

AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB GOGLEDD CYMRU



NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

A meeting of the **EXECUTIVE PANEL** will be held **MONDAY 12 DECEMBER 2022** virtually via **Zoom** commencing at **14:00 hrs.**

Yours faithfully,
Gareth Owens
Clerk

AGENDA

- 1. Apologies**
- 2. Declaration of Interests**
- 3. Notice of Urgent Matters**
Notice of items which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be considered at the meeting as a matter of urgency pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972.
- 4. Minutes of the Meeting held on 29 July 2022**
- 5. Matters Arising**
- 6. Audit Wales – Reducing Fire Alarms**
- 7. Biodiversity Report**
- 8. Manchester Arena Inquiry – verbal report**
- 9. Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor’s Thematic Review into Operational Training – verbal report**
- 10. Cyber Essentials (CE) / Cyber Essentials+ (CE+)**
- 11. Performance Monitoring 2022/23: Quarters 1 & 2**
- 12. Review of Improvement and Wellbeing Objectives in the Authority’s Corporate Plan 2021-24**
- 13. Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/26 and Budget 2023/24**
- 14. New Training Centre**

AWDURDOD TÂN AC ACHUB GOGLEDD CYMRU



NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

15. Urgent Matters

To consider any items which the Chair has decided are urgent (pursuant to Section 100B (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972) and of which substance has been declared under item 3 above.

PART II

It is recommended pursuant to Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act, 1972 that the Press and Public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item(s) of business because it is likely that there would be disclosed to them exempt information as defined in Paragraph(s) 12 to 18 of Part 4 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

16. Industrial Action (verbal)

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Executive Panel

Minutes of the Executive Panel meeting of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority held on Friday 29 July 2022 via Zoom. Meeting commenced at 2pm.

Present

Councillors:

D Rees (Chair)	Anglesey County Council
P Cunningham (Deputy Chair)	Flintshire County Council
K Taylor	Anglesey County Council
C Beard	Conwy County Borough Council
C Gee	Flintshire County Council
R Triggs	Gwynedd Council
P Rogers	Wrexham County Borough Council

Also Present

D Docx (Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive); G Owens (Clerk); D Edwards (Treasurer); S Forshaw (Deputy Chief Fire Officer); R Fairhead, ~ H MacArthur and S Millington (Assistant Chief Fire Officers); S Morris (Assistant Chief Officer); T Williams (Corporate Communications Manager); A Davies (Members' Liaison Officer).

1 APOLOGIES

A Hughes	Denbighshire County Council
G A Roberts	Gwynedd Council
R Roberts	Wrexham County Borough Council
D Selvester+	Flintshire County Council

2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3 NOTICE OF URGENT MATTERS

3.1 None.

4 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 14 FEBRUARY 2022

4.1 The minutes of the Executive Panel meeting held on 14 February 2022 were submitted for approval.

4.2 **RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting as a true and correct record.**

5 MATTERS ARISING

5.1 There were no matters arising.

5.2 **RESOLVED to note the update.**

6 BROADENING THE ROLE OF THE FIREFIGHTER IN WALES - FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CAPACITY – THEMATIC REVIEW

6.1 The Chief Fire Officer presented the report which provided an overview of the Thematic Review of the Fire and Rescue Services' capacity to assume a broader role for firefighters in Wales. This was produced by the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor to Welsh Government, Dan Stephens, and published on 5 December 2021.

6.2 Members were informed that in March 2021, the Deputy Minister for Social Partnership and the then Minister for Health and Social Services, informed the Senedd of plans to develop a broader role for firefighters in Wales, in support of the NHS in Wales. Thereafter the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector for Wales undertook a thematic review to provide assurance that the three Welsh FRSs had the capacity to carry out any additional work arising from broadening of the firefighters' role without detriment to core services. The outcome of the review was published in December 2021.

6.3 In the following six months there has been on-going dialogue between the Chief Fire Officers in Wales and Welsh Government Officials. On 8 July 2022 the Deputy Minister wrote to the Chairs of the Fire and Rescue Authorities in Wales to ask for written confirmation, by 31 August 2022, as to whether they accept the review's findings and how they intend to progress the recommendations. These recommendations related to reviewing existing shift systems, analysing station work routines and also consideration of increasing capacity within the mobilising system.

6.4 The Chair informed Members that the same report had been presented to the Audit Committee on the morning of 29 July and its consensus had been to support the concept of broadening the role as long as it did not affect core services delivered by firefighters. This was reiterated by all Members. In terms of reviewing shift patterns, Members noted that this proposal will be undertaken as part of the forthcoming Fire Cover Review.

6.5 The Treasurer commented that as the Authority faces a period of transition and taking into account that inflation was at its highest level for many years, the Authority will need to consider the impact of all these elements on the Authority's budget and careful prioritisation will be required to ensure any changes remain affordable and equitable.

6.6 **RESOLVED to note:**

- (i) **the publication of “Broadening of the role of firefighters in Wales. 2021 Thematic Review report by the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor and Inspector for Wales”**
- (ii) **the subsequent correspondence from the Deputy Minister to the Chair of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and authorise that a response should be written from the Chair, in consultation with the Chief Fire Officer, reflecting Members’ views and sent to the Deputy Minister by 31 August 2022.**

7 PERFORMANCE MONITORING APRIL 2021 – MARCH 2022

- 7.1 The Deputy Chief Fire Officer presented the report which provided information about incident activity during the 2021/22 financial year; performance in relation to the Authority's improvement and well-being objectives; and other notable incident activity.
- 7.2 It was noted that during the 2021/22 financial year the Service attended:
- 5,354 emergency incidents. These have increased by 13.9% compared with the same period in 2020/21. The increase was driven primarily by a 56% increase in attendances at special services non-fire emergencies (958).
 - 399 accidental dwelling fires at which 34 people sustained slight injuries, five people sustained serious injuries, and five people lost their lives;
 - 207 road traffic collisions, 71 of which required crews to release or extricate people from vehicles;
 - 2,517 false alarms, which included a 15.2% increase in attendances to false alarms from automatic fire alarm (AFA) systems.
- 7.3 During this period the Service also completed 14,062 Safe and Well Checks, which was 2,721 more than in the previous financial year (11,341).
- 7.4 The Chair commented that it was pleasing to note that the fires at Berwyn Prison had reduced from 47 to 22 and this was considered to be in part due to the partnership working between the Service and the prison.
- 7.5 Members requested future reports contain information on environmental-related incidents such as wildfires and flooding and water incidents; this would also link in with the Authority's work on sustainability.
- 7.6 **RESOLVED to note the contents of the performance monitoring report.**

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	12 December 2022
Lead Officer	Dawn Docx, Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Shân Morris, Assistant Chief Officer
Subject	Reducing False Alarms



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To introduce the Terms of Reference for this year's thematic review being undertaken by Audit Wales.

RECOMMENDATION

- 2 That Members note:
 - (i) The purpose of the review;
 - (ii) The main questions the review seeks to answer; and
 - (iii) The timescales for the review.

BACKGROUND

- 3 The performance review for 2022-23 of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) undertaken by Audit Wales, will focus on the progress made to reduce and prevent false fire alarms.
- 4 The review is being undertaken to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under sections 17 and 41 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. It also informs an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.
- 5 A false alarm is defined as an event where a fire and rescue crew attend an incident believing there to be a fire, but on arrival discover that no incident exists or has existed.
- 6 The purpose of the review by Audit Wales, is to provide assurance to the people of Wales, the Welsh Government and the Authority that sufficient progress is being made in reducing the prevalence of fire false alarms and the associated costs from primarily non-domestic (not a house or home) buildings. It will also identify good practice to see wider benefits, such as carbon emissions reduction.

INFORMATION

- 7 Since 2009, all Fire and Rescue Authorities have been required to record the incidents they attend via the online Incident Recording System (IRS). This includes fire false alarms, which are categorised into three sub-categories:
- due to apparatus – where an alarm or firefighting equipment operate in error, including accidental activation by people;
 - good intent – where a person believes in good faith that the Fire and Rescue Service is required; and
 - malicious – where a person intends for a response to a non-existing incident.
- 8 The review by Audit Wales will largely involve document reviews and interviews and will seek to answer if the Authority is doing all it can to reduce the prevalence and responses to non-domestic fire false alarms by identifying if:
- the Authority have a good understanding of the locations, causes and impacts of fire false alarms in non-domestic premises;
 - has a clear and appropriate plan or strategy for addressing fire false alarms considering risk and suitable evidence;
 - the Authority regularly evaluates and monitors performance to ensure fire alarms are reducing; and
 - the Authority has reduced the volume of fire alarms it responds to in non-domestic premises.
- 9 The intended benefits of the review will provide assurance that the Authority has an appropriate strategy in place to reduce fire false alarms in non-domestic premises, that value for money is secured in the use of resources and to provide insight into opportunities for improvement.
- 10 It is expected that some of the benefits identified from the undertaking of the review will already have been realised in North Wales, following the approval by the Authority in 2004 of a change in the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service's (the Service's) attendance to fire false alarms at non-domestic premises.
- 11 The procedure for attendance at fire alarms currently in place in North Wales stipulates that the Service will not attend fire false alarms in non-domestic premises unless there is a confirmed fire during a 999 call, with some premises exempt. Though this procedure has been refreshed recently, it is anticipated there may be opportunities to refine the procedure further following receipt of the review recommendations.

- 12 The proposed timetable for the review commences from July 2022, with interviews of members, staff working across various roles and key partners taking place during October 2022 – January 2023. It is expected that officers will receive draft feedback during January 2023, with the report being issued to the Authority during March 2023.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The review informs an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.
Budget	No budget requirements have been identified for the undertaking of the review.
Legal	The review helps to discharge the Auditor General's duties under sections 17 and 41 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004.
Staffing	The review will include interviews with Members and staff from various roles in the Service, which may have an impact on them carrying out their roles though this is likely to be minimal. Information and data requests from Audit Wales will be facilitated by the contact officer and members of the Service Corporate Planning Team.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The Project Brief is available in Welsh and English and interviews have been offered by the Auditors in Welsh and English.
Risks	None identified.

Project Brief – Reducing False Alarms – North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

Audit year: 2022-23

Date issued: July 2022

Document reference: 3021A2022

This document has been prepared for the internal use of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority as part of work performed/to be performed in accordance with statutory functions.

No responsibility is taken by the Auditor General, the staff of Audit Wales or, where applicable, the appointed auditor in relation to any member, director, officer or other employee in their individual capacity, or to any third party.

In the event of receiving a request for information to which this document may be relevant, attention is drawn to the Code of Practice issued under section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The section 45 Code sets out the practice in the handling of requests that is expected of public authorities, including consultation with relevant third parties. In relation to this document, the Auditor General for Wales, Audit Wales and, where applicable, the appointed auditor are relevant third parties. Any enquiries regarding disclosure or re-use of this document should be sent to Audit Wales at infoofficer@audit.wales.

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English. Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to delay. Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg. Ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg. This document is also available in Welsh.

Contents

Project brief	
Background	4
Purpose of the review	6
Focus of the review	6
Method	6
Main review questions	7
Output	7
Intended benefits	7
Timetable	8
Fieldwork schedule	8
Document requests	9
Audit Wales contacts	10

Project brief

Background

- 1 The performance review for 2022-23 of North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) will focus on the progress made to reduce and prevent fire false alarms. A fire false alarm is defined as an event where a fire and rescue crew attend an incident believing there to be a fire but on arrival discover that no incident exists or has existed. This project brief provides background information for the review, the key audit methodology, outputs, and timescales.
- 2 Since 2009, all UK Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) are required to record incidents attended via the online Incident Recoding System (IRS). This includes fire false alarms, which are categorised into three sub-categories:
 - due to apparatus – where an alarm or fire-fighting equipment operate in error, including accidental initiation by people.
 - good intent calls – where a person believes in good faith that the service is required.
 - malicious false alarms – where a person intends for a response to a non-existent incident.
- 3 IRS data on these categories is regularly published by the Welsh Government. Whilst there has been a significant reduction in false alarms since the financial year 2007-08, Welsh FRAs are still sending full-crewed responses to thousands of unnecessary incidents. During financial year 2020-21, Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities attended 14,880 false alarms:

Exhibit 1: false alarms by reason and financial year, 2007-08 and 2018 to 2021

Category	FY 2007-08	FY 2018-19	FY 2019-20	FY 2020-21
Malicious	1,532	372	375	321
Good intent	5,946	5,855	5,422	5,810
Due to apparatus	12,120	8,258	8,484	8,749
Proportion of total incidents	35.6%	39.5%	40.8%	48.9%

N.B. 2007-08 is the earliest data available and is provided for context

Source: [Stats Wales](#)

- 4 In addition to those attended, FRAs also receive false alarms that are not attended due to the way they are handled by Control Operators. This is mainly the result of confirmation by the source of the signal that there is no incident. These are still false signals, but as a crew does not attend or are turned around enroute, they are not recorded in IRS data
- 5 The costs of attending these incidents are both financial and human, with increased risk and opportunity costs. The Welsh Government estimated that the 9,805 false alarms due to apparatus in 2013-14 cost Welsh FRAs £2.94 million (2014 prices)¹. These costs can vary according to various circumstances, such as the type of firefighter attending, or distance travelled.
- 6 Furthermore, as fire and rescue crews believe they are attending genuine incidents, their response is identical to that of a real fire. This can often mean a 'blue light' response, which also increases the risk for the crew(s) responding and other road users. In addition, there is the risk that a crew responding to a fire false alarm is unable to respond to a genuine incident or is delayed.
- 7 There are also additional costs with the deployment of equipment, such as additional wear and increased carbon emissions. This makes achieving the Welsh Government's target of carbon neutrality for the public sector by 2030 even more challenging. It also means opportunity is lost to train crews or for firefighters to be deployed to other activities, such as prevention work. As a result, there are incidental costs in addition to the immediate response that need to be considered.
- 8 Repeated and frequent false alarms can also undermine confidence in fire safety systems, leading to people at such premises potentially taking alarms less seriously. This may prove costly in the event of a real fire in the same premises.
- 9 The fire and rescue sector as a whole has identified the issue of false alarms and sought ways to prevent and reduce them. Guidance was produced by the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA) in 2014² that focused on reduction following consultation with FRAs and other stakeholders. Collectively, the Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities produced guidance³ on false signals caused by automatic fire alarms in 2018.
- 10 In 2015, the Welsh Government published the report *Time for Action*, which examined this issue and presented a range of options for FRAs, building owners/occupants, and for collaboration between both. In addition, the 2016 National Framework⁴ also endorsed and adopted recommendations to 'identify the main sources of false alarms and take all reasonable and practical steps to reduce

¹ Welsh Government, [Time for Action](#), October 2015

² CFOA, [Guidance for the Reduction of False Alarms & Unwanted Fire Signals](#), 2014

³ Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, [Reducing Automatic Fire Alarm Signals](#), 2018

⁴ Welsh Government, [Fire and Rescue National Framework](#) 2016, November 2015

their incidence'. Since then, the volume of false calls has remained stubbornly above 14,000 incidents per year.

- 11 This review will, therefore, seek to understand why false calls remain so prevalent, the cost of them, whether past recommendations have been actioned and the other steps taken by the Authority to address them. The review is also an opportunity to share and learn from work in other parts of the UK.
- 12 For the purpose of this review, Audit Wales will primarily focus on non-domestic fire false alarms. As many false alarms originate from other public sector locations, such as hospitals, the review will highlight national themes for Welsh Government to consider.

Legislative basis for the review

- 13 This project is being undertaken to help discharge the Auditor General's duties under sections 17 and 41 of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004. It will also inform an examination undertaken by the Auditor General under section 15 of the Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015.

Purpose of the review

- 14 The review will provide assurance to citizens, the Welsh Government, and the Authority that sufficient progress is being made in reducing the prevalence of fire false alarms and their associated costs from primarily non-domestic buildings. It will also support the Authority to identify good practice and to see wider benefits, such as carbon emissions reduction.

Method

- 15 The project will largely involve document reviews and interviews. Where there may be a need for interviews, where practical we will seek to integrate this with other planned work and/or our regular liaison meetings with Authority officers/members.
- 16 In undertaking this project, we will also draw on the findings of our other ongoing and recent work, the findings of other Inspectors and Regulators and the work of the Authority's own internal review mechanisms such as the Authority's internal audit and scrutiny functions. Our key methods include:
 - **M1:** A review of cumulative audit and inspection knowledge and experience (CAIKE)
 - **M2:** Document reviews (see **Exhibit 4**)
 - **M3:** Interviews with key officers and authority members
 - **M4:** Interviews with other public sector organisations that are significant causes of fire false alarms
 - **M5:** Interviews with other FRAs to identify good practice

- **M6:** Short survey of building managers of key sectors

Main review questions

Exhibit 2: main review questions

The table below sets out the main questions we will seek to answer in undertaking this review.

Level 1
Is the authority doing all it can to reduce the prevalence and responses to non-domestic fire false alarms?
Level 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the Authority have a good understanding of the locations, causes and impacts of fire false alarms in non-domestic premises? • Does the Authority have a clear and appropriate plan or strategy for addressing fire false alarms in non-domestic premises considering risk and suitable evidence? • Does the Authority regularly, evaluate and monitor performance to ensure fire false alarms in non-domestic premises are reducing? • Has the Authority reduced the volume of fire false alarms it responds to in non-domestic premises?

Output

- 17 Once we have completed our fieldwork, we will provide a report and present our findings to the Authority. The report will include a summary of our findings together with recommendations for improvement and compare wider performance with the other Welsh FRAs.
- 18 We will continue to utilise the ‘no surprises’ approach and share emerging findings and conclusions with senior managers prior to reporting.

Intended Benefits

- 19 The review will help to:

- Provide assurance that the Authority has an appropriate strategy in place to reduce fire false alarms from non-domestic premises.
- Provide assurance that plans are in place to secure value for money in the use of resources.
- Provide insight through highlighting opportunities for improvement.

Timetable

Exhibit 3: timetable

The table below sets out a proposed timetable for the review at the Authority

Proposed timetable	
Draft project brief discussed with the Authority and a final draft issued	July 2022
Document review and other desktop analysis	July to October 2022
Interviews	October 2022 to January 2023
Emerging findings meeting and draft conclusions feedback	December/January 2023
Report issued and finalised	March 2023

Fieldwork schedule

Interviews

20 We will liaise with the Authority to identify and agree who will need to be interviewed to inform our review. As a minimum, we will interview members of the senior leadership team; the relevant Head(s) of Service; front-line staff, and representatives of key partner bodies involved in fire false alarm reduction. We can offer interviews in either Welsh or English.

Audit approach

- 21 Audit Wales continues to closely monitor the situation regarding COVID-19. Whilst we are conscious that the delivery of our audit must not detract from the important work of public bodies at this critical time, we are also confident that it can add value and insight to support organisations in their recovery. As a principle, we will always ensure we balance the delivery of our statutory responsibilities with giving public bodies the time and space they need to recover from the pandemic.
- 22 The Auditor General's priority remains to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of Audit Wales staff, their families and those of our partners elsewhere in the public service. Practically, this means that we will engage with the Authority to agree how best to deliver our fieldwork and we will remain flexible throughout.

Document request

- 23 Prior to interviews we will undertake a review of the documents identified below. However, we would be grateful if you could supply us with any additional documents which you feel may be relevant to our work in this area. The list is not exhaustive and requests for additional documents may be made during the course of the review. Where documents in the list below are publicly available on the Authority's website, we would be grateful if you could please direct us to where we can find them.

Exhibit 4: the table below sets out the documents we would like to request initially as part of this review

Document title
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Fire False alarms reduction plan.• Any data (internal and IRS) capturing information on fire false alarms, such as causes, frequency, duration of response, and cost, including those not attended• Evidence and analysis of any consultation or engagement exercises to inform a fire false alarms strategy or policy.• Evidence of training and guidance provided to officers on implementing the fire false alarm strategy.• Corporate Plan.• Job descriptions, business case and specification of any role(s) dedicated to (or primarily) leading on the Authority's response to fire false alarms.• Terms of Reference and recent meeting minutes of any working groups co-ordinating and/or scrutinising fire false alarms.• Publicity and campaigning work on reducing fire false alarms.

Document title

- Evidence of progress in addressing previous Welsh Government recommendations.
- Evidence of engagement with public sector partners to reduce fire false alarms.
- Reporting of performance against targets, actions and milestones – to senior officers and Authority members.
- Breakdown of the cost of deploying a fire appliance to respond to a call.
- Contact details of building managers held by the Authority.

Audit Wales contacts

Exhibit 5: Audit Wales contacts

The table below sets out the Audit Wales team that will be working on this review at the Authority.

Role	Name
Audit Director	Derwyn Owen
Audit Manager	Nick Selwyn
Senior Auditors	Matthew Brushett Philippa Dixon Euros Lake Charles Rigby



Audit Wales
24 Cathedral Road
Cardiff CF11 9LJ

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

We welcome correspondence and telephone calls in Welsh and English.
Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	12 December 2022
Lead Officer	Stuart Millington, Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Environment)
Contact Officer	Anthony T Jones, Head of Operations and East Area
Subject	Biodiversity and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016



PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. This report addresses North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's (the Authority's) compliance with section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. It also provides information on proposed future planning and reporting of actions by the Authority in relation to improving biodiversity within its estate.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. The Authority is required to plan for, and report on its actions to improve biodiversity within its estate. This report presents a draft Biodiversity Report and Action Plan 2022 for approval to publish on the Authority's website by the end of December in accordance with section 6 of the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. Members are asked to approve the contents of the attached Biodiversity Report and Action Plan 2022 to be incorporated into a publication on the Authority's website before the end of December 2022.

BACKGROUND

4. Biodiversity relates to the variety of life found on earth. The economy and people's health and well-being depend on healthy, resilient ecosystems for food, clean water and air, raw materials, energy and protection against hazards such as flooding and climate change.
5. The Natural Environment and Rural Communities (NERC) Act 2006 placed a duty on public authorities to have regard to the conservation of biodiversity in the proper exercise of their functions.

6. In 2015 the Welsh Government launched a Nature Recovery Action Plan aimed at reversing the decline of biodiversity in Wales. This Plan set out how Wales would deliver the commitments of the EU Biodiversity Strategy and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity through short term actions up to 2020 and as longer-term commitments beyond 2020.
7. The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 put in place seven well-being goals for Wales that public bodies listed in the Act must work to achieve. One of those goals relates to a 'resilient Wales', making Wales 'a nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change'.
8. In 2016 public authorities in Wales became subject to the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 which introduced an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the 'section 6 duty').
9. The section 6 duty requires public authorities – including fire and rescue authorities – to seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consistent with the proper exercise of their functions and, in so doing, to promote the resilience of ecosystems.
10. Public authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into all their activities including business planning, policies, programmes and projects. Specifically, each public authority must publish a plan setting out how it proposes to comply with the section 6 duty, and a report describing what it has already done in this regard. The first such retrospective report was published in 2019, with subsequent reports due every three years thereafter.

INFORMATION

11. The Service has been working to an action plan for managing the Authority's premises in ways that enhance the biodiversity of its estate by addressing the six objectives listed in the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales. Further details are provided in the attached draft Biodiversity Report and Action Plan (please refer to Appendix 1).
12. In addition to this, the Authority's draft objectives for 2022/23 include an intention to develop and adopt an Environmental Strategy. Future biodiversity action planning would therefore fall within the remit of this broader strategy.

13. The draft text of the Authority's second section 6 biodiversity report is contained within Appendix 1. Subject to the Authority's approval, this will be incorporated into a report for publication on the Authority's website by the statutory deadline of the end of December 2022.

14. Although reporting against the section 6 duty under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016 is required only every three years, more frequent reporting can in future be incorporated into the Authority's Annual Performance Assessments.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	Direct implication for agreeing the steps towards meeting one of the Authority's long-term improvement and well-being objectives
Budget	The action plan items are already accounted for within existing budgets
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning, well-being and environment legislation
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The impact of specific actions on these aspects will be assessed at the appropriate point in their development
Risks	Reduces the risks of legal non-compliance and of failing to budget and plan appropriately

Environment (Wales) Act 2016: Part 1 – Section 6

The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty

Biodiversity Report and Plan

November 2022

Mae'r ddogfen yma ar gael yn y Gymraeg
This document is also available in Welsh

Author(s):

Tim Christensen
Environment and Climate Change Manager

Prepared by:
North Wales Fire and Rescue Service
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire
LL17 0JJ



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

Contents

Page

1.0	Background	1
2.0	Introduction and Context.....	4
3.0	Actions Taken	5
4.0	Highlights, Key Outcomes and Issues	9
4.1	Biodiversity Projects (Case Studies).....	9
5.0	Action Plan.....	11
5.1	NRAP Objective 1	11
5.2	NRAP Objective 2	11
5.3	NRAP Objective 3	12
5.4	NRAP Objective 4	14
5.5	NRAP Objective 5	15
5.6	NRAP Objective 6	16

Tables

Page

Table 1: Site Types and Locations.....	7
--	---

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.0.1 Biodiversity (or biological diversity) is the variety of life found on earth. It includes all species of plants and animals, their abundance and genetic diversity; it underpins our lives and livelihoods and supports the functioning and resilience of ecosystems in oceans, wetlands, lakes, rivers, mountains, forests and agricultural landscapes. Our economy, health and well-being depend on healthy, resilient ecosystems, which provide us with our food, clean water and air, raw materials and energy and to protect us against hazards, such as flooding and climate change. It is vital to connect people with nature and the contribution its wildlife and habitats bring towards society's well-being, sense of place and cultural identity.
- 1.0.2 It is widely recognised that biodiversity is under pressure from a range of influences and that habitats and species continue to decline, therefore, it is vital that we maintain and enhance our biodiversity to ensure it remains healthy, resilient and capable of adapting to change. The effect of climate change on biodiversity over the coming decades is likely to be significant, including a further loss of habitat and a potential increase in invasive species.
- 1.0.3 Biodiversity management within NWFRS is an integral part of improving its overall environmental performance and the Service has previously addressed biodiversity issues on its estate through its Sustainable Development Action Plan, which covered the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2020. The Biodiversity Duty through the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC) 2006 required all public authorities, including the Fire Services, to pay regard to the conservation of biodiversity in exercising their functions. This subject area is now reportable under the requirements of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016, Part 1, Section 6 – The Biodiversity and Resilience of Ecosystems Duty.
- 1.0.4 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 recognises the importance that the Welsh Government places on nature and its biodiversity; along with six other goals for a sustainable Wales, the Act puts in place the 'Resilient Wales' goal (a nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change).

- 1.0.5 The Environment (Wales) Act 2016 enshrines the principles of the UN's Convention on Biological Diversity in law by adopting an ecosystems approach to how Wales manages its natural resources in the future. The Act introduces an enhanced biodiversity and resilience of ecosystems duty (the section 6 duty) for public authorities (this includes Fire Services) in the exercise of functions in relation to Wales. The s6 duty requires that authorities 'must seek to maintain and enhance biodiversity so far as consist with the proper exercise of their functions and in so doing promote the resilience of ecosystems'.
- 1.0.6 To comply with the s6 duty public authorities should embed the consideration of biodiversity and ecosystems into their early thinking and business planning, including any policies, plans, programmes and projects, as well as their day to day activities.
- 1.0.7 Under the Act, all public authorities must, before the end of 2019 and before the end of every third year after 2019, publish a report on what they have done to comply with the s6 duty. The reporting duty should not be burdensome, and should be proportionate to the size and type of organisation, with regard to the action for biodiversity they can carry out. NWFRS published its first Biodiversity Report and Action Plan in November 2019.
- 1.0.8 Whilst protected sites and species are important, the s6 duty is also about taking steps to protect nature in our towns, cities, public places and wider landscape, both through practical action on the ground, and in the way all public functions are carried out. It is not just the large, landscape initiatives that are important, but also the smaller, every day, local scale actions that can make a difference and can contribute to helping biodiversity.
- 1.0.9 In addition to the legislation, the Welsh Government has produced a Nature Recovery Plan, which consists of the Strategy for Nature and the commitment to biodiversity in Wales, the issues needed to be addressed and the objectives for action; an Action Plan to meet the objectives to reverse the decline of biodiversity; and the governance structure, roles and responsibilities of everybody involved in the delivery of action for biodiversity in Wales.

1.0.10 Through the Nature Recovery Action Plan, a number of objectives have been identified to address issues that are driving the decline in biodiversity, and to support recovery:

- Objective 1:** Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity throughout decision making at all levels.
- Objective 2:** Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management.
- Objective 3:** Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitats and habitat creation.
- Objective 4:** Tackle key pressures on species and habitats.
- Objective 5:** Improve evidence, understanding and monitoring.
- Objective 6:** Put in place a framework of governance and support delivery.

1.0.11 The Welsh Government has produced Reporting Guidance for the section 6 duty, and this document has been used in the formation of this report.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

- 2.0.1 North Wales Fire and Rescue Service provide fire protection and prevention services to around 687,000 people over a geographical area of 2,400 square miles, as well as hundreds of thousands of tourists and visitors who come to North Wales every year. There are around 328,742 domestic properties and 33,820 non-domestic properties under NWFRS' protection and the Service employs almost 1,000 staff in operational and support roles.
- 2.0.2 The Service covers three geographical areas, Gwynedd and Anglesey, Conwy and Denbighshire and Wrexham and Flintshire, with an estate of 47 buildings, ranging from whole-time, day-crewed, retained and community fire stations, administration offices, a garage workshop to sharing premises with North Wales Police and the Welsh Ambulance Service Trust. Each area has a community safety office and a designated community safety manager; annually NWFRS attend around 1,879 fires, 958 Special Service Incidents, and around 2,517 false alarms of various kinds every year.
- 2.0.3 There is a large transport fleet including 54 fire appliances, one incident command unit and 31 'special' vehicles - such as all-terrain vehicles and foam carriers; there are also three aerial ladder platforms, portable power tools, lifting and winching and other specialist equipment to enable us to respond to many different types of incidents.
- 2.0.4 The Service carries out extensive work with schools, businesses and local communities to promote fire safety and prevention. The potential for serious damage to our environment, often in sensitive areas, by the impact of countryside fires is a serious concern, the impact of deliberate fire setting undermines social and economic confidence and draws on resources which could be utilised more effectively elsewhere.

- 2.0.5 In addition to the Operational response to attending fires or incidents in areas where biodiversity may be affected, the Arson Reduction Team (partnership between NWFRS and North Wales Police) helps to tackle the problem of deliberate fire setting so that people, communities, businesses, the environment and the area's heritage are not put at risk. The Team aims to reduce the number of countryside fires which are deliberately set; change the attitude of the community towards the deliberate setting of fires; take a multi-agency partnership approach to address this issue; ensure a consistent message is delivered to communities on countryside fires and to support the delivery of diversionary activities for both adult and young people, deter potential offenders and intervene early when anti-social behaviour begins.
- 2.0.6 Therefore, North Wales Fire & Rescue Service can be considered as a Group 2 Organisation in the s6 guidance with respect to the description of organisation relative to biodiversity. That being NWFRS are an organisation which (1) own, occupy or manage land at their own premises and (2) whose functions are connected with biodiversity and/or land management or that can influence those who own or manage land.
- 2.0.7 North Wales Fire & Rescue Service is subject to the Well-being of Future Generations Act and the production of well-being plans and is a member of the Gwynedd and Anglesey, Conwy and Denbighshire and Flintshire Public Service Boards in relation to biodiversity, climate change and environmental agenda working groups.

3.0 ACTIONS TAKEN

- 3.0.1 The Facilities Management Department are responsible for the delivery of biodiversity projects and the grounds maintenance contract at Service premises, following approval by the Assistant Chief Fire Officer (Finance & Resources).
- 3.0.2 The former grounds maintenance contract expired on 31st March 2020 and in developing the specification for the new contract (which is now in effect), biodiversity enhancement actions to be taken at sites, have being included.

3.0.3 The grounds maintenance contract involves a regime, whereby, between April and November each year, all grassed areas at sites are cut every two weeks; shrubs, hedges and trees trimmed as required; herbicide applied to control weeds to paved areas, kerbs and the base of buildings; and hard standings (car park, paths etc.) cleared of litter and all waste arising (grass, leaves, dead shrubs etc.) being removed off site. The control and management of invasive non-native species is included in the grounds maintenance contract, Japanese Knotweed is under strict management at 3 sites.

3.0.4 In addition to the three habitat creation schemes reported in 2019, the Service has undertaken four biodiversity protection or enhancement projects within the current reporting period:

Project 1: Dolgellau: Environmental action day

Project 2: Llantysilio and Ruabon Mountains: arson prevention campaign and hydroseeding

Project 3: Abergele, Chirk, Conwy, Flint, Harlech, Llanfairfechan, Prestatyn and Rhosneigr Fire Stations: Grass cutting regime reduction

Project 4: Harlech Fire Station: Swift box installation

These projects will be discussed below in the case studies.

3.0.5 The NWFRS estate can be grouped into 3 types of site:

Group 1: Grounds to site contain hard standings + grassed areas + shrubs, hedges, trees

Group 2: Grounds to site contain hard standings + grassed areas

Group 3: Grounds to site contain hard standings only

Each premise and their geographical location are summarised in Table 1: Site types and locations.

Table 1: Site Types and Locations

County Area	Group 1 sites with hard standings + grassed areas + shrubs, hedges, trees B = biodiversity project site JK = Japanese Knotweed control	Group 2 sites with hard standings + grassed areas	Group 3 sites with hard standings only
Conwy	Colwyn Bay FS Conwy FS Llanfairfechan FS Llanrwst FS Fleet & Stores ICT – Unit 8	Abergele FS Cerrigydrudion FS	Llandudno FS Betws y Coed FS
Denbighshire	Rhyl complex Corwen FS (JK) Ruthin FS Fire Service Headquarters (B)	Llangollen FS Prestatyn FS St Asaph FS	Denbigh FS
Flintshire	Deeside FS	Buckley FS Flint FS Mold FS	Holywell FS
Wrexham	Chirk FS Wrexham FS [Wrexham Ambulance & Fire Services Resource Centre] – grounds managed by Welsh Ambulance Service Trust	Johnstown FS	

Anglesey	Menai Bridge FS Rhosneigr FS	Holyhead FS Benllech FS Llangefni FS (JK)	Amlwch FS Beaumaris FS
Gwynedd	Caernarfon FS Bangor FS Abersoch FS Nefyn FS & PS (B) Pwllheli FS (JK) Porthmadog FS Tywyn FS & PS (B)	Llanberis FS Dolgellau FS Bala FS Blaenau Ffestiniog FS Harlech FS	Aberdyfi FS Barmouth FS
Total	21 (22 if Wrexham included)	17	8

4.0 HIGHLIGHTS, KEY OUTCOMES AND ISSUES

4.0.1 The potential to address biodiversity considerations within the NWFRS estate is high, with 83% of sites having areas of soft landscaping (grassed areas) and 46% of those sites having additional areas within the grounds containing shrubs, hedges or trees; only 17% of sites are devoid of any vegetation.

4.0.2 Observations from previous site visits:

- Some grassed areas are too small to sustain a 'no-cutting April to August' regime.
- Some hedges source from neighbours' land, but form part of the NWFRS site's perimeter; where there are gaps in the hedge (preventing wildlife corridors and inter-connectivity), the area at ground level on the Service's side may be hard standings.
- Sites containing mature trees, tend to have Horse Chestnuts present and during the Autumn members of the public come into the grounds to collect conkers, therefore these sites already enable a means for the Service to contribute towards community engagement with nature. This behaviour was witnessed at the Porthmadog and Conwy fire station site visits.

4.1 Biodiversity Projects (Case Studies)

Project 1

4.1.1 In partnership with Adra and Gwynedd Council, Service Personnel participated in an Environmental Action Day in September 2021 in Dolgellau, within the Snowdonia National Park. This involved engagement with the public around the importance of protecting the local environment, and removal of litter.

Project 2

4.1.2 In partnership with Natural Resources Wales and North Wales Police, the Service undertook an arson prevention campaign in August 2022 at Llantysilio and Ruabon Mountains, following a wildfire at Llantysilio in 2018 which engulfed over 250ha within a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). In October 2021, following this fire, the Service provided logistical assistance to Natural Resources Wales to undertake a hydroseeding scheme in the area of the fire.

- 4.1.3 The arson prevention campaign involved public engagement and education around avoidance of high-risk activities such as discarding of cigarettes and/or glassware and the use and disposal of barbeques.

Project 3

- 4.1.4 In accordance with the Grounds Maintenance and Enhanced Biodiversity Contract, which came into force in April 2020, the grass cutting regime has been reduced to Spring and Autumn cutting only at Abergele, Chirk, Conwy, Flint, Harlech, Llanfairfechan, Prestatyn and Rhosneigr Fire Stations.
- 4.1.5 This has been undertaken with the aim of allowing the growth of a habitat for pollinators and herbivore insects.

Project 4

- 4.1.6 As part of a planned demolition and replacement of the training tower at Harlech Fire Station, located within Snowdonia National Park and the Coed Llechwedd SSSI, the Service has agreed to install a sparrow terrace nest box at the station.

5.0 ACTION PLAN

5.0.1 The following provides information on what actions North Wales Fire and Rescue Service are taking to meet the Nature Recovery Action Plan for Wales (NRAP) objectives, with regards to the management of their grounds and the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity at their premises.

5.1 NRAP Objective 1

“Engage and support participation and understanding to embed biodiversity through decision making at all levels”

5.1.1 NWFRS is committed to addressing biodiversity on its estate, and is currently developing policy to replace the Sustainable Development Action Plan (SDAP), which covered the period 1st April 2007 to 31st March 2020.

5.1.2 Data, information and reports relating to subject areas relating to biodiversity are provided to Senior Officers and the Fire Authority, as required or requested.

5.1.3 To date, raising awareness on biodiversity issues has been mainly project-site based, for example the Fire Headquarters biodiversity project informed staff of the works being undertaken and why. There has been good engagement with the scheme, with staff photographing species (butterflies and other insects) and providing feedback on any issues to the Facilities Department.

5.2 NRAP Objective 2

“Safeguard species and habitats of principal importance and improve their management”

5.2.1 The Service does not have any protected sites within its estate.

5.2.2 The Fire Headquarters is located on the St Asaph Business Park, which contains Greater Crested Newt, any grounds disturbance works take into consideration the legislative requirements pertaining to the newts.

5.2.3 Where new-build development or major refurbishment work is undertaken by the Service, schemes are subject to BREEAM certification where feasible to do so. BREEAM is the world's longest established method of assessing, rating, and certifying the sustainability of buildings. Principles under which development work takes place include:

- Ensuring, where possible, that any construction takes place in sites defined as land of low ecological value
- Ensuring, where possible, that development work protects existing ecological features from substantial damage arising from its preparation or completion.
- To recognise and encourage actions taken to enhance the ecological value of development sites as a result of the development.

5.3 NRAP Objective 3

“Increase the resilience of our natural environment by restoring degraded habitat and habitat creation”

5.3.1 This objective is met through the implementation of the Grounds Maintenance and Biodiversity Enhancement Contract, which commenced 1st April 2020.

5.3.2 Each site under the control of the Service was assessed for its grounds maintenance requirements and habitat creation potential, with a site specific regime being written for each site, including site plans and measurements of vegetated areas.

5.3.3 Please refer above to Table 1: NWFRS Site types and locations.

5.3.4 The potential to address biodiversity considerations within the NWFRS estate is high, with 83% of sites having areas of soft landscaping (grassed areas) and 46% of those sites having additional areas within the grounds containing shrubs, hedges or trees; only 17% of sites are devoid of any vegetation.

5.3.5 The regimes put in place under the Grounds Maintenance and Biodiversity Enhancement Contract are:

Grassed Areas

- 5.3.6 Unless the grassed area needs to be maintained as a formal feature (i.e. front of Headquarters) or the area of grass is too small, the cutting regime has been reduced from every two weeks between April and August to one cut in the spring and one in the autumn; thus, allowing the grass to grow between April and August each year to increase the habitat area available to pollinators and other species.
- 5.3.7 Where grassed areas are left to grow between April and August, a strip along the edge of the grass next to hard standings will be cut regularly, to demarcate the biodiversity area, indicate the area is being managed and allow for any health and safety considerations for personnel using the site.
- 5.3.8 For areas of grass that are too small to leave to grow, these have been individually assessed for alternative 'pollinator friendly' habitats, such as flower-beds or planters.

Shrubs and Trees

- 5.3.9 All trees will be recorded in a Tree Inventory (ongoing), stating location, any tree protection orders, species, approximate age, condition (the health of the tree and risk assessments [to the tree from disease such as Ash die-back and the risk from the tree, such as the removal of dead branches which may fall on property or people]).
- 5.3.10 Where trees need to be removed, they will be replaced with suitable native species.
- 5.3.11 Where trees have been removed in the past and gaps in the habitat exist, where viable these gaps will be closed by planting new trees.
- 5.3.12 Hedges and shrubs will be trimmed at the appropriate time of year and take into consideration species that may be using them, such as nesting birds.
- 5.3.13 Where shrubs or hedges need to be renewed or repaired, flowering species (such as hawthorn) will be used as a feed stock for pollinators.
- 5.3.14 Log piles, bat, bird and insect boxes are to be installed at sites where viable.

Awareness Raising of Biodiversity

- 5.3.15 NWFRS personnel have been informed of the change of grounds maintenance regime and why.
- 5.3.16 Public explanation boards are displayed at sites where the front is subject to a specific biodiversity project, outlining what specific biodiversity measures have been taken and the reasons for doing so. At the locations of more significant projects (e.g. the rear garden at Headquarters in St. Asaph), a photographic log showing 'before' and 'after' is typically included.

5.4 NRAP Objective 4

"Tackle key pressures on species and habitats"

- 5.4.1 Japanese Knotweed Control is in place at 3 sites and is subject to ongoing status monitored.
- 5.4.2 A risk assessment to the Service's Ash Trees from Ash die-back disease was postponed due to the pandemic, and is now planned to take place by the end of 2023.
- 5.4.3 Where additional tree planting is undertaken, the biogenic sequestration value to the Service's carbon footprint as a result of tree carbon sequestration within the estate is reported as part of the annual carbon accounting report.
- 5.4.4 Where a green space for staff, visitors or community groups is created, seating will be sourced from sustainable and social sources.
- 5.4.5 The use of pesticides and herbicides; the Service already specifies to contractors to ensure the use of these substances is proportionate, they are not applied to wet foliage or when rain is expected, that all litter and arising are removed prior to spraying and that their equipment is fitted with approved guards to prevent spray drift.
- 5.4.6 Due to their bioaccumulative nature and high degree of ecotoxicity, the Service will end the use of long-chain (C6 and C8) fluorosurfactant firefighting foams and dispose of its existing stocks in accordance with manufacturer guidelines. These foams are to be replaced with fluorine-free alternatives.

- 5.4.7 The Service has a dedicated Wildfires lead officer, who provides consultation with landowners including farmers and local authorities, and partner authorities such as Natural Resources Wales and North Wales Police to help reduce the number and scale of wildfires within the Service area, thus protecting large and valuable habitats. Partnership work undertaken with farmers is of particular value as many wildfires requiring attendance by the Service begin as controlled burns undertaken by landowners. This work involves education around the requirements of The Heather and Grass Burning Code for Wales 2008, including the requirement to prepare a Burn Plan and provide sufficient notification to the Service.
- 5.4.8 The Service will continue its ongoing work around Arson Prevention, to help protect natural habitats.

5.5 NRAP Objective 5

“Improve our evidence, understanding and monitoring”

- 5.5.1 A Biodiversity Inventory of the NWFRS estate has been produced, containing site plans, measurements of grassed areas and habitats on site. A photographic log of all biodiversity areas within the estate was prepared in 2021.
- 5.5.2 The baseline year for the Inventory is the 2019-20 financial year, where sites have been subject to the former grounds maintenance regime, prior to the aforementioned changes to reflect the Service’s biodiversity commitments.
- 5.5.3 The Inventory is updated each year, reflecting projects undertaken at each site and further works required.
- 5.5.4 All Inventories, data and information is accessible to the Local Environment Records Centre (COFNOD), the Wales Biodiversity Partnership, local Biodiversity Officers, Public Service Board partner organisations, North Wales Wildlife Trust and any other interested parties.

5.6 NRAP Objective 6

“Put in place a framework of governance and support for delivery”

- 5.6.1 The day to day delivery of biodiversity action at NWFRS sites is administered through the Environmental and Energy Conservation Section of the Facilities Management Department, in conjunction with the Environment and Climate Change Manager, reporting to the Head of Operations and the Assistant Chief Fire Officer responsible for Environment. The ‘Biodiversity Report and Plan’ reports prepared under the Environment (Wales) Act 2016: Part 1 – Section 6 every three years are presented to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority for approval prior to publication.
- 5.6.2 The Service seeks, on an ongoing basis, support from PSB partner organisations and local wildlife groups for the species identification at sites; for example, in conjunction with the Wildlife Trust, opening the grounds for the day to members of the public and ecological experts to help assess and record species found on site; with the results being recorded with COFNOD.

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	12 December 2022
Lead Officer	Richard Fairhead, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Steve Morris, ICT Technical Manager
Subject	Cyber Essentials (CE) Certification



PURPOSE OF REPORT

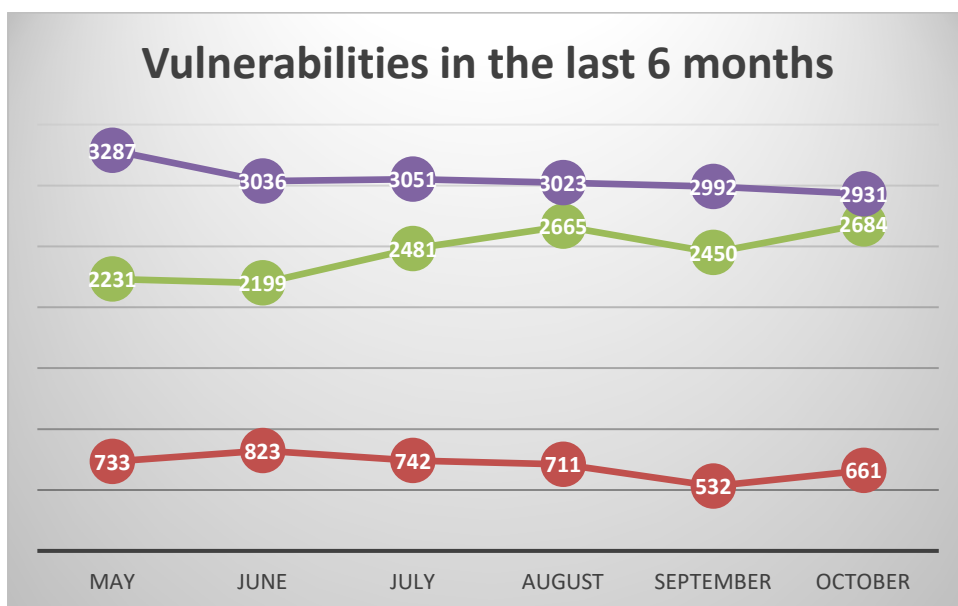
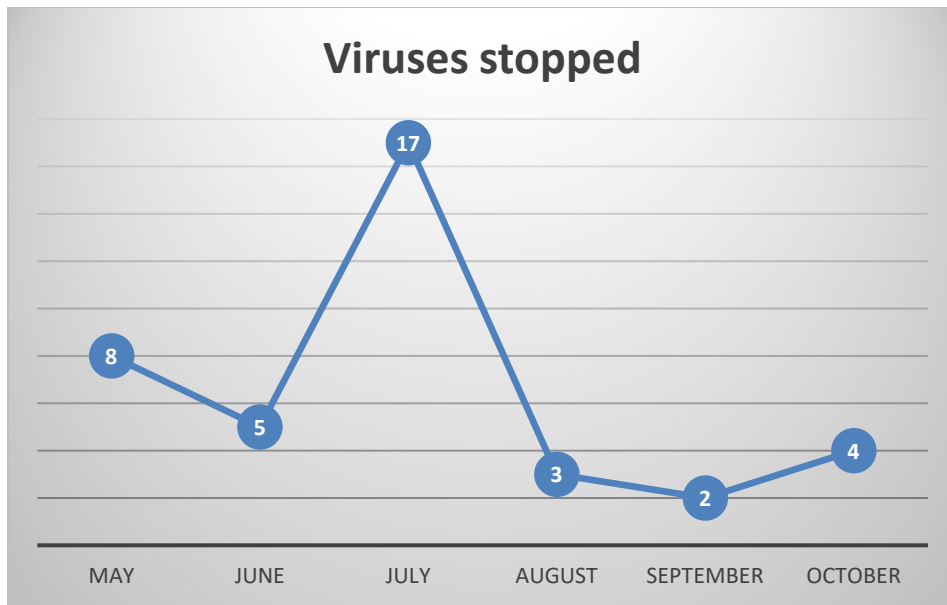
1. To inform members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) of the work the service is undertaking with regards to cyber security.

RECOMMENDATION

2. Members are asked to:
 - i) Note the work being carried out by the Service on cyber protection, including the Service working towards CE certification in the first instance.

INFORMATION

3. All organisations are under constant threat from cyber criminals trying to attack computer systems and North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) is no different. Our ICT department are, on a daily basis, identifying and stopping these attacks and preventing threats entering our systems. This work is continuous and a significant amount of time and resources are spent protecting the service from cyber-attack.
4. The graphs on page 2 of this report show the extent of the work required by the ICT department to protect us from cyber threats. In the last 6 months our ICT department has identified and dealt with 39 viruses' trying to enter and over 6,000 threats have been identified which our systems have to deal with and prevent entering our systems. The Service's Firewalls, which are programmes that monitor what is coming in and going out of our systems and block threats, are constantly being updated to ensure they are effective.



Critical Risk	High Risk	Medium Risk
---------------	-----------	-------------

5. If we didn't work so hard to identify viruses and threats then there are several different ways in which the Service would be affected.
 - a. If a cyber-criminal accessed our risk critical command and control systems, we may not be able to mobilise fire engines.
 - b. If personal data was accessed and then leaked we would be liable to a fine of up to 20 million euros.
 - c. Cyber criminals try to disable organisations systems using ransomware which require both time and considerable cost to re-instate.
 - d. Falling victim to cyber criminals would also cause reputational damage the service.

6. The National Cyber Security Centre have an initiative called Cyber Essentials (CE) that is designed to assist organisations against the ever-growing threat of cyber-attacks. As such, Welsh Government (WG) are encouraging all public sectors to meet the CE standard, which is a self-assessment addressing how to prevent the majority of cyber-attacks, whilst working towards Cyber Essentials Plus (CE+) which is a more in-depth assessment carried out by an independent assessor.
7. The Service are currently working to achieve CE certification in the first instance, and following the self-assessment will work towards preparing for the independent assessment to achieve CE+. Achieving CE+ will require investment in technology and staff who have the skills to work full time on addressing the cyber security issues.
8. Colleagues at the other two Welsh Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) are also looking to achieve CE before working towards CE+ certification due to similar resourcing challenges. Other public sector organisations such as North Wales Police (NWP) have achieved certifications similar to CE+. However, they have invested the resources to achieve this due to the nature of their business and sensitivity of the data they hold.
9. The ICT department will continue to invest significant time and resources to protecting the Service but having a certification such as Cyber Essentials offers independent assurance that serious measures have been taken to protect our computer systems. It also provides the Service with a clearer picture of any potential areas where improvement may be required.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	N/A
Budget	CE is £700 per annum CE+ is £2700 per annum. Significant investment for both staff and technology is also required.
Legal	Not applicable, although the Service could face legal consequences should a cyber-attack hamper its ability to carry out its statutory duties.
Staffing	Meeting the standards that would allow CE+ accreditation would require a skilled technical resource dedicated to the cyber security fight. This resource is not a resource we currently have
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	N/A
Risks	The risks of not being cyber secure are far reaching and can include: an inability to function as a Service; large financial costs and time involved in recovery; reputational damage; and legal complications.

Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	12 December 2022	
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer, (Corporate Policy and Planning)	
Contact Officer	Pippa Hardwick, Head of Corporate Planning	
Subject	Performance Monitoring: April – Sept 2022	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide information about incident activity during the first half of the 2022/23 financial year; performance in relation to the Authority's improvement and well-being objectives; and other notable incident activity.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 During the first half of 2022/23 the Service has attended 3,450 emergency incidents. This is an increase of 26.1% compared with the same period in 2021/22.
- 3 The increase has primarily been driven by an 81.3% increase in attendances at non-fire emergencies (698) which are classified as Special Service Incidents. This follows the new Chief Fire Officer's change in policy around attendance at Special Service Incidents, to provide more assistance to the public and partner agencies whilst at the same time increasing the visibility of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) in the community.
- 4 However, it is pleasing to see a reduction in the number of fires in the home (161 compared to 208) that the Service has attended during the first half of the year, along with a reduction in fire deaths (0) and serious injuries (2). Conscious that this could change, the Service will continue to deliver fire prevention interventions and initiatives to support fire safety in the home.
- 5 Post- covid increases in the in-person delivery of Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs) is also a positive outcome during the first half of the year with a total of 9,229 SAWCs completed, compared with 5,971 during the same half of 2021/22. With a commitment to meet the end of year target of 20,000 SAWCs, the Service will continue to positively increase the number of SAWCs during the second half of the year, working with partners to prioritise those at high risk of fire in their home.

- 6 A new area of reporting for the Executive Panel at mid-year is the number of wildfires attended. Wildfires can be a result of extreme weather events linked to climate change and is an area of growth in the UK in comparison to the reduction of house fires during the past decade. Wildfires can be particularly challenging incidents for the Service to deal with because of their erratic nature, potential size, scale and intensity and because of the rural and rural-urban interface environments in which they tend to occur.
- 7 As defined by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) a wildfire is a grassland, woodland or crop fire that:
 - involves a geographical area of at least one hectare (10,000 square metres or 100m x 100m);
 - has a sustained flame length of more than 1.5 metres;
 - requires a committed resource of at least four fire and rescue appliances/resources;
 - requires resources to be committed for at least six hours;
 - presents a serious threat to life, environment, property and infrastructure.
- 8 During the first half of this year there were 54 wildfires in North Wales, which were attended by a combined total of 356 vehicles for over 1097 hours. This area of performance will continue to be monitored and reported on at future Executive Panel meetings.
- 9 The mobilising rules implemented during the pandemic at HMP Berwyn and the fire safety advice delivered during this period will also continue. This has resulted in a reduction of fires attended at the prison from 21 to 8 compared with the same period 2021/22.
- 10 Following the Service restructure from the 1st April 2022, focus on the 20-fire station availability target has resulted in an increase of 172 days (94%) compared with 141 days (77%) during the first half of the year. This is another positive direction of travel, though it is early days and work will continue to recruit and retain firefighters at our fire stations.

RECOMMENDATION

- 11 That Members note the content of the performance monitoring report.

INFORMATION

12 **All Incidents**

The upward trend in the number of incidents attended has continued, with 26.1% more incidents attended in the first half of 2022/23 (3,450) than in the same period in 2021/22 (2,737). Although there have been increased attendances across all categories, the main contributor was an 81.3% increase of Special Service Incidents (SSIs). This is an expected increase, following a change in the Service's mobilising procedures to increase our attendance at SSI's.

13 **Fires**

Fires attended during the reporting period increased 22.7% to 1,294 compared with 1,055 in the same period of 2021/22.

14 **Grassland, Woodland and Crop Fires**

Grassland, Woodland and Crop fires increased 79.1% (230 to 412).

Secondary Accidental Grassland, Woodland and Crop fires increased to 272 from 146, with 'Heathland or Moorland' fires being the main contributor to the increase (38 to 100).

Increases were also recorded in 'Grassland, Pasture, Grazing etc' (46 to 84); 'Hedge' (13 to 26) and 'Tree Scrub - includes single trees not in garden' (11 to 25).

Secondary Deliberate Grassland, woodland and crop fires increased 52.6% (78 to 119) with the main contributors to this increase being 'Grassland, Pasture, Grazing etc.' (30 to 56) and 'Tree Scrub - includes single trees not in garden' (10 to 18).

15 **Wildfires**

There were 54 wildfires which were attended by 356 vehicles for over 1097 hours during the reporting period.

16 **Primary Fires**

Primary fires decreased slightly (4.2%) compared with the same quarters of 2021/22 (480 to 460), and were 3.2% below the three-year average of 475. Accidental primary fires decreased 6.8% from 398 to 371 with the main contributor to the decrease being a reduction in 'Dwelling' fires (208 to 161) although 'Non Residential' and Grassland, Woodland and Crop fires increased slightly from 69 to 79 and 4 to 18 respectively.

Deliberate Primary fires, which had been on a downward trend since 2018/19, increased slightly compared with the same period of 2021/22 (82 to 89).

- 17 **Secondary Fires**
Secondary fires increased 50.5% from 537 to 808, primarily due to a 55.8% increase in Accidental Secondary fires (337 to 525) with the main contributors to the increase being 'Outdoor' (333 to 518), 'Grassland, woodland and crop' (146 to 272) and 'Other outdoors (including land)' (93 to 158). Deliberate Secondary fires increased 41.5% (200 to 283) due to a 43.1% increase in 'Outdoor' (183 to 262) wherein 'Grassland, woodland and crops' and 'Other outdoors (including land)' increased 52.6% (78 to 119) and 35.4% (79 to 107) respectively.
- 18 **Chimney Fires**
Chimney fires, which have been on a downward trend since 2020/21 (49), decreased further compared with the same period in 2021/22 (38 to 26).
- 19 **Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)**
The Service attended 22.6% fewer ADFs - 161 compared with 208 during the same period of 2021/22. ADF's in 'House of single occupancy' and 'Bungalow of Single Occupancy' decreased from 118 to 93 and from 35 to 17 respectively, with the main contributors to the decrease being 'Combustible Articles too Close to Heat Source (or fire)' (46 to 33), 'Cooking – Chip Pan/Deep Pan Fryer' (14 to four) and 'Faults in Equipment or Appliances' (20 to 13).
- 20 **Fatalities/Casualties in ADFs**
There were no fatalities in ADFs compared with 3 during the same period in 2021/22. There was also a reduction in casualties from 66 to 47, with two people sustaining serious injuries and 19 sustaining slight injuries.
- 21 **Smoke Detectors – ADF's**
Smoke/heat detectors were present at the majority of accidental fires in dwellings in 2022/23 (88.2%). ADF's where a smoke/heat detector was fitted, operated and raised the alarm, reduced from 100 to 80 compared with the same period in the previous financial year, in line with the year to date reduction of ADF's attended.
- 22 ADF's where a smoke detector was fitted but did not operate decreased from 42 to 41, with the most likely reason for non-operation being the detector correctly installed on an escape route (hall, landing) and not in a room most likely to be the origin of a fire (kitchen, living room). ADF's where no detector was fitted decreased from 26 to 19, and where a detector was fitted and operated but did not raise the alarm, incidents also decreased from 40 to 21.

- 23 **Deliberate Primary Fires in Non-Residential Buildings**
Deliberate primary fires in non-residential buildings declined from 36 to 28, with 8 occurring at HMP Berwyn.
- 24 **False Alarms**
The upward trend in False Alarms continued with the Service attending 1,458 false alarms - 161 (12.4%) more than in the same period of 2021/22 (1,297), and 208 (16.7%) more than the three-year average of 1,250. Those originating from AFA systems increased 17.2% (123) from 714 to 837 and represented 57.4% of false alarm attendances.
- 25 **Non-Residential Automatic Fire Alarms (AFA)**
Non-Residential AFAs increased 65.2%, from 92 to 152 mainly due to increases in 'Hospitals and Medical Care' (65 to 109) and 'Education' (12 to 24), where the main causes of activation were 'Faulty' (42 to 68); 'Accidentally/carelessly set off' (10 to 25) and 'Steam' (3 to 10).
- 26 **Other-Residential AFAs**
Whilst 'Other-Residential' AFAs increased 30.2%, from 53 to 69, with 'Nurses'/Doctors' Accommodation' increasing to 17 from 3, 'Residential Home' decreased from 15 to 6 with 'Cooking/Burnt Toast' and 'Smoking' being the main causes of activation.
- 27 **Dwelling AFAs**
AFAs in Dwellings showed a continued upward trend, increasing 8.3% from 568 to 615, with 'House – Single Occupancy' being the lead contributor to the increase, rising from 140 to 171.
- 28 Of the 615 Dwelling AFAs, 'Cooking/Burnt Toast' was the main cause of activation, increasing from 303 to 313. Slight increases were also recorded in 'Accidentally/Carelessly Set Off' (26 to 34); 'Testing' (17 to 26) and 'Steam' (10 to 18). However, there was a decrease in 'Smoking' from 20 to 12.
- 29 **Good Intent False Alarms**
Good intent false alarms increased 4.8% from 565 to 592. False alarms made with good intent in 'Non-Residential' increased from 30 to 43 with the main contributor to the increase being 'Other' (10 to 17) and 'Overheating Appliance' (zero to four).
False alarms made with good intent in 'Other Residential' increased slightly from 14 to 19. False alarms made with good intent in 'False Alarm – Property not found' increased from 30 to 57 on the back of increased 'Reported incident/Location not found' (25 to 51).
Good Intent false alarms in 'Grassland, Woodland and Crops' increased from 71 to 77, with 'Controlled Burning' being the main contributor to the increase (48 to 59), whilst 'Reported Incident/Location not found' decreased from 19 to 8.

- 30 **Malicious False Alarms**
There was a slight increase in Malicious False Alarms (18 to 29), with the main contributor to the increase being 'Dwelling' (5 to 24), where 'Activation of Fire Call Point/Alarm' increased from 5 to 21.
- 31 **Special Service Incidents**
There was an 81.3% increase in Special Service incidents (385 to 698) which can be attributed to the change in policy aimed at increasing the presence of the fire service in the community when needed. Missing from Home (MFH) and Method of Entry (M of E) incidents increased 167.9% (53 to 142) with 'Assist Other Agencies' seeing a 182% increase (50 to 141). Within the increase to 'Assist other agencies', 'Other Assistance to Police/Ambulance' increased from 48 to 136.
- 32 'Other than RTC' increased 78.9% (245 to 438), with increases in 'Other Rescue or Release of Persons' (31 to 71); 'Effecting Entry or Exit' (41 to 58); 'Assist Other Agencies' (32 to 54), and 'Lift Release' (34 to 53). There was an increase in 'Flooding' (20 to 28), where attendance at 8 of these incidents was to make a location safe, while advice was given at 12 incidents.
- 33 **Road Traffic Collisions (RTC) Incidents**
The Service attended 35.6% more RTCs (118), where 41 (34.7%) involved the extrication or release of persons. Where the Service was called upon to make a vehicle or scene safe, attendance increased 53.4% (42 to 63). Although the Service attended more RTCs, the percentage of RTCs which involved the release or extrication of persons was the same as in the same period of 2020/21 (34.7%).
- 34 **Safe and Well Checks (SAWCs)**
The Service completed 54.6% more SAWCs (9,229) compared with the same period of 2021/22 (5,971). High-priority SAWCs increased from 2,590 to 3,189, of which 1,824 (57.2%) were in response to referrals from partner agencies. Medium priority SAWCs increased from 1,125 to 1,772, of which 509 (28.7%) were in response to referrals from partner agencies. Low priority SAWCs increased from 2,256 to 4,268, with 683 (16%) being in response to referrals from partner agencies. Following the lifting of pandemic and travel restrictions, physical on site SAWCs increased 129.2% (3,610 to 8,275), with a resulting decrease in SAWCs being completed over the phone (2,361 to 954).

35 **Station Performance**

Planned 20 station availability was achieved on 172 days (94.0%) out of 183 days, compared with 141 (77.0%) in the same period of the last financial year. However, this is still lower than the 182 days (99.5%) achieved in the same period of 2018/19.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Helps the Authority to monitor its performance against the improvement and well-being objectives in the Corporate Plan 2021-24.
Budget	Helps to highlight any potential impacts on budget due to unanticipated incident activity.
Legal	Assists the Authority with ensuring that there are sufficient resources to meet demand.
Staffing	No implication identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	No implication identified.
Risks	Not satisfying legal requirements to report on and monitor performance that may impact on the ability to ensure that there are sufficient resources to meet demand.

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT

Half Year

April – September 2022

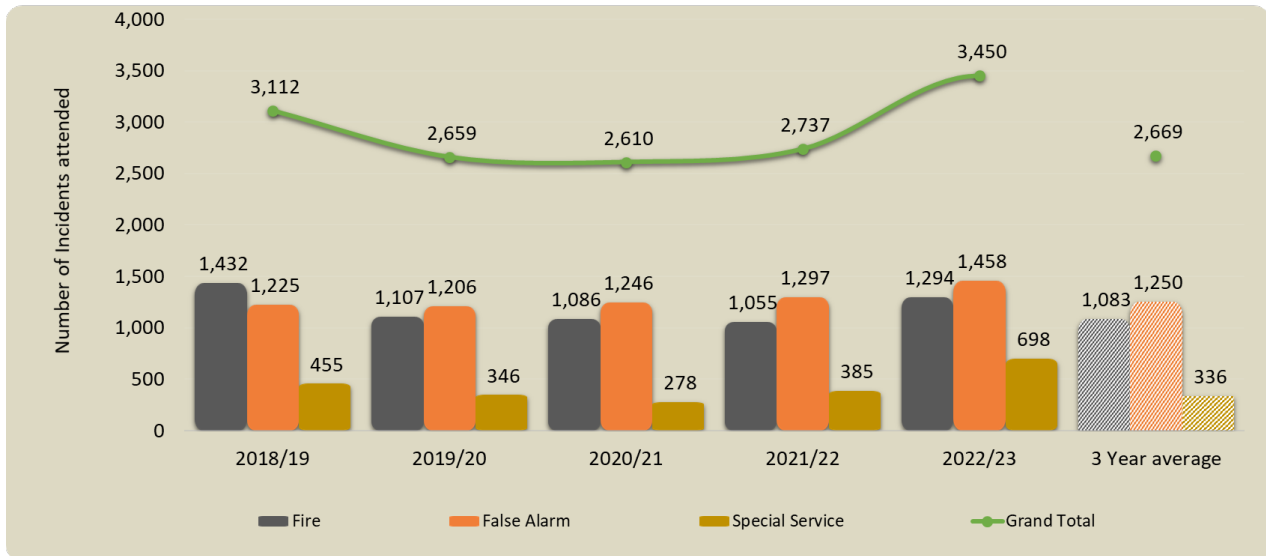
Figures are provisional and may be subject to minor amendment.

CONTENTS

INCIDENT ACTIVITY REPORTING	
ALL INCIDENTS	
All Incidents	1-2
FIRES BY CATEGORY	
Fires by category and motive	3-4
Primary Fires, by property type and motive	5
Accidental fires in dwellings	6-7
Fatalities and casualties from accidental fires in dwellings	8
Smoke Detectors - Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)	9
FALSE ALARMS	
False alarms by category	10-11
SPECIAL SERVICE INCIDENTS	
Special service incidents by category	12-13
Road Traffic Collisions and Extrications/Release	14-15
MONITORING AGAINST OBJECTIVE 1- TO WORK TOWARDS MAKING IMPROVEMENTS TO THE HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELL-BEING OF PEOPLE IN WALES	
Safe and Well Checks	16-17
Planned 20 Station Availability	18
GLOSSARY	
Glossary	19-20

1 All Incidents

1.1 During the first half of the 2022/23 financial year, the Service attended 3,450 emergency incidents and false alarms, an increase of 26.1% on the same period in 2021/22.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total incidents attended	2022-23	1,575	1,875			3,450	↑ 26.1%	2,669	↑ 29.3%
	2021-22	1,322	1,415			2,737			
Total fires	2022-23	577	717			1,294	↑ 22.7%	1,083	↑ 19.5%
	2021-22	575	480			1,055			
Total special service incidents	2022-23	327	371			698	↑ 81.3%	336	↑ 107.7%
	2021-22	152	233			385			
Total false alarms	2022-23	671	787			1,458	↑ 12.4%	1,250	↑ 16.7%
	2021-22	595	702			1,297			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

Narrative

Fires increase – the significant increase in fire incidents (when comparing Q1 and Q2 2021/22 to Q1 and Q2 2022/23) is attributed to the hot summer experienced in the UK. This therefore led to an increase of 211 incidents (19.5%) over the previous 3-year average.

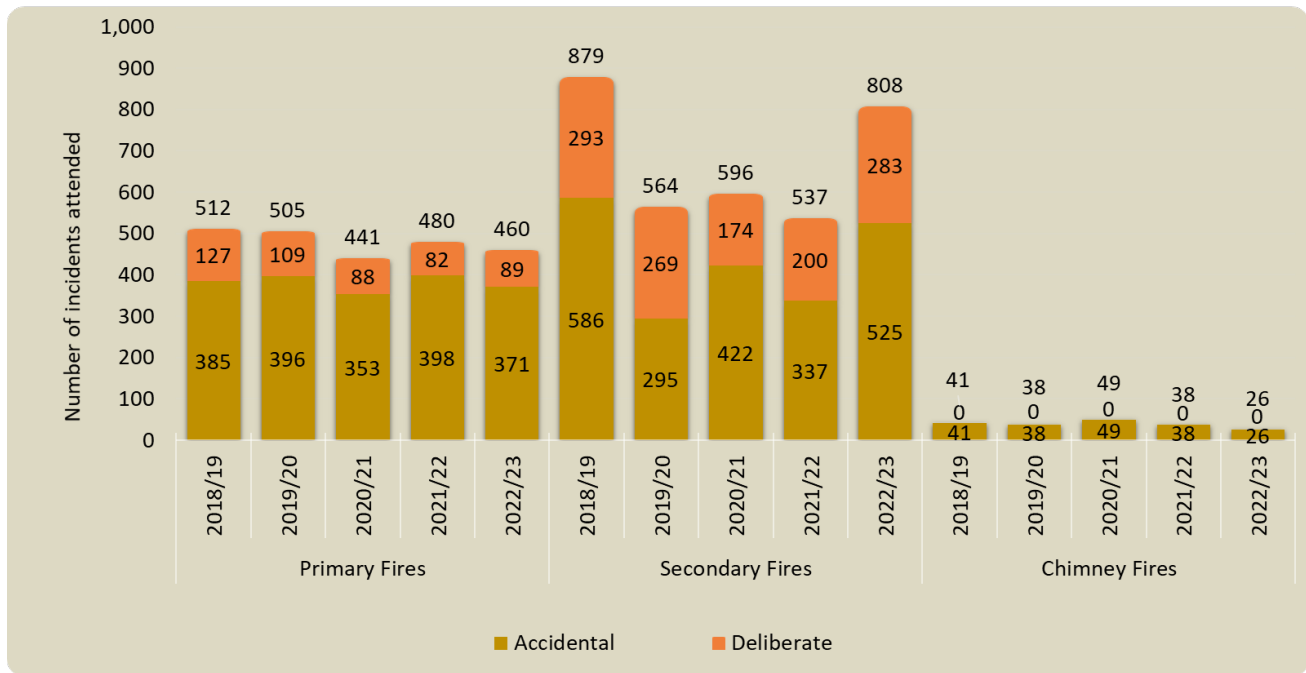
AFA's (non-domestic) increase – The Service is aware of the increase in AFA's in non-domestic settings; these calls are predominately from Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board (BCUHB) with numerous activation reasons and Service continues to work with BCUHB in reducing these AFA activations. There is also an increase in domestic (dwelling) attendance to AFA's and this is referred to later in this report.

SSIs increase – This follows the appointment of the new Chief Fire Officer and change in policy around attendance at Special Service Incidents, to provide more assistance to the public and partner agencies whilst increasing the visibility of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS) in the community.



2 Fires, by Category and Motive

- 2.1 A total of 1,294 fires have been attended; a 22.7% increase from 1,055 in 2021/22.
- 2.2 **Primary fires** – There was a 4.2% decrease in primary fires, from 480 to 460 compared with the first six months of 2021/22.
- 2.3 **Secondary fires** – There was a 50.5% increase in secondary fires, increasing from 537 to 808.
- 2.4 **Chimney fires** – There was a 31.6% decrease in chimney fires, from 38 to 26, compared with the same period in 2021/22.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Primary fires	2022-23	226	234			460	↓ 4.2%	475	↓ 3.2%
	2021-22	251	229			480			
Secondary fires	2022-23	332	476			808	↑ 50.5%	566	↑ 42.8%
	2021-22	293	244			537			
Chimney fires	2022-23	19	7			26	↓ 31.6%	42	↓ 38.1%
	2021-22	31	7			38			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

Narrative

The increase in both secondary accidental and secondary deliberate fires is attributed to the hot summer in the UK. In comparison, 2018/19 was also a very hot and dry summer in North Wales, demonstrating comparable numbers of incidents attended by the Service.

Actions to support communities and reduce fire events:

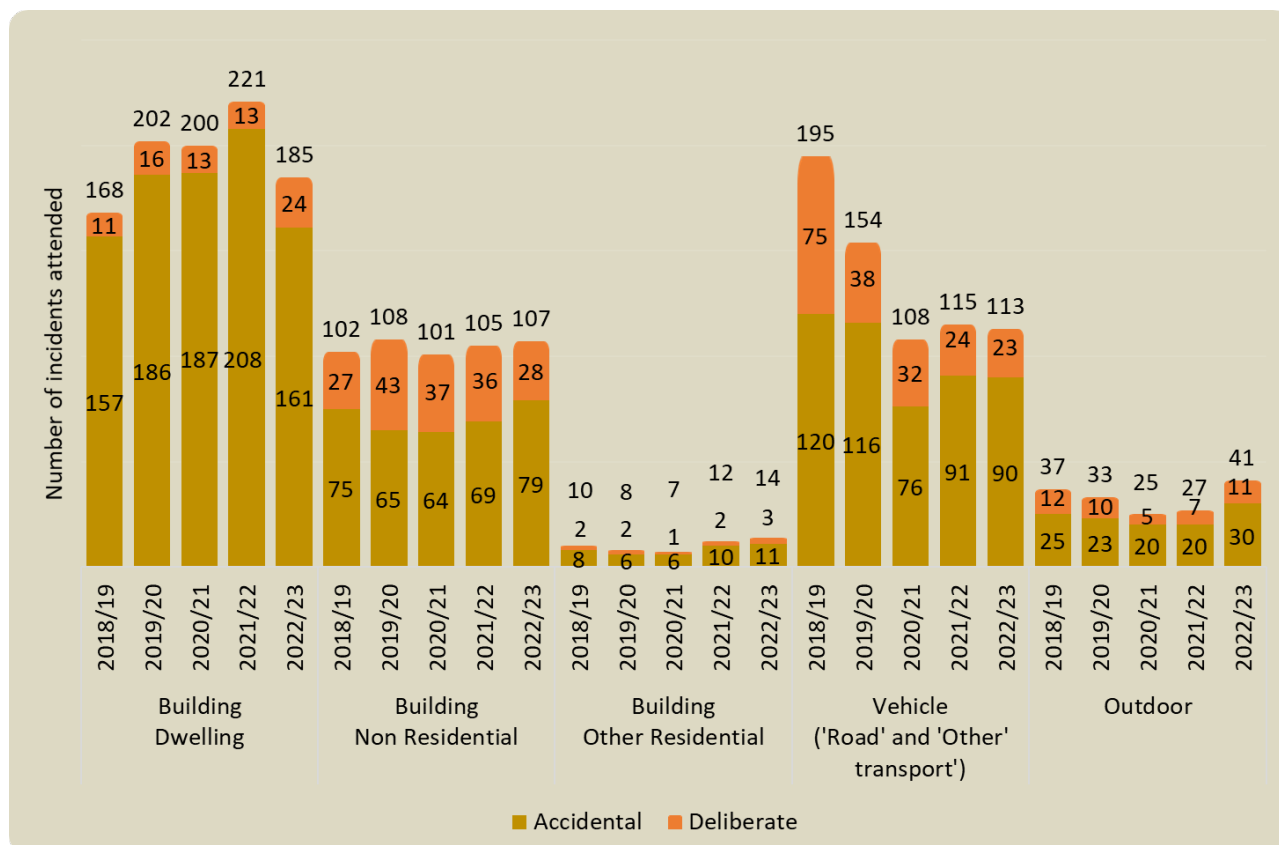
- Continue to deliver SAWCs across North Wales in line with our current strategy;
- Continue to work with strategic partners with our Arson Reduction teams to identify potential risk to reduce deliberate fire incidents;
- Attendance at the new Wales Wildfire Board established recently, supporting a new All Wales Wildfire Charter drafted to support the reduction in accidental and deliberate secondary fires;
- Prevention teams proactively attended agricultural shows, including the Royal Welsh Agricultural Society show in July 2022 to raise the profile of impacts of Wildfires in North Wales;
- Campaign Steering Group (CSG) working with Corporate Communications to continue to proactively promote safety and Wildfire messaging across all media platforms.



3 Primary Fires, by Property Type and Motive

3.1 During the reporting period, 28 primary fires were started deliberately at non-residential buildings, compared with 36 during the first half of 2021/22.

3.2 At HMP Berwyn, 8 deliberate fires occurred, compared with 21 in the same period of 2021/22.



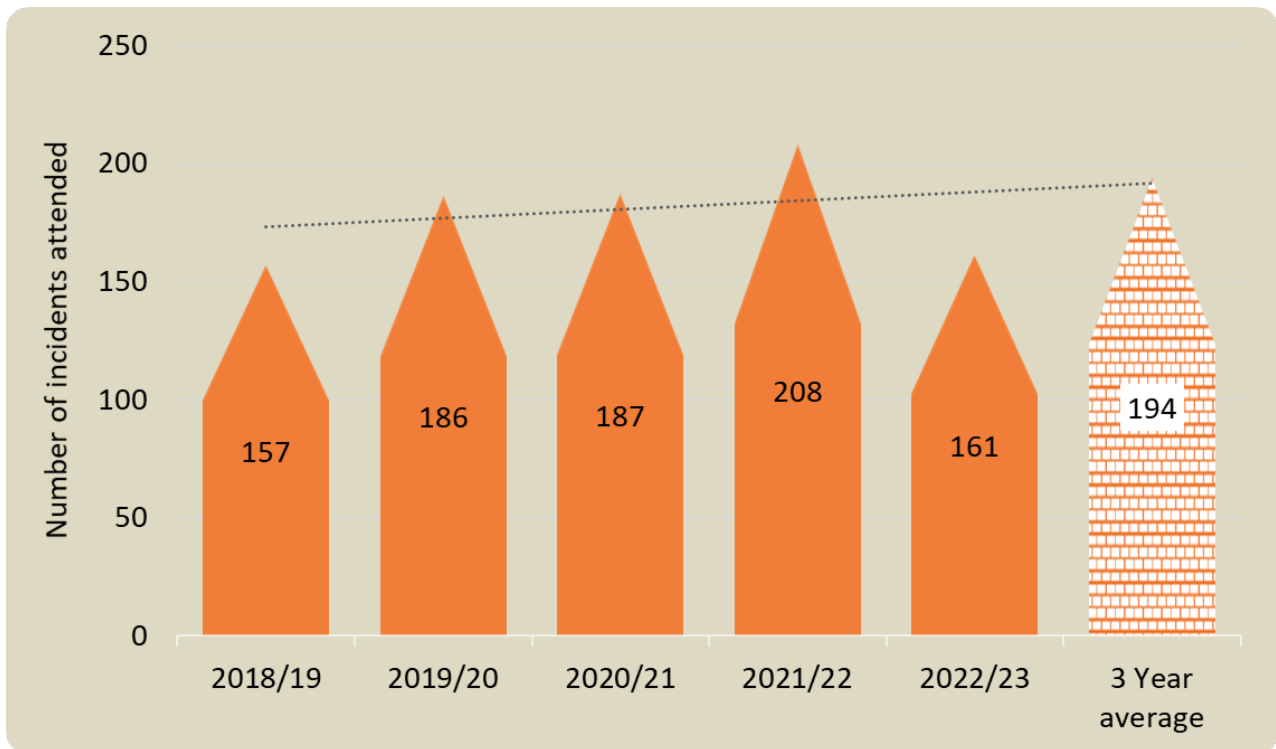
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD
All deliberate primary fires	2022-23	41	48			89	↑ 8.5%
	2021-22	40	42			82	
All accidental primary fires	2022-23	185	186			371	↓ 6.8%
	2021-22	211	187			398	

Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
93	↓ 4.3%
382	↓ 2.9%

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

4 Accidental fires in dwellings

4.1 The Service attended 161 accidental dwelling fires during the reporting period, 47 (22.6%) less than during the same period in 2021/22 (208), and 17.0% below the three-year average of 194.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Accidental fires in dwellings	2022-23	81	80			161	↓ 22.6%	194	↓ 17.0%
	2021-22	113	95			208			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

Actions to support communities and reduce ADFs:

- Continue working with regional hoarding groups to identify people at high risk of fire;
- Continue to receive high priority referrals from partner agencies;
- Joint venture between NWFRS and Bangor University to fit stove guards in student accommodation to reduce cooker fires;
- Continue to support Station Open days (generating SAWCs & providing safety advice);
- Support ongoing local and national (Wales & NFCC) campaigns in line with our own Campaign Steering Group (CSG) calendar;
- Locally run & targeted outreach days supported by external agencies. Areas are leafleted by Prevention teams and re-visited to provide SAWCs;
- Recent Cost of Living 'drop in' campaign in Rhyl provided Prevention teams the opportunity to give further safety advice;
- Proactive hot spotting campaigns following significant incidents producing SAWC referrals and community reassurance following incidents;
- Partnership between NWFRS and Carterfi Conwy, and Care & Repair continues to identify high priority referrals – we engage with vulnerable people who are discharged from hospitals/care settings, and we can provide interventions where required.

5 Fatalities and casualties from accidental fires in dwellings

5.1 There were no ADF fatalities during the first half of 2022/23, compared to three during the same period of the previous financial year. There were two serious injuries in accidental dwelling fires, compared with 3 during the same period of 2021/22. The number of precautionary checks decreased from 22 to 12, whilst the number of people requiring first aid at the scene also decreased from 22 to 14.

Severity of injury	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
Precautionary Check	8	9	18	22	12
First Aid	11	22	11	22	14
Injuries - Slight	8	12	12	19	19
Injuries - Serious	0	3	0	3	2
Fatality	2	1	3	3	0
Total	29	47	44	69	47

Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	Change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	Change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Injuries from accidental fires in dwellings	2022-23	10	37			47	↓ 19	51	↓ 4
	2021-22	43	23			66			
Deaths from accidental fires in dwellings	2022-23	0	0			0	↓ 3		
	2021-22	3	0			3			

Actions to support communities by increasing smoke detector ownership and safety education:

- The Service continues with the aim to deliver 20,000 SAWCs this year;
- Continue to work with partners to identify the most vulnerable people in the community and provide them with suitable advice and interventions;
- Continue the education and awareness of the correct sighting and fitting of smoke detectors in people's homes to prevent unnecessary activations and false alarms;
- Continue to promote regular testing of smoke detectors using all media platforms;
- Ensuring our advice provides details and actions to be taken if a fire starts or if a smoke detector activates in the home.



6 Smoke Detectors – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADFs)

- 6.1 Smoke/heat detectors were present at the majority of ADFs, although not all went on to operate. At 19 of the ADFs, no detector was fitted.
- 6.2 Of the 161 ADFs, 140 were confined to the room of origin, the item first ignited, or there was heat/smoke damage only.



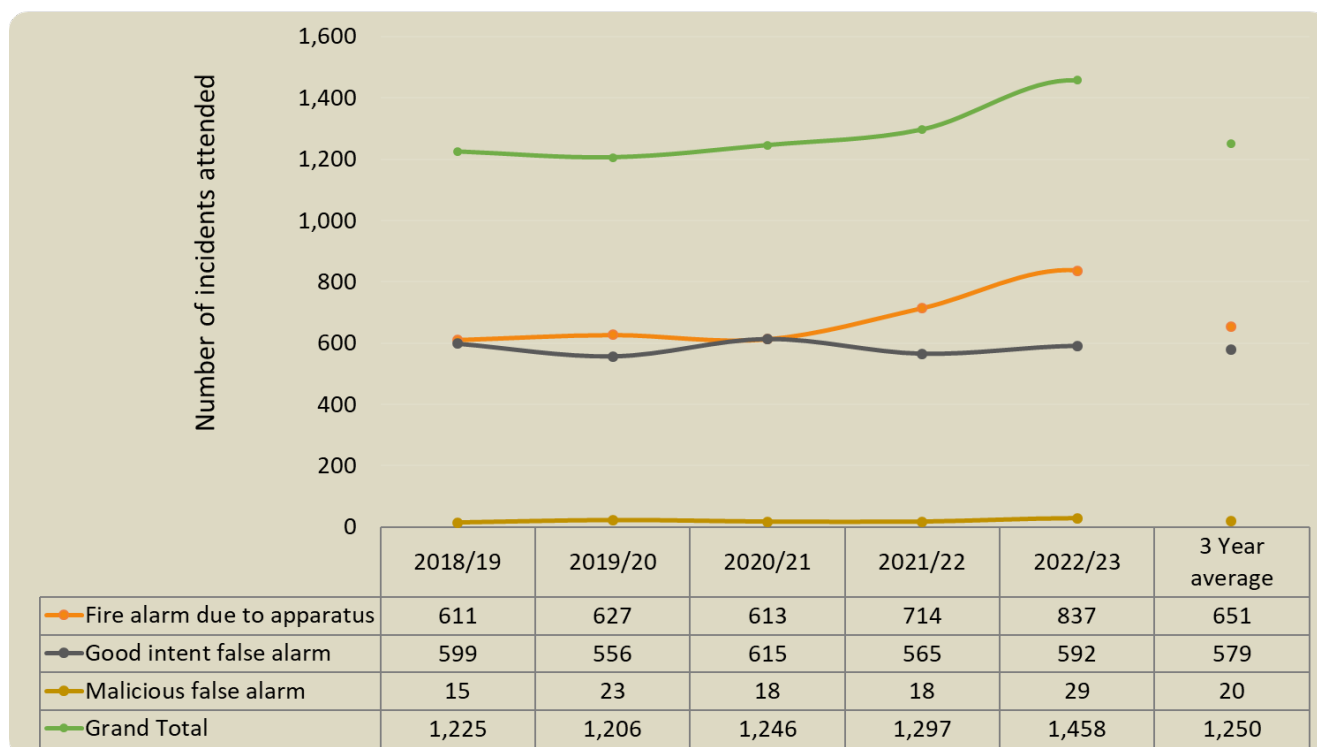
Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Smoke detector fitted which operated and raised alarm	2022-23	36	44			80	↓ 20.0%	92	↓ 13.0%
	2021-22	54	46			100			
Smoke detector fitted which operated but didn't raise the alarm	2022-23	17	4			21	↓ 47.5%	35	↓ 40%
	2021-22	20	20			40			
Smoke detector didn't operate	2022-23	22	19			41	↓ 2.4%	43	↓ 4.7%
	2021-22	26	16			42			
Smoke detector not fitted	2022-23	6	13			19	↓ 26.9%	24	↓ 20.8%
	2021-22	13	13			26			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.



7 False Alarms

7.1 In the first half of 2022/23 there were 1,458 false alarms; a 12.4% increase from 1,297 in the same half of 2021/22. There was a 17.2% increase in AFAs from 714 to 837. False alarms made with good intent increased 4.8% from 565 to 592. False alarms made with good intent increased 4.8% from 565 to 592.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total false alarm	2022-23	671	787			1,458	↑ 12.4%	1,250	↑ 16.6%
	2021-22	595	702			1,297			
AFA	2022-23	417	420			837	↑ 17.2%	651	↑ 28.5%
	2021-22	311	403			714			
False alarms made with good intent	2022-23	240	352			592	↑ 4.8%	579	↑ 2.3%
	2021-22	278	287			565			
Malicious	2022-23	14	15			29	↑ 61.1%	20	↑ 45%
	2021-22	6	12			18			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

Narrative

A total of 1,458 false alarms (FA) have been attended during this reporting period.

837 were from automated fire alarm systems – this is 28.5% above the three-year average of 651.

615 of these AFAs were in dwellings which is potentially due to the increased number of care line automatic systems in communities.

52 AFAs in Non-Residential properties, an increase of 60 this reporting period, is due to a rise in NWFRS attendance at BCUHB trust properties.

69 in 'Other-Residential' which also includes student accommodation and care settings.

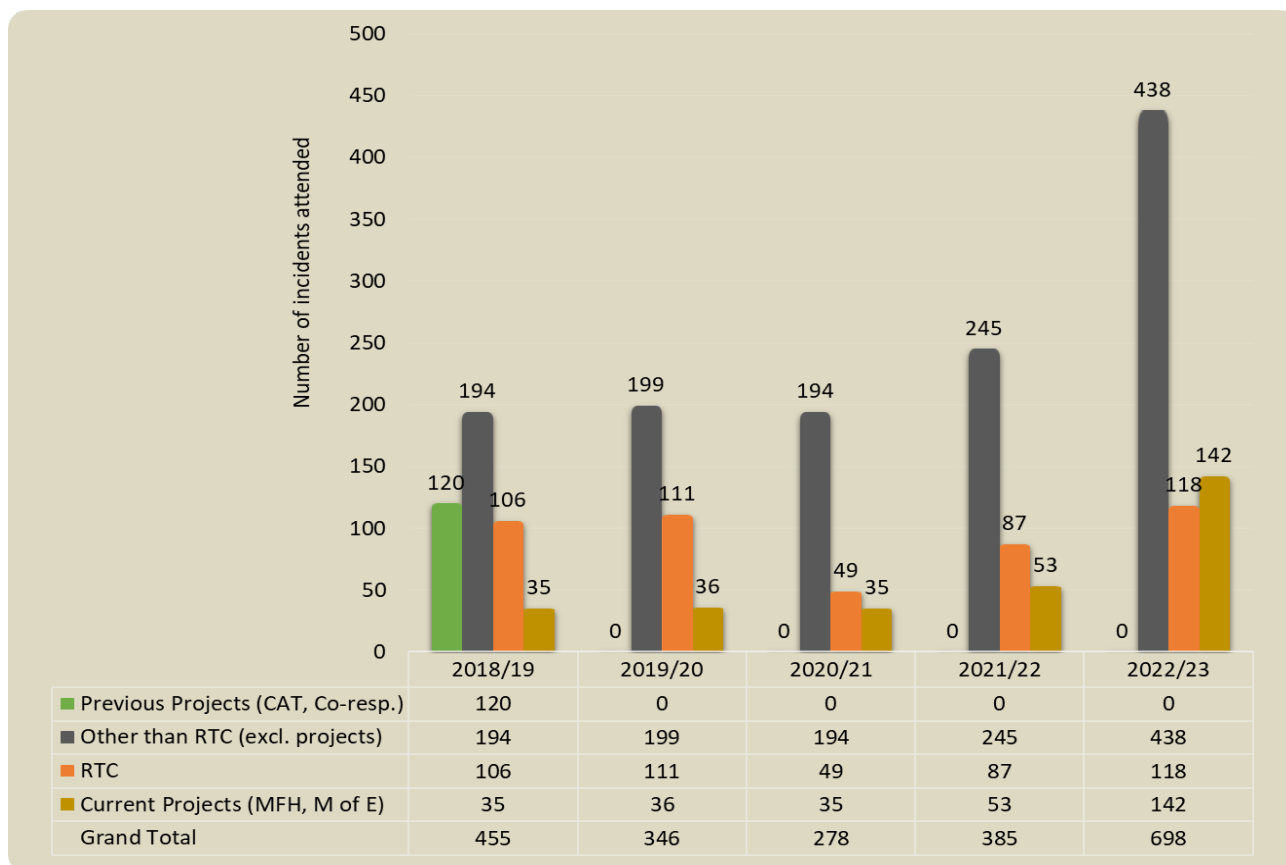
What we are doing:

- **AFAs in 'Dwellings'** – The Service continues to work to keep the most vulnerable people safe in the community, with targeted Prevention campaigns and working with care providers by installing care line systems. This may increase the number of AFAs we attend in dwellings, but each attendance will give us an opportunity to provide further and sometimes bespoke safety advice.
- **AFAs in 'Non-Residential'** - We continue to work with BCUHB to reduce unwanted actuations and BCUHB have a plan in place to reduce unwanted AFAs which the Service continues to monitor.
- **AFAs in 'Other-Residential'** - As above, work is ongoing to support BCUHB to reduce these unwanted AFA activations in care settings. We are also working with higher education establishments to reduce these unwanted AFAs through targeted Prevention campaigns.

8 Special Service Incidents



8.1 Special service incidents increased 81.3% to 698 during the first half of 2022/23, compared with 385 in the same half of 2021/22. Road traffic collisions increased 35.6% from 87 to 118, whilst 'Other than RTC' incidents increased 94.6%, from 298 to 580.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	% change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	% change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
Total special service incidents	2022-23	327	371			698	↑ 81.3%	336	↑ 107.7%
	2021-22	152	233			385			
Road traffic collisions (RTC)	2022-23	53	65			118	↑ 35.6%	82	↑ 43.9%
	2021-22	31	56			87			
Other than RTC	2022-23	274	306			580	↑ 94.6%	254	↑ 128.3%
	2021-22	121	177			298			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

Narrative

698 Special Service incidents attended – an 81.3% increase from 385.

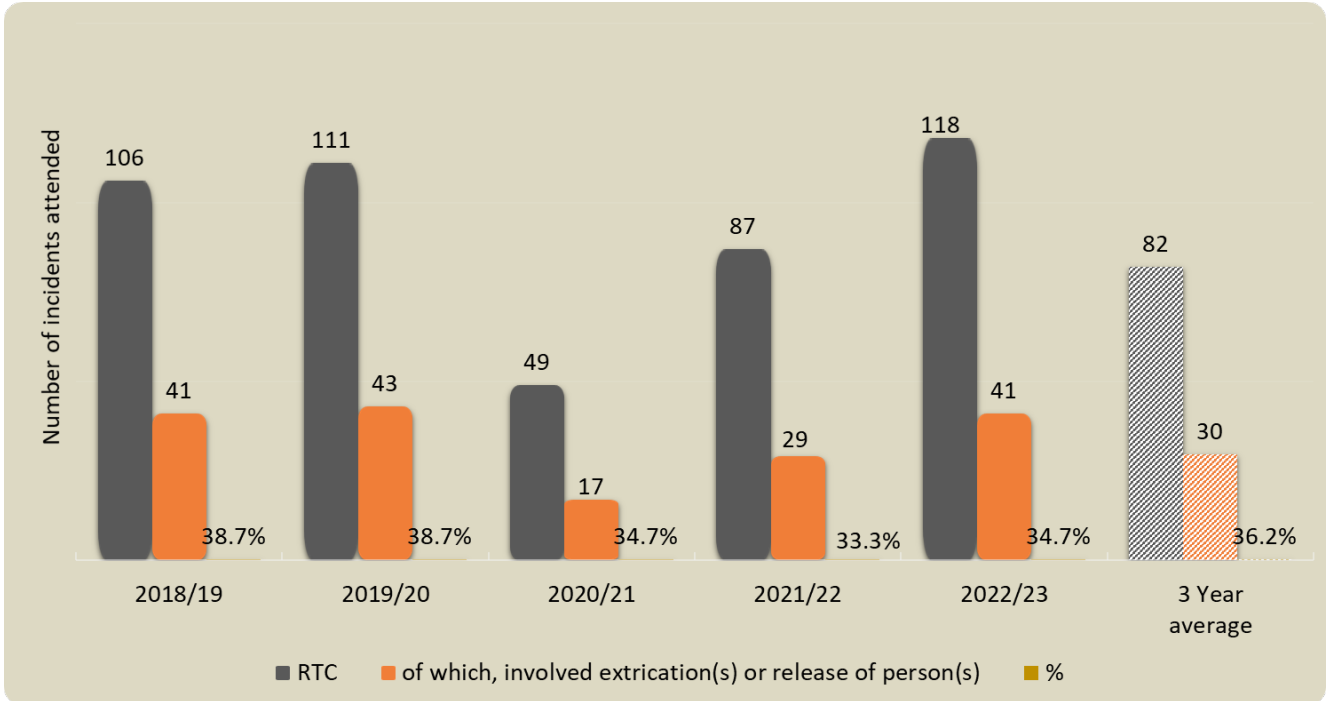
580 Other than RTC, an increase of 94.6% from 298.

A main contributing factor for the increase in attendance at Special Service incidents, is due to a decision taken by the Service to increase its support to other agencies and to be more visible in the communities of North Wales following the pandemic.

9 Road Traffic Collisions and Extrications/Release



9.1 Out of the 118 road traffic collisions attended in the first half of 2022/23, 41 (34.7%) involved the Service using equipment to extricate at least one casualty from the vehicle. Whilst 68 incidents resulted in injuries, the majority of casualties sustained only slight injuries.



118	RTC incidents attended
68	incidents where people sustained injury
41	incidents involved extrication / release

Severity of Injury *	Number of people
Precautionary check	12
First Aid	15
Injuries - Slight	52
Injuries - Serious	40
Fatalities	6

*RTC injuries - where available are recorded in the IRS in the same categorisation as fire injuries

Narrative

118 RTCs attended – a 35.6% increase from 87 in 2021/22.

41 (34.7%) involved extrication / release of persons.

Action taken to reduce the number of road traffic collisions:

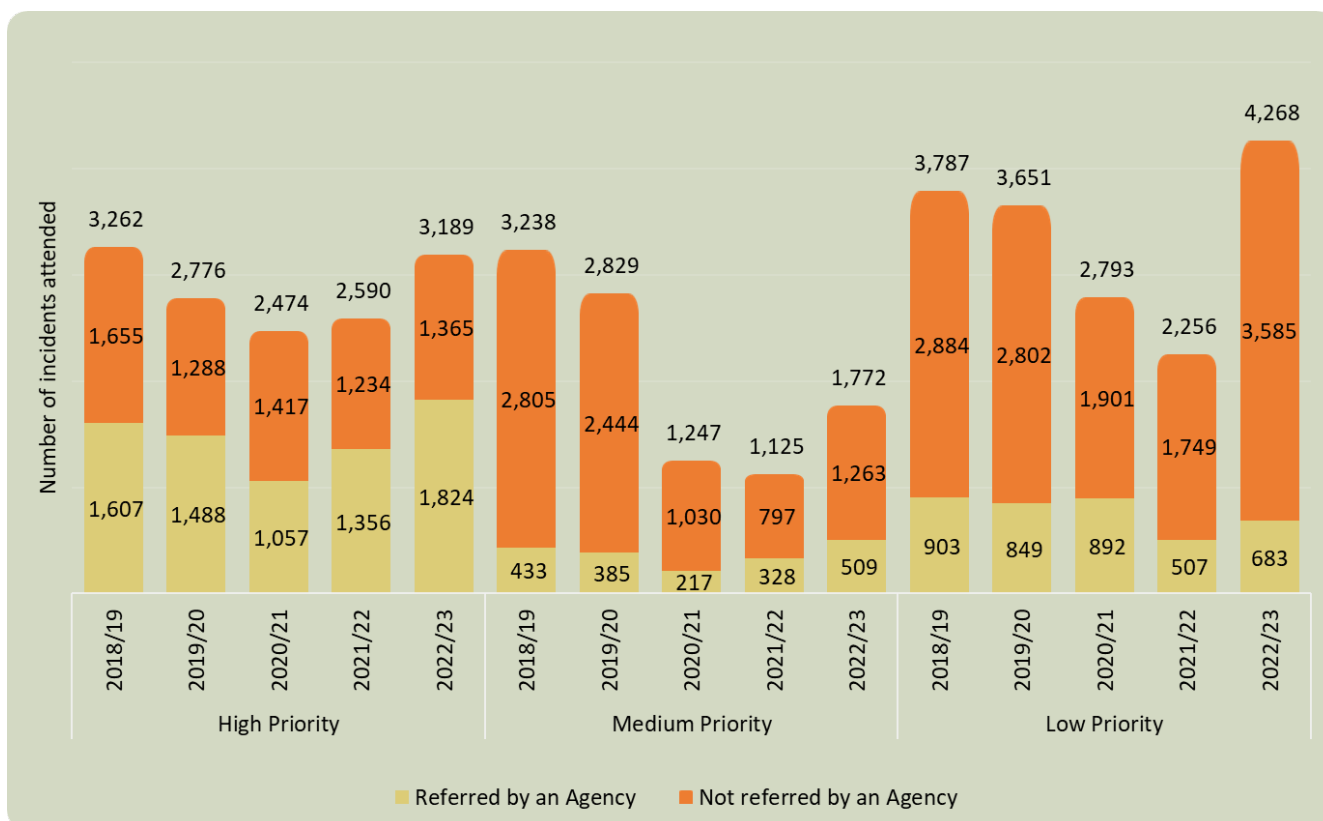
- Prevention teams continue work with partners to target young drivers, motorcyclists, and older drivers (Ops Darwin - motorbikes) to help reduce road traffic incidents in North Wales.
- NWFRS, in partnership with WAST and NWP, is part of the 'Deadly Impacts' intervention that details the consequences of a road traffic collision (RTC) from death and serious injuries.
- Continue using educationalists targeting young people to deliver educational programmes and interventions (Olivia's story).



10 Monitoring against Improvement and Well-being objective 1:
 1.1 To support people to prevent accidental dwelling fires and stay safe if they do occur.

10.1 Safe and Well Checks

The Service completed 9,229 Safe and Well Checks during the reporting period, of which 3,016 (32.7%) were undertaken in response to a referral from a partner agency.



Category	Year	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Year-to-Date (YTD)	Change YTD	Average of 3 previous years	Change YTD / Average of 3 previous years
% of all Safe and Well Checks undertaken that originated from a referral from a partner organisation	2022-23	35%	30%			33%	↓ 4pp	33%	→ 0pp
	2021-22	40%	35%			37%			

*The columns in grey show: the average of the three previous financial years (based on the equivalent reporting period); the percentage change based on the difference between the current financial year and the three-year average.

Narrative

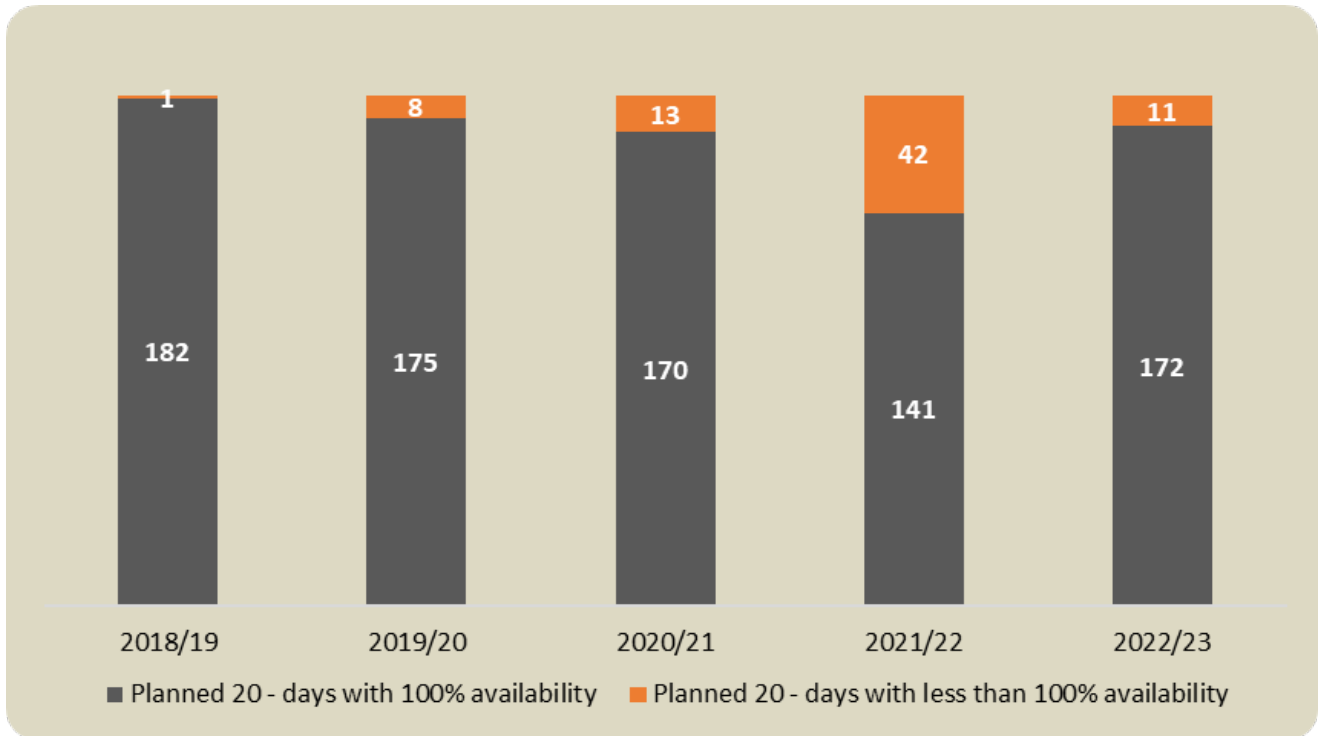
9,229 SAWCs completed - 3,258 (54.6%) more than in the same period of 2021. 3,016 (32.7%) were referrals from a partner agency with 1,824 being High Priority. 1,772 Medium Priority SAWCs, a 57.5% increase from 1,125. 4,268 Low Priority SAWCs, an 89.2% increase from 2,256.

Action taken to improve performance and comments:

- Return to pre-covid-19 SAWC activity following positive re-engagement work with our partner agencies;
- Continue to deliver 20,000 SAWCs as previously referred to in the report;
- Continue to deliver Prevention campaigns and safety advice in line with our CSG and Corporate Communications campaign calendar;
- Continue to provide bespoke or tailored intervention to the most vulnerable in the community.

11 Planned 20 Station Availability


11.1 On 172 (94%) out of 183 days the 20-station availability Service standard was achieved – a 22% increase from the same period in 2021/22 (141 days - 77%).



Glossary

Fires	All fires fall into one of three categories – primary, secondary or chimney.
Primary Fires	<p>These are fires that are not chimney fires, and which are in any type of building (except if derelict), vehicles, caravans and trailers, outdoor storage, plant and machinery, agricultural and forestry property, and other outdoor structures such as bridges, post boxes, tunnels, etc.</p> <p>Fires in any location are categorised as primary fires if they involved casualties, rescues or escapes, as are fires in any location that were attended by five or more fire appliances.</p>
Secondary Fires	<p>Secondary fires are fires that are neither chimney fires nor primary fires.</p> <p>Secondary fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.</p> <p>Secondary fires are those that would normally occur in locations such as open land, in single trees, fences, telegraph poles, refuse and refuse containers (but not paper banks, which would be considered - in the same way as agricultural and forestry property - to be primary fires), outdoor furniture, traffic lights, etc.</p>
Chimney Fires	<p>These are fires in occupied buildings where the fire is confined within the chimney structure, even if heat or smoke damage extends beyond the chimney itself.</p> <p>Chimney fires do not involve casualties, rescues or escapes, and will have been attended by four or fewer fire appliances.</p>
Special Service Incidents	<p>These are non-fire incidents which require the attendance of an appliance or officer and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Local emergencies e.g. flooding, road traffic incidents, rescue of persons, 'making safe' etc; b) Major disasters; c) Domestic incidents e.g. water leaks, persons locked in or out etc; d) Prior arrangements to attend incidents, which may include some provision of advice and inspections.
False Alarm (general guidance)	<p>Where the FRS attends a location believing there to be an incident, but on arrival discovers that no such incident exists, or existed.</p> <p>Note: if the appliance is 'turned around' by Control before arriving at the incident it is not classed as having been attended and does not need to be reported.</p>
False Alarms - Malicious	These are calls made with the intention of getting the FRS to attend a non-existent incident, including deliberate and suspected malicious intentions.
False Alarms – Good Intent	These are calls made in good faith in the belief that the FRS really would attend a fire or special service incident.

False Alarms - AFA	These are calls initiated by fire alarm and fire-fighting equipment. They include accidental initiation of alarm apparatus or where an alarm operates and a person then routinely calls the FRS as part of a standing arrangement, i.e. with no 'judgement' involved, for example from a security call centre or a nominated person in an organisation.
Building - Dwellings	A property that is a place of residence, i.e. occupied by households, excluding hotels, hostel and residential non-permanent structures.
Building - Non-Residential	Properties such as hospitals, offices, shops, factories, warehouses, restaurants, cinemas, public buildings, religious buildings, agricultural buildings, railway stations, sheds, prisons.
Building - Other Residential	Properties such as hotels, hotels and residential institutions B&Bs, Nursing/care homes, student halls of residence.
Vehicle (Road and Other Transport)	Road vehicle, rail vehicle, aircraft, boat.
Outdoor	Fields, grassland, woodland, refuse containers, post boxes.

Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	12 December 2022	
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer (Corporate Policy and Planning)	
Contact Officer	Pippa Hardwick, Head of Corporate Planning	
Subject	Review of Improvement and Well-being Objectives in the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To review the Fire and Rescue Authority's long-term objectives that are contained in its Corporate Plan 2021-24.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

2. Every March the Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) publishes a Plan for the following financial year, setting out its agreed improvement and well-being objectives and outlining the actions it proposes to take towards achieving those objectives during the year. The Authority published its most recent update against Corporate Plan 2021-24 earlier this year.
3. Although the relevant legislation does not stipulate how often a public body must change its objectives, there is a requirement to undertake an annual review of its well-being objectives to assess whether or not they are still relevant and appropriate.
4. Over the coming months Officers will be revisiting the content of the Authority's Corporate Plan 2021-24 in order to update the lists of planned actions underpinning each strategic objective. To this end, the Authority is asked to consider whether it wishes to continue to pursue the same long-term objectives next year, or alternatively to suggest changes that can be written into next year's updated version of the Corporate Plan 2021-24.

RECOMMENDATION

5. Members are asked to:
 - i) confirms the Authority's intention to continue to pursue its existing seven long-term objectives in 2023/24; and
 - ii) request that an updated version of the Corporate Plan 2021-24 be prepared by Officers for approval in April 2023.

BACKGROUND

6. Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in Wales are required to publish improvement objectives in accordance with the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2009, and well-being objectives in compliance with the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. For the purposes of the Authority's planning processes these are treated as one and the same.
7. Part 2 of the Well-being of Future Generations Act (the Act) places a duty on the Authority to carry out sustainable development, which must include:
 - a) setting and publishing well-being objectives that are designed to maximise its contribution to achieving each of the well-being goals set for the whole of Wales; and
 - b) taking all reasonable steps (in exercising its functions) to meet those objectives.
8. In the normal run of the planning cycle, the Authority outlines proposed objectives for the forthcoming year during the autumn/winter, and in March it approves a plan detailing shorter-term actions that support its longer-term objectives.
9. In 2023-24 Officers will be engaging with the Authority in relation to the next iteration of the corporate Plan for 2024 onwards with a view to it evolving into a 5 year plan for 2024-29.

INFORMATION

10. In March 2021 the Authority published seven long-term well-being objectives in its Corporate Plan for 2021-24. The objectives are:
 - **Objective 1:** To work towards making improvements to the health, safety and well-being of people in North Wales.
 - **Objective 2:** To continue to work collaboratively to help communities improve their resilience.
 - **Objective 3:** To operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, making the best use of the resources available.
 - **Objective 4:** To continue to identify opportunities to encourage greater engagement with people, communities, staff and stakeholders.
 - **Objective 5:** To maintain a suitably resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce.
 - **Objective 6:** To develop ways of becoming more environmentally conscious in order to minimise the impact of our activity on the environment.
 - **Objective 7:** To ensure that social value and sustainability are considered, including during procurement processes.

11. Further to an annual review in March 2022, the previous Fire and Rescue Authority approved a revised and updated Corporate Plan for 2021-24 which recognised the continuance of some actions into future years due to external factors influencing the rate of progress in some areas and the impact of embedding internal governance changes which were due to take effect from April 2022.
12. Under the Act the Authority is required to review its objectives at least once a year, but it does not have to change them. In assessing whether its objectives continue to be appropriate, the Authority must consider to what extent:
 - they contribute to achieving the well-being goals for Wales;
 - they are consistent with the sustainable development principle – i.e. that they help to ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs; and
 - the Authority is taking all reasonable steps to meet those objectives.
13. If the assessment indicates a need to change any objectives, the Authority would be expected to explain what has changed, and why the change has happened.
14. At its meeting in October 2022 the Authority approved the Annual Performance Assessment 2021/22 for publication on its website. This Assessment describes progress and achievements last year in support of the Authority's objectives. It also explains how each of the Authority's objectives contributes to achieving the well-being goals for Wales and is consistent with the sustainable development principle.
15. The Annual Performance Assessment did not indicate a need to revise or change the existing set of seven long-term objectives.
16. Many of the actions in support of the objectives evidence the fact that the Authority continues to take a long term view through its community-based prevention role, helping to inform, educate and equip people to live safe and fulfilling lives. It also acts responsibly in relation to protecting natural habitats and the Environment more generally.
17. Some of the underpinning actions will necessarily be different in 2023/24 as cost saving efficiencies continue to be pursued and the Authority seeks to react to internal and external influences, but these will be included in the revised Corporate Plan 2021-24 for approval by the Authority in April 2023.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	Direct implication for confirming or revising the Authority's long-term well-being objectives.
Budget	There is a clear relationship between the Authority's plans for delivering the objectives within the 2021/24 Corporate Plan and the level of financial resources available.
Legal	Supports compliance with improvement planning and well-being legislation.
Staffing	No known impact on staffing levels at this time.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	The impact of specific actions on these aspects will be assessed at the appropriate point in their development.
Risks	Reduces the risks of legal non-compliance and of failing to budget and plan appropriately.

Report to	Executive Panel	
Date	12 December 2022	
Lead Officer	Dafydd Edwards, Authority Treasurer	
Contact Officer	Helen Howard, Head of Finance	
Subject	Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/26 and Budget 2023/24	

PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To present to Members the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) 2023/26 and the draft revenue and capital budgets for 2023/24. The report also sets out the significant risks and uncertainties faced at this time.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is required to set a balanced budget each financial year and confirm provisional contribution figures to each constituent authority by the end of the December preceding the start of the financial year.
- 3 This report sets out the draft revenue and capital budget for 2023/24 and the Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) to March 2026. The funding required from each constituent local authority is also confirmed.
- 4 The budget for 2023/24 and the MTFS include a number of key assumptions, risks and uncertainties which have been identified during the budget planning process

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 5 Members are asked to:
 - (i) endorse the capital and revenue budgets for 2023/24 based on an increase in contributions from constituent authorities of £5.32m;
 - (ii) note the key risks and uncertainties identified during the budget planning process;
 - (iii) endorse the Medium-Term Financial Strategy; and
 - (iv) recommend approval by the Fire and Rescue Authority at its meeting on 17 January 2023.

OBSERVATIONS FROM OTHER COMMITTEES AND MEMBER PLANNING DAYS

- 6 The proposals set out in this paper are consistent with the budget setting approach outlined to the Fire and Rescue Authority meeting of 17 October 2022, including the associated risks and uncertainties.
- 7 The members' induction and planning meetings held on 13 June and 6 October 2022 provided an overview of the service delivery models and the associated challenges being faced by the Authority.

BACKGROUND

- 8 The Improvement and Wellbeing Plan for 2023/24 confirms the Authority's long-term well-being objectives:
 - Objective 1:** to work towards making improvements to the health, safety and well-being of people in North Wales
 - Objective 2:** to continue to work collaboratively to help communities improve their resilience
 - Objective 3:** to operate as effectively and efficiently as possible, making the best use of the resources available
 - Objective 4:** to continue to identify opportunities to encourage greater engagement with people, communities, staff and stakeholders
 - Objective 5:** to maintain a suitably diverse, resilient, skilled, professional and flexible workforce
 - Objective 6:** to develop ways of becoming more environmentally conscious in order to minimise the impact of our activity on the environment
 - Objective 7:** to ensure that social value and sustainability are considered, including during procurement processes.
- 9 The Chief Fire Officer's report to Members in September 2021 provided a situation assessment. This confirmed that the key challenges facing the Authority are maintaining sufficient availability of on-call fire crews; ensuring sufficient resources to maintain and develop firefighter skills; and having enough corporate capacity to meet current and future demands.
- 10 Following this assessment, the Authority approved a number of internal reviews including a fire cover review, a review of the retained duty system (on-call crews) and a training review to ensure firefighter safety. These reviews are ongoing, although the budget proposals for 2023/24 build on the initial assessments including developing capacity and addressing health and safety issues.
- 11 The budget setting proposals were set out to Members in the report to the Authority on 17 October 2022. The budget proposals set out in this report ensure a strategic approach is taken towards financial planning and funding to support achievement of the Authority's objectives.

DRAFT REVENUE BUDGET 2023/24

- 12 Detailed budget planning work has been undertaken and the key planning assumptions, risks and uncertainties are outlined in Appendix 1.
- 13 The planning process has confirmed a net expenditure requirement for 2023/24 of £44.72m which is a year on year increase of £5.30m.

£'m	2022/23	2023/24	Increase
Salaries	28.20	31.76	3.26
Non-pay (net of income)	11.21	12.95	2.04
Total	39.41	44.71	5.30

- 14 The table below provides a reconciliation between the 2022/23 revenue budget and the proposed budget for 2023/24. The contribution from each constituent authority is detailed within appendix 4.

	£'000
2022/23 budget	39,410
Original pay assumption (per MTFP)	500
Pay awards above planning assumptions	1,700
Increased training provision	350
Increase in operational resilience	520
Corporate resilience and capacity	100
Business Fire Safety	100
Energy costs	890
Interest rate increases	600
Capital charges relating to land purchase	150
Other inflationary pressures	394
2023/24 budget requirement	44,714

15 Employee pay costs are in excess of 70% of net expenditure and the draft budget for 2023/24 is £31.76m. Due to outstanding pay negotiations and pay inflation the Authority is facing unavoidable additional commitments and this remains an area of significant uncertainty. The current planning assumption is that the 2022/23 pay claim is settled at 5%, and the pay award for 2023/24 is 5% for all staff. As national pay awards have not yet been finalised this remains a significant planning risk. Work continues to ensure the careful management of employee costs, including the continued management of variable pay.

16 A breakdown of the employee costs is provided below which confirms that over 78% of costs relate to employees working in service delivery roles.

Staffing Budget Analysis	2023/24 £'m	2024/25 £'m	2025/26 £'m
Response Services	22.229	23.068	23.852
Protection and Prevention Services	2.414	2.514	2.612
Corporate Services	7.114	7.358	7.618
Staffing Budget Requirement	31.757	32.940	34.082

17 Employer pension contributions for firefighters increased during 2019/20 following the 2016 revaluation by the Government Actuary's Department. The Welsh Government provided initial support and a decision on the longer-term position has not yet been finalised. The provision of support for 2023/24 onwards has not yet been concluded and this represents a risk of £1.1m. At this time, the budget assumption, following discussions with Welsh Government, is that the same level of funding will be received.

18 As part of the budget setting process, budget holders submitted departmental plans detailing their expected non-pay expenditure. The specific risks within each budget heading were considered resulting in a proposed budget for supplies, services and third-party payments of £12.95m.

19 This reflects the unavoidable cost pressures that are being experienced across all areas of non-pay. In particular it was noted in the report to the Authority on 17 October that energy cost pressures of £0.9m are being experienced and Government support is only guaranteed until 31 March 2022.

- 20 The requirement for the public sector to achieve net zero by 2030 has required a review of the energy efficiency of the estate and the level of vehicle emissions. Although a specific budget has not been allocated to energy reduction strategies, all procurement includes actions to reduce the Authority's carbon footprint.
- 21 Capital financing costs include the costs of borrowing and revenue charges for using capital assets. A number of rises in the Bank of England base rates have been experienced during 2022/23 and borrowing rates are now 5.2%. This is a significant variance to the historically low rates experienced for a number of years and the capital financing budget has been increased by £0.866m to reflect the deteriorating position. Interest costs of £0.15m have been factored into the budget for 2023/24 in respect of a potential land purchase. This scheme will be subject to separate approval by Members.
- 22 The economic uncertainty arising from global supply chain issues and high inflation will be carefully monitored throughout the financial year. However, these create significant uncertainty and risks which may require budget allocations to be revised between budget headings to address changing priorities.

DRAFT CAPITAL PLAN 2023/24

- 23 The draft capital plan is outlined within Appendix 3 and proposes a capital requirement of £6.53m for 2023/24. The main element of the plan relates to the potential purchase of land to accommodate the new Training Centre and the essential investment in new fire appliances.
- 24 The plan includes a rollover of funding from 2022/23 of £0.375m, which relates to the replacement of existing training towers which are end of life. The tenders in relation to these works are currently being evaluated.
- 25 Only building schemes that can safely be completed in the current climate have been included in the plan. This will remain under review before funding is released.
- 26 Work is ongoing to reduce carbon emissions including the use of more environmentally friendly vehicles. Several electric and hybrid vehicles have been leased for duty officers, to replace diesel leased vehicles. Leasing currently remains the most cost-effective method of procurement, for these types of vehicles, and enables the Fleet Department to review their suitability and performance and take advantage of the latest technology.

- 27 The future capital expenditure includes provision for a new Training Centre to replace the existing arrangements. The provision of training has been identified by the Fire Advisory for Wales as a key area of focus and the current arrangements are not sustainable in the medium to longer term. The project is currently in the initiation phase and whilst financial provision has been made within the medium-term financial plan, the detailed proposals will be subject to separate approval arrangements. The initial capital estimates are included within Appendix 3.
- 28 The capital expenditure will have a consequential impact on the capital financing charges in future financial years which have been included within the medium-term financial plan detailed within Appendix 2.

MEDIUM TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2026/26 (MTFS)

- 29 The draft MTFS is provided within Appendix 2 and is an assessment of the costs associated with maintaining the current level of service provision. Employee related expenditure remains the main cost driver and the medium-term financial strategy is based on a planning assumption of a 5% pay award for 2023/24, reducing to 3% over the remaining planning period.
- 30 The key risks and uncertainties relating to the MTFS are outlined in appendix 1. The current planning assumption for the MTFS is that grant funding for the Airwave project will continue and the additional pension costs arising from the 2016 Government Actuary Department (GAD) valuation of the firefighters' pension scheme will continue to be centrally funded.
- 31 Capital expenditure in future years continues to be in relation to the replacement of fire appliances and special vehicles, as well as the replacement of ICT systems. The MTFS also includes provisional costs associated with purchasing land, and the building of a new Training Centre, noting that this will be subject to separate approval and affordability calculations.

CONSTITUENT AUTHORITY CONTRIBUTIONS

- 32 The proposed constituent Authority contributions are documented in Appendix 4.

IMPLICATIONS

Wellbeing Objectives	The budget enables the Authority to achieve its long-term well-being objectives.
Budget	The current estimate of the year on year increase in local authority contributions for 2023/24 is £2.34m.
Legal	The Fire and Rescue Authority has a legal duty to set a balanced revenue budget.
Staffing	None
Equalities/ Human Rights/Welsh Language	None
Risks and Uncertainties	<p>The draft budget has been risk assessed and the following key risks noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the budget is based on an assumption that pay awards will be 5%. National agreements have not yet been reached; • the planning assumption is that Welsh Government support for the increase in firefighters' pensions will continue. If this is not supported there is a risk of £1.1m; • the planning assumption is that Welsh Government funding of £0.4m will continue in respect of the national emergency service network (Airwave grant); • the Authority plans to continue to develop an Environmental Strategy during 2023/24. An assessment of costs has not yet been made; and • the uncertainty surrounding general inflation and supply chain shortages remain and no additional costs have been factored into the 2023/24 budget.

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
Employee costs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The staffing budgets are formulated on existing service delivery models and updated to address the risks identified within the Chief Fire Officer's 2021 situational assessment. This includes additional provision to address the training needs of staff and to ensure that operational and corporate capacity is maintained. • The initial planning assessment presented to members in December 2021 assumed national pay awards of 2%. This assessment is no longer valid and significant provision is required to address 2022/23 pay awards (not yet finalised for firefighters) and 2023/24 awards. The budget proposals assume that the firefighter pay dispute for 2022/23 is settled at 5%. A provisional estimate of 5% for 2023/24 has also been included. • The increase of 1.25% in national insurance contributions applicable from April 2022 has now been reversed following the outcome of the September 2022 mini budget. • It is assumed that the increases to the employer pension contribution rates arising from the last Government Actuary's Department valuation will continue to be grant funded by the Welsh Government. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Joint Council (NJC) has not yet reached agreement on the firefighter pay award for 2022/23, although settlements above the budget provision are anticipated at the time of writing this report. Provision has been made for the recurring costs of a 5% settlement for 2022/23. • The National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services reached agreement on the pay award for staff on LGPS contracts for 2022/23. This was above the original planning assessment for 2022/23 and has resulted in a recurring budget pressure. • The budget planning assumes normal levels of activity. If spate conditions occur, budget pressures will be experienced. The working assumption is that the General Fund would be utilised in the first instance. • The Welsh Government has not yet confirmed that the grant to support the increase in employer contributions for the firefighter pension scheme will continue at its current level of £1.1m. • In December 2018, the government lost its appeal to the legal challenge of the transitional pension arrangements for firefighters. The remedy will apply across the public sector pension schemes. The financial outcome is unknown and no provision has been made.

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following the public inquiry into the Grenfell disaster the Fire Safety Act (2021) has introduced changes to building regulations. The budget proposals will reflect revised staffing and training for staff to ensure that the Authority is able to respond to these changes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The pension scheme for staff employed on local government terms and conditions is subject to a four-yearly valuation. The latest valuation is being finalised and will take effect from April 2023. It is not known whether this will impact on the employer contributions and this remains a risk at this time. The pension scheme for firefighters is subject to a four-yearly valuation. The results inform the employee and employer contribution rates which are set by the Welsh Government. The next valuation outcome will be applicable from April 2024 and is expected to increase employer contribution rates from their current level of 27.3% of pensionable pay. Although this will not impact on the 2023/24 financial year it remains a key risk and uncertainty over the medium-term planning cycle.
Non-Pay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The initial planning assessment has confirmed that the non-pay budgets will be formulated on existing service delivery models and updated to reflect imperatives arising from the Chief Fire Officer's situational assessment. The demands on the non-pay budget are further exacerbated by the inflationary impact and supply chain issues. Budgets have been formulated using the knowledge and professional judgement of budget managers and underlying contractual obligations, but through necessary include a large degree of estimation. Where cost pressures can be quantified these have been separately identified and included (e.g. energy) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whilst the Service continues to review non-pay costs and strives to manage cost pressures within the planned budget this remains an area of risk due to ongoing pressures within the supply chain arising from price rises and availability issues. This position is being carefully managed but due to significant volatility it is not possible to fully quantify the impact. The cost of gas and electricity is a known cost pressure and current planning assumptions include an increase of £0.9m from the initial assessment in the medium-term financial plan.

Heading	Planning assumptions used in budget setting	Risks/Uncertainties
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The national procurement of an Emergency Services Network is progressing but significant delays are being experienced. The existing contract has been extended and the Authority currently receives £0.4m from the Welsh Government towards the provision of the existing service. The assumption is that the current revenue support will continue although this has not yet been confirmed. • Although the Authority continues to work towards reducing its carbon footprint detailed plans have not yet been formalised. This work will progress during 2023/24 and no specific budget provision has been included.
Capital Financing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The capital financing requirement for 2023/24 is influenced by historical capital expenditure, the need to borrow for the 2023/24 capital programme and the impact of interest rate increases. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The increase in interest rates is a key risk area given the economic uncertainty at this time. Further financial modelling will be undertaken to assess the sensitivity of the Authority's financial position and performance to further increases in interest rates and reported as part of the budget setting.
Income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income budgets have been reviewed and set in line with previous years. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No specific risks have been identified over and above the grant income from the Welsh Government referenced within this report.

Appendix 2 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/2026 – Revenue

	2022/23 Budget £m	2022/23 Projection £m	2023/24 Budget £m	2024/5 Budget £m	2025/6 Budget £m
Employee pay costs	30.120	31.553	31.757	32.940	34.082
Other employee costs			1.907	1.817	1.820
Total Employee Costs	30.120	31.553	33.664	34.758	35.903
Increase in Employee Costs			0.118	0.032	0.033
Premises	2.901	3.896	3.237	3.357	3.529
Transport	1.204	1.204	1.239	1.177	1.154
Supplies, Services and 3rd Party	5.370	5.842	5.831	6.285	5.856
Total Non-Pay Expenditure	9.475	10.942	10.307	10.818	10.539
Increase in Non Pay Expenditure			0.088	0.050	- 0.026
Fees and Charges/Misc. Income	- 0.277	- 0.303	- 0.262	- 0.271	- 0.280
Grant Income	- 2.179	- 2.179	- 2.124	- 2.124	- 2.124
Total Income	- 2.456	- 2.482	- 2.385	- 2.395	- 2.404
Capital Financing and Interest Charges	2.263	2.513	3.129	4.670	6.936
Utilisation of Reserves and Provisions		- 3.124			
Budget requirement	39.402	39.402	44.714	47.851	50.974
Increase in Budget			13.48%	7.02%	6.53%

Appendix 3 Medium Term Financial Strategy 2023/2026 – Capital

Scheme	2023/24 £m	2023/24 £m	2024/25 £m
Command and Control System Upgrade	0.600	0.500	
New Training Centre	3.000	25.000	20.000
Fire Appliance Replacement	1.430	1.400	3.550
Multi-Purpose Station Vans	0.189	0.513	0.608
Fleet Workshop Vans		0.201	
Specialist Vehicles	0.150	0.260	
Specialist Equipment		0.500	0.500
Fleet - new fall arrest system	0.100		
ICT Hardware		0.785	
Training Tower Replacement	0.250	0.250	0.250
Buildings - Minor Works	0.813	0.750	0.750
Total 2023/24	6.532	30.159	25.658
Rollover - Training Towers	0.375		
Total Rollover from 2022/23	0.375		
Total: Capital Plan	6.907	30.159	25.658

Appendix 4 – Constituent Local Authority Contributions 2023/24

Authority	2022/2023 Contribution £	Population	Apportionment %	2023/24 Budget Requirement £	Increase £
Anglesey Council	3,915,486	69,842	10%	4,434,413	518,927
Gwynedd Council	7,017,885	125,539	18%	7,970,731	952,846
Conwy County Borough Council	6,631,214	118,625	17%	7,531,747	900,533
Denbighshire County Council	5,381,432	96,198	14%	6,107,810	726,379
Flintshire County Council	8,813,821	157,626	22%	10,008,001	1,194,181
Wrexham County Borough Council	7,652,042	136,419	19%	8,661,525	1,009,483
Total	39,411,879	704,249	100%	44,714,228	5,302,349

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	12 December 2022
Lead Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Stewart Forshaw, Deputy Chief Fire Officer
Subject	New Training Centre



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 This report presents an update on the work undertaken to date on the production of a detailed business case for the option/s of a new training and development centre in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 The North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) is committed to the provision of essential operational training to its staff to support service delivery and firefighter safety. The Chief Fire Officer's assessment undertaken during 2021 identified training as a priority area and Authority approval was given to undertake a full review on the future delivery of operational training and development in the Service.
- 3 This has included a review of current operational training facilities in the Service, including those located at Dolgellau and Rhyl Fire Stations. This identified the need to invest in training and development facilities to ensure operational preparedness and safety, both in terms of existing and future provision. In particular, the need to provide practical and immersive training experiences across a range of scenarios will require investment in new training facilities.
- 4 The review of operational training facilities in the Service also supports the recent findings of the Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor's thematic review of operational training within the Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, which recognises the requirement for significant capital investment required to replicate real-world conditions for firefighters to develop and refresh their skills in a training environment.
- 5 Following approval by the Authority at its meeting on the 17 October 2022 to allocate a budget for the development of a detailed business case for a new training and development centre, a number of options have been explored by the project team. This worked includes the identification of a suitable piece of land to locate the new training and development centre in North Wales.

- 6 The next stage of the development of the business case includes entering into an exclusivity agreement with the landowner, so the required due-diligence can take place prior to recommending and seeking an approval from the Authority for land purchase.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7 It is recommended that Members:
- (i) note the background to review of training provision, including the Chief Fire Advisor for Wales' thematic review;
 - (ii) note that the current training provision is reaching its end of life;
 - (iii) endorse the inclusion of a budget for the purchase of land in the 2023/24 budget setting, noting that this will be subject to separate approval following the conclusion of due diligence; and
 - (iv) note the timescales set out in this report for the provision of a detailed business case for Members' consideration.

BACKGROUND

- 8 At the meeting of the Authority September 2021 the three main priorities for the Service were presented by the Chief Fire Officer in her assessment and approved by Members. They included improving availability, improving training and strengthening the corporate structure.
- 9 The report presented to the Authority on the 17 October 2022 recommended that an initial budget was allocated to the new training centre project, to support the area of improving training.
- 10 Following approval, the new training centre project team have consulted with staff, building construction professionals, sustainability experts and an architect to develop a high-level design for a new training and development centre in NWFRS. This has also included the identification of a piece of land assessed as being suitable regarding geographical location and size.

INFORMATION

- 11 The Service has undertaken a detailed review of its operational training facilities at Rhyl and Dolgellau fire stations and as a result it has become apparent that, they do not provide the facilities required to train firefighters operating in a modern-day fire and rescue service.

- 12 Although the fire house training facility at Dolgellau fire station continues to be used for operational training, it requires significant investment to extend its medium-term life span for risk critical breathing apparatus and firefighting tactics training across a range of scenarios faced by our firefighters. It is also located in an area of North Wales which is a considerable distance for the majority of our staff to travel and attend breathing apparatus courses.
- 13 During the past decade the Authority will have noted the number of fires and other emergency incidents have reduced significantly. Although this is a success story for the fire prevention work that has taken place in our communities during this time, it has resulted in the risk of firefighters having less exposure to the hazards and complex situations they are likely to face when attending such incidents.
- 14 Fire contaminants is also a risk present in the smoke and toxic flammable gases released during fires and may contribute to cancer and other health conditions in firefighters. So, the management of fire contaminants needs to be included in training and development centre design, operational procedures and fire and rescue service culture.
- 15 To mitigate these risks, operational training and development for our staff in a realistic and immersive training environment which includes adequate health and safety measures, needs to be at the forefront of a new training and development centre design, to provide essential facilities required for training and development for at least the next 25 years in the Service.
- 16 At the meeting of the Fire Authority on the 17 October 2022 the recommendation to allocate an initial budget to the project was approved, which included the option to enter into an exclusivity agreement with a landowner of a site assessed as being suitable regarding size and location.
- 17 Since the meeting of the Authority, suitable land for locating a training and development centre has been identified and following conversations with the land agent, the next phase of the project will be to enter into an exclusivity agreement with the land owner. This will allow the Authority to undertake site suitability surveys and a pre-planning application with the local planning office.

- 18 In accordance with best practice for project management, following the meeting of the Authority in October 2022 a Project Initiation Document (PID) has been developed by the project team that has been approved by the Service Leadership Team and members of the Land and Property Committee. The PID sets out the timescales of the whole project, including decision and approval points for the Authority during the lifecycle of the project.
- 19 It is anticipated that the next phase of the project, which includes entering into a land exclusivity agreement and pre-purchase site surveys will be concluded by the 31 March 2023. Following this phase, the results of the site surveys and a pre-planning application to the local planning office will be reviewed and recommendations for site purchase may be presented to the meeting of the Fire Authority on 17 April 2023 dependent on the outcomes.
- 20 Therefore, the inclusion of a budget to purchase land from April 2023 will be presented to Members as part of the 2023/24 budget setting process although formal approval by the Authority will be sought following the conclusion of the due diligence.
- 21 Separate to the purchase of land, the detailed business case for the new training and development centre is scheduled to be completed for July 2023 and will be brought to Members for further scrutiny and approval at that time.
- 22 Following approval of the business case proposals a detailed timetable will be developed although it is envisaged that building work could commence during early part of 2025 following a planning application, detailed design brief development and procurement of a main contractor.
- 23 Members will be kept updated and informed on the progress of the project as it develops during the proceeding months.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	This project is aligned to all of the Well-being and Corporate Objectives 2022/23 and will promote firefighter safety, support operational preparedness and ensure sustainability over the longer term
Budget	£250,000 has been funded from reserves to develop a detailed business case for the options of a new training and development centre in NWFRS. An additional budget will be required for land purchase and building costs, should the business case be approved.
Legal	The Authority has a duty under the Health and Safety legislation to ensure the sufficiency of training of its staff, management of risks such as contaminants. The project also addressed the wider legal obligation to reduce carbon emissions.
Staffing	Project team and stakeholders are included in the Project Initiation Document (PID) for approval at Service Leadership Team. The project supports staff health and safety and wellbeing.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	Implications for the protected characteristics are covered within the PID Integrated Impact Assessment.
Risks	All risks are included in the PID risk register.