exceptional operational pressure. The incident required significant additional commitment from Fire Control personnel, with staff working additional hours and demonstrating considerable flexibility to sustain operations over a prolonged period. Despite these pressures, Fire Control maintained effective service delivery throughout the incident, reflecting a strong, professional and resilient performance.

During the early stages of the incident, Fire Control responded well to the rapid escalation and evolving nature of the incident through the effective mobilisation of resources, dynamic management of appliances and continual communication with incident ground commanders and partner agencies. This was achieved despite the challenges associated with maintaining a fully consistent operational picture whilst information continued to develop on scene. Learning identified that situational awareness during the earliest stages of the incident may have been further strengthened through a more structured and consistent flow of information from the incident ground as the scale and complexity of the incident rapidly evolved.

As the incident progressed, improvements in the structure, consistency and flow of information significantly enhanced situational awareness and supported more effective coordination across command levels. This was further strengthened through close working between Fire Control, incident ground commanders and supporting functions, helping to reduce pressure within the Control environment and improve operational continuity.

The incident also reinforced the benefits of increased resilience within Fire Control during major and protracted emergencies. Whilst existing arrangements enabled the Service to maintain an effective response throughout the incident, staffing levels frequently relied upon additional hours and flexibility from personnel to sustain resilience. A proposal to move towards a minimum staffing model of three personnel within Fire Control was already under consideration prior to the incident but had not yet been implemented. The experience gained during the wildfire provides further evidence in support of this approach, demonstrating how additional resilience can enhance situational awareness, increase capacity to manage concurrent incidents and reduce reliance on extended working arrangements during periods of sustained operational demand.

Fire Control also played a significant role in coordinating national resilience activity, working closely alongside the Strategic Holding Area (SHA) to streamline mobilisation arrangements, improve clarity and support sustained operations. This coordination helped alleviate pressure on both the incident ground and within Control, enabling national resources to be integrated smoothly and proportionately as the incident developed.

The Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT) was a key enabler throughout the incident, supporting informed and risk-based decision making to maximise the availability and deployment of resources. This enabled Fire Control to balance the demands of the incident ground whilst maintaining appropriate response cover across the county.

What Worked Well

- Fire Control maintained effective business as usual service delivery across North Yorkshire and the City of York throughout a prolonged major incident
- Staff managed rapid escalation well, adapting to high demand, evolving information and increased complexity
- Consistent and effective use of the Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT) supported risk based decisions and protected community response standards
- Strong coordination of national resilience activity, working effectively with the Strategic Holding Area (SHA)
- Additional support, including Duty Tactical Officers, strengthened forward planning and anticipation of resource demand
- Close liaison with crews, commanders and senior managers supported welfare, relief planning and informed business continuity decisions
- High levels of professionalism, teamwork and resilience were demonstrated throughout.

Learning Opportunities

- Review Fire Control capacity and resilience for prolonged incidents
- Continue to strengthen Fire Control's integration within strategic and tactical command arrangements.

4.5 National Resilience

The activation and integration of national resilience capabilities was a key strength of the response. Specialist assets, including high volume pumps, drones and aviation support, were mobilised effectively, demonstrating the Service's ability to scale its response in proportion to increasing complexity. Debrief findings confirm that the timely deployment of national assets, supported by infrastructure such as the Strategic Holding Area, was critical in sustaining operations at scale.

Escalation decisions reflected a proportionate and risk based approach. Up to 25 August, the incident was successfully managed using NYFRS resources supported by mutual aid, ensuring that national capabilities were not deployed prematurely. This approach aligned with the evolving risk profile and supported sustainability of response.

Following a significant change in fire behaviour on 25 August, operational demand and incident duration increased rapidly. At this point, the deployment of National Resilience assets became necessary to sustain effective incident management, including maintaining crew welfare through rest and recuperation, while retaining control of what developed into one of the largest and most complex wildfire incidents experienced by the Service.

These arrangements were enabled through the National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF), which provided a clear and consistent mechanism for the request, prioritisation and deployment of national resources. This ensured that capability was aligned to national risk and demand, while maintaining effective oversight and coordination.

Specialist advisory support also formed an important component of the response. NYFRS's Wildfire Tactical Advisor was mobilised early, providing on scene expertise and structured SMEAC briefings that supported confident decision making. Initial reliance on a single advisor did, however, highlight a limitation in capacity, with additional national Wildfire Tactical Advisor support not immediately available due to seasonal pressures. This was resolved within a short period but identifies a need to strengthen resilience within specialist advisory arrangements.

The incident also reinforces that the national approach to wildfire response continues to evolve. Through the National Fire Chiefs Council, work is ongoing to develop enhanced specialist wildfire teams. NYFRS supports this direction and will contribute learning from this incident to inform future development, recognising the operational value of more readily deployable specialist capability to strengthen national resilience in response to increasingly complex wildfire incidents.

What Worked Well

- Effective activation and integration of national resilience capabilities through National Coordination and Advisory Framework (NCAF)
- Proportionate and well-judged escalation aligned to incident complexity
- Rapid mobilisation of specialist assets, including HVP, drones and aviation support
- Early deployment and effective use of Wildfire Tactical Advisor (WTA) capability.

Learning Opportunities

- Recommend increasing WTAs on the national framework
- Continue to support national wildfire capability development, with the aim of positioning North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service as a credible and deployable resource for future national wildfire mobilisation.

4.6 Strategic Holding Area (SHA)

The establishment of the Strategic Holding Area (SHA) at Pickering by NYFRS staff was a significant strength and a critical enabler to the response. The efficiency with which the SHA was established and operated provided a structured and centralised approach to the staging, briefing and deployment of resources.

This supported operational coordination, logistics and overall effectiveness, particularly as the scale and complexity of the incident increased. The SHA enabled the effective integration of Service, partner and national resilience assets, improved situational awareness and supported a more consistent and controlled deployment model across a large and geographically dispersed incident ground.

As the incident escalated following 25 August, the full utilisation of the SHA became increasingly important in sustaining the deployment of resources, supporting welfare and rotation arrangements, and maintaining operational oversight during the most demanding phases of the incident.

The incident also highlighted learning in relation to SHA pre-planning arrangements. Existing SHA locations are primarily aligned to national road networks and major transport routes. Due to the remote and rural nature of this incident, a suitable location required identification through operational planning during the days prior to the SHA being established.

Whilst this was achieved successfully and enabled the effective implementation of the SHA, future learning would be to broaden pre-planning considerations for SHAs in more remote and rural locations to support similar large-scale incidents.

Further learning was identified in relation to the operation of the SHA. Due to the geographical scale of the incident, which ultimately extended across approximately 25 kilometres, it was not always operationally efficient or proportionate for crews to report to the SHA prior to deployment to the incident ground. In some circumstances, this would have added in excess of an hour to travel times and delayed the arrival of resources where they were most urgently required.

This was not considered a weakness in the response. Rather, it reflected sensible and pragmatic operational decision making, balancing the need for effective coordination with the need to deploy resources quickly across a large and geographically dispersed incident ground.

The experience does, however, provide useful learning for future large-scale incidents. As incidents increase in scale and complexity, there is an opportunity to further develop flexible deployment models and associated procedures so that expectations are clear from the outset. This would allow resources to be deployed directly where appropriate whilst ensuring the SHA maintains an accurate common operating picture and effective oversight of resource movements. The learning is therefore less about addressing a shortcoming and more about refining arrangements to support future incidents of a similar scale and complexity.

Overall, the establishment and operation of the SHA represented notable practice and significantly enhanced coordination, resilience and the effective management of a complex and protracted incident.

What Worked Well

- NYFRS established an effective operation of the SHA, receiving notable positive feedback
- Centralised staging, briefing and deployment improved coordination and control
- Enhanced integration of Service, partner and national assets
- Improved situational awareness and consistency of information flow
- Supported a structured and controlled deployment model across a large incident ground
- Played a critical role in sustaining operations during peak demand following escalation.

Learning Opportunities

- Share best practice through the national framework (JOL[13]/NOL[14])
- Include consideration of SHA locations within wildfire pre-planning
- Consider the application of flexible SHA mobilisation arrangements for geographically dispersed incidents.

13 Joint Organisational Learning.
14 National Organisational Learning

4.7 Incident Handover

Handing control back to a responsible organisation once a fire is contained (not extinguished but mitigated) reflects established and appropriate practice. It enables fire and rescue service resources to be released for other emergencies and prevention activity, while maintaining proportionate oversight through agreed triggers.

In this instance, clear triggers were put in place, most notably that any breach of the control line would prompt re-engagement via a 999 call. This reflected a risk-based approach aligned to the conditions and information available at the time.

The fire remained within established firebreaks and was subject to ongoing monitoring by Forestry England. NYFRS attendances on 9 and 10 July confirmed containment, and subsequent reports of smoke were managed in line with the agreed handover arrangements, with Forestry England undertaking site assessments.

On 11 August, following further reports of smoke, Forestry England attended and confirmed earlier in the day that the fire remained within the firebreaks, with no requirement for NYFRS intervention. However, later that evening, a crew from Goathland, whilst passing enroute to another incident, identified significant smoke and confirmed that the fire had breached the control line.

Fire investigation findings confirmed that the fire involved both surface and subsurface peat spread. This type of fire behaviour is inherently difficult to detect, can persist below ground, and may re-emerge beyond visible fire edges.

Responsibility for the forestry sector was again handed back to Forestry England on 12 September 2025, once the fire was assessed as contained. This followed a phased approach, with initial on scene support provided by NYFRS, which was subsequently scaled back and transitioned to monitoring through reports received by Fire Control.

What Worked Well

- Clear and appropriate handover arrangements aligned to established practice
- Defined triggers for re-engagement, including breach of control lines via 999 activation
- Effective partnership working with Forestry England to support ongoing monitoring
- Early confirmation of containment through joint activity and site assessments
- Demonstrated ability to adapt and strengthen handover arrangements as the incident developed.

Learning Opportunities

- When responsibility is handed back, the receiving organisation should have a shared understanding of its role and responsibilities in the ongoing management of risk.

4.8 Assets and Equipment

Resources were drawn from NYFRS, partner agencies, national resilience arrangements, contractors and landowners, enabling a flexible and adaptive response as the incident developed.

A broad range of assets was utilised, including fire appliances, specialist wildfire and off road vehicles, water carriers, drones, helicopter support, High Volume Pump (HVP) capability and national resilience resources. These assets enabled operations across geographically dispersed sectors with limited access, challenging terrain and constrained water supplies. As the incident escalated, specialist and national capabilities became increasingly important. Drones enhanced situational awareness and supported tactical planning, while HVP and water assets strengthened large scale water supply and ground saturation.

Strong engagement with partners, contractors and landowners enabled deployment of additional plant and equipment, including water bowsers, excavation machinery and drenchers.

These resources significantly enhanced water delivery, firebreak creation and access. RAF firefighting capability also provided valuable support in protecting MOD land, including the use of a high capacity water drencher around RAF Fylingdales. Contributions from landowners and contractors further strengthened resilience and highlighted the value of local knowledge and established relationships.

Specialist off road capability, including Argocats, were critical in accessing remote terrain and sustaining operations. However, access remained constrained in some areas due to ground conditions and the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO), limiting the use of standard appliances and reinforcing reliance on specialist assets capable of operating at distance or with reduced crew exposure. This highlighted opportunities to further strengthen resilience through equipment and technology such as drones and equipment that delivers large volumes of water over distance without the need to be close to the fire.

Sustaining equipment over a prolonged period proved challenging. High utilisation and difficult terrain increased wear and failure rates, while demand for consumables such as fuel, hoses and spare parts placed pressure on logistics and fleet support. The use of multi-agency and third party assets increased operational capability but introduced interoperability challenges, highlighting opportunities for greater standardisation, pre-incident familiarisation, and the use of technology to better track and manage assets during complex incidents.

Overall, asset and equipment arrangements enabled an effective and adaptable response. The learning reflects the scale and complexity of the incident and identifies clear opportunities to strengthen coordination, sustainability and future capability through the considered adoption of proven, market available innovation.

What Worked Well

- Rapid mobilisation and deployment of a wide range of assets at scale
- Effective use of specialist capabilities, including drones, HVP, helicopter support and off-road equipment
- Strong engagement with partners, contractors and landowners to enhance operational capacity
- Valuable contribution from RAF firefighting capability and third-party assets
- Strategic Holding Area (SHA) significantly improved coordination, integration and control
- Flexibility in adapting assets to operate in challenging and remote environments.

Learning Opportunities

- Review wildfire capability and the use of technology, including drones and vehicles and equipment that deliver large volumes of water over distance
- Revisit arrangement for consumables, maintenance, and mobile repair whilst at incidents
- Consider how to enhance real-time asset tracking, visibility, and interoperability across multi-agency and third-party deployments.

4.9 Helicopter Capability

Helicopter support provided a valuable supplementary capability during the incident, enhancing situational awareness across a large and complex incident ground. Aerial observations supported command decision making, informed sector plans, and assisted in identifying emerging risks to control lines, critical infrastructure and surrounding areas. This capability was effectively supplemented by drone operations, which delivered intelligence, mapping and observational benefits.

The helicopter also provided an additional tactical option in areas that were difficult to access due to terrain, fire behaviour and the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO). Early in the incident, on 13 and 14 August, Forestry England funded the deployment of a helicopter to support efforts to prevent further fire spread within their land. This enabled targeted water dousing, which was proportionate and appropriate at that time and in that location.

From 15 August, North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service assumed responsibility for ongoing helicopter costs. Following the initial Forestry England funded deployment, NYFRS engaged early with MHCLG to seek clarity on the potential for central government support through the Bellwin Scheme.

As the incident entered a period of relative stability, the effectiveness of helicopter use was increasingly influenced by a range of operational and environmental constraints, including weather conditions, smoke density, airspace considerations and proximity to critical national infrastructure. At times, flying conditions were unsuitable, limiting availability. In addition, the scale of the incident, combined with deep seated peat fire and extensive fuel loads, meant that aerial water drops had limited impact on sustained fire suppression. As a result, helicopter capability was not relied upon as a primary tactic throughout the incident.

By contrast, drone capability provided persistent aerial situational awareness without many of the same risk, cost and access constraints associated with crewed aviation. Drones were able to operate flexibly in reduced visibility windows, closer to the fireground and for extended durations, strengthening intelligence led decision making while reducing exposure and dependency on complex aviation operating conditions.

The helicopter was therefore retained as a contingency capability, held on standby to deliver targeted water application where required, particularly in inaccessible areas or where control lines were identified as being at risk. This reflects a proportionate and risk based approach, balancing operational benefit against cost, availability and the anticipated duration of what became a protracted incident.

What Worked Well

- Rapid mobilisation through partner funding arrangements enabled early access to helicopter support
- Aerial visibility significantly improved situational awareness and informed decision-making
- Supported operations in inaccessible and high-risk areas, including where UXO constrained ground access.

Learning Opportunities

- Ensure expectations regarding the effectiveness of water bombing in peat and large-scale wildfire conditions are built into training
- Undertake a review of capability and assured access to drones to strengthen operational situational awareness.

4.10 Water Sourcing and Environmental Constraints

The Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004[15] places a statutory duty on fire and rescue authorities to take all reasonable measures to secure an adequate supply of water for firefighting purposes.

Water availability required careful management throughout the incident, reflecting the remote location, limited natural water sources, and the sustained demand associated with deep-seated peat fires. Suppression activity relied on a combination of water bowsers, portable pumps, High Volume Pump (HVP) capability and off-road delivery methods to distribute water across a large and challenging incident ground.

Opportunities for direct water sourcing were constrained by geography, access limitations, and environmental considerations. During periods of heightened escalation, seawater was utilised as a contingency measure to support suppression activity; however, it was used only when required, for the shortest possible duration and in consultation with partner agencies, recognising its potential environmental impact and ensuring its use remained proportionate and necessary.

As the incident progressed, water supply arrangements became progressively more stable, supported by improved coordination and integration of assets. However, the experience reinforced the importance of early clarity around water sourcing options, permissions and environmental constraints that can only come from pre-planning.

What Worked Well

- Effective use of a range of water delivery methods, including bowsers, HVP and off-road assets
- Strong adaptation to a challenging operating environment with limited natural water sources
- Ongoing assessment of water sourcing options balanced operational need with environmental protection
- Improved coordination and structure of water supply arrangements as the incident developed.

Learning Opportunities

- Consider early and structured pre-planning for water sourcing in remote and environmentally sensitive areas, ensuring viable options, permissions and constraints are identified in advance.

15 **Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.**

5 People, Health, Safety and Welfare

5.1 Duty Systems and Workforce Resilience

Wholetime, day-crewed, On-call and volunteer staff demonstrated professionalism, resilience and sustained commitment throughout a prolonged and demanding incident.

The scale and duration of the incident required careful management of workforce availability and welfare. Measures such as scaling down attendance after 17:00 hours were introduced to reduce the impact on fatigue and wider duty system pressures, when appropriate. However, the incident highlighted the need for clearer expectations around extended deployments, particularly for wholetime crews, where prolonged operational demand may extend beyond standard shift patterns due to protracted travel distances.

The duration and intensity of the incident reinforced the importance of structured and proactive relief planning. The coordination of relief crews improved as the incident progressed, but it was a significant logistical challenge. Given the remoteness of the incident, crews often travelled significant distances to and from their home station.

On-call and volunteer personnel made a particularly significant contribution, often remaining on scene for extended periods. the prolonged nature of the incident began to impact availability for some, particularly where primary employment and personal commitments limited sustained response.

Overall, the incident highlighted the importance of embedding clear and sustainable rotation models from the outset, alongside workforce planning that fully considers the long-term availability and resilience of all duty systems during protracted incidents.

Sustained demands across on scene command, SCG/TCG leadership and business as usual delivery placed significant pressure on officer capacity. This was managed through extended working hours, use of recall to duty and operating with limited resilience within the system.

The wildfire provides further evidence that sustaining strategic leadership, within a structure comprising two Principal Officers supported by Area Managers, can place prolonged demands on capacity during extended incidents. Maintaining governance oversight, alongside business as usual activity in these conditions required extended working patterns for deployment of strategic and senior officers.

In this context, revisiting the recommendations of the external review conducted in 2025 represents a proportionate and evidence informed response.

What Worked Well

- Strong performance and commitment across all duty systems, including wholetime, day-crewed, On-call and volunteer personnel
- High levels of adaptability, with officers and crews flexing roles to meet operational demand
- Introduction of measures to manage fatigue and welfare, including scaling down attendance at key times
- Command arrangements remained effective despite increased pressure and complexity.

Learning Opportunities

- Revisit and consider expectations and planning for extended deployments across all duty systems
- Explore pre-planned relief and rotation models for prolonged incidents
- Review resilience within command roles to reduce multi-hatting and maintain clear role separation.

5.2 Health, Safety and Risk Management

The incident presented a broad and sustained range of health, safety and welfare challenges, associated with prolonged wildfire operations in a demanding and remote environment. While many of these challenges aligned with the recognised risk profile of large scale wildfire incidents, they were significantly amplified by the duration of operations, geographic complexity, extreme weather conditions, and the presence of additional high consequence hazards, including unprecedented fire behaviour and unexploded ordnance (UXO).

Key risks included prolonged exposure to heat, smoke and airborne contaminants; fatigue arising from extended duty periods and long travel distances; and hazards associated with vehicle and plant movements across difficult terrain, narrow access routes and reduced visibility. These risks were systematically identified and actively managed through a combination of dynamic and analytical risk assessment, exercised in line with the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974[16]. Decision making throughout the incident was informed by National Operational Guidance (NOG)[17], relevant Service Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs), and specialist advice where required.

Effective command, control, coordination and supervision were maintained throughout, with officers providing tactical direction, oversight and continual review as conditions evolved. Control measures were introduced progressively, including adaptations to tactics, access arrangements and deployment models, ensuring that foreseeable risks were reduced so far as reasonably practicable, while maintaining operational effectiveness.

This was evidenced through documented command decision logs, analytical risk assessments, tactical briefings, Fire Control records, ResilienceDirect updates and multi-agency TCG/SCG records, alongside continual review and adaptation of tactics, resource deployment and control measures as the incident evolved.

The risk posed by unexploded ordnance (UXO) became apparent following the first explosion heard on the incident ground and was subsequently managed through ongoing risk assessment, specialist advice from Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) partners, and the application of proportionate control measures. Firefighting tactics, access routes and equipment use were adapted, with defined exclusion zones enforced and all operations restricted to established tracks, enabling safe operations within a complex and hazardous environment. Earlier access to detailed UXO information through pre-planning would have further strengthened safety arrangements and should be explored as part of the lessons learned.

Variable wind conditions resulted in rapidly changing smoke behaviour across the incident ground, affecting visibility and exposure levels. This created ongoing challenges in the siting of key assets, including the Incident Command Unit and welfare facilities. Decontamination and contaminant management were also significant considerations. Due to the remote setting, limited water availability and logistical constraints, full decontamination and immediate access to shower facilities were not always achievable in the early stages and required adaptive and pragmatic arrangements. As the incident matured, the Strategic Holding Area (SHA) provided better options.

16 **Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.**
17 **https://nfcc.org.uk/our-services/national-operational-guidance**

5.3 How was the risk mitigated

Fatigue management emerged as a critical health and safety consideration throughout the incident. Extended on scene and off scene activity, combined with significant travel distances, increased fatigue related risk. As the incident progressed, staff and resources were increasingly rotated in a manner aligned to the most appropriate duty systems, supporting more effective deployment, improved welfare arrangements and the management of fatigue related risks during sustained operations. Relief planning, sector rotations and welfare arrangements continued to develop positively throughout the incident; however, the experience highlights the need to further strengthen fatigue management considerations within future planning for prolonged incidents.

Vehicle and plant interaction presented increased risk during periods of high operational activity, contractor presence and reduced visibility from smoke and dust. This was most evident in the early stages of the incident, where some self deployment reduced overall coordination and situational awareness. In response, more explicit briefings were implemented, reinforcing route discipline, clearer speed management and expectations around vehicle and plant movements. Additionally, third party contractors were streamlined and brought under a single overarching contractor arrangement. Together, these measures improved coordination, visibility and overall safety as operations progressed.

Despite the complexity and hazard profile of the incident, it was safely managed without significant injury.

What Worked Well

- Effective risk based management supported by strong command, supervision and use of National Operational Guidance
- Early, proportionate management of high consequence risks, including UXO
- Safety arrangements strengthened in line with the escalation of the incident, with no serious injuries sustained.

Learning Opportunities

- Review fatigue, welfare and decontamination arrangements for prolonged incidents
- Consider how coordination of vehicle, plant and contractor movements in complex operating environments and be built into existing processes and procedures
- Work with military partners to improve responder access to accurate UXO and hazard information at MOD sites.

5.4 Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Personal Respiratory Protection (RPE)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) arrangements were tested during the prolonged wildfire response due to sustained exposure to heat, smoke and physically demanding conditions. Structural firefighting PPE provided appropriate protection; however, it is primarily designed for use within compartment fires and structural firefighting environments, where high thermal protection properties are required to protect firefighters from intense heat exposure. As a result, the design and thermal properties of structural PPE can make it less suited to prolonged wildfire operations, where higher ambient temperatures, difficult terrain and extended periods of physical activity place additional physiological strain on personnel and reduce opportunities for cooling and recovery.

In response to these conditions, some crews adapted their PPE use, including removing fire tunics to improve comfort and endurance during prolonged operations. While this reflected a sensible and pragmatic attempt to manage fatigue and heat stress, it increased potential exposure to heat, smoke, debris and ultraviolet radiation. Respiratory Protective Equipment (RPE) was also used where required to provide protection from smoke and harmful particles; however, prolonged use during physically demanding activity across difficult terrain proved challenging for some staff. This was particularly evident where only full face mask RPE was available, which provides a higher level of protection than is often necessary in wildfire conditions but can be more cumbersome and uncomfortable to wear for extended periods. When worn, face masks also affected voice clarity and radio communications; however, crews adapted effectively, adjusting working practices to maintain safety and clear communication within a dynamic operational environment.

These arrangements were subject to ongoing dynamic risk assessment and supervisory oversight, with decisions informed by prevailing fire behaviour, environmental conditions, smoke levels, tactical activity and proximity to risk. Control measures included maintaining safe systems of work, restricting activities to lower risk tasks where appropriate, continual monitoring by supervisors, regular crew rotations, welfare and hydration arrangements, flexible deployment of crews, and the ability to reintroduce full PPE immediately should conditions deteriorate or operational risk increase.

Lightweight, breathable wildfire specific PPE is designed to balance protection with wearability during high temperature, long duration incidents and would better support crew safety, comfort and effectiveness. Similarly, ensuring all staff have a suitable range of RPE options which will reduce fatigue.

A number of fire and rescue services have already introduced wildfire specific PPE as part of their operational capability. This incident provides a clear example of where such investment would enhance resilience and better align equipment provision with the evolving risk profile associated with large scale wildfire events.

What Worked Well

- Structural firefighting PPE provided a good level of protection in high-risk conditions
- Crews demonstrated adaptability in managing prolonged exposure and physically demanding conditions
- High levels of professionalism maintained despite challenging environmental factors
- Awareness of physiological demands supported practical decision-making on the incident ground.

Learning Opportunities

- Review PPE provision to ensure suitability for prolonged wildfire conditions
- Ensure all staff have flexible options of RPE and are appropriately face fitted.

5.5 Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Defence Land (RAF Fylingdales)

The presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) made the situation much more complex and affected both how the fire spread and the operational response. Although the danger was identified early in the escalation phase and managed with thorough safety considerations for responders, this kind of risk is not usually considered in standard wildfire planning.

The area has historical significance as a Second World War training site, having been used both as a military firing range and as a mock village intended to divert enemy bombing. As a result, a large number of munitions were deployed across the landscape, some of which did not detonate. This legacy context provides important background to the UXO encountered and reinforces the importance of accessible historical risk information to inform both planning and operational decision-making.

UXO risk had a greatly significant impact on the incident. It constrained access to parts of the incident ground, limited the range of tactical options available and required the integration of specialist advice and enhanced risk management processes to ensure the safety of personnel. During the incident, 22 UXO-related explosions were recorded, reinforcing the need for cautious and controlled intervention.

These constraints were a contributing factor in the fire spreading across a wider area than may otherwise have occurred as restrictions on access reduced opportunities for early intervention and containment in certain locations. Under normal conditions, and without UXO risk, crews would've continued to operate Argocat off-road vehicles on the moorland and utilise offensive firefighting tactics to get large volumes of water to penetrate into the peat beds.

Engagement with military partners, including the RAF and the Joint Regional Liaison Officer (JRLO), was positive and effective throughout the incident. Established relationships enabled clear coordination across defence land and Critical National Infrastructure, RAF Fylingdales.

The RAF played a role in monitoring and managing the western perimeter on defence land affected by UXO risk. Their specialist vehicles, including a high capacity firefighting unit capable of delivering water over long distances, proved effective in restricted terrain.

The incident also highlighted opportunities to strengthen the availability and accessibility of UXO-related information. Prior to and during the early stages of the incident, there was limited detailed data available regarding the location of buried munitions. While such hazards may present limited risk under normal conditions, involvement in fire significantly increases the likelihood of detonation, presenting a clear risk to responders.

There is therefore an opportunity to improve how UXO risk is identified, communicated and incorporated into both operational and strategic planning assumptions. This includes strengthening early access to relevant information, embedding UXO considerations within wildfire pre-planning and Local Resilience Forum arrangements, and ensuring that clear protocols and specialist guidance are readily available.

More broadly, there is value in sharing this learning at a national level to support consistent understanding and preparedness across fire and rescue services, particularly as incidents increasingly occur in complex and historically impacted environments.

What Worked Well

- Early identification of UXO risk enabled the implementation of appropriate control measures
- Effective engagement with RAF, JRLO and EOD specialists supported safe and informed decision-making
- Early assertive decision to change fire tactics to ensure responder safety
- Strong partnership working ensured coordination across defence land and protection of critical national infrastructure, including RAF Fylingdales
- Established relationships with military partners supported timely advice and effective liaison.

Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen the availability and accessibility of UXO risk information and embed clear protocols for managing UXO within wildfire pre-planning and Local Resilience Forum arrangements
- Consider national-level sharing of learning to support consistent understanding and preparedness across fire and rescue services
- NYFRS to explore specialist firefighting vehicles with long throw and high capacity capability, similar to RAF.

6 Facilities and Feeding

The incident tested welfare arrangements due to its scale, geographical spread and prolonged duration, presenting a level of demand beyond that typically experienced. Welfare facilities, including toilet and hygiene provision, were made available by the Service and adapted as the incident developed. Given the wide geographic footprint and multiple operating locations, this was supplemented through support from partner agencies coordinated via the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), including the provision of additional toilets and mobile welfare facilities. While this multi-agency approach strengthened capacity, the nature of the incident created challenges in maintaining consistently timely access across all sectors, including appropriate provision for female colleagues.

Similar pressures were experienced in relation to feeding arrangements. In the early stages, crews appropriately relied on standard provisions carried on fire appliances, which are designed for short duration incidents. As the incident extended, the Service deployed its welfare unit and introduced additional food options. Maintaining consistent and scalable feeding across numerous, dispersed sectors remained challenging initially, reflecting the pace of escalation and the logistical complexity of the operating environment.

The response benefited significantly from widespread goodwill, with substantial food donations received from the public, partners and local businesses. This support was positively received and contributed to morale during an exceptionally demanding period. However, it also introduced additional logistical considerations, including coordination, distribution, storage, food hygiene management and safe disposal, which required structured oversight.

A clear step change was achieved following the establishment of the Strategic Holding Area (SHA) in Pickering on 27 August. This provided hot, nutritious food, enhanced welfare facilities and more consistent logistical support, including onward delivery to the incident ground. This significantly improved the consistency, quality and sustainability of welfare provision as operations continued.

Overall, welfare arrangements adapted and strengthened as the incident progressed, supported by partnership working, improved logistics and the use of additional facilities provided through LRF coordination. The experience reinforces the importance of anticipating and mobilising scalable, multi-agency welfare provision at an earlier stage during prolonged and geographically dispersed incidents. Considering the increasing likelihood of large scale wildfire events in North Yorkshire, NYFRS will build on this learning to further enhance feeding and welfare protocols, ensuring they remain aligned to future operational demands.

What Worked Well

- Welfare facilities and feeding arrangements were established and adapted as the incident progressed
- Deployment of the welfare unit provided an initial level of support to crews
- Strong public and partner support through food donations contributed positively to morale
- Establishment of the Strategic Holding Area (SHA) significantly improved provision.

Learning Opportunities

- Reconsider scalable welfare and feeding arrangements for these types of incidents
- Review provision of welfare facilities, including toilets and hygiene provision with appropriate arrangements for all personnel
- Review Policy and arrangement for donated supplies.

7 Partnership Working

7.1 Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

The incident demonstrated the strength and maturity of the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), with effective multi-agency engagement, timely activation of Response to Major and Critical Incidents (RMCI) arrangements, and sustained partner commitment enabling a coordinated and resilient response throughout.

RMCI arrangements are North Yorkshire's locally agreed framework for managing major and critical incidents. They set out how agencies notify, escalate and coordinate a response through defined structures such as the Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) and Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), reflecting Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) and supporting shared situational awareness, joint decision making and effective multi-agency working. Decision-making within these forums was, in the main, collaborative in nature, with outcomes reflecting collective ownership and shared accountability across agencies.

The response was further supported by the establishment of a number of specialist multi-agency cells, which added capacity, coordination and subject matter expertise:

- Communications Cell
- Evacuation and Shelter Cell
- Scientific, Technical and Advice Cell
- Logistics Cell
- Multi Agency Information Cell (MAIC)
- Vulnerable Persons and Humanitarian Assistance Cell

The scale, pace and duration of the incident highlighted opportunities to further strengthen arrangements for complex and prolonged events, particularly in maintaining a clear distinction between strategic intent and tactical delivery.

At times, this distinction became less clear, with elements of tactical discussion emerging within strategic forums. While this reflected strong engagement and a shared desire to resolve issues, it created a risk of strategic groups becoming drawn into operational matters. This may, in part, have reflected variations in how information and decisions were communicated within individual organisations, leading to requests for clarification or discussion at a strategic level. Maintaining clear role boundaries, supported by JESIP principles, remains important, with operational tactics led on the ground, TCG coordinating activity, and SCG focused on setting strategic direction and parameters.

Attendance at SCG and TCG meetings was consistently high, with up to 40 participants at times. This ensured strong representation and supported collaboration, challenge and shared understanding. However, levels of contribution varied, highlighting an opportunity to reinforce expectations around active engagement. All partners should feel confident to contribute, offer challenge and play a full role in collective decision-making. It is important that the SCG is understood to operate through shared, joint decisions. Where partners have the opportunity to contribute at the time, there should be a shared understanding that decisions are owned collectively going forward.

The incident also highlighted the importance of maintaining a proportionate and sustainable battle rhythm. At times, the frequency of meetings and the volume of information requests reduced the time available to implement agreed actions on the ground. This was particularly evident during periods of rapid escalation and reflects the inherent lag in situational awareness between on scene, tactical and strategic levels.

As the battle rhythm adapted and relaxed, it reduced pressure on command functions and supported more effective delivery. Continued emphasis on aligning meeting cadence, purpose and information requirements to risk and operational need will support both coordination and delivery. Consideration of organisational capacity and the cumulative impact of concurrent demands across partner agencies will further support effective decision-making and system resilience during prolonged incidents.

It was also evident that a number of agencies not routinely involved in the LRF had limited familiarity with JESIP principles. Enhancing awareness and preparedness for these partners will help ensure consistent integration into established command, control and coordination arrangements in future incidents.

The response benefited from strong partnership working, including positive operational input from landowners. There is, however, an opportunity to further clarify expectations at a strategic level, ensuring that all partners understand their roles, contributions and accountabilities within SCG and wider LRF structures.

More broadly, the incident reinforces the importance of ongoing strategic dialogue around land management practices, recognising that wider system decisions can influence operational risk and demand on emergency services.

Overall, LRF arrangements provided a strong foundation for the response. The learning identified reflects the increasing complexity of such incidents and provides a clear opportunity to further strengthen coordination, clarity and resilience across the partnership.

What Worked Well

- Strong and mature LRF response with effective multi-agency engagement
- Timely activation of RMCI arrangements
- High levels of partner commitment throughout a prolonged incident
- Broad representation at coordination groups enabling collaboration, challenge and shared understanding
- Ability to adapt and establish a more effective battle rhythm as the incident developed.

Learning Opportunities

- Reinforce clear strategic, tactical, operational roles and accountability across all partners through LRF training and exercising
- Strengthen JESIP awareness and multi-agency readiness, ensuring all partners (including non-routine organisations) can operate effectively within command structures
- Ensure disciplined focused meeting cadence and decision-making grounded in system-wide risk.

7.2 Non Category 1 and 2 Responders – Land Management Organisations

Land management organisations that sit outside the Category 1 and 2 responder framework, including North York Moors National Park (NYMNP), Forestry England and Natural England, played a critical role throughout the Fylingdales Moor wildfire. Their involvement brought essential landscape scale expertise, environmental intelligence and operational capability that significantly contributed to managing a complex and evolving incident across protected and environmentally sensitive terrain.

Command and control arrangements enabled effective engagement with these organisations as the incident escalated. Their participation within Tactical and Strategic Coordination Groups supported alignment between operational firefighting priorities and wider land management, conservation and recovery considerations. This included coordination on firebreak construction, access routes, habitat protection, and the management of designated sites, alongside close liaison with RAF Fylingdales, Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD), and other specialist partners.

The scale, geographical spread and duration of the incident required sustained coordination across multiple agencies operating over a large and remote moorland environment. Integrating land management activity into the command framework presented early challenges, particularly in maintaining consistent visibility of deployment, tasking, and accountability across a rapidly developing operational footprint. These challenges reflected both the pace of escalation and the fact that several non LRF organisations are not routinely embedded within formal incident command structures.

Land management organisations contributed specialist capability that extended beyond support roles. Forestry England, for example, undertook early site monitoring following handover from the Service, supported suppression and containment activity within forestry land, and contributed plant, access and technical advice. NYMNP and Natural England provided critical environmental and ecological intelligence, advising on protected habitats, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), historic environment sensitivities and the implications of tactical actions such as firebreak positioning and heavy plant use.

As the incident progressed, command and control arrangements evolved to better accommodate this breadth of non LRF activity. The introduction of additional command points, strengthened coordination processes and dedicated cells, including Logistics and Scientific/Technical support, improved oversight, clarified tasking and enhanced overall control. This enabled land management organisations to operate more effectively within the incident structure while continuing to discharge their statutory and stewardship responsibilities.

The incident highlighted differing levels of familiarity among non Category 1 and 2 responders with JESIP principles and formal multi-agency command arrangements. While engagement and cooperation were strong, there were opportunities to improve shared situational awareness, briefing consistency and understanding of roles within tactical and strategic command. These challenges were not failures of intent or capability, but reflections of the growing need to integrate land management bodies more routinely into major incident planning and exercising.

Overall, land management organisations made a valuable contribution to the response. The learning from this incident highlights the importance of earlier and more structured pre-incident engagement, including clearer expectations around roles, information sharing, access to systems such as Resilience Direct, and integration into command and LRF coordination arrangements.

What Worked Well

- Early engagement of land management organisations brought critical landscape, environmental and access expertise into operational decision making
- Effective participation in TCG and SCG supported alignment between firefighting activity, conservation priorities and protection of designated sites
- Provision of specialist advice (habitats, SSSIs, historic environment) informed proportionate tactics such as firebreak placement and use of heavy plant
- Adaptive command arrangements (additional command points and specialist cells) improved integration and oversight as the incident escalated
- Clear commitment and flexibility from land management organisations supported sustained operations during a prolonged incident and into recovery.

Learning Opportunities

- LRF to consider how to improve access to shared information systems and strengthen familiarity with JESIP to enhance situational awareness and interoperability.
- Develop a wildfire engagement and pre-planning framework with land managers and key stakeholders, building on the existing Fire Operations Group (FOG) concept.

7.3 Local Landowners and Farmers

Engagement with landowners was a stand-out strength of the response and made a highly significant contribution to operational success. Alongside partner agencies, farmers, gamekeepers, contractors, the Ministry of Defence, Local Resilience Forum partners, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, and local communities, landowners demonstrated exceptional commitment, collaboration and community spirit throughout the incident. Their collective support provided local knowledge, access to land, specialist equipment, water resources, logistical assistance and strategic coordination at critical stages of the response. The willingness of so many individuals and organisations to assist at pace and over a sustained period materially enhanced operational capability and strongly reflected the resilience, generosity and public-spirited nature of the communities affected by the incident.

Many landowners acted swiftly and proactively to protect land, property and livelihoods, often in challenging and uncertain conditions. This response was rooted in positive intent, deep knowledge of the local environment and a genuine desire to support firefighters and neighbouring communities. Their actions, equipment and insight provided real and tangible benefit to the response, particularly across a large, remote and geographically dispersed incident ground.

Given the scale, urgency and complexity of the incident, there were early challenges in ensuring that all activity was fully coordinated through the formal command structure. This was understandable in the context of the rapid escalation, multiple access points and the sheer volume of goodwill and practical support being offered. As the incident developed, command and control arrangements evolved to better integrate this support. The introduction of additional command points and strengthened coordination processes improved oversight, enabled clearer tasking and ensured landowner support could be used safely and effectively within the wider incident plan.

Local fire crews, particularly On-call and volunteer firefighters drawn from these communities, played a vital role in supporting this integration. Their trusted relationships, local knowledge and understanding of land use were instrumental in bridging engagement between landowners and the formal command structure, further strengthening coordination and mutual confidence.

In some areas, limited pre-existing arrangements with landowners meant that early situational awareness, including land management practices, water availability and site specific risks, developed progressively rather than immediately. This experience reinforces the value of building on the strong relationships demonstrated during this incident through more structured, pre-incident engagement.

Overall, landowners, partner agencies and wider stakeholders played a valuable and often critical role in supporting the response. This included farmers, gamekeepers, contractors, Ministry of Defence personnel, Local Resilience Forum partners, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, local communities and many others who contributed resources, expertise, coordination and practical assistance throughout the incident. The level of cooperation, goodwill and collective effort demonstrated was a clear strength and is deserving of recognition. The learning identified presents an opportunity to further strengthen these partnerships through clearer pre-incident expectations, access arrangements and coordination mechanisms, ensuring that local knowledge, community support and partner capabilities can be even more effectively integrated in future incidents while maintaining appropriate command, control and safety.

What Worked Well

- Strong and proactive engagement from landowners, farmers and local stakeholders, making a significant contribution to operational success
- Exceptional community spirit demonstrated through the provision of local knowledge, land access, plant, equipment and water resources
- Rapid, positive action by landowners to help protect land, property and livelihoods under challenging and uncertain conditions
- Practical insight proved particularly valuable across a large, remote and geographically dispersed incident ground
- Local fire crews, especially On-call and volunteer firefighters, effectively bridged relationships between landowners and the formal command structure
- Trusted relationships and local knowledge improved coordination, situational awareness and mutual confidence as the incident progressed.

Learning Opportunities

- Develop a wildfire engagement and pre-planning framework with landowners and key stakeholders, building on the existing Fire Operations Group (FOG) concept
- Explore how stakeholders who are not Category 1 or 2 responders can be more effectively integrated into command-and-control arrangements and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) framework.

7.4 Bellwin Funding and Approval Process

Recognising the exceptional and prolonged nature of the incident, Strategic Leaders engaged at an early stage with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG), supported by the Mayor and Deputy Mayor, to explore the potential application of the Bellwin Scheme. This reflected the significant and unplanned financial burden placed upon the Service as the incident escalated and required sustained multi-agency and national support.

The Bellwin Scheme provides a mechanism through which local authorities, including fire and rescue services, may recover exceptional expenditure incurred in responding to emergencies. Whilst it is recognised that fire and rescue services are expected to maintain reserves and make provision for foreseeable incidents, the scale, duration and complexity of the Fylingdales wildfire extended beyond what could reasonably be anticipated through normal planning assumptions.

A significant contributory factor was the presence of unexploded ordnance (UXO) across parts of the incident ground. The associated safety risks restricted access and limited the use of conventional wildfire suppression tactics and containment measures in certain areas. This constrained opportunities for early intervention and, in some locations, contributed to the fire spreading over a larger area than may otherwise have been achievable. Consequently, alternative and more resource-intensive approaches were required, including specialist plant, extensive logistical support and aerial firefighting assets. These factors materially increased both the complexity and cost of the response.

The incident highlighted challenges associated with the timeliness and process for accessing Bellwin funding during large-scale and protracted emergencies. Whilst national funding mechanisms exist, there is an opportunity to strengthen the speed, clarity and responsiveness of activation arrangements, particularly where incidents involve atypical risks and circumstances that fall outside normal planning assumptions.

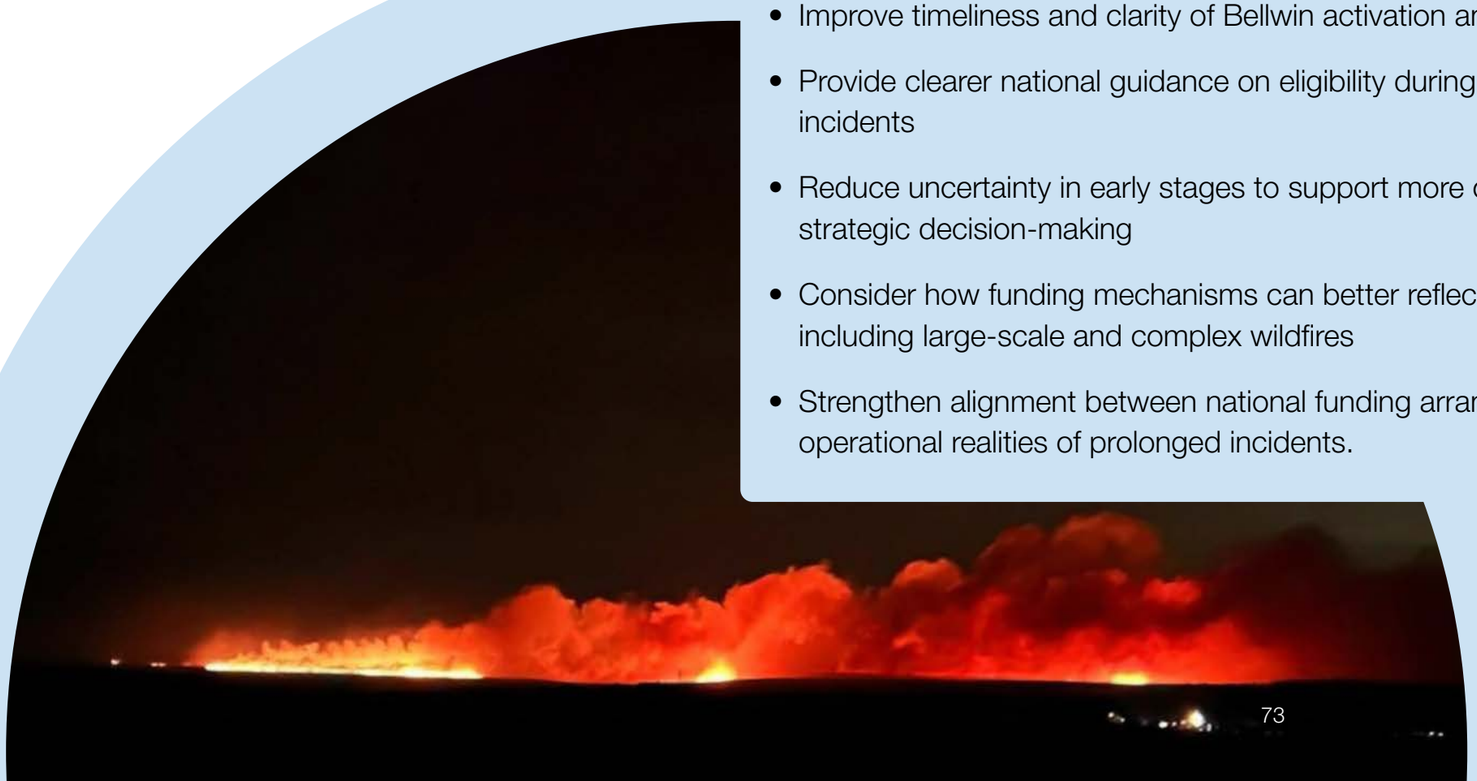
More broadly, this reflects an emerging challenge for the Fire and Rescue Service sector as incidents driven by extreme weather, environmental conditions and complex operational hazards become more frequent. Consideration should be given to whether current national funding arrangements remain appropriately aligned to these evolving risks, ensuring Fire and Rescue Services can respond effectively to exceptional incidents that exceed foreseeable local capability.

What Worked Well

- Bellwin scheme provided a mechanism to support recovery of exceptional and unplanned costs
- Strategic awareness of financial implications informed decision-making throughout the incident
- Engagement with national processes enabled consideration of funding support for high-cost interventions
- Recognition of the need to balance operational necessity with financial accountability.

Learning Opportunities

- Improve timeliness and clarity of Bellwin activation and approval processes
- Provide clearer national guidance on eligibility during complex and atypical incidents
- Reduce uncertainty in early stages to support more confident and timely strategic decision-making
- Consider how funding mechanisms can better reflect emerging risks, including large-scale and complex wildfires
- Strengthen alignment between national funding arrangements and the operational realities of prolonged incidents.



7.5 Internal Communications

The scale, duration and complexity of the Langdale wildfire created significant internal communication demands across the Service. Effective communication was essential to maintain organisational awareness, support operational decision making and ensure staff understood the evolving impact of the incident on service delivery.

During the early stages of the incident, the communications function did not always receive timely updates from the incident ground, reflecting the rapidly evolving nature of the response and the operational pressures being experienced by commanders. This occasionally made it more challenging to maintain situational awareness and provide consistent updates across the organisation. As the incident developed, improvements in information flow, coordination and communication between operational and communications functions strengthened organisational awareness and supported more effective internal communications.

The sustained nature of the response required regular communication with operational personnel, managers, support functions and strategic leaders regarding incident developments, resource commitments, welfare arrangements and organisational impacts. However, the scale of external communications activity required to support partners, the media and the public meant that internal communications were, at times, afforded a lower priority. As a result, some departments were not always fully aware of how the incident was affecting the day-to-day activities of other teams across the Service.

As communications arrangements matured, governance and coordination requirements increased to support effective decision making and organisational oversight. Whilst these arrangements provided assurance and consistency, the incident highlighted the importance of maintaining an appropriate balance between governance and agility to ensure information can be shared quickly and effectively across the organisation during fast-moving incidents.

The incident also reinforced the importance of sufficient communications capacity and resilience during prolonged emergencies. The demands placed upon the communications function were significant and extended over several weeks. The Service had already recognised the need to strengthen capacity within this area and was progressing additional communications resource prior to the incident. The experience gained during the wildfire further demonstrated the value of enhanced resilience and capacity to support both internal and external communications during major incidents.

The learning identified presents an opportunity to further strengthen information flow, organisational awareness and communications resilience during prolonged and complex incidents.

What Worked Well

- Internal communication arrangements adapted and improved as the incident developed
- Governance and oversight arrangements supported informed decision-making and organisational awareness.

Learning Opportunities

- Embed regular internal updates from the outset to improve Service-wide awareness of operational impacts
- Strengthen communications resilience and capacity to sustain delivery during prolonged incidents
- Integrate the communications function more closely with incident ground information flows to improve situational awareness and organisational communication.

7.6 External Communications and Media Messaging

Communications and media messaging formed a critical component of the response, particularly given the level of national media interest and the complexity of the incident. Early media dial-in sessions via Microsoft Teams were effective in managing demand, reducing the volume of individual enquiries and interview requests, and enabling a more coordinated and consistent external message during the initial stages.

The Service primarily used its website as the central platform for incident updates throughout the response. This reflects established Service practice, providing a single, accessible and authoritative source of information for both the media and the public whilst enabling chronological updates to be published quickly and efficiently as the incident evolved. Between August and December 2025, over 60 incident updates were published on the Service website, creating a comprehensive and transparent record of the response.

Social media channels, primarily Facebook and, to a lesser extent, Instagram and X, were used to support warning and informing activity, reinforce key public safety messages and provide updates on incident developments where appropriate. Between August and November 2025, the Service published more than 85 social media posts relating to the wildfire across its corporate channels. These platforms provided an effective mechanism for amplifying key messages and directing the public towards the latest information hosted on the Service website.

Several media briefings were held throughout the incident and video updates were provided. The Service website was updated daily, including a dedicated incident update page which provided a consistent reference point for both the media and the public. Media briefings were primarily conducted via Microsoft Teams, reflecting the operational risks associated with inviting journalists onto the moorland whilst the incident remained ongoing.

Briefings and updates were provided on:

- 14 August – briefing via Microsoft Teams
- 21 August – briefing via Microsoft Teams
- 27 August – multi-agency briefing (NYLRF partners) via Microsoft Teams
- 29 August – in-person media briefing at the Strategic Holding Area (followed by a video update)
- 4 September – video update
- 23 September – video update aligned to the de-escalation of Major Incident status

A structured multi-agency communications approach was established through the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), including the formation of a dedicated Communications Cell and a rolling communications email chain. This provided a mechanism for communications representatives from partner organisations, including NYFRS, North Yorkshire Police, North Yorkshire Council, the York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority, Forestry England, UKHSA, NHS and Yorkshire Ambulance Service, to share updates, coordinate messaging and amplify key public information through their respective channels. A smaller communications coordination group was also established for those organisations most directly involved in the incident, supporting timely information sharing and message alignment.

The York and North Yorkshire Combined Authority also provided communications support during periods of annual leave, helping to ensure continuity of communications activity and enabling key updates and messages to continue to be shared in a timely and coordinated manner. The Combined Authority further supported the response by amplifying Service and partner messaging through its own communication channels.

The incident highlighted the challenge of balancing public information requirements with wider expectations for frequent updates. During the early stages, operational updates were sometimes necessarily limited to confirming that the fire remained ongoing and that crews would remain in attendance for a sustained period. This reinforced the importance of setting clear expectations regarding what information could be shared, why further detail may not yet be available and how transparency and public confidence could still be maintained during a rapidly evolving incident.

Maintaining this balance was particularly challenging during a prolonged, high-profile incident where public interest, media demand and social media commentary remained significant throughout. Due to the volume of engagement generated, it was not possible to continuously monitor or respond to all comments received through social media channels. Instead, the communications approach focused on ensuring accurate and verified information was regularly published through official channels.

At times, inaccurate, incomplete or speculative information was shared externally, including by social media accounts with significant followings. This created additional challenges for public messaging and understanding and occasionally complicated efforts to maintain a consistent and authoritative narrative. The incident highlighted the value of monitoring emerging misinformation, disinformation and rumours more proactively during prolonged incidents, supported by timely operational updates that enable inaccurate information to be challenged quickly through official channels.

The incident also highlighted the importance of maintaining clear and consistent corporate messaging across all Service communication channels. At the time of the incident, a number of individual station social media accounts operated independently. Whilst well intentioned, some messages, including requests for donations, differed from agreed corporate communications and occasionally created confusion. Since the incident, the Service has transitioned to district-level Facebook accounts which are accessible to the communications team, providing greater oversight and consistency of messaging.

The response also highlighted the importance of maintaining close communication between operational commanders and communications teams where issues such as evacuations, road closures or significant changes in incident activity are being considered. This supports the timely delivery of warning and informing messages and ensures the public receives accurate and consistent information during periods of heightened uncertainty.

Overall, the communications strategy provided a strong foundation for managing substantial public and media interest throughout the incident. The learning identified presents an opportunity to further strengthen resilience, coordination and the ability to maintain a proactive narrative during prolonged and complex incidents, whilst maintaining effective warning and informing arrangements for communities affected by future major incidents.

What Worked Well

- Early use of media dial-in sessions effectively managed high levels of media demand
- Regular website and social media updates supported timely public information and warning and informing activity
- Strong multi-agency communications coordination through the LRF Communications Cell and partner communication networks
- Clear alignment of messaging across partners on key issues such as public safety, health messaging and road closures
- Effective use of multiple communication channels improved accessibility, consistency and public confidence.

Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen arrangements to monitor and respond to misinformation, disinformation and rumours
- Further improve the flow of operational information to communications teams to support timely public messaging
- Enhance communication arrangements to ensure timely and consistent updates are provided to political leaders during major incidents.

7.7 Warning and Evacuation

In the period leading up to 25 August 2025, warning and informing activity formed a core part of the response. As fire behaviour and weather conditions evolved, communities were kept informed through proportionate public safety messaging, supporting awareness, reassurance and preparedness during periods of heightened risk. This approach enabled early consideration of potential escalation while avoiding unnecessary alarm and ensured communities understood that the situation was being actively monitored.

During the Bank Holiday weekend on 25 August, a significant increase in the rate of fire spread led to a precautionary decision to evacuate a number of locations to protect life. This included Grouse Hill, May Beck and Flask Caravan Parks, along with a partial evacuation of businesses north of the B1416. Residents were moved safely to designated locations, supported by well coordinated multi-agency arrangements.

In parallel, and at the request of the Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG), the Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG) developed a suite of evacuation and shelter plans to ensure readiness should the incident escalate further. Although these plans were not ultimately required, due to effective operational activity by Fire and Rescue Services, partner agencies and local farmers, their development provided confidence that further escalation could be managed in a controlled and coordinated manner.

Evacuation and shelter plans were produced for Ravenscar, Hackness, Newton Dale, Goathland, Sleights, Stainsacre and Robin Hood's Bay. Each plan followed a consistent framework, setting out clear escalation triggers, notification procedures and detailed evacuation arrangements. This included population data, identification of vulnerable residents, transport requirements and the scale and nature of residential, commercial and agricultural premises within each area.

Arrangements for warning and informing were embedded within all plans, including door knocking, social media messaging, standard communications and consideration of emergency alert systems, providing multiple and proportionate routes to reach the public if required. Shelter planning identified suitable rest centres, supported by defined staffing, equipment, identification and close down arrangements.

The incident also highlighted the importance of public reassurance around how evacuation instructions would be communicated if required. While escalation and evacuation planning was robust, clearer reassurance to communities that they would be directly informed if they needed to leave would have further strengthened confidence during periods of uncertainty. As part of preparedness activity, plans included consideration of the National Emergency Alerts system, and draft alert messages were prepared on 27 August should activation have been required. Although deployment was not necessary, this ensured a rapid and direct public warning mechanism was available.

Overall, evacuation and shelter arrangements demonstrated strong preparedness, effective multi-agency coordination and the ability to scale at pace in a dynamic and high risk environment. The planning undertaken strengthened situational confidence and ensured that, had conditions deteriorated further, communities could have been protected swiftly, proportionately and safely.

What Worked Well

- Issued early and proportionate warning and informing messages ahead of 25 August, supporting community awareness during periods of heightened risk
- Made timely, risk based decisions on evacuation on 25 August, prioritising life safety and protecting communities
- Established an Evacuation and Shelter Cell quickly to coordinate multi-agency planning for escalation scenarios
- Developed robust evacuation and shelter plans for multiple locations, providing confidence and readiness if further action was required
- Integrated CHEMET plume modelling and local intelligence to inform public health messaging and evacuation considerations
- Maintained clear multi-agency coordination throughout warning, evacuation and shelter planning.

Learning Opportunities

- Strengthen public perception on how evacuation instructions would be communicated, including clearer messaging on notification methods
- Improve communication of response stages (warning, prepare to evacuate, evacuate, shelter in place) to ensure shared understanding across partners and communities
- Further integrate predictive tools such as Chem Met into evacuation planning and decision-making triggers, particularly where access constraints, such as the closure of key roads, may require earlier intervention.

7.8 Organisational Resilience

The incident placed sustained and significant demand on organisational capacity, requiring North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service to manage a large-scale major incident while maintaining core service delivery. This created a complex dual-operating environment, with priorities continually assessed and balanced.

The Service maintained a clear and disciplined approach to operational prioritisation. Protection of life, communities and critical infrastructure remained the overriding focus, alongside an effective response to day-to-day incidents. During the peak wildfire period, the Service responded to a further 453 incidents, supported by 41 mutual aid resources, sustaining service-wide cover.

This was underpinned by proactive and dynamic resource management. The Dynamic Cover Tool was used effectively to assess risk and reposition resources, maintaining response standards as far as reasonably practicable. The ability to flex between major incident demands and business-as-usual activity was a key strength.

Support functions played a critical and often under-recognised role in sustaining this balance. Fleet, ICT, resilience, communications and business support teams responded with flexibility, professionalism and strong commitment.

Alongside the operational response, statutory functions, including prevention and protection, were maintained. This was enabled by a mixed staffing model of operational and non-operational roles, allowing activity to continue in line with business continuity arrangements on a prioritised basis as capacity and risk fluctuated.

Ongoing work to strengthen business continuity for critical roles further supported this approach, improving resilience and sustaining key functions during a prolonged incident. Effective succession planning reduced vacancy gaps and maintained continuity.

Moreover, the contribution of non-operational staff is particularly acknowledged, with many stepping beyond their usual roles, embracing a one team approach, to support delivery and maintain business continuity.

Despite sustained organisational pressure, the combined effort of operational and support staff ensured critical services were maintained, risks managed effectively, and the response remained focused.

What Went Well

- Clear prioritisation of life risk, community impact and critical infrastructure while maintaining core response
- Statutory functions (incl. prevention and protection) sustained through mixed staffing and prioritised business continuity
- Dynamic cover and resource repositioning maintained countywide resilience at peak demand
- Mutual aid integrated effectively without loss of command focus
- Support functions operated flexibly to sustain prolonged activity
- High professionalism, adaptability and cross-role working across staff.

Learning opportunities

- Strengthen surge capacity across operational and support functions (staffing, rostering, cross-training)
- Continue to build functional departmental business continuity plans including early identification of critical vs non-critical activity to accelerate reprioritisation.

7.9 Community and Environmental Impact

The wildfire had a significant community and environmental impact, affecting residents, infrastructure and the natural landscape over a sustained period. Local communities experienced disruption from road closures, restricted access, smoke exposure and uncertainty as the incident evolved, with impacts most acute during key escalation periods from 25 August onwards. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service, working closely with partners, supported communities through proportionate warning and informing—issuing clear public advice as conditions changed—and took precautionary measures, including evacuation where required, to manage smoke, access and safety risks across a wide area.

As the incident progressed, broader impacts emerged across infrastructure, businesses and public activity. Key routes, including the A171 and B1416, were closed to protect public safety and support emergency operations, resulting in significant diversion routes, increased journey times and congestion. Additional local road closures and traffic management measures were implemented to maintain safe access and enable emergency response. Tourism and leisure activity was affected during a peak period, and some local businesses experienced disruption due to restricted access and reduced visitor numbers, leading to wider economic impacts for the community.

The incident also highlighted longer-term environmental consequences. Damage to moorland and peatland will take time to recover, with implications for biodiversity, land use and local livelihoods that will extend beyond the operational phase. For some communities and landowners, these effects will be enduring, reinforcing the broader environmental significance of such incidents beyond immediate risks to life and property.

Despite these challenges, communities demonstrated strong resilience throughout. Residents, landowners, businesses and volunteers showed patience, cooperation and support, with offers of assistance and donations contributing positively to staff welfare during a prolonged and demanding response. Overall, the incident demonstrated a coordinated, community-focused approach, helping to manage both the immediate and longer-term impacts while maintaining public confidence during a complex and evolving situation.

7.10 Recovery

At a strategic level, recovery to major incidents start at the early stages of the emergency. This reflects a proactive approach to managing the anticipated longer term impacts of the incident alongside the ongoing response. This early consideration enabled a structured and well paced transition, avoiding a hard handover and ensuring continuity as response activity scaled down. Although recovery groups formed at various phases of the incident they fully formed on 2 September before accepting the co-ordination of the incident on 5 September.

The transition into recovery was managed through established Local Resilience Forum (LRF) arrangements, with a clear governance structure and a well coordinated Main Recovery Coordination Group supported by thematic sub groups.

Effective multi-agency engagement continues was evident throughout the transition, particularly in the coordination of complex issues such as unexploded ordnance (UXO) risk, environmental impact, infrastructure access and community reassurance. The involvement of specialist partners, including military representatives and national agencies, provided timely expertise and shared situational awareness, supporting informed decision making and risk management.

While recovery activity continues and remains active through LRF recovery structures and sub groups, the detailed progress and outputs of this phase sit outside the scope of this debrief. This document focuses on the response phase and the immediate transition arrangements, with ongoing recovery being addressed through the LRF's dedicated recovery governance and assurance processes.

The Service continued to support recovery arrangements throughout the incident, with the Chief Fire Officer leading two engagement sessions with MHCLG and Defra, alongside partner agencies involved in the recovery phase. These sessions were well received and provided an opportunity to articulate the operational challenges, scale of the incident and its impact on local communities. They also sought to support Bellwin claims across all organisations, while offering direct, first-hand insight into the consequences of the incident.

7.11 Fire Investigation

At the time of the initial incident, Tier 2 fire investigations were not routinely commissioned for moorland and heathland fires. This position was consistent with wider sector practice at the time, where formal fire investigations have historically focused on incidents in the built environment rather than large scale wildland fires. As a result, a Fire Investigation Officer was not deployed during the early stages of the incident. As the fire escalated in scale, duration and complexity, the Strategic Leadership Team determined that a comprehensive fire investigation was both appropriate and necessary to ensure learning could be identified, tested and shared.

A dedicated team of Tier 2 Fire Investigation Officers was therefore established on 18 August 2025 to undertake the investigation. A clear Terms of Reference was produced at an early stage, setting out the purpose of the investigation, governance arrangements and defined responsibilities. This provided a clear and accountable framework and ensured a consistent and transparent approach across all agencies involved. The first site visit was undertaken on 19 August, 54 days after the initial attendance.

The investigation was strengthened by a multi-agency and multidisciplinary approach, drawing together expertise from wildfire operations, fire investigation, Crime Scene Investigation and individuals with detailed local knowledge of the area. This breadth of expertise enhanced analytical capability and contributed to the robustness and credibility of the findings. The Fire Investigation Officers tasked with this work demonstrated a particularly high standard of professional practice, undertaking extensive research and applying recognised investigative methodologies to assess complex and evolving evidence in a challenging environment.

18 Certified Fire Investigator Training

The effective use of drone technology was a notable strength, enabling large and difficult to access areas to be examined safely and efficiently, while supporting the capture of high quality aerial imagery. Investigators also made effective use of established national guidance, including the *Guide to Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination*, alongside additional Wildland Fire Investigation training CFI trainer.net[18]. A clear investigative timeline was developed to support consistency and evidential integrity, with both internal and external peer review providing additional assurance and challenge.

The investigation also identified learning relevant to future incidents. Wildland fires can spread, burn underground and subsequently burn back across wide areas, influenced by changing wind and weather conditions. This can make identifying the area of origin increasingly challenging as time progresses. Earlier deployment of Fire Investigation Officers would support more effective early evidence capture.

More broadly, the incident highlights a sector wide opportunity to strengthen fire investigation capability in relation to moorland and wildland fires. These environments present investigative challenges that differ from those in the built environment, and there is a case for continued development of national guidance, training and competence frameworks to reflect the increasing frequency, scale and complexity of large scale wildfire incidents.

What Worked Well

- Timely and proportionate decision to commission a Tier 2 fire investigation as the incident escalated
- Clear Terms of Reference established early, providing strong governance, role clarity and accountability
- High standard of professional practice by Fire Investigation Officers, including thorough research, effective use of evidence and recognised investigative techniques
- Strong multi-agency approach, combining wildfire expertise, fire investigation, crime scene investigation and local knowledge
- Effective use of drones and recognised guidance (Guide to Wildland Fire Origin and Cause Determination), supported by specialist training
- Robust assurance through structured timelines and internal and external peer review.

Learning Opportunities

- Consider earlier deployment of Fire Investigation Officers for large scale or escalating wildland fires to strengthen early evidence capture
- Work the sector to further develop wildfire specific fire investigation capability, training and guidance.

7.12 Conclusion

The Fylingdales Moor wildfire represents one of the most significant and complex wildfire incidents managed by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service. It required a sustained, coordinated and adaptable multi-agency response under challenging environmental, geographic and operational conditions.

Despite this complexity, the overall outcome was positive. There was no loss of life, no serious injury, and critical national infrastructure, communities and property were protected. This reflects a strong and effective response, underpinned by clear command arrangements, committed personnel and mature multi-agency working.

A key strength of the incident was the effectiveness of strategic coordination. Clear governance structures, supported by collaborative decision-making and strong partner engagement, ensured that risk was understood and managed across the system.

The incident also demonstrated sound judgement in its early stages, with activity initially managed proportionately within business-as-usual arrangements before escalating appropriately as conditions changed. This ensured that resources and governance structures were applied in line with risk and evolving demand.

However, the scale and duration of the incident highlight a clear shift in the nature of wildfire risk. This was not a localised operational event, but a prolonged, system-wide incident requiring sustained coordination across multiple agencies, significant resource mobilisation and strong organisational resilience.

This reflects a broader trend. Wildfires are becoming more frequent, more complex and more demanding, influenced by climate, land conditions and fuel continuity. Incidents of this type are likely to place increasing pressure not only on operational response, but on the wider system, including prevention, land management, governance and recovery.

The learning identified does not detract from the effectiveness of the response. Instead, it provides a clear opportunity to strengthen future preparedness

It also reinforces that wildfire risk must be understood and managed as a shared system responsibility. Effective mitigation and future resilience will depend on continued collaboration between Fire and Rescue Services, landowners, environmental partners and the wider Local Resilience Forum.

Overall, this incident demonstrates a service and partnership that responded effectively under exceptional conditions, while recognising the need to continue adapting to an evolving risk environment. The learning captured within this report provides a strong foundation to support that ongoing development and ensure the Service remains well prepared for future large-scale and protracted incidents.

8 Recommendations

The following recommendations have been developed from the learning identified throughout this report. They are intended to strengthen preparedness, command, operational delivery and organisational resilience for future large scale and protracted wildfire incidents, while supporting continuous improvement at both Service and partnership levels.

Where learning points appeared in more than one section, these were assessed to determine whether they represented distinct issues or different perspectives of the same underlying problem. Where overlap existed, learning was consolidated into a single learning opportunity supported by multiple evidence sources. This ensured proportionality, avoided duplication and maintained a clear line of sight between learning and recommendations.

Ref	Learning Theme	Key Section(s) in Report	Recommendation	Ownership
R1	Planning Assumptions	Wildfire Risk Pre-Planning; Scale and System Impact; Business Continuity	Review and update wildfire planning assumptions to reflect increased scale, duration, endurance and concurrent incidents	NYFRS
R2	Site-Specific Risk Information	Pre-Incident Planning and Risk Information; Operational Delivery	Strengthen site-specific wildfire pre-planning, including fuel load, access, control lines, water sourcing options, permissions and environmental constraints	NYFRS
R3	Predictive Intelligence	Fire Behaviour and Environmental Conditions; Strategic Coordination	Enhance training and use of predictive intelligence (weather, fire behaviour and environmental modelling) to support anticipatory decision-making	NYFRS
R4	Training and Competence	Training and Development	Strengthen workforce wildfire competence through targeted training, exercising and specialist tactical development	NYFRS
R5	Command Infrastructure	Command and Control; Strategic Holding Area (SHA); Incident Command Unit (ICU)	Build resilience into command infrastructure, including portable facilities and sustained staffing models	NYFRS
R6	Operational Assurance	Command and Control; Operational Assurance	Strengthen and scale operational assurance arrangements for complex and prolonged incidents	NYFRS
R7	Assets and Equipment	Assets and Equipment; National Resilience; SHA Operations	Review wildfire asset capability, interoperability, real-time tracking and sustainment arrangements	NYFRS
R8	Welfare and Logistics	Facilities and Feeding; Welfare; Health and Safety; SHA Operations	Develop scalable welfare, feeding and logistical support arrangements for prolonged and geographically dispersed incidents	NYFRS
R9	Drone Capability	Situational Awareness; Operational Intelligence; Aviation Support	Formalise and expand assured drone capability within wildfire response	NYFRS
R10	Decontamination, PPE and RPE	Health, Safety and Risk Management; PPE and RPE; Facilities and Feeding	Strengthen wildfire decontamination arrangements and consider appropriate wildfire-specific PPE and flexible RPE options	NYFRS
R11	Workforce Resilience	Duty Systems and Workforce Resilience; Welfare	Develop pre-planned relief, rotation and endurance models for prolonged incidents	NYFRS
R12	Business Continuity	Scale and System Impact; Business Continuity	Strengthen business continuity and surge capacity planning across operational and support functions	NYFRS
R13	Rota structures	Duty Systems and Workforce Resilience; Strategic Leadership Capacity	Review operational officer capacity and rota arrangements	NYFRS
R14	Strategic Risk Management	Wildfire Risk Pre-Planning; Local Resilience Forum Arrangements	Review wildfire risk scoring within the Community Risk Register to reflect emerging and climate-driven risks	LRF
R15	Multi-Agency Pre-Planning	Partnership Working; Pre-Planning	Establish an LRF-led multi-agency wildfire pre-planning framework aligned to high-impact risks	LRF
R16	Governance and Decision-Making	Command and Control; SCG and TCG Arrangements	Reinforce role clarity between SCG, TCG and incident ground through training, exercising and clear briefing structures	LRF
R17	Information and Risk Sharing	Pre-Incident Risk Information; Fire Behaviour; UXO Information	Improve consistency, availability and sharing of wildfire risk data across agencies	NYFRS / LRF

Ref	Learning Theme	Key Section(s) in Report	Recommendation	Ownership
R18	Partnership Integration	Local Landowners and Farmers; Partnership Working	Improve integration of non-Category responders and strengthen coordination structures	LRF / Land Managers
R19	Communications	Internal Communications; External Communications and Media Messaging; Warning and Evacuation	Strengthen internal and external communications, including misinformation management, warning and informing, and political leader updates	NYFRS / LRF
R20	Specialist Risks (UXO)	UXO and Defence Land	Improve access to specialist risk information, strengthen national capability and ensure effective learning transfer	NYFRS / LRF / MOD
R21	Funding and Recovery	Bellwin Funding and Approval Process; Recovery	Provide structured feedback to MHCLG to improve the timeliness and clarity of Bellwin funding arrangements for atypical, high-cost incidents	NYFRS / LRF / MHCLG

9 National / Joint Organisational Learning (NOL / JOL) Summary

9.1 Overview

The Fylingdales Moor wildfire represents one of the most complex and sustained wildfire incidents experienced by North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS). The incident exposed a number of learning themes that have relevance beyond the Service and the Local Resilience Forum (LRF), reflecting the increasing frequency, scale and operational complexity of climate driven wildfires nationally.

The learning outlined below has been identified as suitable for National Organisational Learning (NOL) and Joint Organisational Learning (JOL) consideration, due to its applicability across fire and rescue services, partners and national frameworks.

9.2 Key NOL / JOL Themes

Command Capacity, Leadership Endurance and BAU Resilience

Officer rota arrangements proved effective under normal conditions but were placed under significant pressure during a prolonged major incident occurring alongside peak leave periods. Sustained demands across incident command, SCG/TCG leadership and business-as-usual delivery required extended working hours and highlighted limited resilience within existing arrangements.

National relevance: Leadership endurance, minimum resilient command capacity and welfare arrangements during protracted incidents.

Wildfire Pre-Planning and Capability in Remote Environments

While NYFRS had strong specialist wildfire capability (wildfire stations, Argocats, Wildfire Tactical Advisor), the incident highlighted limitations in pre-incident planning for high-risk wildfire sites, particularly in remote, On-call and volunteer areas. Access to detailed risk information (e.g. defence land, historic hazards) was limited at the outset.

National relevance: Consistency of wildfire pre-planning, specialist capability assumptions and risk intelligence quality.

Welfare, Feeding and Operational Endurance

Welfare and feeding arrangements were initially suitable for extended incidents but insufficient for maintaining a long term, geographically dispersed wildfire response. Significant improvements were required as the incident progressed.

National relevance: Welfare provision for prolonged wildfire deployments as incidents increase in duration and scale.

Duty Systems and Protracted Deployment

The incident highlighted pressures on wholetime, On-call and volunteer duty systems. On-call staff demonstrated exceptional commitment, but sustained response began to impact primary employment and availability. Questions were raised around expectations for extended duty beyond normal shift patterns.

National relevance: Sustainable crewing models and workforce resilience during prolonged incidents.

Risk Information and Site Data Quality

Post incident review identified limitations in the accuracy, accessibility and timeliness of wildfire risk data, including peat depth, subsurface conditions and complex hazard information. Earlier access could have informed control line depth, tactics and resource deployment.

National relevance: Improving pre-incident risk data quality as wildfire risk escalates nationally.

Communications and Strategic Messaging

Early media dial in sessions were effective in managing demand; however, prolonged governance layers reduced agility, and internal communications were difficult to sustain alongside external messaging.

National relevance: Maintaining effective, transparent internal and external communications during extended major incidents.

PPE for Wildfire Conditions

The absence of wildfire specific PPE resulted in crews adapting structural PPE due to heat fatigue, increasing exposure risk.

National relevance: The case for lightweight, breathable wildfire PPE across UK Fire and Rescue Services.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) and Defence Land Risk

Limited availability of accurate information on buried munitions significantly increased risk to responders. While UXO may pose minimal risk under normal conditions, wildfire involvement substantially elevates danger due to detonation ("cook off").

National relevance: UXO information sharing between MOD, landowners and Fire and Rescue Services.

Bellwin Funding Timeliness

Uncertainty around the timing and approval of Bellwin funding constrained early strategic options for large scale control line activity involving helicopters and heavy plant.

National relevance: Clarity and timeliness of funding mechanisms for atypical, high cost incidents.

Unprecedented Wildfire Behaviour and Land Management Impacts

Fire behaviour exceeded previous experience, driven by extreme weather, fuel continuity and limited firebreaks. The introduction of the Heather and Grass Management Code 2025 may further alter wildfire behaviour nationally.

National relevance: Reviewing operational assumptions, training and land management interfaces.

9.3 Conclusion

The learning from the Fylingdales Moor wildfire reflects a broader shift in the wildfire risk profile facing Fire and Rescue Services. The themes identified provide clear opportunities for national improvement in command resilience, wildfire pre-planning, workforce sustainability, welfare provision, risk intelligence, PPE, funding mechanisms and partnership working.

This incident offers strong evidence base for NOL and JOL submission, supporting collective preparedness for increasingly frequent, complex and protracted wildfire events across the UK.

10 Governance, Assurance and Embedding Learning

Effective governance is critical to ensuring that the learning identified from the Fylingdales Moor wildfire is translated into meaningful and sustained improvement. In recognition of the scale and complexity of the incident, clear arrangements will be established to oversee, coordinate and assure the delivery of recommendations arising from this debrief.

10.1 Governance Arrangements

Overall ownership for the implementation of learning will sit within established governance structures to ensure accountability, consistency and alignment with wider organisational and partnership priorities.

Within North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service (NYFRS), learning and recommendations will be overseen through existing internal governance arrangements, ensuring alignment with service improvement, risk management and assurance frameworks.

NYFRS will be a key player in the Local Resilience Forum (LRF) governance arrangements to support and contribute to the delivery of agreed actions. Progress will be reported through the appropriate Coordinating Groups and, where required, escalated to executive forums. This will provide assurance that learning is being addressed collaboratively, that NYFRS is fulfilling its responsibilities as an LRF partner, and that inter agency dependencies are being effectively managed.

The Deputy Mayor provides political oversight and holds the Chief Fire Officer and the service to account for performance. This is achieved through structured governance arrangements and will contribute to the overall assurance, of the debrief and public accountability.

10.2 Translation of Learning into Action

Recommendations arising from this debrief will be captured within detailed action plans to ensure that learning moves beyond identification and into delivery. Each recommendation will be translated into a series of clearly defined actions, designed to be practical, proportionate and focused on improving future preparedness and response.

All actions will be developed using SMART principles, ensuring they are:

- Specific – clearly describing what will be delivered or changed
- Measurable – with defined success criteria or indicators of completion
- Achievable – realistic within available capability and resources
- Relevant – directly linked to the learning identified
- Time bound – with agreed milestones and completion dates.

This approach will support transparency, enable effective monitoring and provide a clear audit trail demonstrating how learning has been addressed.

10.3 Senior Responsible Owners (SROs)

Each recommendation and associated action will be allocated to a named Senior Responsible Owner (SRO). SROs will be accountable for ensuring that actions are progressed, barriers are addressed and outcomes are delivered within agreed timescales.

Where actions are multi-agency in nature, SROs will work collaboratively across organisations to ensure clarity of roles and collective ownership of outcomes.

10.4 Monitoring, Reporting and Assurance

Progress against action plans will be subject to routine monitoring and reporting through established governance arrangements. This will include:

- Regular progress reviews against defined milestones
- Clear reporting on completion status, risks and dependencies
- Evidence based assurance that actions have been implemented as intended.

Where learning has wider system implications, progress and assurance will be shared across the partnership to support collective learning and consistency of practice.

10.5 Embedding and Continuous Improvement

Completion of actions will not, in itself, represent the end of the learning process. Consideration will be given to how learning is embedded into:

- Policy, plans and procedures
- Training, exercising and professional development
- Capability development and investment decisions
- Preparedness for future large scale and protracted incidents.

Where appropriate, learning from the Fylingdales Moor wildfire will also be shared beyond North Yorkshire to contribute to regional and national understanding of wildfire risk, response and resilience.

Together, these arrangements ensure that learning from this significant incident is governed robustly, translated into practical improvement, and embedded in a way that strengthens both organisational and system wide resilience over the longer-term.

11 Acknowledgements

North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service would like to formally recognise and thank all those who contributed to the response to the Fylingdales Moor wildfire and to the development of this Major Incident Debrief.

This incident required a sustained and coordinated effort over a prolonged period, involving personnel from across the Service, partner agencies and the wider community. The professionalism, resilience and commitment demonstrated throughout the response were instrumental in protecting life, critical infrastructure, communities and the environment under exceptionally challenging conditions.

Our sincere thanks go to all NYFRS staff, including wholetime, day crewed, On-call and volunteer firefighters, Control staff, resilience and support teams, whose dedication and flexibility ensured the effective management of a complex and resource intensive incident while maintaining business as usual service delivery.

We acknowledge and thank our multi-agency partners for their vital contributions, including North Yorkshire Police, Yorkshire Ambulance Service, local authorities, military and defence partners, Forestry England, North York Moors National Park Authority, Natural England, the Environment Agency, utility providers, and all organisations engaged through the Local Resilience Forum. Their cooperation, expertise and sustained engagement were critical to effective coordination, decision making and recovery planning.

We further acknowledge the assistance provided by the following fire and rescue services and resilience partners:

- Cleveland Fire Brigade
- County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service
- Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service
- Derbyshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service
- Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service
- Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
- Humberside Fire and Rescue Service
- London Fire Brigade
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service
- Northumberland Fire and Rescue Service
- South Wales Fire and Rescue Service
- Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service
- West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service
- Hertfordshire County Council (National Resilience Enhanced Logistics Support Deployment)

We also wish to recognise the significant contribution of local landowners, farmers and contractors, whose local knowledge, access, equipment and practical support were invaluable in challenging terrain and remote operating environments. Their willingness to assist at pace and over an extended period greatly enhanced operational effectiveness.

Finally, we thank local communities and businesses for their patience, cooperation and support throughout the incident. The understanding shown during periods of disruption, alongside the goodwill and assistance offered to responders, reflects the strength and resilience of communities across North Yorkshire and the City of York.

This debrief, and the learning captured within it, is a testament to the collective effort of all those involved and reflects a shared commitment to transparency, learning and continuous improvement.

Glossary of Terms

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Argocat

A low ground pressure, tracked off road vehicle designed to operate in remote and environmentally sensitive terrain, such as moorland and peatland, where standard fire appliances cannot safely access.

Back Burning

A controlled firefighting technique where fire is deliberately introduced under carefully managed conditions to remove vegetation (fuel) ahead of a wildfire, reducing its intensity when it reaches a control line.

Bellwin Scheme

A national government funding mechanism that allows local authorities, including Fire and Rescue Services, to apply for reimbursement of exceptional and unplanned costs incurred during major emergencies.

Business as Usual (BAU)

The routine delivery of emergency response and core services alongside a major incident response.

Command and Control

The framework through which incidents are managed, including decision making, coordination, communication and supervision across operational, tactical and strategic levels.

Control Line

A natural or man made feature, such as a road, track or firebreak, used to stop or limit the spread of fire.

Dynamic Cover Tool (DCT)

A decision support system used by Fire Control to manage and reposition emergency resources in real time to maintain effective countywide cover during periods of high or prolonged demand.

Ember Transfer

The spread of fire caused by burning embers being carried by wind ahead of the main fire front, igniting new fires beyond established control lines.

Fire Operations Group (FOG)

A coordinated multi-agency forum bringing together Fire and Rescue Services, landowners and environmental partners to support wildfire preparedness, prevention and response planning.

Fire Driven Weather

Localised atmospheric effects created by intense heat from a wildfire, including changes in wind direction or strength that can influence fire behaviour and escalation.

Fuel Continuity / Fuel Load

Fuel load refers to the quantity of burnable vegetation present. Fuel continuity describes how connected that vegetation is across the landscape, influencing how rapidly a fire can spread.

High Volume Pump (HVP)

A national resilience asset capable of delivering large volumes of water over long distances where conventional water supplies are insufficient.

Incident Command Unit (ICU)

A mobile command facility providing on scene management, communication and coordination functions during complex and prolonged incidents.

Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP)

A national framework that sets out how emergency services and partners work together effectively during major incidents.

Local Resilience Forum (LRF)

A statutory multi-agency partnership responsible for coordinating emergency planning, response and recovery at a local level.

National Organisational Learning (NOL) / Joint Organisational Learning (JOL)

National systems for capturing, sharing and embedding learning from significant incidents across Fire and Rescue Services and partner organisations.

National Resilience

A UK wide framework providing specialist capabilities, coordination and support to local emergency services during large scale or high impact incidents.

Volunteer Firefighter

An individual who provides emergency response support on a voluntary basis, often alongside On-call roles, contributing significantly to community resilience and rural fire cover.

On-Call Firefighters

Firefighters who have a primary employment or are self employed and respond to emergencies when alerted, typically from their home or workplace. They provide critical emergency cover, particularly in rural and remote communities.

Day Crewed Duty Firefighter

A firefighter who provides emergency response during defined daytime hours from a fire station and responds to emergencies when alerted, from their home overnight. Day crewed duty arrangements support effective response in areas where risk and demand are higher during the day.

Wholetime Firefighter

A full time, salaried firefighter who works a shift based rota, providing 24 hour emergency response from a fire station. Wholetime firefighters form the core response capability in higher risk or higher demand areas, including major urban centres.

Outer Cordon

The wider controlled perimeter established around an incident to manage public safety, restrict access and support emergency operations.

Peat Fire / Subsurface Fire

A fire that burns below ground level within peat layers. These fires can smoulder for long periods, are difficult to detect and may reemerge beyond visible fire boundaries.

Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG)

A multi-agency group responsible for setting strategic direction, priorities and oversight during major or critical incidents.

Tactical Coordinating Group (TCG)

A multi-agency group responsible for coordinating tactical activity and translating strategic intent into operational plans.

Unexploded Ordnance (UXO)

Military munitions that failed to detonate as intended and remain hazardous. During wildfires, exposure to heat can trigger detonation, significantly increasing risk to responders.

Wildfire Tactical Advisor (WTA)

A specialist role providing independent, evidence based advice to incident commanders on wildfire behaviour, tactics and safety.

SMEAC Briefing

A structured operational briefing format used during wildfire incidents, covering Situation, Mission, Execution, Administration and Command, supporting clear and consistent decision making.

Scan our QR code to find out more about North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service.

NORTH YORKSHIRE
FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

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