

#BringAPicnicNotABBQ

If British Summer Time and warmer days means you will be visiting one of Dorset & Wiltshire's local heathlands or outdoors spaces to enjoy the wildlife and wilderness, please take a picnic.

Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) are encouraging residents and visitors to take a picnic and not BBQ. Warmer and breezy weather increases the risk of accidental or deliberate fires in our open spaces. A wildfire can move at speeds faster than an Olympic sprinter, so we are asking people who are out and about to follow some simple steps:

- If you are enjoying our open spaces when a fire occurs, get to a safe place and call 999 with as much information as possible.
- Consider downloading and using What3Words to identify your exact location.
- You can also help by reporting any antisocial behaviour on the heath to the Police on 101.

During 2021, DWFRS dealt with 494 fires in the open. In 2022, we have already seen large wildfires in Dorset & Wiltshire and firefighters across the UK have dealt with more wildfires between January and May than in the whole of 2021 (243 compared to 237 in 2021).

Area Manager Marc House, Head of Prevention at DWFRS said: "As we move into the summer, with longer daylight hours and warmer weather, understandably more people want to get out and use Dorset & Wiltshire's natural environments. There is a trend that the number of deliberately set fires and fires caused by BBQs and bonfires in these open spaces, increases.

He added: "I cannot stress enough how important it is to take extra care when enjoying our beautiful open and forestry areas. If you are a smoker, please extinguish them fully before disposing of them responsibly – never ever just throw them away lit, similar to throwing them out from car windows – the result could be 50 or 100 firefighters tackling the subsequent blaze."

Anyone caught starting a fire on a heath will be prosecuted whether it is a case of deliberate arson or neglect, for example an unauthorised camp fire or a disposable BBQ that gets out of control. Wildfires cost lives not only to endangered plants and animals but also put people and houses in danger.

We need your help to protect our countryside. Please #BringAPicnicNotABBQ