

Future of fire control rooms will be decided this month



Scottish Fire and Rescue Service publishes proposals for future locations of Fire Control

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Board is set to decide on the future location of Fire Controls in Scotland at the end of this week. A paper detailing the options has been published as the Service prepares to move from eight to three Controls in the coming years.

The decision to reduce the number of Fire Controls in Scotland was taken by the Board in September of last year as part of wider 'Strategic Intent' proposals to rationalise the inherited property assets from the merger of eight services.

It aims to create a national footprint of SFRS property assets, strategically located across the country. This includes service delivery headquarters in the north, west and east of the country, access to specialist and national resources (already enhanced through fire reform with the extension of a water rescue capability based in Inverness and a national fire investigation unit based in Aberdeen), training facilities and asset resource centres which will house fleet, ICT and equipment workshops.

Reducing the inherited property portfolio will allow the SFRS to invest in an infrastructure that will be fit for a single, national service, removing duplication, cutting costs and increasing service delivery and frontline outcomes.

The move to three Controls is a key part of that plan and one, which the Chief Officer, Alasdair Hay, has pledged, will create safer communities through more efficient mobilisation

of fire and rescue service resources.

The Board previously agreed to retain Johnstone Control, the largest in Scotland, which currently handles more than 50% of all fire calls in Scotland. Further detailed work has now been completed to enable the Board to identify the location of an additional two Controls from the options of Edinburgh, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness.

Six potential options have been considered using a range of criteria including an assessment of risks, which highlights the combination of Blackness Road, Dundee and Tollcross, Edinburgh as the most suitable solution to complement Johnstone as the three Control room model for Scotland.

The final decision, which will look at options involving all four locations, will be a matter for the SFRS Board to decide.

Chief Officer Alasdair Hay, SFRS, said:

“We have a great opportunity as a result of fire reform in Scotland to create three Fire Controls with a much better service with the highest levels of technology and interoperability achieved through the procurement of a single mobilising platform for the three Controls.

“This provides the opportunity for real enhancement to service delivery, whilst at the same time making efficiency savings. It will allow Control staff to gain the widest experience and knowledge from the full range of incident activity, ensure that access to specialist and national resources are mobilised effectively across Scotland, improving the safety of our firefighters and our local communities.

“With a focus on three Controls we can invest in each of the premises creating centres of excellence and a level of interoperability which currently does not exist.

“It will bring benefits both to our professional Control room

staff who perform a vital role in delivering community and firefighter safety, and the public who rely on us to provide an emergency response to a range of life-threatening incidents where the Service has a critical role in delivering a co-ordinated response to protect life and property.”

Chair of the SFRS Board Pat Watters said:

“The report reiterates the Board’s commitment to no compulsory redundancies with a range of policies in place to support affected staff including suitable and appropriate employment opportunities, voluntary severance/early release, redeployment, relocation and travel expenses. The impact on existing and future staffing requirements have been examined and assessed to support the recommendation.”

Pat Watters, Chair of the SFRS Board, added:

“The report on the location of Fire Controls is the result of some of the most detailed and considered work undertaken since the inception of the new Service reflecting the importance of this decision to future service delivery and improvements for both our staff and Scotland’s communities.”