CUSHMAN & WAKEFIELD

INSTANT INSIGHT

WHY THE UK'S FIRST EMERGENCY ALERT MATTERS FOR REAL ESTATE

August 2026



What Happened?

On Friday 14 August, the UK Government issued its first real-world Emergency Alert in response to significant wildfire risk. Whilst the Emergency Alerts system has been tested previously, this marked the first operational deployment linked to a climate-related hazard. For the real estate sector, it was a visible demonstration that climate change impacts are no longer theoretical future risks, but present-day considerations requiring active planning, mitigation and adaptation.

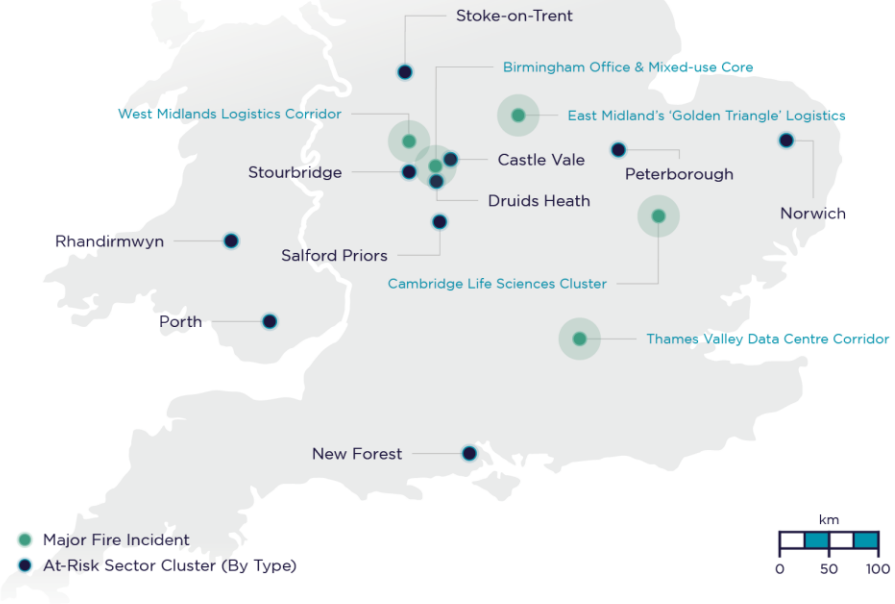
Historically, climate risk discussions within UK real estate have focused predominantly on flooding, given its frequency and its impact on asset values, insurance costs and business continuity. However, the climate risk landscape is changing. Rising temperatures, more frequent heatwaves, drought conditions, wildfire risk and more severe weather events are becoming increasingly relevant considerations for property owners, occupiers and investors.

The 2026 wildfire season underlined this shift: more than 1,132 wildfires had been recorded across England and Wales by mid-August, with satellite monitoring by EFFIS having tracked UK fires since 2004. This surpassed 2025, becoming the worst wildfire year on record. The map below overlays major wildfire incidents with selected sector clusters where physical climate risk is becoming increasingly material.

WILDFIRE INCIDENTS AND AT-RISK SECTOR CLUSTERS

Major Fire Incidents Overlaid With Key Sector Clusters Where Physical Climate Risk is Increasingly Material

Illustrative | sector clusters shown by type, not individual assets | for discussion purposes



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Climate Risk Is Not Static

An asset historically considered at low risk from a particular hazard may not retain the same risk profile as temperatures, rainfall patterns, vegetation conditions and the frequency or severity of extreme weather change. Climate risk assessments should therefore not be treated as a one-off exercise: evaluating present-day and future risks across multiple scenarios and time horizons shows how exposure may evolve and where mitigation or adaptation measures may be required.

What It Means For CRE:

When acquiring an asset, understanding both current and future climate risks provides insight into potential operational challenges, adaptation requirements and long-term investment performance, alongside traditional technical, environmental and commercial due diligence. This aligns with our recently published sustainability acquisition and disposal guides.

For assets already under management, climate risk assessments help owners understand how vulnerability may change over time and where investment should be prioritised to improve resilience, reduce disruption and protect long-term value.

When undertaking refurbishment or repositioning projects, climate resilience should form part of the decision-making process. The response is not simply to avoid locations exposed to future hazards, but to ensure buildings can perform under future climate conditions. Upgrades to building services, drainage and water management can all improve long-term performance.

When preparing assets for disposal, communicating resilience credentials is likely to become increasingly important as investors place greater emphasis on long-term risk management and adaptation planning.

How Cushman & Wakefield Can Help

Our Climate Risk Assessment service helps clients understand the current and future physical climate risks facing their assets and portfolios. We evaluate exposure and vulnerability under multiple scenarios and time horizons, covering hazards including flooding, overheating, drought, storms and wildfire.

Importantly, our work goes beyond identifying risk: we develop asset-specific resilience and adaptation plans covering building fabric and MEP upgrades, flood protection, water management and emergency preparedness.

The question is no longer whether climate change will affect our buildings, but whether they are prepared for it.



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