

Review of Specialist Equipment in the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

Background

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is legislated to deal with a wide range of emergency incidents in addition to fire, requiring the maintenance of specialist skills and equipment to successfully resolve such incidents. The Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2013 takes this a stage further by making it a priority for the SFRS to create more equal access to specialist resources and national capacity.

Following the creation of SFRS, it inherited a wide array of specialist equipment from the eight legacy fire and rescue services. As the demands on services progressively increased over the years, the deployment of additional equipment was undertaken on a local basis, using existing geographical boundaries without any real attempts at mutual aid or cross-border cooperation. A clear imperative to review this position has resulted in the publication of the Review of Specialist Equipment (RSE) report, which recommended a range of changes designed to enhance service delivery from a more strategic viewpoint.

Specialist Resources – Analysis and Outcomes

The SFRS has therefore, carried out an evaluation of the specialist resources across Scotland and has completed a report indicating the outcomes of the review.

The principles of the review are outlined below.

- The first principle is that specialist resources be sited based on risk, operational activity, population and geography as appropriate, but providing equity of access as far as reasonably possible.
- The review forms part of a long term plan to ensure standardisation and simplification of vehicles and equipment across Scotland.
- Wherever possible, specialist resources will be sited in wholetime fire stations to allow the necessary training time to ensure crews are confident and competent.

The direct impact of this review on resources within the Highland area is the relocation of a range of smaller vehicles and Prime Mover with pods incorporating urban search and rescue and mass decontamination equipment, from Inverness Community Fire Station. The benefits realised from their relocation, while key to maintaining the principles identified above, are identified below.

- A considerable reduction in the excessive burden of training and maintenance of skills and equipment currently within Inverness Community Fire Station. This is recognised through the reallocation of equipment which is seldom or never used.
- A greater focus and maintenance of key core skills and operational competencies for all operational personnel based at Inverness Community Fire Station.
- Improving key core skills based on risk profile and planning assumptions across the Highland area. This includes swift water rescue teams (SWRT) and associated specialist equipment.
- The provision of a dedicated heavy rescue vehicle (HRV) which will undoubtedly improve life safety in the communities and on the roads across Highland area
- Ensuring specialist skills and resources remain available across the wider North area, strategically positioned at Elgin and Aberdeen.
- The wider review of risk across the area supports the introduction of additional water rescue resources (incorporating equipment and skills) based at Fort William Community Fire Station.

Next Steps

The outcomes of the review will be implemented over the next three years after the completion of additional training and vehicle and equipment procurement requirements.

Following completion of the implementation plan the specialist resources within Scotland will have a more even distribution giving a more equal access across the country.

Elected Members of the Highland Council are asked to note the contents of this paper and are invited to discuss any items for further detail or clarity.

Full Report

The Report and its recommendations were agreed by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board at its meeting on 29 January 2015 and is available via the web link below.

<http://www.firescotland.gov.uk/about-us/sfrs-board/board-meetings/29th-january-2015.aspx>