

MDA No.: 1626

Title: Letter regarding London Fire Brigade Summer Readiness

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 At the Fire Committee meeting on 11 July 2024, the Committee discussed London Fire Brigade (LFB) summer readiness and resolved that:

Authority be delegated to the Chair, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, to approve any output arising from the meeting.

- 1.2 Following consultation with the party Group Leaders, the Chair of the Fire Committee is asked to agree the letter to the London Fire Commissioner on summer readiness, as attached at **Appendix 1**.

2. Decision

- 2.1 **That the Chair of the Fire Committee, in consultation with party Group Lead Members, approves the letter to the London Fire Commissioner on summer readiness.**

Assembly Member

I confirm that I do not have any disclosable pecuniary interests in the proposed decision and take the decision in compliance with the Code of Conduct for elected Members of the Authority.

The above request has my approval.

Signature:



Printed Name:

Hina Bokhari AM, Chair of the Fire Committee

Date:

31 July 2024


3. Decision by an Assembly Member under Delegated Authority

Background and proposed next steps:

- 3.1 The exercise of delegated authority will be formally noted at the Fire Committee's next appropriate meeting.

Confirmation that appropriate delegated authority exists for this decision:

Signature (Committee Services):



Printed Name: Diane Richards

Date: 29 July 2024

Financial Implications: NOT REQUIRED

Note: Finance comments and signature are required only where there are financial implications arising or the potential for financial implications.


Signature (Finance): Not required

Printed Name: N/a

Date: N/a

Legal Implications:

The Chair of the Fire Committee has the power to make the decision set out in this report.

Signature (Legal): 

Printed Name: Rory McKenna Monitoring Officer

Date: 31.07.24

Email: Monitoringofficer@london.gov.uk

Supporting Detail / List of Consultees:

Susan Hall AM (Deputy Chairman), Anne Clarke AM and Zack Polanski AM

4. Public Access to Information

- 4.1 Information in this form (Part 1) is subject to the FoIA, or the EIR and will be made available on the GLA Website, usually within one working day of approval.
- 4.2 If immediate publication risks compromising the implementation of the decision (for example, to complete a procurement process), it can be deferred until a specific date. Deferral periods should be kept to the shortest length strictly necessary.
- 4.3 **Note:** this form (Part 1) will either be published within one working day after it has been approved or on the defer date.

Part 1 - Deferral:

Is the publication of Part 1 of this approval to be deferred? NO

Part 2 – Sensitive Information:

Only the facts or advice that would be exempt from disclosure under FoIA or EIR should be included in the separate Part 2 form, together with the legal rationale for non-publication.

Is there a part 2 form? NO

Lead Officer / Author

Signature: Philippa Goffee

Printed Name: Philippa Goffe

Job Title: Senior Policy Adviser

Date: 31 July 2024

Countersigned by Executive Director:

Signature:



Printed Name: Helen Ewen

Date: 31 July 2024



Hina Bokhari AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

Andy Roe KFSM
London Fire Commissioner
London Fire Brigade

(Sent by email)

1 August 2024

Dear Andy,

I am writing to you on behalf of the London Assembly's Fire Committee (the Committee) following its recent meeting on 11 July 2024 looking into London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) summer readiness.

In our meeting, the Committee took evidence from guests from Madrid, Finland and Surrey Fire and Rescue Services, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) as well as LFB Deputy Commissioners Jonathan (Jon) Smith and Charlie Pugsley. In this meeting, the Committee was keen to assure itself that when London is again confronted with extreme heat similar to that of July 2022, the LFB is prepared, and London's firefighters are equipped with the best available tools and equipment to keep London and Londoners safe.

Updates to London Fire Brigade since July 2022 Major Incident

The Committee welcomes the details Charlie and Jon were able to provide regarding developments in training since the July 2022 major incident and its review, its data driven approach to fighting wildfires as well as how LFB is working with partners across London. The Committee was also particularly encouraged by Charlie and Jon's comments around learning from both national and international partners. Despite this progress, the Committee remains concerned that firefighters still do not have the lightweight PPE identified as necessary in the major incident review two years on.

The Committee would welcome assurances from you that the trials of lightweight PPE currently running in the east of London are concluded and the resulting decisions over procurement taken quickly.

Please could you write to the Committee with a timeline for when these decisions will be made, and London's firefighters will be equipped with the best available equipment that will allow them to do what is an incredibly challenging job. This includes ensuring that appropriate PPE is available for women firefighters.

The Committee heard from Gareth Cook, Regional Secretary of the London Fire Brigades Union, about the Union's view that there should be a UK-wide wildfire strategy.¹ He told us this was needed to deliver:

"the correct level of funding to allow...research to take place. The research will obviously give us the equipment that we need, the tactics that we need, as you have seen today from some other international colleagues, there is a lot to be learned. Climate change is very real."

"There are all sorts of issues at the moment and we need to be agile."²

The Committee is also concerned that climate change will raise the risks of wildfire and add further pressure to LFB during periods of extreme weather.

Can you please advise the Committee if you:

- support the FBU's view that we need a national strategy for wildfires
- will be pressing the Government to prioritise a national strategy for wildfires in the light of climate change and to provide more support to fire and rescue services in preparing for this risk.

Land Management Practices

The Committee also heard about how important land management is in managing the risk from wildfires. Matthew Oakley, National Tactical Advisor for Wildfire, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, told the Committee, "land management and engaging with stakeholders is key."³ Marli Holland, Rural Affairs Officer, Surrey Fire and Rescue Service, told the Committee about the work she does to engage with land managers and local communities in preparation and readiness for summer heat and potential wildfires. For example, Marli told the Committee:

"Within Surrey alone, we have 37 risk sites; they are all based on high, medium, and low risk, and that is based off previous incident data. We encourage crews to attend, meet the land managers, get familiar with the site. We are talking about vehicles going off site, getting used to the vehicles just in case, should we need to attend, we know what we are doing and where to go."⁴

Luis Rincón, Inspector of Operations, Comunidad de Madrid Fire Brigade, moreover told the Committee about the preventative work the Madrid Fire Brigade does during the winter on the land around the Madrid region.⁵

¹ Fire Brigades Union, [Report: UK woefully under-prepared to face increasing risk of wildfires](#), September 2023

² [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 2](#), p2 - 3

³ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 2](#), p2

⁴ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 2](#), p4

⁵ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 1](#), p4

In the Committee's meeting, Jon was asked about how LFB engages with land managers in the local community. In response Jon referred to LFB's Borough Commanders and how they "are a key component of ... community safety partnerships."⁶ He added "We do not have statutory powers to mandate in terms of land management but what we can do is point out very clearly where we think there are areas that we have concerns about."⁷

Jon spoke about the need for "close collaboration" and how borough management plans are now underpinned by 'station delivery plans' which have been introduced from 1 July this year and told us these are seasonal to reflect local issues.⁸

Charlie told us that LFB has written to London's local authorities three years in a row about the need to manage open spaces. He went on to say that a "central toolkit" has been provided to Borough Commanders that goes through things they can do "to get really good engagement."⁹ He added that it provides materials that can be printed out and used locally which is "supported by information on our website on things like grass and wildfires as well."¹⁰

The Committee requests sight of:


- the letter sent to local authorities this year;
- a station delivery plan from a station located in an area at risk of fires in a period of heat; and
- the toolkit on engagement provided to Borough Commanders.

As part of the preparation for the meeting, we used the data you supply to the London Datastore to abstract information on the prevalence of fires in open and public spaces in London and how these have impacted LFB.

Our Research Unit provided us with a visualisation pack to help show how fire incidents in open spaces in London during summer months have impacted LFB in recent years. This was used to inform Members of the Committee ahead of the meeting. We are providing the pack as an attachment to this letter for your information.

I would be grateful if you could please respond to the Committee by 29 August 2024. Your response should be copied to Philippa Goffe, the Committee's Senior Policy Adviser (philippa.goffe@london.gov.uk).

Yours,



⁶ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p7

⁷ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p7

⁸ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p7

⁹ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p8

¹⁰ [Fire Committee meeting draft transcript 11 July 2024 Appendix 3](#), p8

Hina Bokhari AM
Chair of the Fire Committee

cc Jonathan Smith
Deputy Commissioner and Operational Director for Preparedness and Response,
London Fire Brigade

Charlie Pugsley, Deputy Commissioner and Director of Prevention, Protection and
Operational Policy, London Fire Brigade

About this paper

This paper has been produced for the Fire Committee by the London Assembly Research Unit. The Research Unit provides an impartial, specialist research and analysis service to support the work of the Assembly and inform Londoners.

The analysis set out in this paper was initially undertaken to support the Committee's meeting on 11 July 2024 to discuss the London Fire Brigade's (LFB's) preparedness for dealing with potential fires over the summer period, particularly in light of the experience during the heatwaves of 2022 in London. The LFB is London's fire and rescue service, overseen by the London Fire Commissioner, which is a functional body of the Greater London Authority and appointed by the Mayor of London.

The purpose of the analysis was to understand how many outdoor fires the LFB has been required to attend in recent years, where in London these incidents have occurred, and the relationship to the weather in the city, particularly instances of very high temperatures.

Definitions and available data

There is no single definition of the term 'wildfire'. In the UK, the term is used in the UK context to describe 'any uncontrolled vegetation fire which requires a decision, or action, regarding suppression' [1]. In a global context, the term would describe fires occurring in 'wildland', although this is less relevant to the UK. The National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), representing all fire and rescue services, defines wildfires as fires that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- Involves a geographical area of at least one hectare (10,000 square metres)
- Has a sustained flame length of more than 1.5 metres
- Requires a committed resource of at least four fire and rescue service appliances/resources
- Requires resources to be committed for at least six hours
- Presents a serious threat to life, environment, property, and infrastructure. [2]

There are difficulties in capturing data on wildfires, based on these definitions. The data used in this analysis is primarily drawn from London Fire Brigade incident records, published on the London Datastore [3]. This includes information on some of the criteria used by the NFCC, but not all. This data does include information on the location and nature of the fire (that is, what is on fire) and LFB's response.

A strict interpretation of the NFCC definition would almost certainly limit the number of 'wildfires' in London to very small numbers, which is to be expected in a dense urban environment. This analysis, therefore, includes outdoor fires taking place in London that involve vegetation. These are often still very serious incidents that present a threat to Londoners, require a response from LFB and, as the analysis shows, have occurred more frequently when temperatures are higher.

[1] Belcher et al, [UK wildfires and their climate challenges. Expert Led Report Prepared for the third Climate Change Risk Assessment](#), 2021

[2] NFCC, [Wildfire Aware](#), accessed 16 July 2024

[3] London Fire Brigade, [LFB Incident Records](#), accessed 16 July 2024

Data gathering

Data on fires was gathered from [LFB's incident records](#) which can be found on the London Datastore. For the purpose of this analysis the data was filtered along the following lines:

- Incident: Fire
- Property Category: Outdoor
- Property Type: beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest broadleaf/hardwood, woodland/forest conifers/softwood.

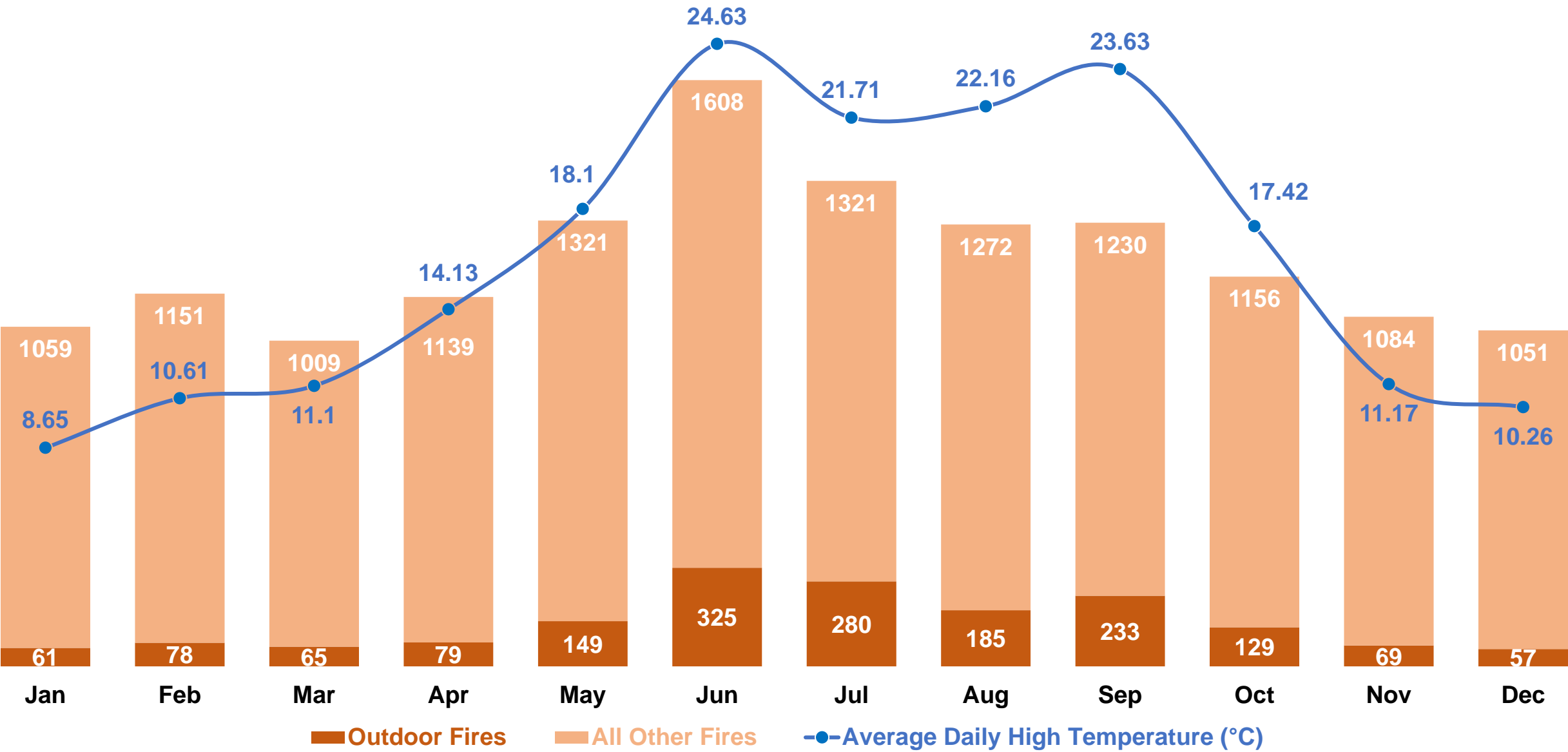
The visualisations refer to the fires captured by these filters as “outdoor fires” or “incidents”.

The aim was to capture fires that occurred in less managed area, which is why gardens were excluded from this analysis.

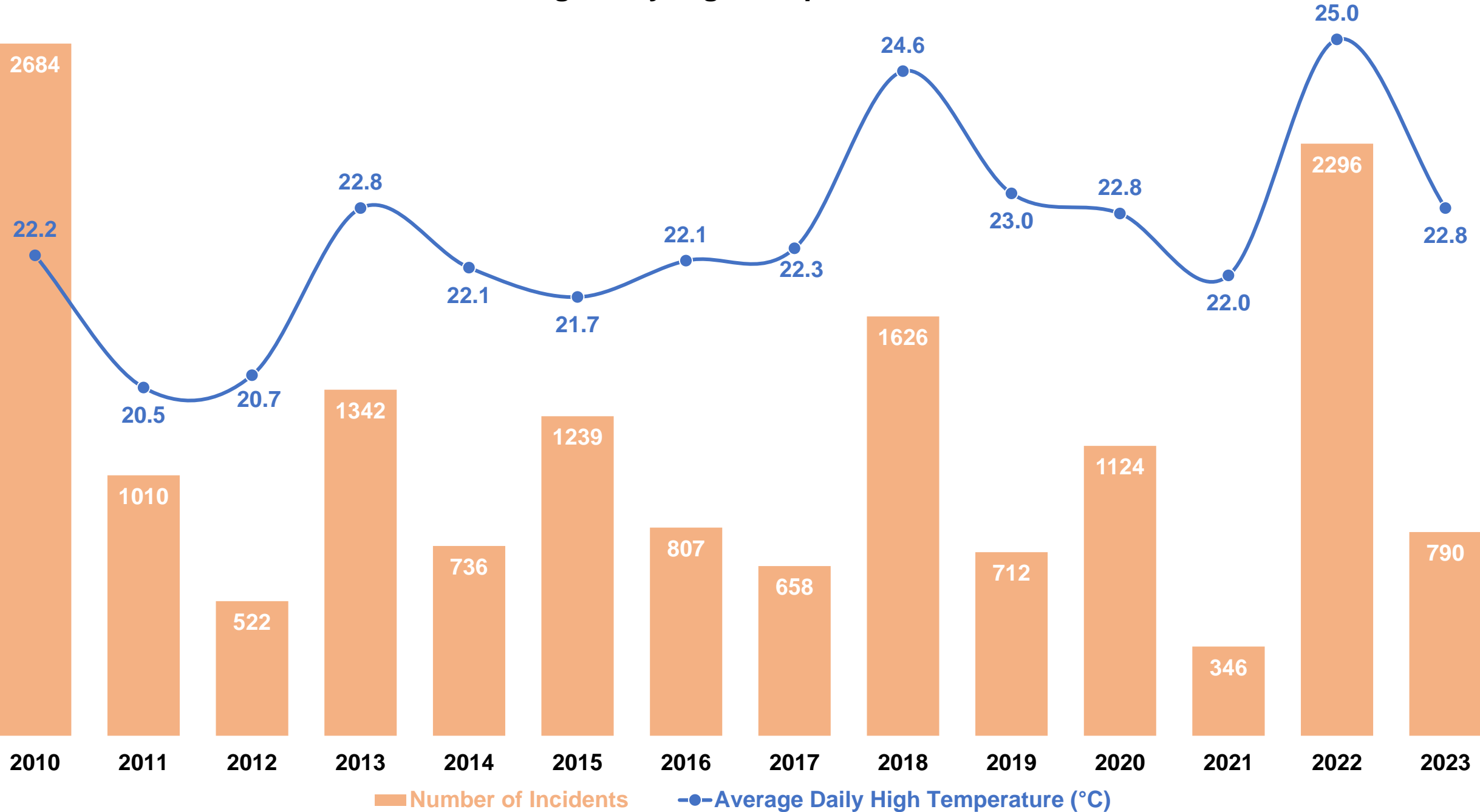
For the purpose of this analysis the meteorological summer is used. This covers the 1 June to 31 August[4]. These date range is referred to as the “summer period” in the visualisations.

[4] Met Office, [When does summer start?](#), accessed 18 July 2024

2023 Monthly Fires and Average Daily High Temperatures



Summer Period Outdoor Fires and Average Daily High Temperatures



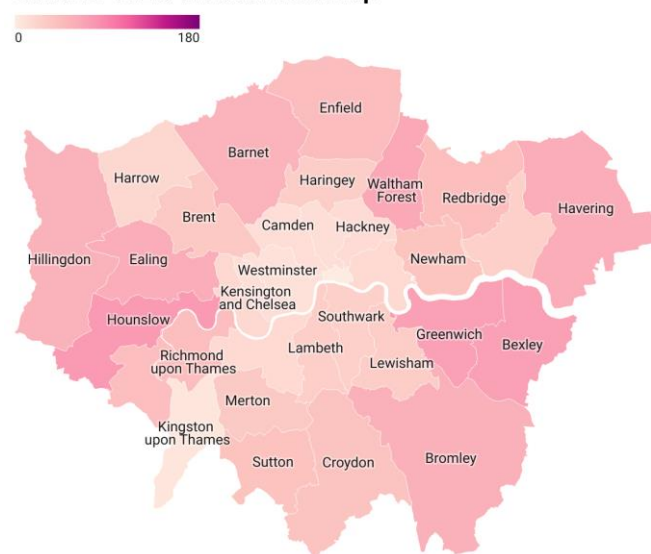
Summer 2020 saw temperatures which were slightly higher than average, especially during June and August. However, June and July were relatively wet months.

Summer 2021 was warmer than average, however there were periods of heavier than average rainfall. July in particular was wetter than normal, with some areas of the UK experiencing twice the average rainfall.

Summer 2022 was warmer than average and saw intense hot spells in each month. A UK record was set on the 19th July when temperatures reached 40.3 °C. The UK also experienced little rain throughout most of July and early August. This combination of intense heat and less rainfall might have contributed to the sharp increase in outdoor fires seen throughout London.

The summer of 2023 saw mixed weather. June 2023 was the UK's warmest and fourth sunniest on record. However, July was cool and wet, and August saw mixed weather.

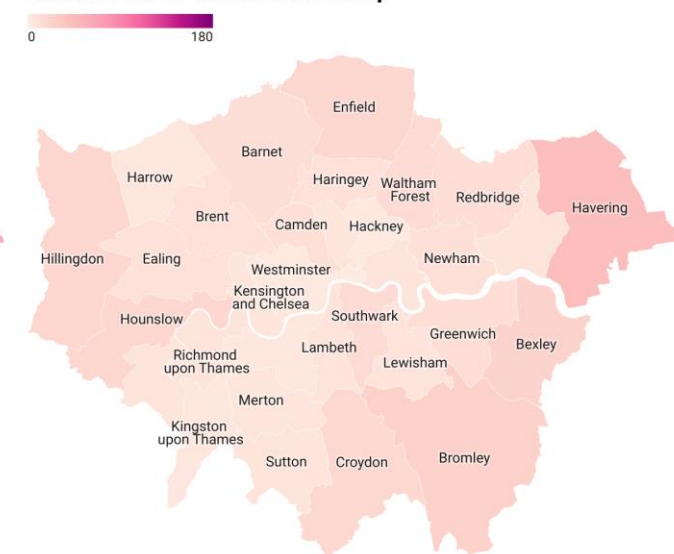
Summer 2020: Incident Heat Map



Incidents were filtered to include the following 'property types': beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest.

Map: Research Unit • Source: London Datastore • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2018 • Created with Datawrapper

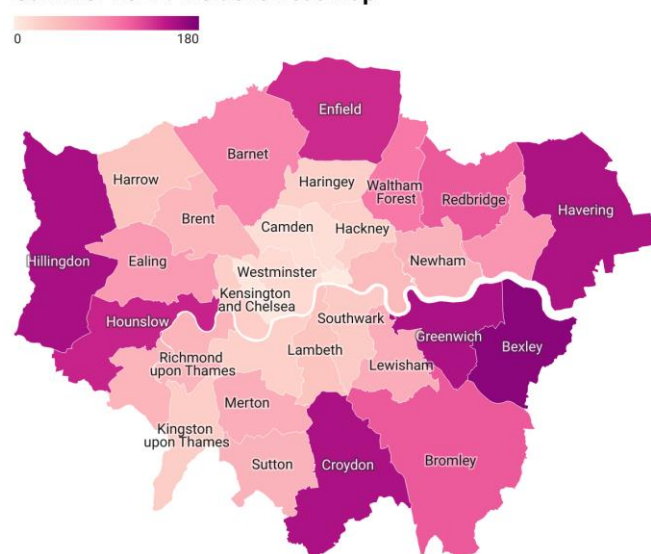
Summer 2021: Incident Heat Map



Incidents were filtered to include the following 'property types': beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest.

Map: Research Unit • Source: London Datastore • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2018 • Created with Datawrapper

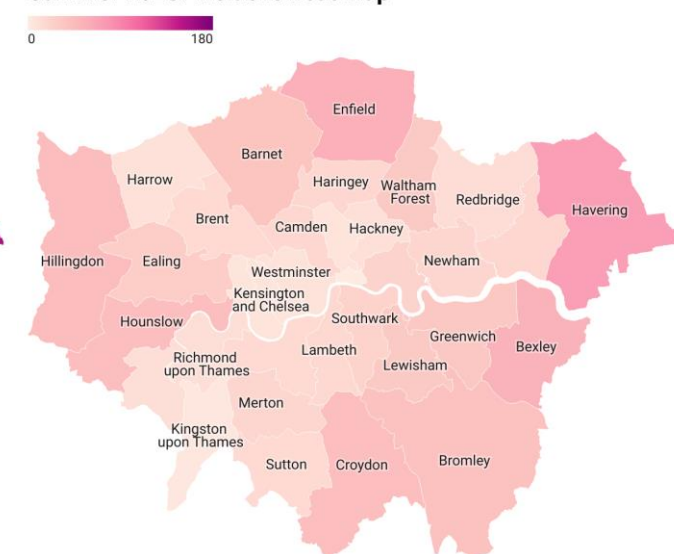
Summer 2022: Incident Heat Map



Incidents were filtered to include the following 'property types': beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest.

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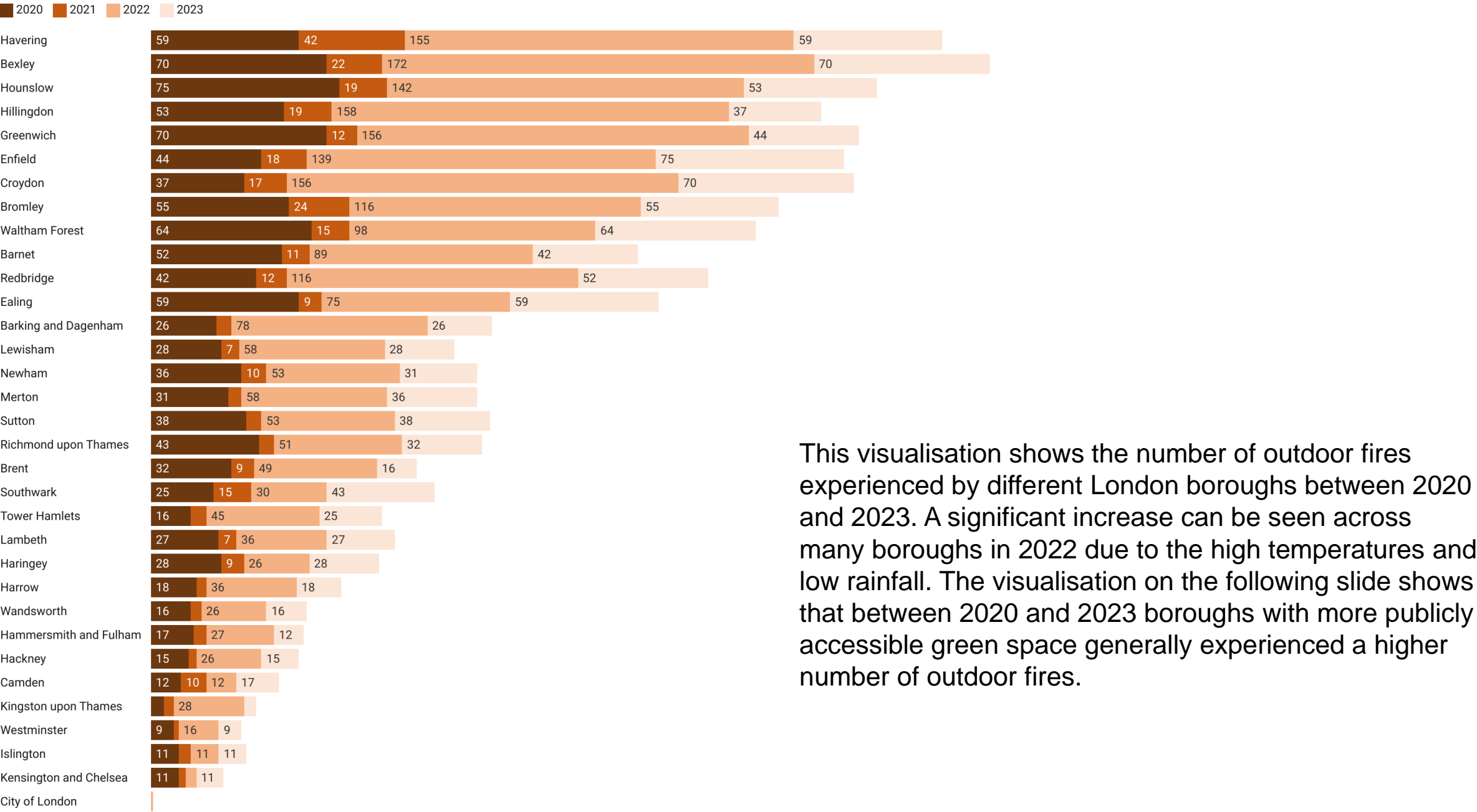
Summer 2023: Incident Heat Map



Incidents were filtered to include the following 'property types': beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest.

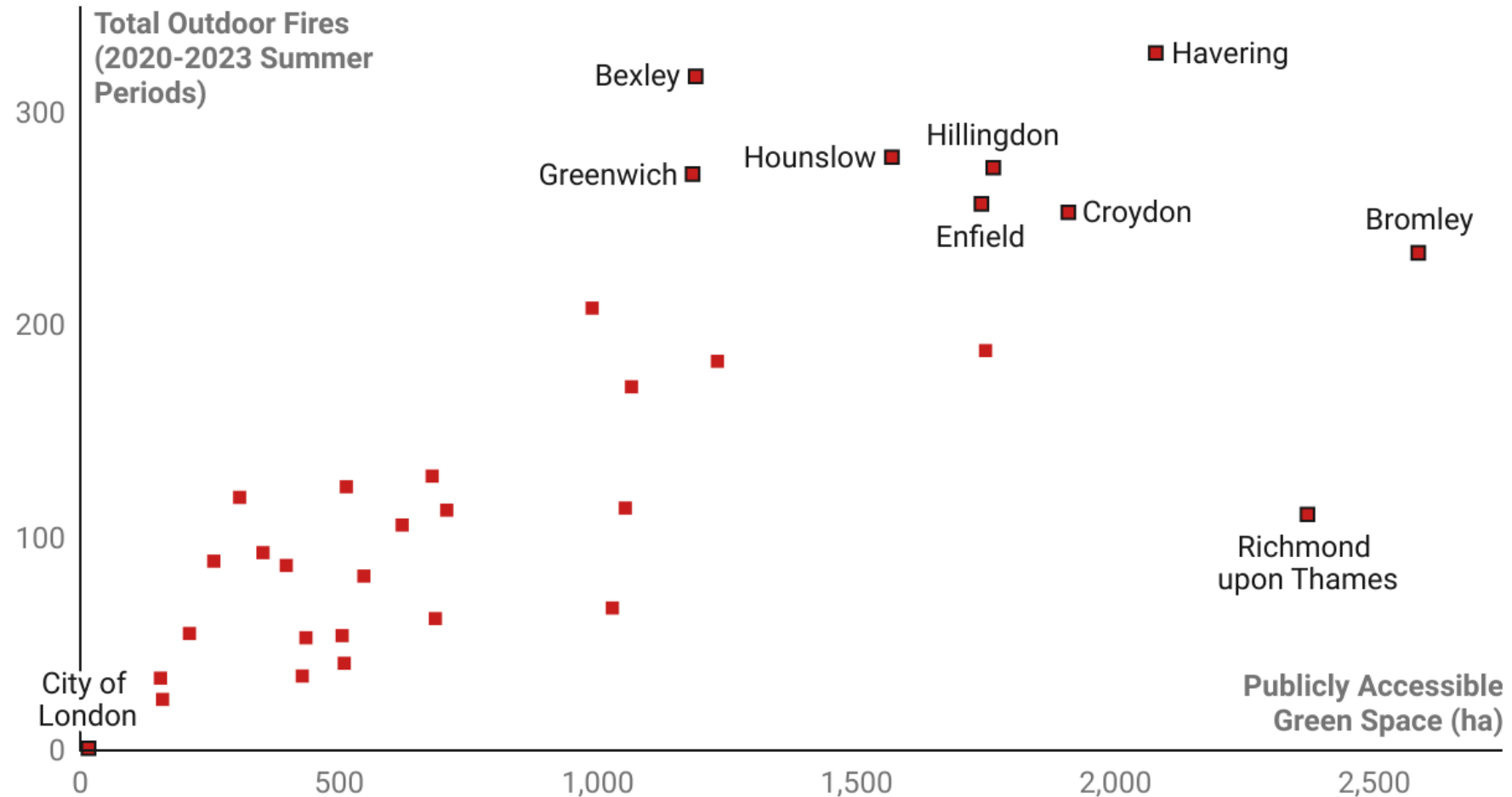
Map: Research Unit • Source: London Datastore • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2018 • Created with Datawrapper

Number of outdoor fires by borough (2020-2023 Summer Periods)



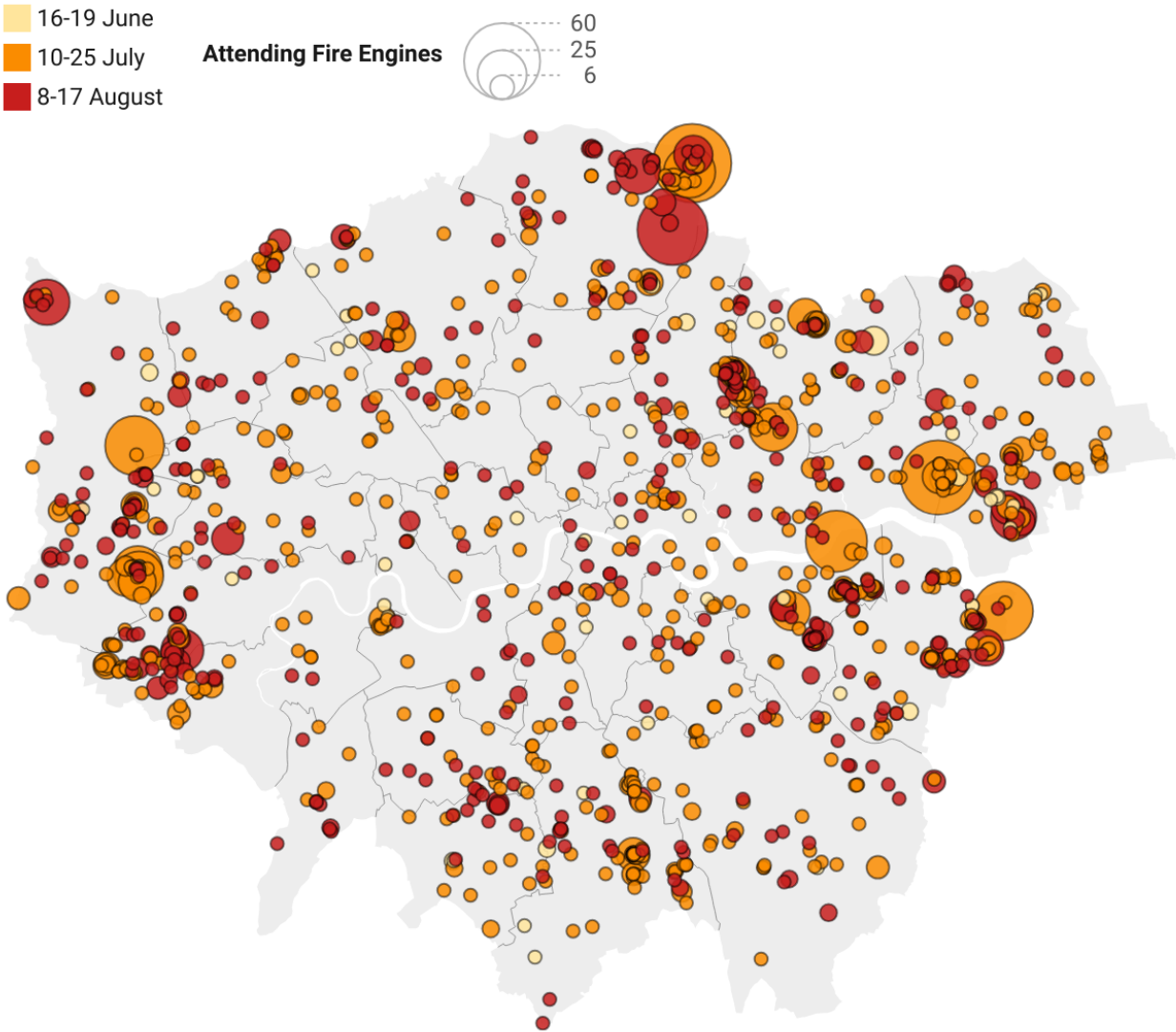
This visualisation shows the number of outdoor fires experienced by different London boroughs between 2020 and 2023. A significant increase can be seen across many boroughs in 2022 due to the high temperatures and low rainfall. The visualisation on the following slide shows that between 2020 and 2023 boroughs with more publicly accessible green space generally experienced a higher number of outdoor fires.

Number of Outdoor Fires and Publicly Accessible Green Space



Incidents were filtered to include the following 'property types': beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest.

Incident Map: 2022 Heatwaves



Incidents were filtered to include the following 'property types': beach, canal/riverbank vegetation, cemetery, golf course, grassland/pasture/grazing etc, heathland, hedge, lake/pond/reservoir, park, playground/recreation area (not equipment), railway trackside vegetation, roadside vegetation, scrub land, tree scrub, wasteland, woodland/forest. The heatwave dates were chosen to cover periods when London was covered by a Level 3 Heat Health Alert (HHA) or above.

Map: Research Unit • Source: London Datastore • Map data: © Crown copyright and database right 2018 • Created with Datawrapper

The summer of 2022 saw a series of intense heatwaves. This visualisation shows the three periods during which London was covered by a Level 3 Heat Health Alert (HHA). The second heatwave also saw a Level 4 HHA issued from the 16-19 July and a UK record was set when a temperature of 40.3°C was recorded. These high temperatures were also combined with relatively low levels of rainfall, with 86mm being recorded across the summer months. This is compared to 191.6mm in 2021 and 171.2mm in 2023.

During these three heatwaves the LFB was called to an average of 38.4 outdoor fires per day. On Saturday 13 August the LFB attended 75 outdoor fires. On Tuesday 19 July the LFB reporting experiencing its busiest day since World War Two. It received 2,670 calls during the day, compared to an average of 350. In response the LFB asked the public not to hold barbeques or bonfires. Many retailers stopped selling disposable barbeques.

Data Sources

- London Datastore, [London Fire Brigade Incident Records](#), accessed June 2024
- Met Office, [Climate Summaries](#), accessed July 2024
- Met Office, [Climate Station Data Heathrow](#), accessed July 2024
- Office for National Statistics, [Excess mortality during heat-periods: 1 June to 31 August 2022](#), accessed July 2024
- Timeanddate, [Past Weather in London](#), accessed June 2024
- Vivideconomics, [Natural capital accounts for public green space in London](#), October 2017