Birdlip Parish Council

Clerk@Birdlippc.org.uk

Summer Drought and Wildfire Emergency Plan

Parish: Birdlip, Gloucestershire
Plan period: Summer / periods of drought and elevated wildfire risk
Responsible body: Birdlip Parish Council
Review: Annually and following any significant incident

1. Purpose of the Plan

The purpose of this plan is to help Birdlip Parish Council and the local community prepare for and respond to an emergency arising from prolonged hot and dry weather, drought, grassland fires or wildfires.

Birdlip is surrounded by open countryside, grassland, woodland and areas of vegetation which can become extremely dry during prolonged periods of hot weather. A wildfire could spread rapidly and may affect roads, properties, utilities and access routes into and out of the village.

The primary objective of this plan is **the protection of life and the safe evacuation of residents and visitors**.

This plan is intended to complement, rather than replace, the plans and instructions of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service, Gloucestershire County Council, the Police and other emergency services.

Where there is an immediate threat to life, residents should **call 999 and follow the instructions of the emergency services**.

---

2. Emergency Priorities

In the event of a wildfire or other serious summer emergency, the priorities for Birdlip Parish Council will be:

1. **Protect life and facilitate evacuation.**
2. Ensure residents are aware of official emergency instructions.
3. Identify and communicate safe evacuation routes.
4. Give particular consideration to elderly, vulnerable or mobility-impaired residents.
5. Assist emergency services by providing local information about access routes and affected areas.
6. Keep residents informed through available communication channels.
7. Prevent residents from entering areas affected by fire, smoke or emergency operations.
8. Support the community during the immediate aftermath and recovery period.

The Parish Council will **not direct residents into an evacuation route where emergency services have advised that route is unsafe**. Conditions during a wildfire can change rapidly, and the emergency services will have priority in determining safe routes.

---

3. Wildfire Risk

The risk of wildfire increases during periods of:

- prolonged hot and dry weather;
- drought conditions;
- very dry grass, hedgerows, woodland and vegetation;
- strong winds;
- exceptionally high temperatures;
- discarded cigarettes or other sources of ignition;
- bonfires or uncontrolled fires;
- barbecues or campfires in unsuitable locations;
- deliberate fire setting.

Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service advises that people should not attempt to tackle a countryside fire themselves and should call 999 immediately if they see a fire.

---

4. Early Warning and Monitoring

During periods of particularly high fire risk, the Parish Council should monitor:

- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service information;
- Gloucestershire County Council emergency information;
- Police information;
- official weather and drought warnings;
- local reports of fires or smoke;
- road closures and access restrictions.

Residents should be encouraged to keep their phones available for emergency alerts and to monitor official sources.

The Parish Council should avoid relying solely on social media for emergency information. Information received from residents should be checked against official information wherever possible before being circulated.

---

5. Immediate Action if a Wildfire is Seen

Anyone seeing a fire in the countryside should:

CALL 999 IMMEDIATELY.

Give:

- the location of the fire;
- the nearest road, landmark or identifiable location;
- an indication of the size and direction of the fire, if this can be safely established;
- any information about buildings, people or roads that may be at risk.

Residents should **not approach the fire or attempt to extinguish it**.

If smoke or fire is approaching a property, residents should follow instructions from the emergency services and evacuate when instructed.

---

6. Birdlip Evacuation Strategy

Birdlip has a number of roads and lanes which may potentially be affected by a wildfire. The direction of travel required during an emergency will depend upon the location and movement of the fire.

There must therefore be no assumption that the normal route out of the village will always be available.

Residents should be familiar with more than one possible means of leaving their immediate area.

The Parish Council should identify and maintain an up-to-date map showing:

- primary evacuation routes;
- alternative evacuation routes;
- pedestrian routes;
- routes suitable for emergency vehicles;
- areas potentially vulnerable to wildfire;
- locations of vulnerable residents, where appropriate and with due regard to privacy;
- possible assembly or reception points;
- locations of water supplies, hydrants and other relevant emergency infrastructure where known.

---

7. Parson's Pitch / Hawcote Hill Area – Alternative Evacuation Routes

Particular consideration should be given to residents living around **Parson's Pitch and the Hawcote Hill end of the village**, as access to the main village could potentially be restricted if a fire affected the normal route.

If the route into the main village is blocked:

Residents in the Parson's Pitch / Hawcote Hill area should **not attempt to drive or walk through smoke or fire**.

Two alternative routes have been identified for consideration, subject always to the instructions of the emergency services and the conditions at the time.

Route A – Pedestrian Evacuation

Residents able to evacuate on foot may use the **pedestrian exit at the end of Cirencester Road**.

This provides an alternative means of leaving the area without relying on access through the main village.

Residents should only use this route if it is clear and safe to do so and if it has not been closed by the emergency services.

Route B – Vehicular Evacuation

Where vehicle evacuation is appropriate and the route is safe, an alternative vehicular exit is available via the **lane next to Birdlip View**, leading towards **Ruby's Hawcote Barn**.

This route may provide an alternative means of escape if the normal access towards the main village is unavailable.

The route must only be used if it is safe and accessible. Emergency services may close or restrict this route depending upon the location and direction of the fire.

Residents should never drive towards smoke or flames in order to reach an alternative route.

---

8. Evacuation Principles

If an evacuation is required:

Residents should:

- leave promptly when instructed;
- follow the instructions of the emergency services;
- take essential medication and important personal items if there is time;
- take pets with them where possible;
- assist neighbours who may require help, where it is safe to do so;
- keep roads clear for emergency vehicles;
- use the evacuation route advised by the emergency services;
- keep away from areas affected by fire and smoke.

Residents should not:

- delay evacuation to collect possessions;
- attempt to defend their property against a wildfire;
- enter a closed road or restricted area;
- use a route that is visibly affected by fire or heavy smoke;
- block access roads with parked vehicles;
- return home until advised that it is safe.

Gloucestershire County Council's household emergency guidance similarly advises residents to leave quickly and calmly when instructed to evacuate and to follow emergency-service instructions.

---

9. Vulnerable Residents

Particular consideration should be given to residents who may require assistance to evacuate, including:

- elderly residents;
- people with mobility difficulties;
- residents without access to a vehicle;
- residents living alone;
- families with young children;
- residents with disabilities;
- residents requiring regular medication;

- residents with animals or livestock.

The Parish Council will establish a **voluntary community assistance register**, with residents able to identify themselves or a neighbour who may require assistance during an emergency.

Any such information must be held securely and used only for legitimate emergency planning purposes.

The Parish Council should encourage neighbours to check on each other during periods of extreme heat and elevated fire risk.

---

10. Vehicles and Parking During an Emergency

During periods of high wildfire risk, residents should be reminded:

- not to park where vehicles could obstruct emergency access;
- to keep narrow lanes clear;
- not to leave vehicles blocking turning areas;
- to consider whether vehicles can be moved quickly if evacuation becomes necessary.

The Parish Council should liaise with Gloucestershire County Council and emergency services regarding any locations where parking could significantly obstruct emergency access.

---

11. Community Communication

If an incident occurs, the Parish Council, after communicating with emergency services, should use available communication methods to provide residents with verified information.

These may include:

- Parish Council website;
- Parish Council social media;
- village communication groups;
- direct contact with vulnerable residents where appropriate;
- liaison with local community organisations.

Emergency information should clearly state:

WHAT HAS HAPPENED
WHICH AREA IS AFFECTED
WHETHER EVACUATION IS REQUIRED
WHICH ROUTES ARE CLOSED
WHERE RESIDENTS SHOULD GO
WHERE OFFICIAL INFORMATION CAN BE FOUND

Information should not be circulated unless it is reasonably verified, particularly information concerning road closures or evacuation routes.

---

12. Emergency Assembly / Reception Point

The Parish Council should agree in advance with Gloucestershire County Council and the emergency services an appropriate **emergency reception or assembly location** outside the immediate wildfire risk area.

The location should be capable of accommodating evacuated residents and should be accessible to emergency and support services.

The location should **not be regarded as a fixed evacuation destination** until it has been confirmed as safe by the emergency services.

If an official rest centre or reception centre is established, residents should follow the instructions provided by the emergency services and local authority.

---

13. Parish Council Emergency Response

On receiving information about a significant wildfire, the Parish Council should:

1. Establish whether emergency services are already in attendance.
2. Contact the appropriate emergency planning arrangements where necessary.
3. Obtain verified information about the location and direction of the fire.
4. Identify which parts of Birdlip may be affected.
5. Communicate official information to residents.
6. Give particular consideration to vulnerable residents.
7. Monitor access and evacuation routes.
8. Liaise with Gloucestershire County Council regarding road closures and emergency access.
9. Keep a record of significant decisions and information received.
10. Continue to provide community support during the recovery phase.

The Parish Council should never put Councillors, volunteers or residents at risk by asking them to enter an area affected by fire.

Gloucestershire County Council specifically advises communities that volunteers should not undertake activities that place themselves or others at risk.

---

14. Drought and Extreme Heat Measures

During prolonged drought conditions, the Parish Council should encourage residents to:

- conserve water;
- avoid unnecessary use of water;
- follow any water company restrictions;
- avoid outdoor burning;
- avoid bonfires during periods of high fire risk;
- take care when using barbecues;
- never discard cigarettes in grass or vegetation;
- report fires immediately;
- keep access routes clear;
- check on vulnerable neighbours during periods of extreme heat.

Particular care should be taken around dry grassland, hedgerows, woodland edges and other areas of combustible vegetation.

---

15. Liaison with Emergency Services

The Parish Council should seek to ensure that the plan is shared with, and reviewed where appropriate by:

- Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service;
- Gloucestershire County Council Emergency Planning Team;
- Gloucestershire Police;
- relevant landowners and land managers;
- local community organisations.

Gloucestershire County Council encourages communities developing emergency plans to work with local emergency services so that community arrangements complement official emergency preparedness and response arrangements.

---

16. Important Local Evacuation Information

Parson's Pitch / Hawcote Hill

If the normal route towards the main village is blocked:

ON FOOT

Use the **pedestrian exit at the end of Cirencester Road**, if safe and open.

BY VEHICLE

Use the **lane next to Birdlip View towards Ruby's Hawcote Barn**, if safe and open.

DO NOT USE EITHER ROUTE IF IT IS AFFECTED BY FIRE, HEAVY SMOKE OR HAS BEEN CLOSED BY THE EMERGENCY SERVICES.

ALWAYS FOLLOW THE DIRECTIONS OF THE EMERGENCY SERVICES.

---

17. Key Emergency Message for Residents

IF YOU SEE A WILDFIRE:

CALL 999

DO NOT ATTEMPT TO FIGHT THE FIRE.

MOVE AWAY FROM THE FIRE AND SMOKE.

FOLLOW EMERGENCY SERVICE INSTRUCTIONS.

IF EVACUATION IS ORDERED, LEAVE PROMPTLY.

DO NOT RETURN UNTIL YOU ARE TOLD IT IS SAFE.

---

18. Plan Review

This plan should be reviewed:

- annually before the summer period;
- following any wildfire or significant fire incident;
- following changes to roads or access routes;
- following significant development within the parish;
- following advice from Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service or Gloucestershire County Council;
- whenever an evacuation route becomes unavailable or a new route is identified.

The Parish Council should also consider undertaking a **walk-through of the identified evacuation routes** before the summer period to ensure that routes remain accessible and clearly understood.

Action for Birdlip Parish Council

The Parish Council should seek confirmation from Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and Gloucestershire County Council that the proposed evacuation routes, particularly the pedestrian route at the end of Cirencester Road and the vehicular route via the lane next to Birdlip View towards Ruby's Hawcote Barn, are suitable to be identified within the community emergency plan.

In the event of a Major Incident being declared, the Parish Council will work alongside the local Command Centre following their instructions.

This plan is a community preparedness document and does not override instructions issued by the emergency services during an actual incident.