

Landmark climate review calls for “reset moment” following election to prepare London for more deadly floods and heatwaves

- The London Climate Resilience Review, an independent report commissioned by the Mayor of London, publishes its full and final report
- Emma Howard Boyd CBE, Chair of the Review and former Chair of the Environment Agency, says preparing London for more frequent and extreme climate risks is “non-negotiable” and the new government should embrace the opportunity for a reset moment on UK climate resilience
- Review says in July 2022 when London hit 40°C, there was a 50% increase in water consumption while reservoirs were at their lowest for 30 years and wildfires pushed the London Fire Brigade to its limits
- Report highlights opportunities for investment in London and growth in key sectors but warns time is running out
- Recommendations include an official heat plan for London to enable the city to better deal with severe floods and heatwaves

Today [Wednesday 17 July], the London Climate Resilience Review has published its full and final report into London’s preparedness for climate impacts including heatwaves, floods, droughts, wildfires, storms, sea level rise and subsidence. The Mayor of London called for the Review after parts of London received more than twice the average July rainfall in 2021, and Londoners died in 2022’s 40°C heatwave.

Alongside immediate dangers to people’s lives and livelihoods the Review found that government and businesses have not adequately planned for the disruption caused when severe weather impacts “cascade” through critical systems like healthcare, transport, energy and water.

Key points in the London Climate Resilience Review:

- Climate impacts in London happen together. The 40°C heatwave occurred at the same time as drought and wildfires, and heatwaves are often followed by flash flooding.
- The new government’s plans to build more homes and better infrastructure must include updating resilience and technical standards to cope with the weather extremes London can expect in the coming decades.
- The UK’s ageing population, and particularly older people over 65 in care homes, are at the highest risk of heat-related mortality.
- London and the whole of the south-east of England needs a new reservoir.
- The UK government should produce a National Wildfire Strategy and Action Plan by the end of 2025. That Strategy must reflect the increased risk of reduced water supply due to drought and therefore consider non-water-based fire suppression methods.
- The deadline for upgrading flood defences upstream of the Thames Barrier is 2050, and downstream it is 2040; a new Barrier is needed by 2070.
- London’s trees, and other green and blue spaces, are under threat from heatwaves, wildfires and windstorms. This weakens London’s resilience because trees reduce street temperatures in heatwaves and decrease flood risk.

- Around 43% of London properties are likely to be affected by subsidence by 2030.
- Based on the work of the London Surface Water Strategic Group, UK government should create a Strategic Surface Water Authority for London, led by an independent and non-political Chair, to promote, enforce, and allocate funds in-line with a strategic London-wide approach to flooding.
- Initial analysis indicates climate change could impact London's GDP by 2-3% every year by the 2050s, with costs increasing further in late century.

The publication of the Review comes days after the general election, during which the Labour manifesto pledged to improve climate resilience and preparation at a national and local level.

Emma Howard Boyd CBE, Chair of the London Climate Resilience Review, said:

“We are entering a new era. In 2024, even as El Niño fades, we are set for another record-breaking year of deadly heatwaves, wildfires and storms. In the last year, floods in the UK have upended lives and battered local economies.

“The Mayor of London took a world-leading step by calling for an independent review of London's climate resilience. The health and security of Londoners and the health of the national economy are inseparable.

“This is a reset moment for efforts to increase the UK's stability in the face of global climate disruption. As the new government takes action to end the cost-of-living crisis, protecting the lives and livelihoods of working people from extreme weather is non-negotiable.”

In 2022, the Mayor established the £3.1m Trees for London programme with the aim of increasing London's resilience to extreme weather of the type experienced that summer. In the first two years the programme has funded the planting of more than 115,000 trees prioritising areas of high heat and flood risk. To maintain this momentum in its final year, the Mayor has awarded the Trees for London Programme an additional £1m to help make London a fairer, greener more resilient city.

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan said:

“Climate change is one of the biggest dangers our capital faces, and its effects cannot be ignored.

“I welcome this review, which I commissioned after seeing first-hand during recent years how extreme weather can devastate communities, ruin businesses and end lives. It is essential that we invest in key sectors and prepare our public services so that London can continue to grow and thrive in the face of climate change, and the review provides clarity and direction on how to do this. This is also an issue of social justice as the review makes clear it is Londoners on lower incomes that are most exposed to the impacts of dangerous climate change.

“I accept the recommendations made to City Hall, and we will work to take forward the recommendations over the coming months, working with our new national Government, local councils, businesses and London's communities We do not have a moment to waste.”

The Review gathered evidence from individuals, communities and organisations including the NHS, Transport for London, London Fire Brigade, the Metropolitan Police, Borough Councils, the GLA, UK government, NGOs, the financial services sector, sports and cultural institutions as well as representatives of vulnerable groups.

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Notes to editors

1. The final report is available on the London Climate Resilience Review webpage: [The London Climate Resilience Review | London City Hall](#)
2. To arrange an interview or for further information, please contact: Sam Payne, Headland Consultancy – icrr@headlandconsultancy.com - 07818 705765
3. **About the Review**

The London Climate Resilience Review is an independent review commissioned by the Mayor of London to take stock of London's preparations for climate change and to make recommendations to advance London's climate resilience. The Mayor called for the Review following accelerating climate impacts in the UK and around the world. In London the extreme flooding of July 2021 damaged homes and properties, costing local authorities tens of millions, with aggregate insured losses estimated to be over £100 million, displacing residents and disrupted critical services to vulnerable Londoners. In 2022, there were 3,271 heat related deaths in England and 387 in London. The 2022 heatwaves would not have happened without climate change but many of those deaths would have been preventable. The heatwaves caused widespread failure of green infrastructure including street trees, in Epping Forest alone a total of 76 fires were reported between 26 June and 16 August 2022. The extreme heat stretched water supplies, melted road surfaces and caused disruptions to rail infrastructure. Social care, education and health care face major disruptions across London. The aggregate costs are not known. The Review has set out actions needed at the national, regional and local level to reduce climate impacts on people, infrastructure, nature and the environment and economy in London. The Review has run a comprehensive research and engagement process to deliver its assessment of London's climate resilience and to inform recommendations to guide London's preparation for more frequent and intense climate hazards.

The Review identifies six areas for urgent attention and makes 50 recommendations for action to the Mayor of London, and the new national government. The six areas for urgent action and attention are:

1. A strategic, London-wide, action plan on heat risk is needed.
2. London is not prepared for another major surface water flooding incident and lives and livelihoods are at risk.
3. London must accelerate work to understand cascading risks and system interdependencies within and beyond London's boundaries.
4. National, regional, and local governments must do more to enable investment in climate resilience.
5. Londoners should be engaged on climate impacts.
6. All the above must be coordinated strategically with a shared regional vision and framework for adaptation.

4. The Mayor of London's environmental work includes:

- In August 2023 the Mayor expanded the Ultra Low Emission Zone London-wide, ensuring five million more Londoners can breathe cleaner air. It followed extensive consultation by TfL.
- Nearly one in six buses in London are now zero emission (over 1,400). All new buses must be zero emission.
- The Mayor transformed London's taxi fleet by no longer licensing new diesel taxis and reducing the age limit for older cabs. Over half of London's taxi fleet is now Zero Emission Capable.
- Sadiq has funded over 20 Low Emission Neighbourhoods, supported by his £21 million Air Quality Fund, launched air quality audits in 50 schools and 20 nurseries – as well as the Breathe London network, now with over 450 sensors.
- London was the first global city to declare a climate emergency, and the Mayor has now set London's net zero target to 2030.
- London's greenhouse gas emissions reduced by 45 per cent from their peak in 2000 to 2020

5. London's Local Authorities

- Boroughs across London are working to protect residents from extreme temperatures, whilst also reducing emissions. A key example of this is the Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund, which is used to support the installation of external wall insulation, solar panels and air source heat pumps to decarbonise heating. Reducing emissions caused by heating homes is crucial to tackling climate change.