

Sent by email

Chair - North Yorkshire Local Resilience Forum
North Yorkshire Council
County Hall
Racecourse Lane
Northallerton
DL7 8AD

Thursday 18th June 2026

Dear Chair,

Report on the Fylingdales Moor Fire 2025

We hope you are well.

We are writing in response to the *Reports to the Fylingdales Moor Fire 2025* which has been published today. In addition to the thanks we have made separately to those who involved in the firefighting effort, including farmers, gamekeepers, volunteers and firefighters themselves, we would like to express further thanks to all the officers who have worked on this report and the many others who will have contributed to it. We'd particularly like to thank *[officer name withheld]*, who has been instrumental in ensuring partners from across the region were able to collaborate effectively during and since the fire.

The report is welcome following the most extensive, complex and devastating wildfire ever recorded in our county.

Indeed, we understand that in terms of carbon release it was the largest wildfire to date in England with 54,258 tonnes of CO₂ lost from our moorlands. As you rightly say in the report, it's vital where lessons are identified they are properly acknowledged so that services develop and that preparations for and prevention of future wildfire incidents are optimised. It is against that backdrop that we are sending these questions and observations in the hope they can be used constructively to enhance the work already undertaken during and since this incident by the Local Resilience Forum.

Local Resilience Forum (NYLRF)

The duties, structure and oversight of the NYLRF are set out in the Civil Contingencies Act of 2004. This predates the existence of the Mayoral Combined Authority, a gap which was identified in the UK Government Resilience Framework (2023), referenced in

the Devolution White Paper and highlighted following the Major Incident declaration of the Langdale/Fylingdales wildfire. Whilst some of this gap was quickly mitigated by the early inclusion of Combined Authority officers, there were no direct channels for information sharing and oversight for a regional direct elected Mayor who clearly has a formal role to ensure appropriate public accountability. Recommendation 7 identifies the problem but allocates responsibility to the communications cell. In our view, the gap was significantly more extensive than communications.

This is a gap that has been recognised nationally and included in the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act with Government intending to review the Civil Contingencies Act to '[work] with local leaders to clarify and strengthen the role of local government and mayors in local resilience.' A report is due to be presented to Parliament by March 2027.

We would therefore urge NYLRF to make representation to MHCLG in this vein to ensure the issues we faced and have set out in this statement are considered in the wider governmental review.

While operational expediency was clearly paramount, we were particularly concerned about the lack of any (even consultative) democratic oversight and scrutiny during this incident. This is something we believe should be considered, albeit while safeguarding and protecting the operational independence of emergency response.

Major incidents, regional mutual aid and national resilience

Consideration should be given to what a major incident declaration might trigger for a future wildfire, in particular regarding national resilience and resourcing support. North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service is a rural service across a large geographical area and is heavily reliant on on-call fire fighters. Will the NYLRF join us in making representation to the Government to ensure there is future consideration of automatic national resilience and community support being made available in areas affected by wildfires which reach the level of major incident, as there is for major flooding?

Additionally could the NYLRF address the following:

Did the LRF conclude that the escalation decision making processes in this fire were sufficient?

How can we ensure sufficient resources are made available quickly to reduce the risk of breaches / escalation of fires in the future – in what way was this considered by the LRF

and what was the conclusion? Have the risk assessment protocols been reassessed in light of this fire and consideration given to the way in which risks should be escalated as the risk of wider impact increases (i.e. to the environment or to businesses further afield who may be indirectly rather than directly affected by smoke etc)

The report refers to the escalation of risks to ensure funding from central Government was secured quickly, what is the learning from how these processes worked in this case and is there any learning about ensuring the right partners are provided with enough information to undertake this effectively on behalf of LRF partners?

Has consideration been given by the NYLRF to the point at which national resilience support was requested and whether this should be triggered automatically in the future for wildfires over a certain size or that lasts for more than a certain length of time?

Has consideration been given to whether particular proximity of national infrastructure assets should automatically require national resilience to be requested?

Health and welfare

There are no recommendations regarding the health impact from smoke from the fire included in the report. Could additional details from the health and welfare debrief be provided? In particular, was feedback sought from the businesses affected about whether perceived risks from smoke affected them and whether additional assurance was needed to minimise the impact on the tourism economy?

In appendix E to the report it is stated that there were three occasions where exposure levels were in excess the advised level “on the Whitby monitor” could this be clarified and additional information regarding the mitigations that were made as a result be confirmed? Is there a need for more localised air quality monitoring during a wildfire or were public health officials satisfied that they had localised enough monitoring of air quality to advise the public appropriately?

We note the references in the North Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service debrief to health and welfare but note that this is focused on firefighter welfare and safety. We will continue to engage directly with them on how to maximise responder welfare for firefighters and partners during a prolonged incident.

Has public health looked at the issue of partner health and welfare specifically and do they have any recommendations? What future mitigations might be needed in terms of availability of PPE for partners supporting firefighting effort and whether any minimum

health and safety expectations need to be included in partnership agreements? Which agency does the NYLRF think should lead on this work?

Environmental considerations

The environmental impact of this incident cannot be understated. It was the largest carbon emission from a wildfire ever recorded in England and the devastation to wildlife and the deep peat beds will take centuries to fully recover. Having already made representation to DEFRA for longer term investment in the prevention of wildfires, we welcome the £3.2 million to support the recovery efforts and firebreak reinstatement and are continuing to engage proactively with partners including Yorkshire Water and landowners about long term prevention work. Ensuring appropriate assessment of future risks to peat, as well as wider environmental consideration is imperative and already part of the work, we are seeking on wildfire prevention activities across our region.

Can the NYLRF make separate formal representations to the Government to request that the risk posed by carbon release is made a key consideration for the triggering of national resilience to support the prevention and fighting of wildfires?

The response sets out that environmental risks were discussed in recovery cells and appendix F details the impact itself to peatlands, archaeology, historic landscapes and rights of way, however there are no further recommendations included, is work taking place to identify learning and recommendations for the future, and if so, could we be provided with details of it, especially recommendations around the future protection of moorlands, and in particular of our National Parks?

We note from the NYFRS debrief that 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. We further note the NYFRS recommendation R2 regarding preparations for wildfires as well as wider reviewing of the equipment needed to deliver large volumes of water into remote areas. We have already begun the work of building stronger partnerships, through NYFRS, to ensure these risks are reduced going forwards but would be keen to ensure we work collaboratively with the NYLRF where appropriate. Did the recovery cell that covered infrastructure discuss water supply and were Yorkshire Water asked to respond? Please could the learning and recommendation from this work be shared?

Economic impacts, including road closures

We have engaged with many of the partners and stakeholders who were affected by the fire, including farmers, landowners and businesses as well as other political leaders in the areas affected by the fire. We welcome the work taking place to identify the wider recovery needs from this incident and would be happy to support this work wherever appropriate.

We note appendices G and H but believe there are recommendations and learning from both of these areas that are not currently included in the report. Notably;

Has consideration been given to whether limited public access could have been maintained via the A171 (such as for residents, or at certain times of day) where possible, rather than blanket bans for all but emergency services, especially when the diversion options were as long as they were at this incident? Consideration should also be given to the way in which the information is cascaded around roads that remain open during an incident, not purely the information on roads that are closed, as this is of equal value to the public at large.

What intelligence has been gathered to date on the business impact of the fire on the local economy (directly or indirectly), in particular given the smoke plume over much of the coast in one of the busiest times of the year for visitors and tourism? Has any compensation been provided or sought for those businesses affected directly or indirectly?

Communications

We believe there is significant learning about how communications was coordinated during the incident. Risks are identified in the report around the coordination of communications, but not the capacity of partners to delivery, the importance of being able to receive questions and concerns from key stakeholders, such as political representatives and that queries are responded to in a timely and accurate way. Are these issues also being considered in the NYLRF recommendations?

What consideration has the NYLRF given to the risks from mis and dis information from unauthorised sources and how to ensure communications are properly coordinated so the public has a clear source of trusted information and advice that is updated in a regular and timely way?

We note the debrief from the communications cell to *establish clear triggers and expectations for how Political Officials and Emergency Services coordinate their communication strategies during the initial phase of an incident*. It would be helpful to understand who the political officials are in the context of this recommendation?

How does the NYLRF plan to ensure that elected representatives, included the directly elected Mayor of York and North Yorkshire and Members of Parliament, particularly those who's constituencies are directly affected are kept informed with accurate information and advice to ensure amplification of messages to the public?

How are key stakeholders and the wider public being briefed on the recommendations in the report?

Prevention of future wildfires

As NYFRS detail in their debrief, the Fylingdales Moor wildfire represents one of the most significant and complex wildfire incidents managed by the service and required a sustained, coordinated and adaptable multi-agency response under challenging environmental, geographic and operational conditions. It is welcome that NYFRS are undertaking a review of the prevention and preparedness of the service and are calling for a national wildfire campaign, which we support.

Has the NYLRF considered separate recommendations around the prevention of future wildfire, particularly in terms of public information, working in partnership to amplify the work of the emergency services in this area or in other areas, such as education?

What is the view of the NYLRF around the sale of disposable BBQs in the county and whether these could require local licensing if they are to be sold in North Yorkshire?

Briefing and scrutiny

We were briefed on the separate NYFRS Langdale/Fylingdales Moor Wildfire Major Incident Debrief back in May and raised questions and provided comments in advance of its publication. For the reasons set out earlier, this was our only opportunity to feed into the formulation of the report. Had our position, and that of the Mayoral Combined Authority been clearer in this process, some of the questions set out in this statement may have been already answered. It would therefore be helpful to understand what the pre-publication scrutiny and oversight of the NYLRF report has been?

Please could we be provided with additional details from the debrief processes detailed? In particular we would like further assurances regarding:

- Debrief 1 – where and how does the Mayoral Combined Authority fit into this process and what was the learning from this incident, in terms of recommendations and how will these be actioned?

- Debrief 4 – political officials have been included but not elected representatives or those who hold public services to account, what was the learning from this incident in terms of recommendations around improving communications, risks from mis and dis information and how to ensure public confidence is maintained in the event of future major incidents of this kind?

Finally, we believe this report has a pivotal role to play in building and maintaining public confidence that agencies and services are reflecting and learning from this major incident. Can we therefore ask what engagement is taking place with local stakeholders – including businesses, farmers, landowners and elected representatives to ensure additional any further questions they may have can be addressed? Is separate scrutiny planned of the LRF workplans and recommendations on behalf of the public? If possible, we would like to ensure we are able to be involved in this work wherever possible.

We are also sending a copy of this letter to local MPs, Council Leaders and the Secretary's of State at the Cabinet Office, MHCLG and DEFRA whose teams have visited the fire site to ensure the wider learning and work taking place around the building of national resilience in this area includes all of the lessons from this wildfire.

We'd like to put on record again our thanks for all the work undertaken by NYLRF and to all those who have undertaken work on behalf of the NYLRF working groups.



David Skaith
Mayor of York
and North Yorkshire



Jo Coles
Deputy Mayor of York and North Yorkshire
for Policing, Fire and Crime