

Fire Brigade Union – The Voice of Professional Firefighters

Options for Emergency Cover Improvement

A vision for improvement and growth, not options of decline

FBU North Wales

8-14-2023

Foreword

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is facing an important decision on how to improve its emergency response to communities. They have three options to consider, but all of them would lead to a decline in night-time response standards in communities, negatively affecting densely populated areas, industrial centres, major hospitals, and regions facing economic and social challenges.

Last year, North Wales achieved an extraordinary milestone - ZERO fire-related deaths. This success can be attributed to preventative work and the current resource model, honed over many years, and tested thoroughly. The current approach has proven effective in minimizing the risk of fire-related fatalities.

None of the current Consultation Options deliver wholesale fire cover improvement across all communities in North Wales. Nor do they come without significant cost and disruption. During the Emergency Cover Review's initial concept and development stage, the public and employee representative bodies were not included to help shape and contribute. This led to the three Options out for consultation, none of which align with the original aim of improving emergency cover across all of North Wales. It seems the primary focus has shifted to achieving modest financial savings, overshadowing the true goal of enhancing safety across the region

Every professional firefighter in North Wales supports the need for improved fire cover in rural areas. The decline in On-Call firefighter availability has been a persistent issue, partly due to societal changes forcing people to work outside their communities. To address this, we propose two options which are able to establish and maintain 3 Day Staffed stations and keep the proven formula at Rhyl and Deeside unchanged.

One of the proposals is a *Growth and Investment* Option. This involves utilising existing staff resources combined with the creation of 23 additional posts. These positions would allow the independent creation of 3 new Rural stations, boosting social partnerships, social cohesion and investment, improving community wellbeing and importantly, it aligns with the **Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015**.

It is noteworthy that both Options also increases the number of households that will receive a response within 20 mins, over the current best model of Consultation Option 1 (See Appendix 2)

Addressing varying standards of response and emergency in North Wales requires action. Inequality in service between rural and urban areas raises questions of fairness. Living in a free and open democracy, all communities, staff and other stakeholders should be given the opportunity to consult on options of growth, as well as options of decline.

Achieving zero fire deaths last year was a significant milestone, but maintaining these standards is vital. In a sector where timely and adequate response is crucial, a safe and robust working model should be preserved.

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OPT	Model	How it is achieved	Benefits	Drawbacks
Option 4	Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham remain unchanged, 3 additional hub stations are created. No cost increases	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NWFRS has an over establishment of 8 - WDSR have an establishment of 11 - Utilise 2 departmental WM/CM's <p>3 hub stations are created. working on a 9-day fortnight basis. Monday-Friday Monday – Thursday 8hr working day</p> <p>Personnel from WT stations are offered the opportunity to transfer to a new rural station.</p>	<p>No On- Call Station closures. No redundancies or job losses. Wrexham maintain a 2nd Appliance</p> <p>Current Cover Standards are maintained at Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham AND significantly improved at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau.</p> <p>No added costs associated with permanently relocating 28 staff from Rhyl and Deeside.</p> <p>Provides a permanent “Home Station” for WDSR/ transfer personnel, creating regular work patterns and contributing to environmental impact goals.</p> <p>278 more households within a 20-minute response than the Consultation Option 1 and 2105 more households than Consultation Option 2</p> <p>Percentage increase is 92.80 (Consultation Option 1 is 92.70)</p> <p>Social Value and Prevention and Protection activity is the same as Option 1</p> <p>Wholetime Staff numbers = No Change</p> <p>On-Call Staff numbers = No Change</p> <p>Dept. WM's/ CM's are on-hand to offer local support to On-Call crews</p>	<p>No Wholetime cover available on weekends and 1 Friday per fortnight.</p> <p>£20.36 per household increase from previous year (in line with Consultation Option 1)</p> <p>A costlier choice over Option 2 (£16.63) and Option 3 (£12.22)</p>

OPT	Model	How it is achieved	Benefits	Drawbacks
Option 5 (Growth)	Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham remain unchanged, 3 additional hub stations are created. A cost increase is involved.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NWFRS has an over establishment of 8 - WDSR have an establishment of 11 - Create 23 new Posts <p>Utilise the 42 staff to crew 3 rural hub stations.</p> <p>Personnel from WT stations are offered the opportunity to transfer to a new rural station.</p>	<p>No On- Call Station closures. No redundancies or job losses. Wrexham maintain a 2nd Appliance</p> <p>Current Cover Standards are maintained at Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham AND significantly improved at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau.</p> <p>No added costs associated with permanently relocating 28 staff from Rhyl and Deeside.</p> <p>Provides a permanent “Home Station” for WDSR/ transfer personnel.</p> <p>278 more households within a 20-minute response than the Consultation Option 1 and 2105 more households than Consultation Option 2</p> <p>Percentage increase is 92.80 (Consultation Option 1 is 92.70)</p> <p>Social Value and Prevention and Protection activity is the same as Option 1</p> <p>Wholetime Staff numbers = No Change</p> <p>On-Call Staff numbers = No Change</p> <p>Creation of 23 new posts provides opportunities for local communities to secure full-time employment.</p>	<p>£24.54 per household increase from previous year</p> <p>A costlier choice over Option 1 (£20.36) Option 2 (£16.63) and Option 3 (£12.22)</p>

OPT	Model	How it is achieved	Benefits	Drawbacks
			<p>Greater investment in local communities, creating social cohesion and improved wellbeing.</p> <p>Reduced environmental impact.</p> <p>It fits the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015, which is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales (see appendix 3)</p>	



1 x Rural Day Crewed Station costs £750,000



A Day Shift requires up to 14 Firefighters
(7 when working a 9 Day Fortnight)



This equates to £53,571.43 per Firefighter
Or £1,232,142.89 in total for 23 new posts



With 294,703 households in N Wales, this equates
to an increase of **£4.18** per annum or **1.15p** per
day

Cost of Each Option

Consultation Option 1	= £20.36
Consultation Option 2	= £16.63
Consultation Option 3	= £12.22
Employee/ FBU Option 4a	= £20.36
Employee/ FBU Option 4b	= £20.36
Employee/ FBU Option 4c	= £20.36
Employee/ FBU Option 4d	= £20.36
FBU Growth Option	= £24.54

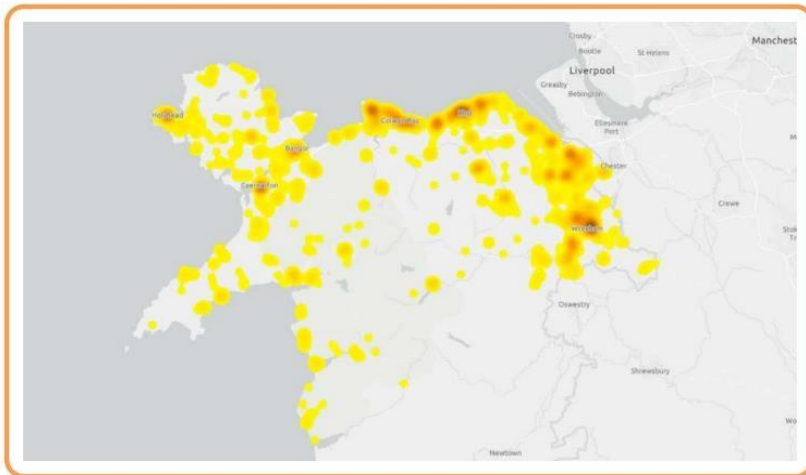
Potential Efficiency Savings

Training Facility = £48 million (£1.1million per annum on interest only)

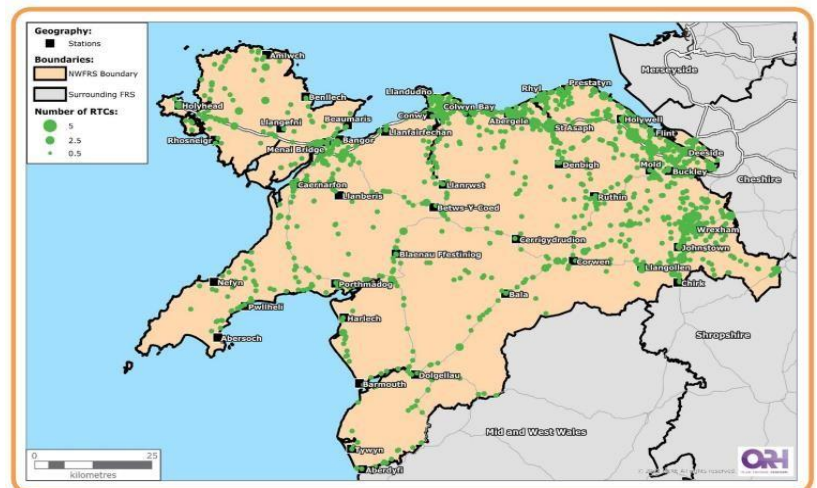
Assistant Chief Fire Officer = £130,000 (on costs) plus car and benefits

NFCC Direct Entry Scheme = £163,000 during 3-year development

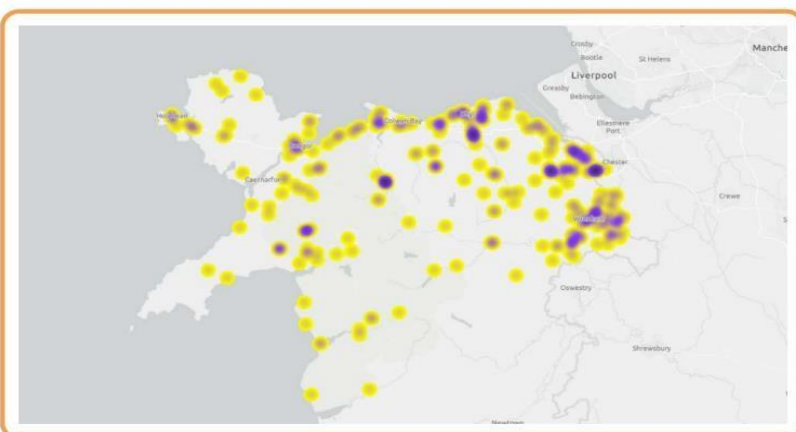
Appendix 1



Accidental Dwelling Fires attended 01/04/2017 – 31/03/2022



Road traffic collision locations 01/04/2017 – 31/03/2022



Flooding incidents attended 01/04/2017 – 31/03/2022

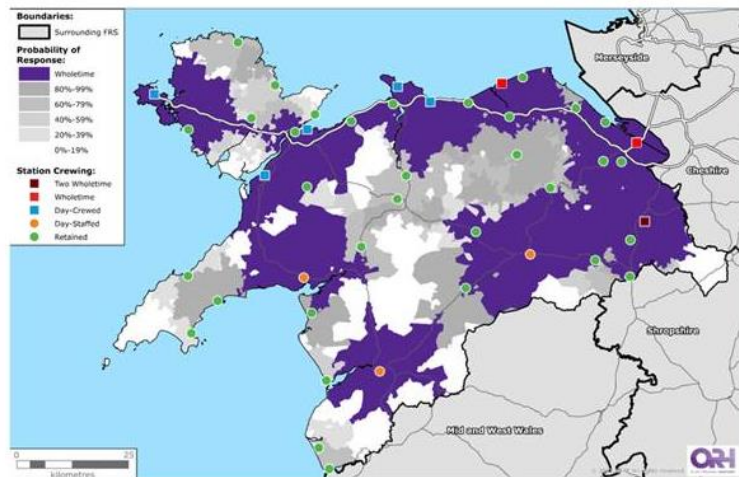
In each of the 3 examples of primary incident types attended, the greatest concentration of occurrences are turnout areas relating to or supported by Rhyl, Deeside and Wrexham

Appendix 2

	Total Households	Base Position (Current)		Modelled Option (Growth)		Difference	
		Households in 20 mins	% Households Covered	Households in 20 mins	% Households Covered	Households in 20 mins	% Households Covered
NWFRS-wide	341,341	314,323	92.10%	316,749	92.80%	+2426	+0.7%

You'll see from the above table that this brings 278 more households within a 20 minute response than the Consultation Option 1 and 2105 more households than Consultation Option 2.

The daytime response map will look the same as Consultation Option 1 in terms of footprint but Deeside and Rhyl would be highlighted in red as Wholetime:



Appendix 3

Fostering Well-being through Job Creation at Rural Fire Stations in Alignment with the Well-being of Future Generations Act 2015

The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 represents a visionary framework aimed at enhancing the overall social, economic, environmental, and cultural well-being of Wales. This legislation urges public bodies to adopt a proactive, long-term perspective, collaborate effectively, and engage communities in pursuit of shared well-being goals. The proposed establishment of three new rural fire stations in Corwen, Porthmadog, and Dolgellau, coupled with the creation of 23 full-time positions, aligns seamlessly with the principles of this Act, serving as a tangible embodiment of its aspirations.

At its core, the Act emphasises the creation of a prosperous, resilient, healthier, and more equal society, fostering cohesive communities, vibrant culture, and global responsibility. By expanding fire cover in underserved rural areas, the proposed fire stations echo these core values and goals in several significant ways:

Resilient Communities: The Act's emphasis on resilient communities is mirrored by the proposal's intention to bolster emergency response capabilities. The establishment of 23 wholetime local employment posts ensures a consistent and reliable presence to address emergencies, thereby strengthening the community's ability to cope with challenges and disruptions. With more personnel available on a full-time basis, emergency response times

can be improved. This enhanced capability is critical in addressing various emergencies, including fires, accidents, and natural disasters. Swift and efficient response can mitigate potential damages and save lives. It also has the added benefit of bolstering On-Call firefighters at periods during nighttime hours.

Long-Term Impact: The Act's focus on long-term thinking aligns with the proposal's commitment to addressing the decline in on-call firefighters. The introduction of permanent positions provides a sustainable solution, safeguarding the community's well-being for years to come. The new firefighter positions provide valuable employment opportunities for individuals residing in Corwen, Porthmadog, Dolgellau, and neighbouring areas. Job creation is vital for community stability, reducing unemployment rates, and offering career paths for individuals who may have otherwise sought employment outside the region.

Collaborative Approach: The Act's call for collaboration is exemplified by the coordination required to establish the fire stations. This collaboration involves public bodies, local authorities, and communities, reflecting the Act's emphasis on cross-sector partnerships to enhance overall well-being.

Community Engagement: The Act's emphasis on involving people in achieving well-being goals resonates with the fire stations' potential to engage the community. Through fire safety education, emergency preparedness initiatives, and active participation, the fire stations can empower citizens to contribute to their own well-being and safety. The presence of new firefighter posts can facilitate increased engagement between the fire service and local communities.

The creation of new firefighter posts and the expansion of fire services can instil a sense of pride and security within local communities. Knowing that there are dedicated professionals ready to respond to emergencies fosters a safer and more resilient environment.

Economic Prosperity: The creation of 23 full-time positions aligns with the Act's vision of a prosperous economy that generates wealth and employment opportunities. These positions not only enhance emergency response capabilities but also contribute to the local economy. These firefighters will become consumers, leading to increased spending on goods and services within the communities where they live and work. This localized economic activity can contribute to a stronger economic foundation for the region, reinforcing the Act's commitment to sustainable economic development.

Cultural Enrichment: The Act's promotion of culture and language aligns with the fire stations' potential to foster community cohesion. By becoming hubs of safety and cultural exchange, the stations can embody the Act's goal of nurturing a Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language. Employing local people, with the societal richness they bring, will engender a sense of ownership and responsibility.

Environmental Stewardship and Local Resilience: By employing local individuals to staff these fire stations, the proposal directly addresses environmental concerns. The reduction of long-distance commutes decreases carbon emissions, contributing to a more sustainable environment. Localized employment enhances resilience by ensuring swift and effective emergency response within communities. This approach aligns harmoniously with the Act's broader emphasis on environmental stewardship, fostering an eco-friendlier community while also promoting self-reliant and empowered neighbourhoods.

Firefighters bring diverse skills and backgrounds to their roles. The recruitment of new firefighters can bring a fresh perspective and diverse skill sets to the fire service, enhancing its overall capabilities and adaptability.

Acknowledging the necessary financial investment, the proposal's implementation to establish three new rural fire stations and create 23 full-time positions requires an increased allocation within the Fire Service budget. This adjustment leads to a modest rise in council tax, amounting to £4.18 per household annually, or approximately 1.5 pence per day for every household in north Wales. This financial commitment underscores dedication to well-being and safety, further solidifying the alignment between the proposal and the Act's principles.

In conclusion, the commitment to expanding fire cover and investing in dedicated personnel not only enhances emergency response capabilities but also signifies a conscious effort to realize the well-being aspirations outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. Through the synergy of improved safety, community engagement, economic empowerment, and environmental responsibility, this proposal stands as a testament to Wales's commitment to holistic well-being for present and future generations.