

Isle of Anglesey County Council	
Report to:	Executive Committee
Date:	26 September 2023
Subject:	The Isle of Anglesey County Council's response to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – Emergency Cover Review
Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Llinos Medi
Head of Service / Director:	Dylan J. Williams Chief Executive
Report Author: E-mail:	Susan Owen Jones Susanjones4@anglesey.gov.wales
Local Members:	Relevant to all elected members.

A –Recommendation/s and reason/s

The Committee is requested to:

1. Consider and provide comments on the Council's draft response to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – Emergency Cover Review.
2. To accept and approve the Council's draft response to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – Emergency Cover Review.

The Council is a category 1 responder and has responsibility for planning and responding to emergencies under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, the Radioactive Emergencies (Preparedness and Public Information) Regulations 2002, and the Pipeline Safety Regulations 1996.

The Council plays a crucial role in civil resilience and works alongside the emergency services and other category 1 responders including the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is undertaking a public consultation to gather feedback on the options offered in relation to the future delivery of its emergency services. The Council has been invited to respond to that consultation.

Please see the documentation published as part of the consultation in Appendix B. As a result of internal discussions, the response in Appendix A has been formulated as Council's feedback to the options under consideration by the Fire and Rescue Authority.

B – What other options did you consider and why did you reject them and/or opt for this option?

N/A

C – Why is this a decision for the Executive?

Securing the formal support and approval of the Executive Committee is important considering the subject in question, as well as the high level of interest in the issue from the perspective of local stakeholders.

Ch – Is this decision consistent with policy approved by the full Council?

N/A

D – Is this decision within the budget approved by the Council?

The North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is mainly funded through a levy from the region's Unitary Authorities. The Council contributes towards this fund and contributions are based on population. Any change to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service budget will affect the levy with additional pressure placed on the Council's budget.

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):

1	How does this decision impact on our long term needs as an Island?	The feedback from the consultation will shape the future of how the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service provide emergency services in North Wales and as a result will impact on the needs of the Island.
2	Is this a decision which it is envisaged will prevent future costs / dependencies on the Authority? If so, how?	No
3	Have we been working collaboratively with other organisations to come to this decision? If so, please advise whom.	No
4	Have Anglesey citizens played a part in drafting this way forward, including those directly affected by the decision? Please explain how.	N/A
5	Note any potential impact that this decision would have on the groups protected under the Equality Act 2010.	N/A

Dd – Assessing the potential impact (if relevant):		
6	If this is a strategic decision, note any potential impact that the decision would have on those experiencing socio-economic disadvantage.	N/A
7	Note any potential impact that this decision would have on opportunities for people to use the Welsh language and on treating the Welsh language no less favourably than the English language.	N/A

E – Who did you consult?		What did they say?
1	Chief Executive / Leadership Team (LT) (mandatory)	The comments have been incorporated in the report.
2	Finance / Section 151 (mandatory)	The comments have been incorporated in the report.
3	Legal / Monitoring Officer (mandatory)	The comments have been incorporated in the report.
4	Human Resources (HR)	
5	Property	
6	Information Communication Technology (ICT)	
7	Procurement	
8	Scrutiny	The Partnership and Regeneration Scrutiny Committee (19 September 2023) accepted the initial draft response of the Council subject to a number of further considerations.
9	Local Members	

F - Appendices:
Appendix A – The Isle of Anglesey County Council’s response to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service – Emergency Cover Review
Appendix B – Consultation document

Ff - Background papers (please contact the author of the Report for any further information):

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority – Emergency Cover Review

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority Emergency Cover Review consultation. Senior Officers and Elected Members have reviewed the consultation document and considered the proposed options. These were formally considered and endorsed by the **xx on xx.**

As a local authority in North Wales and as a category 1 responder, the Council plays a crucial role in civil resilience and must ensure adequate preparedness for emergencies. We work alongside the emergency services and other category 1 responders and fully appreciate and understand the importance of the service and the challenges faced. We value our continued commitments and endeavours to collaborate effectively, whilst recognizing that the current financial challenges are both uncertain and demanding. We also recognise the difficulties in planning for, delivering, and maintaining core statutory services in a period of financial constraints.

The Isle of Anglesey County Council is one of the 6 constituent authorities of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority. Membership of the Fire and Rescue Authority includes county councillors from the six local authorities and this Council has 3 members on the Authority.

The majority of funding for the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is received by way of levy from the Unitary Authorities within the area. The Council pays into this combined fund and the contribution is based on population. Any change in the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service budget would consequently impact on the levy contributions and would result in added pressure to the Council's budget. This would either result in the Council having to reduce other service budgets in order to maintain the budget at the level of funding available or to increase the funding by passing on the additional cost to the Island's residents through increased Council Tax.

Please see below detailed comments:

General comments

1. The purpose and objective of the consultation is clearly set out in the document. The information within and the general presentation of the document is clear and easy to understand.
2. Although, the document does not give detail on the reason / need for change, we have been advised that the review seeks to improve guaranteed day time emergency cover across the whole of North Wales.
3. There are differing needs and challenges across the region, primarily driven by geography, and having a dispersed rural community. We are eager to ensure that rural communities are not at a disadvantage in terms of service provision as a result of any changes.
4. We recognise that North Wales as a region has continued to evolve and so have the risks faced by the public who live, work and visit. We also welcome the evolution of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority to become a preventative service along with special service calls emerging as a result of climate change and advances in technology.
5. We agree with the criteria used in developing the options and the key themes arising from the initial engagement. They are appropriate and suitable.

Options

6. The document suggests that on a regional basis, the impact of the 3 different options varies.
7. Specifically for Anglesey, there will be no impact or effect from maintaining the current arrangements or changing to options 1 and 2.
8. Although options 1 and 2 would see no impact on the Island they would cost more. To maintain the existing level of service, if financially achievable, would be a desirable outcome.
9. The maps showing the location of the emergency calls clearly show that the majority of calls around the coast are in the North and on Anglesey. However, the 3 options proposed increase the full-time staff in South Meirionnydd and Denbigh. As a result, the Service will have more full-time staff in the areas with fewer calls.
10. The consultation document does not show the number of calls per full-time staff before and after implementing any changes. This comparison would help to show the impact of the changes under each of the options. Ideally the change should create a situation where the call to staff figure be consistent across the region.

Option 3

11. Option 3 includes the closure of one of the Island's Retained Stations in Beaumaris.
12. Our view is that the closure or non-availability of a resource would result in taking longer for the next nearest resource to attend an emergency. The next nearest response would not necessarily be coming from neighbouring stations as they may not be available due to crewing deficiencies or being required elsewhere. In the case of Beaumaris, the next station to respond is Menai Bridge which has only been available 26% of the time.
13. Option 3 is the only option detailing a reduction (2,087) in the number of households that would receive a response within 20 minutes. Both options 1 and 2 note an increase (2,148 and 321 respectively). Information received specifies that the closure of the Beaumaris Station would reduce the number of households in Anglesey receiving a response in 20 minutes by 670 households (a reduction from 78.4% to 76%). The location of these households has not been shared; we assume that these would be in the South East of the Island.
14. As previously noted, the next nearest response would not necessarily be coming from neighbouring stations, therefore suggesting the response may come from off Anglesey. With the nearest day crewed station to Beaumaris being over the Menai in Bangor, Gwynedd, it is in our view a reduced service which enhances threat to life.
15. The congestion and lack of resilience for the Menai crossings is of significant concern and dependency on the Bangor Fire Station therefore raises serious concerns. Detailed evidence of these concerns were presented and endorsed by the Council's Executive on the 18th of July 2023 ([Improving the Reliability and Resilience across the Menai Straits.pdf \(anglesey.gov.uk\)](#)).
 - a. The Britannia Bridge is the only point on the UK trunk road network hosting the Trans-European Road Network route E22, where the carriageway narrows from 4 lanes to two - one in each direction.
 - b. Restrictions on the type of vehicles that can access the Menai Suspension bridge (only up to 7.5 tonnes), and speed restrictions of 30mph along with the lack of enhanced safety facilities, such as hard shoulders contribute to poor resilience with regards to emergency vehicles.
 - c. The Britannia Bridge is vulnerable to closures due to wind, incidents and accidents.
 - d. During particularly high winds (gusts above 70mph) the bridge is fully closed – with no possible diversion route for vehicles over 7.5 tonnes.

16. The lack of resilience of the existing Menai crossings has consequential effects on the emergency services and the safety of our communities. We therefore oppose the closure of the Beaumaris Fire Station as included in option 3.

Central costs and operating structure

17. The consultation does not discuss, consider or propose any change to the central costs of running the service. The 3 options presented raise the costs between 8.1% and 13.5%. It will then be a question for the Fire Service how to fund the increase in costs, i.e. will all the costs be funded by the levy or will the service offer savings including reducing the central costs.
18. The focus must be on protecting front line services and the omission of any detail or consideration surrounding the central costs does not provide any assurance that this is the case.

In summary, I confirm the Council's position that the focus of the review must be on protecting front line services during the current economic climate and that consideration needs to be given to implementing efficiency savings in other areas within the operating structure and working practices of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, i.e. central costs, training costs etc. Further detail, consideration and discussions are required regarding the wider operating structure and opportunities for efficiencies.

The Council requests that the North Wales Fire & Rescue Service conduct a review of their administrative and central costs as a basis for setting the levy contribution incorporating the input of the Section 151 Officers in North Wales.

The Isle of Anglesey County Council is against the closure of Beaumaris Station as stated in Option 3.

As stated previously, we value our continued commitments and endeavours to collaboration, whilst also recognising that the current financial challenges are both uncertain and demanding. We would welcome further discussion regarding our response.

YOUR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

**RIGHT PLACE
RIGHT TIME
RIGHT SKILLS**



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

Emergency Cover Review
Have your say

21 July 2023 – 22 September 2023

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What this document is about



North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is running a public consultation to gather feedback from those who live, work and travel in the region about the future of how we provide our emergency cover services in North Wales.

Emergency cover is the way we manage our resources to keep people safe - no matter where you live or who you are, we aim to be there for you when you need us.

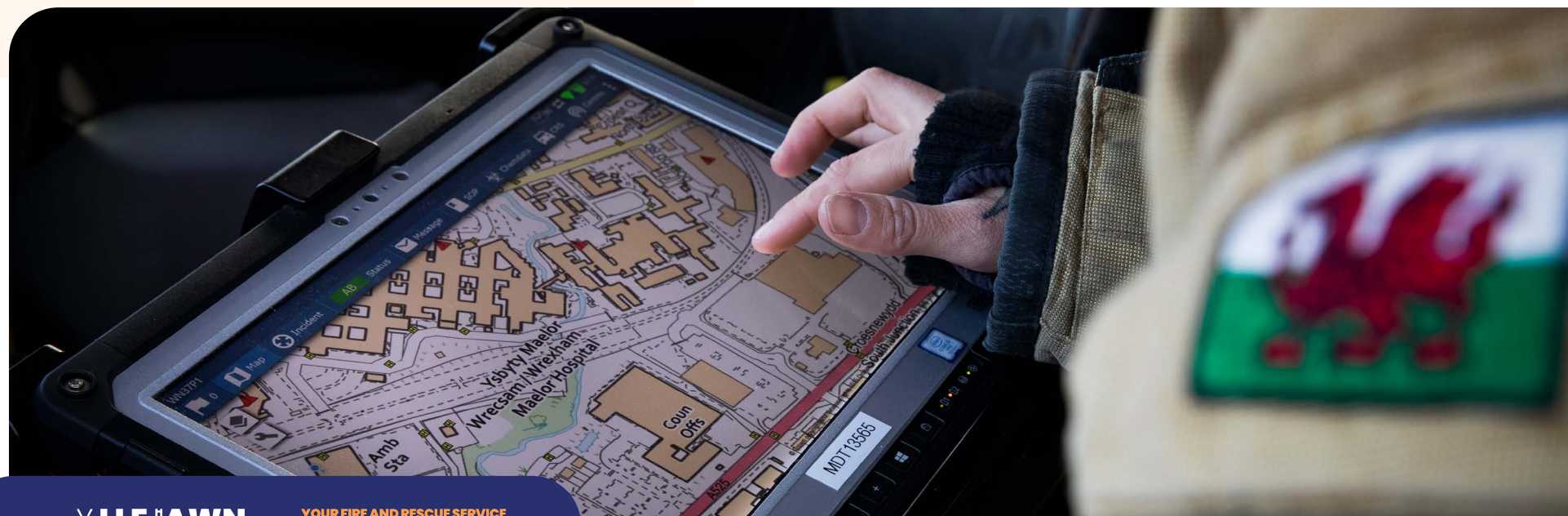
To help us develop our future options, we have been working with our staff and representative bodies, members of the public, council representatives, local vulnerable groups and members of our Fire and Rescue Authority to understand what really matters should you, or someone you care for or represent, require our services in an emergency.

All the feedback has been used to develop our options for the future of emergency cover services across North Wales - we want to know what you think. We explain the options on pages 36-37.

Between 21 July 2023 and 22 September 2023, you can tell us what you think by completing our questionnaire and returning it to us - it is available on paper or online at www.northwalesfire.gov.wales.

We explain the range of ways you can get involved and share your views with us on pages 38-40.

YOUR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
RIGHT PLACE
RIGHT TIME
RIGHT SKILLS



Who we are?

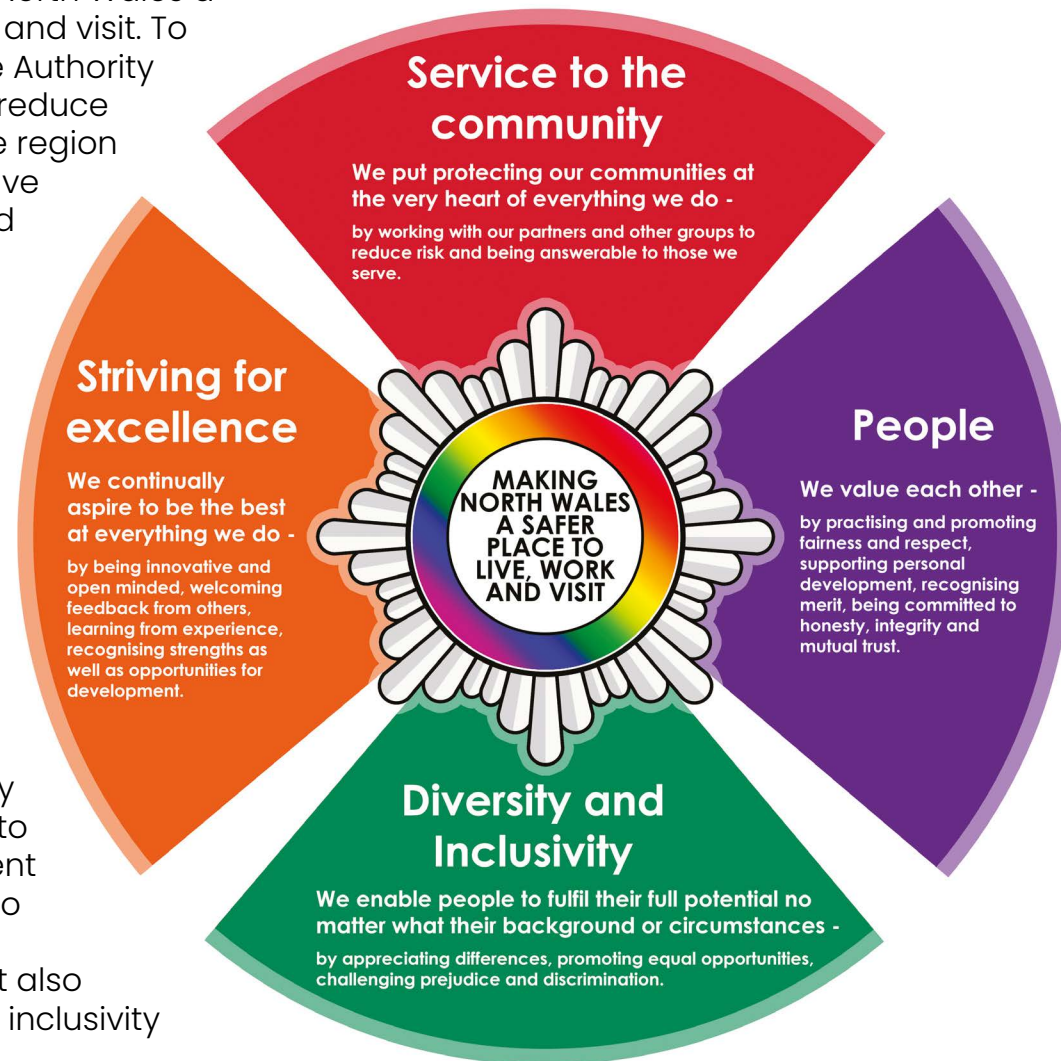
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was established as part of the reorganisation of local government on 1 April 1996. It comprises 28 councillors from the six unitary authorities of North Wales.



The Authority is the publicly accountable body that is responsible for providing a fire and rescue service for the communities of North Wales.

Our mission is to make North Wales a safer place to live, work and visit. To support this mission the Authority will continue to work to reduce dwelling fires across the region through a comprehensive prevention strategy, and will investigate and analyse information to reduce the risks associated with all types of fire and other hazards.

We will also continue to promote education and collaboration with people living and working in North Wales. Equality of opportunity is a fundamental priority and the Authority aims to increase the employment prospects of people who might find it difficult to gain employment whilst also promoting fairness and inclusivity in the workplace.



Our aims

In March 2021 the Authority published a Corporate Plan 2021-24 which sets out our seven long-term improvement and wellbeing objectives. In October 2021 the Authority confirmed its intention to continue to pursue those same objectives in 2022/23 and in March 2023 the plan was revised.

The Corporate Plan explains our vision for the future, and how we propose to achieve this through seven long term objectives. Supporting the delivery of the seven objectives are more detailed, shorter term, steps that have been linked to the seven well-being goals outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015: www.futuregenerations.wales

More information about the Service and the Authority can be found by visiting the North Wales Fire and Rescue Service website: www.northwalesfire.gov.wales

Our core values are displayed in the diagram below.



Introduction

We want to provide the fairest possible service to the public of North Wales.

No matter where you live or who you are, we aim to be there for you when you need us.

This means being able to provide an equitable service across our diverse communities – diverse in terms of location and geography, in terms of the types of incidents we respond to, and also in terms of the people we serve.

From the mountains of Eryri to the newly crowned city of Wrexham, from the Welsh heartlands to the borders of Shropshire and Cheshire, from wildfires to flooding incidents, house fires to road traffic collisions – whatever your ethnicity, gender or sexual orientation and regardless of any disability.

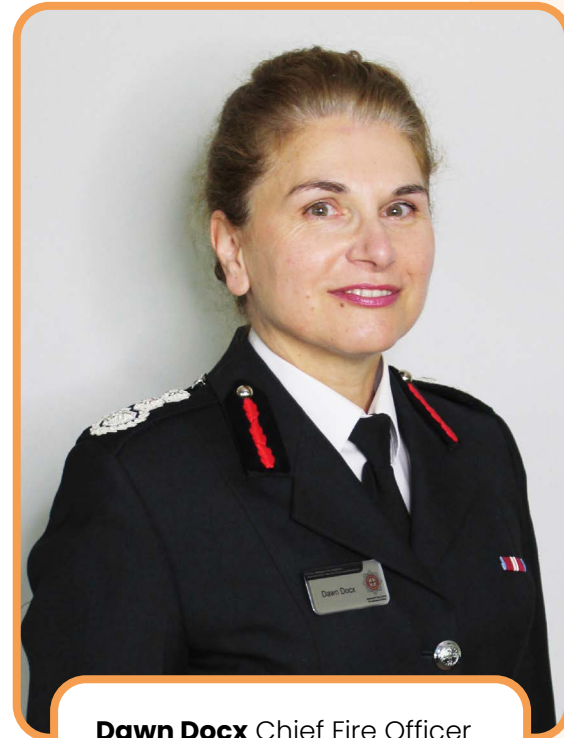
We aim to achieve this by managing our resources, our budget and our people as effectively as possible.

Understanding your views and the views of all those who live, work and travel in our region is key to this.

Balancing this against the current challenges to providing our services is also key – especially when our part time or on-call firefighters are not as available as they have been traditionally, when the risks faced by our communities are changing with climate change and when the financial challenges are greater than ever.

And it's not just about responding to incidents – preventing them from happening in the first place is far better for everyone involved.

Not only does our prevention work help to keep you safe but it also means we can better manage how we operate – and importantly, for some communities such as those in more rural areas, it is a vital part of protecting our residents.



Dawn Docx Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive

How we currently operate

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority was created in 1996 bringing together the County of Clwyd Fire Service and Gwasanaeth Tân Gwynedd. However, the model of emergency cover and the locations and crewing arrangements of the 44 fire stations in North Wales have remained relatively unchanged since the post war era.

North Wales as a region has continued to evolve and so have the risks faced by the public who live, work and visit our beautiful area. In 2008 in addition to being a responding service, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service positioned itself as a preventative service. Since then we have worked hard to bring down the number of fires and resulting deaths and injuries.

Importantly, 2022/23 was a milestone year for us – for the first time since we have kept records, there were zero deaths due to accidental fires in dwellings in North Wales.

This is great news, but we must not become complacent. We need to work harder still to maintain this level of safety.



Dylan Rees Chair of the Authority and Executive Panel



The challenges ahead

In the meantime, other risks have emerged with climate change increasing the frequency and severity of wildfires and flooding.

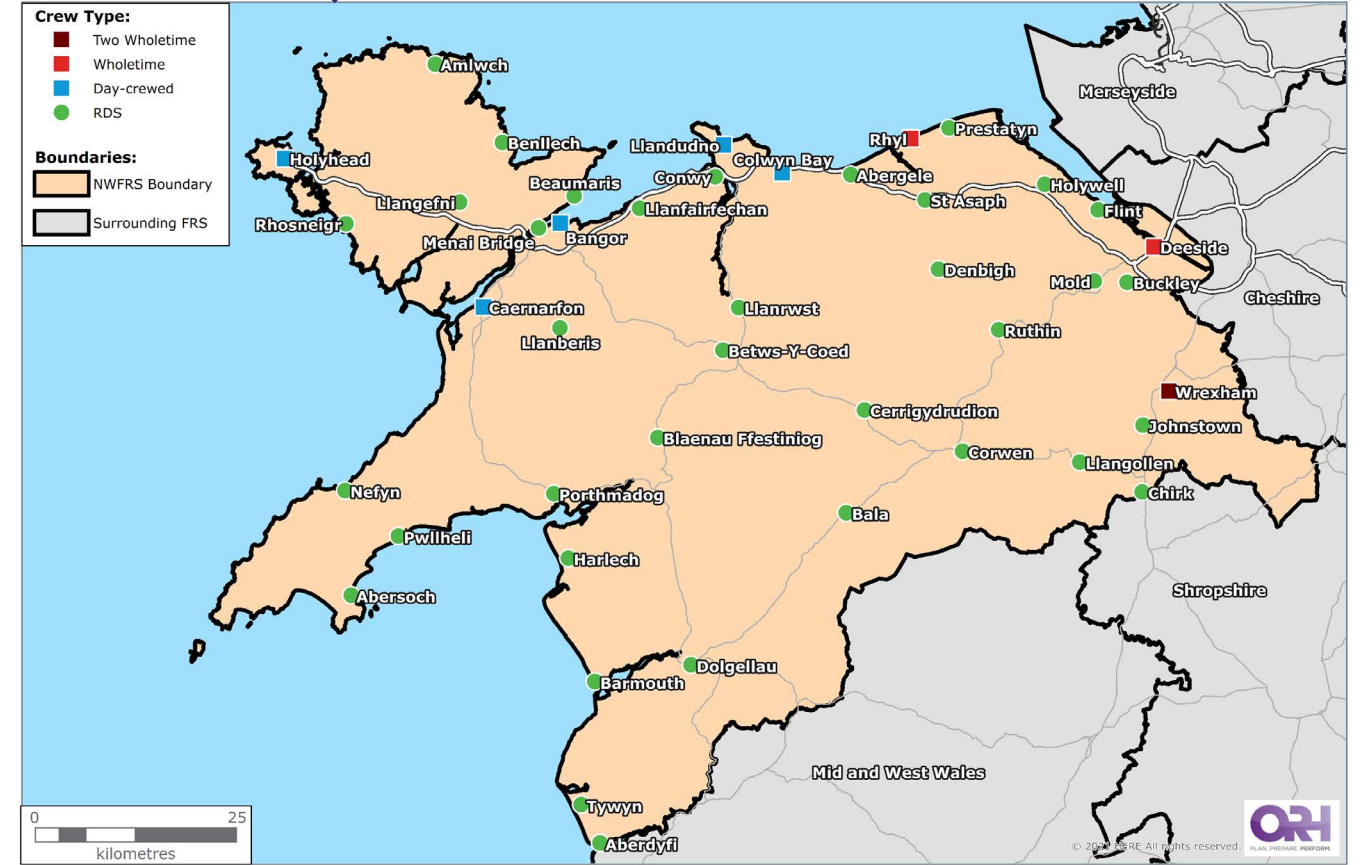
Advances in technology such as solar panels and electric vehicles as well as modern methods of construction and new building materials pose new risks to the public and to firefighters.

Having started to support other emergency sector colleagues we have seen an increase in what we know as special service calls.

As a result, we are becoming more of a Rescue Service than a Fire and Rescue Service.

In the future, the Welsh Government's aspiration is that we explore being able to assist our ambulance colleagues further by responding to cardiac arrests. To do all this we would need to be **in the right place**.

Why are we consulting?



Currently we have guaranteed emergency cover at only eight of our fire stations located predominantly along the A55 dual carriageway corridor in our region.

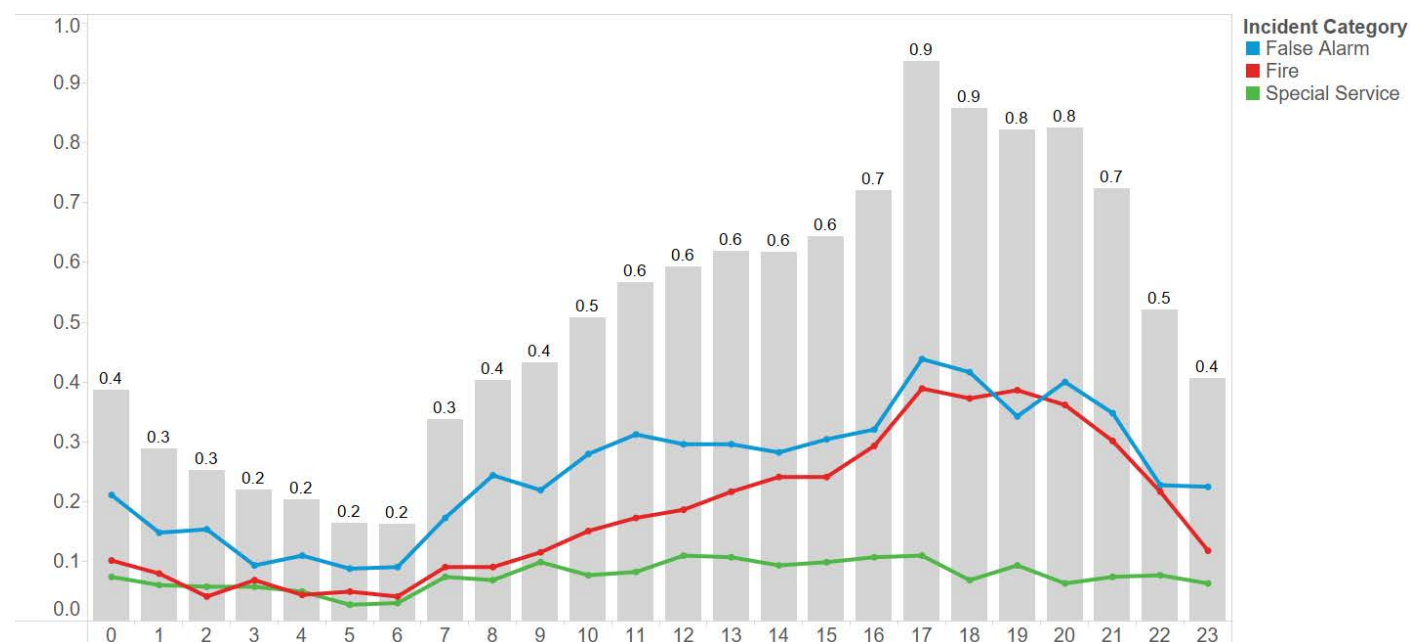
Elsewhere in North Wales we rely on part time or on-call firefighters (who operate the retained duty system) – and their availability during the day time is challenging (see page 11).

We are working hard to recruit and retain these firefighters but we need to have guaranteed emergency cover in inland areas, to ensure that we can be certain of being able to provide a response crew within the optimum response times across the whole of North Wales. In an emergency, time is of the essence.

We have therefore been exploring scenarios for providing emergency cover in the future – with a view to improving existing cover whilst also recognising the current financial challenges. Working with independent specialists we have been modelling exactly how we could optimise our resources and respond in the most effective and efficient way.



We know that the number of incidents we attend increases throughout the day, peaking in early evening and then dropping at night. We could therefore look at matching this demand by changing the way some of our crews work in certain areas.



Average hourly incidents 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2022

Whilst we can work to improve how our average cover and performance could look, there will still be areas, especially in rural locations, where we would continue to work harder to improve our protection and prevention services and continue to focus on the recruitment of on-call staff and their availability.

This would enable us to respond more effectively to all the emergencies we are called upon to attend, including road traffic collisions and events as a result of extreme weather, and crucially **at the right time**.

Along with the new risks, the technology that firefighters use has become more sophisticated. Training is therefore critical, and because the number of fires has decreased significantly in recent years thanks to our prevention work, it makes the need for realistic and immersive training in all of the emergencies we are likely to attend even more crucial.

We also need to be mindful of our need to train firefighters to keep themselves and the public safe and provide the highest quality of response.

We are therefore developing a business case to build a state-of-the-art Training Centre. It would be more centrally located, so less time would be spent travelling and more time could be spent training. It could also prepare our firefighters for dealing with new and existing risks and we could share it with our emergency service partners and others we may attend emergencies alongside, for joint emergency service training and collaboration activities to ensure our people **have the right skills**.

Where does our money come from?

We are committed to delivering value for money across all the services we provide with funding levied from the six local authorities we serve: Anglesey, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire, Gwynedd, and Wrexham.

Our Fire Authority is made up of representatives of the six local authorities and has the power to raise a Council Tax levy for funding.

Each year, each constituent local authority pays a contribution into a combined fire service fund which is equal to its proportion of our Fire Authority's expenses.

Our current budget for 2022/23 is £44.4 million - which equates to £63.07 a year per head of population in North Wales, or £150.66 a year per household.

Information on the cost of each option being consulted on is included in the table on pages 36-37.

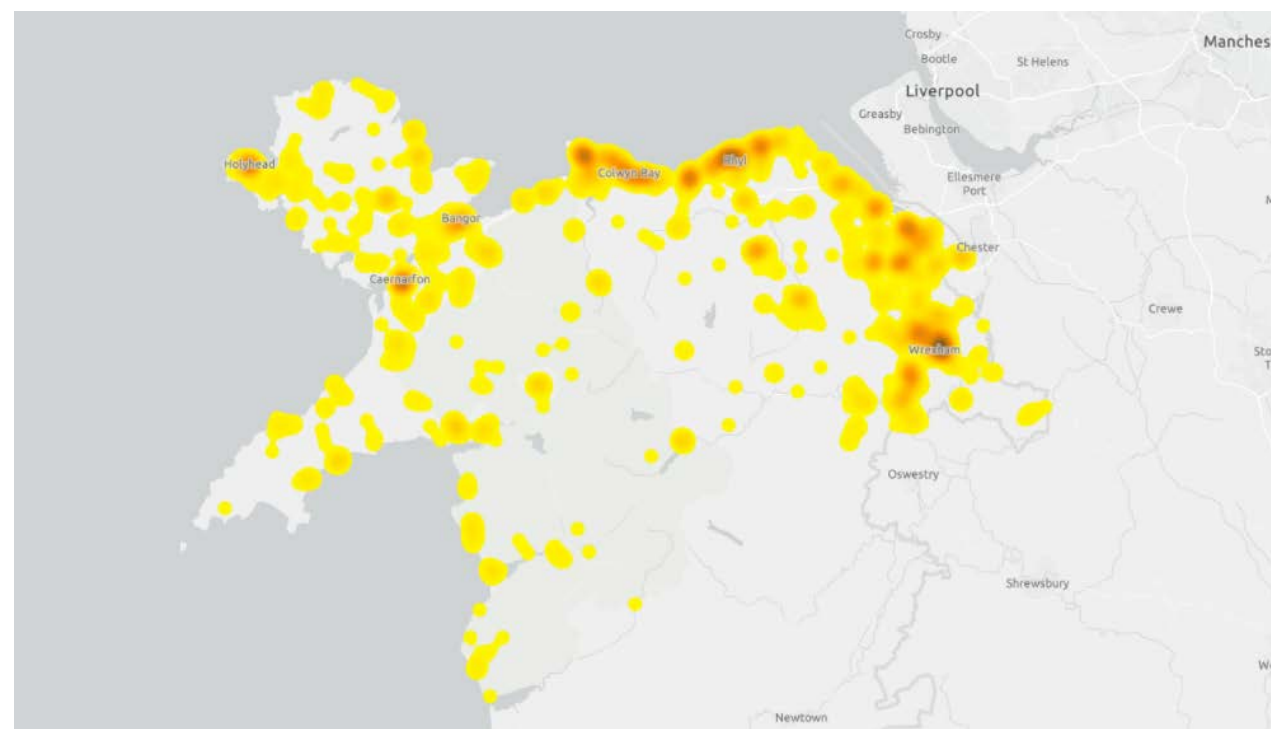
What are our current shift patterns?

- Our retained duty or on-call (part-time) firefighters are mainly based in rural fire stations located across our region. They are required to be within five minutes of their fire station and carry an alerter to be able to respond to emergencies as well as attend drill nights once a week for training sessions and other pre-arranged duties.
- Our day crewed firefighters are full-time firefighters located at Colwyn Bay, Llandudno, Bangor, Caernarfon and Holyhead. The day crewing shift system requires our crews to work a combination of hours on station during the day and on-call from a base location overnight, to provide a 24-hour response. There are also on-call firefighters based at these fire stations.
- Our wholtime or full-time firefighters are located at Wrexham, Deeside and Rhyl. Crews at these stations work shifts from the station at night and during the day to provide a 24-hour response. There are also on-call firefighters based at these fire stations.
- Wholtime rural firefighters also work full-time and work 12-hour day shifts covering the region on a dynamic basis depending on need.



What are the challenges of the different incidents we attend?

Right place, right time, right skills to help prevent or respond to **house fires**



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

All too often we see the catastrophic effects of accidental fires in the home. Preventing fires from happening in the first place is key to keeping people safe which is why we have worked hard to bring down the number of fires and resulting deaths and injuries – and conducting safe and well checks to provide fire safety in the home advice and installing smoke alarms is integral to this work.

Most fires start accidentally – and the effects can be devastating. Over 40% of all fires in the home start in the kitchen and being distracted is the biggest human factor responsible – resulting in a smoke logged kitchen, damaged equipment or in the worst cases, serious injury or harm.

We campaign throughout the year to promote ways you can stay safe – you can follow our tips on cooking safely, e-cigarette safety, electrical safety, smoking safety and much more on our website: www.northwalesfire.gov.wales.

Since 2013, all new and converted homes in Wales are fitted with a fire sprinkler system – which is like having a firefighter in your home and proven to save lives and prevent injuries.

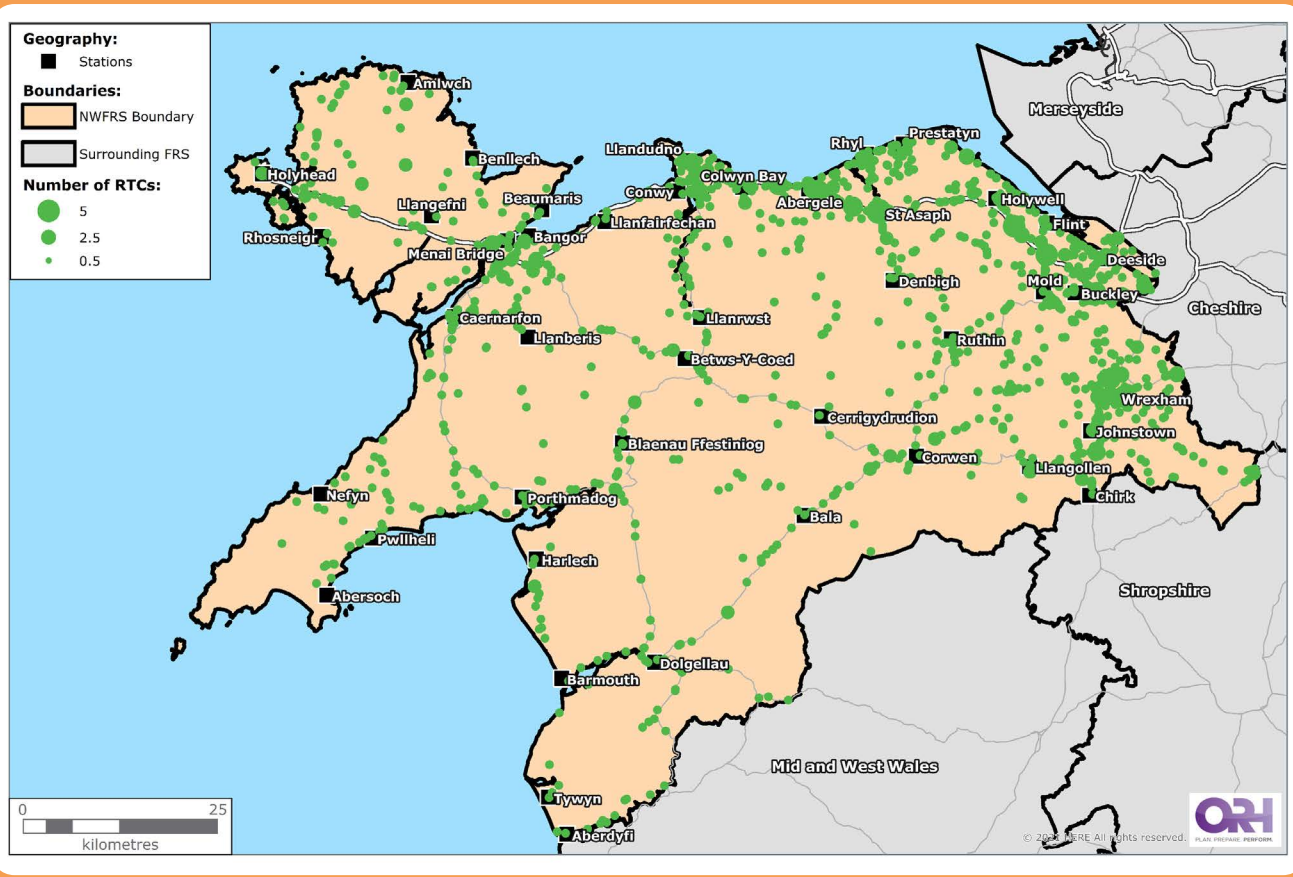
Monitored alarm systems offer a valuable support system for elderly or vulnerable residents – and for all of us, working smoke alarms can give an early warning signal which can buy valuable time to get out, stay out and dial 999.

In 2022/23, for the first time since our records began, there were no deaths due to accidental fires in dwellings in North Wales.

However, we cannot be complacent and know we need to work harder still to maintain this level of safety.



Right place, right time, right skills to help prevent or respond to **road traffic collisions**



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

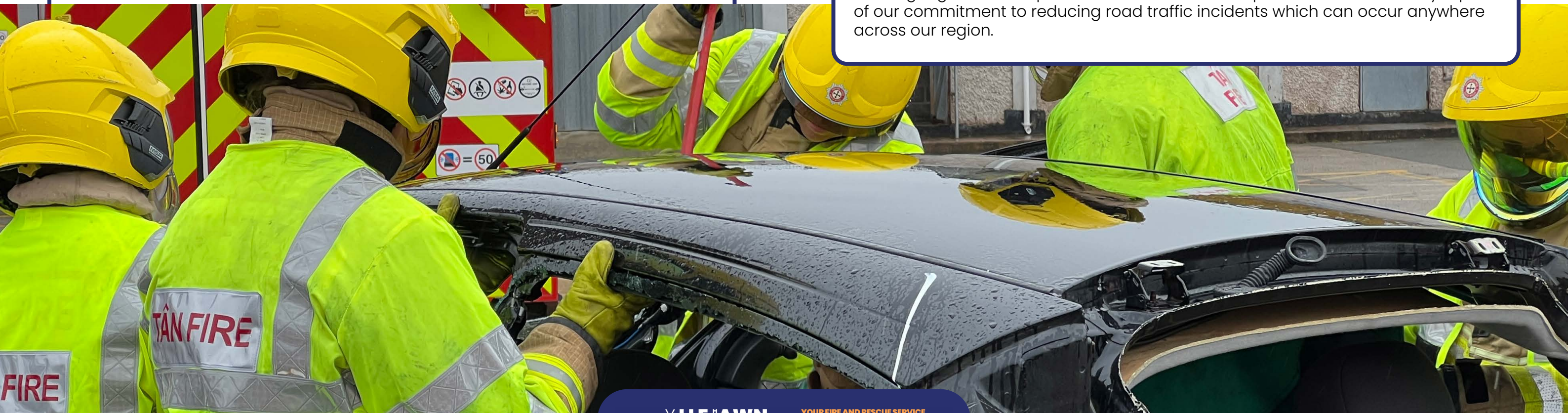


North Wales Fire and Rescue Service works in partnership with other organisations including other fire and rescue services in Wales to promote road safety and raise awareness of the main causes of fatal road traffic collisions. The 'Fatal Five' message focuses on 'Don't drink and drive, Kill your speed, Don't get careless, Belt up, and Switch off your mobile phone'.

Our work as a fire and rescue service does not just involve tackling house fires - we attend a high number of road traffic collisions and work tirelessly with partner agencies to help educate drivers about the potentially fatal consequences of speeding or not paying attention while driving.

This is particularly important for younger drivers - it is well documented that drivers aged 16-24 are disproportionately likely to be casualties in road traffic collisions. In Wales, this age group makes up 11 per cent of the population but 22 per cent of all casualties.

Working together to help raise awareness of the importance of road safety is part of our commitment to reducing road traffic incidents which can occur anywhere across our region.





Climate change has seen an increase in the demand to respond to wildfires in our region.

Every year in Wales, fire is responsible for damaging thousands of hectares of countryside, open space and wildlife habitats.

Wildfires tie up our resources which could be needed at another emergency – and due to the rural and rural-urban interface environments in which they tend to occur we've seen how wildfires put lives at risk, the lives of our communities as well as those of our firefighters.

In 2022 we saw a dramatic increase in the number and severity of wildfires attended in North Wales, rising from 4 in March and April 2021 to 20 in March and April 2022. The picture was similar across the whole of Wales.

That's why working together to prevent these fires is more important than ever – and we work

with a range of organisations, along with other fire and rescue services across Wales, to raise awareness of the damage that wildfires can cause to some of our most iconic upland landscapes.

We're also working with local landowners and farmers – many of the upland wildfires we saw in March 2022 were as a result of land management techniques such as prescribed moor burning getting out of control.

The summer of 2022 also saw record-breaking high temperatures, such that wildfire is now officially recognised as a major UK hazard in the National Risk Register of Civil Emergencies, and in the UK Health Effects of Climate Change report 2023.

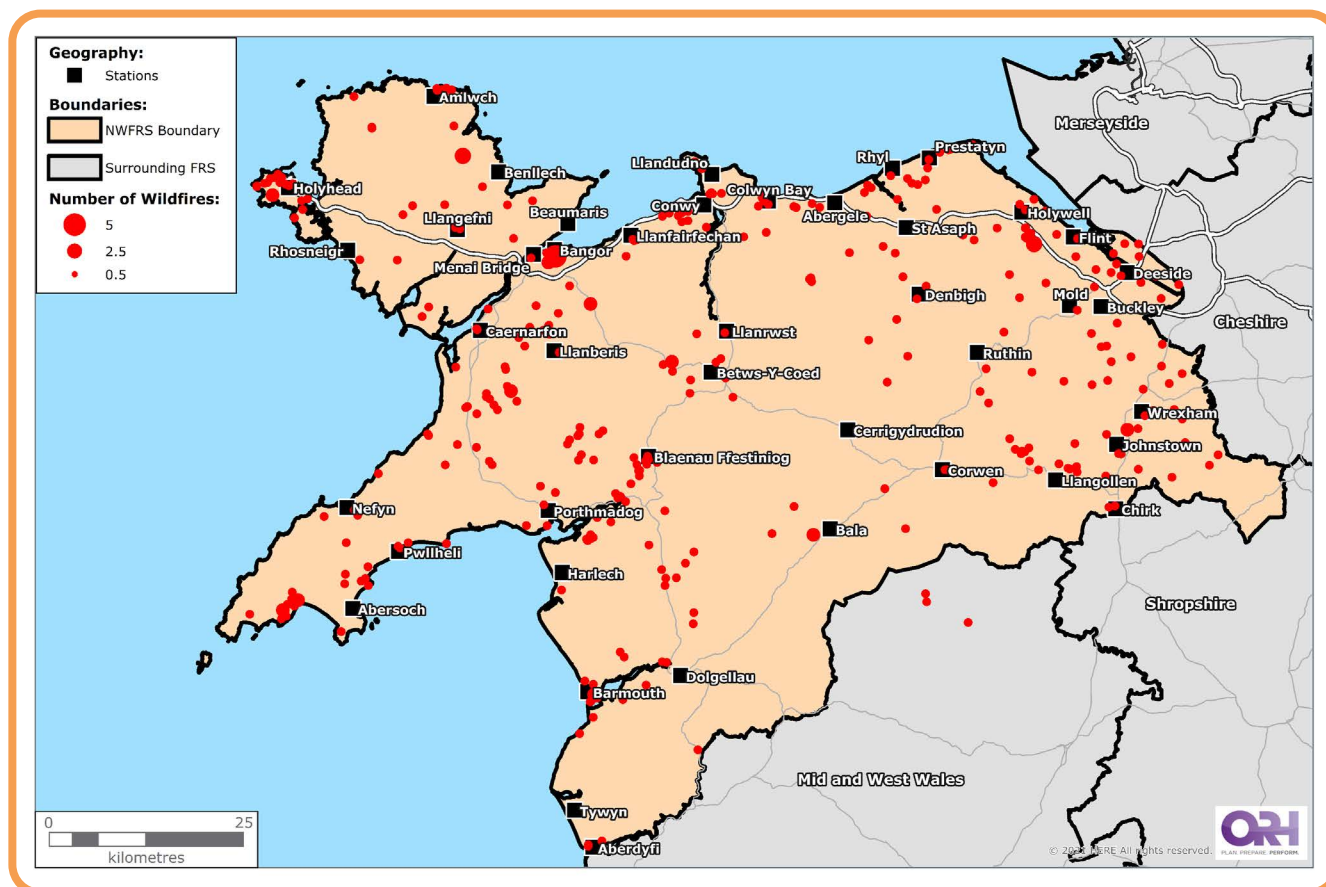
The impact of wildfires can be devastating – damaging land and property, harming our wildlife and our environment, releasing carbon dioxide and pollutants into the atmosphere and water courses, affecting local communities and businesses.

Extinguishing a wildfire is very difficult and costly, requiring specialist equipment as our firefighters often face working in dangerous and difficult conditions.

The costs following a wildfire including restoration, land lost to farmers and businesses and disruption to communities is immense.

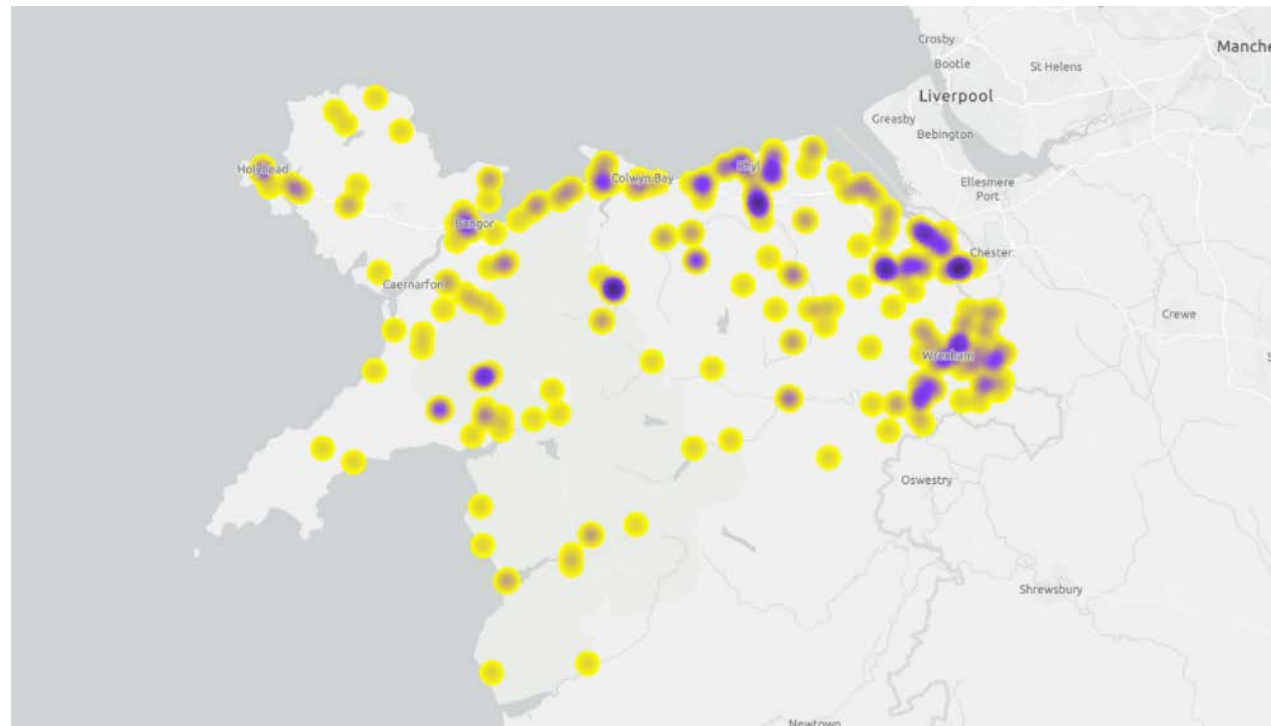
Through effective partnership working, we are focused on reducing the number of wildfires and the impact these have on our communities, landscape and wildlife.

Right place, right time, right skills to tackle **wildfires**



Wildfire Locations 01/04/2017 – 31/03/2022

Right place, right time, right skills to respond to flooding



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

Climate change has also seen an increase in the demand to respond to flooding incidents in North Wales.

Significant storms are becoming more frequent across the UK, requiring a multi-agency emergency response.

In January 2021, Storm Cristoph brought one of the wettest three-day periods on record across North Wales and North West England.

North Wales fire crews attended flooding incidents across the region as the storm Cristoph hit the UK, bringing with it significant rain and multiple severe flood warnings.

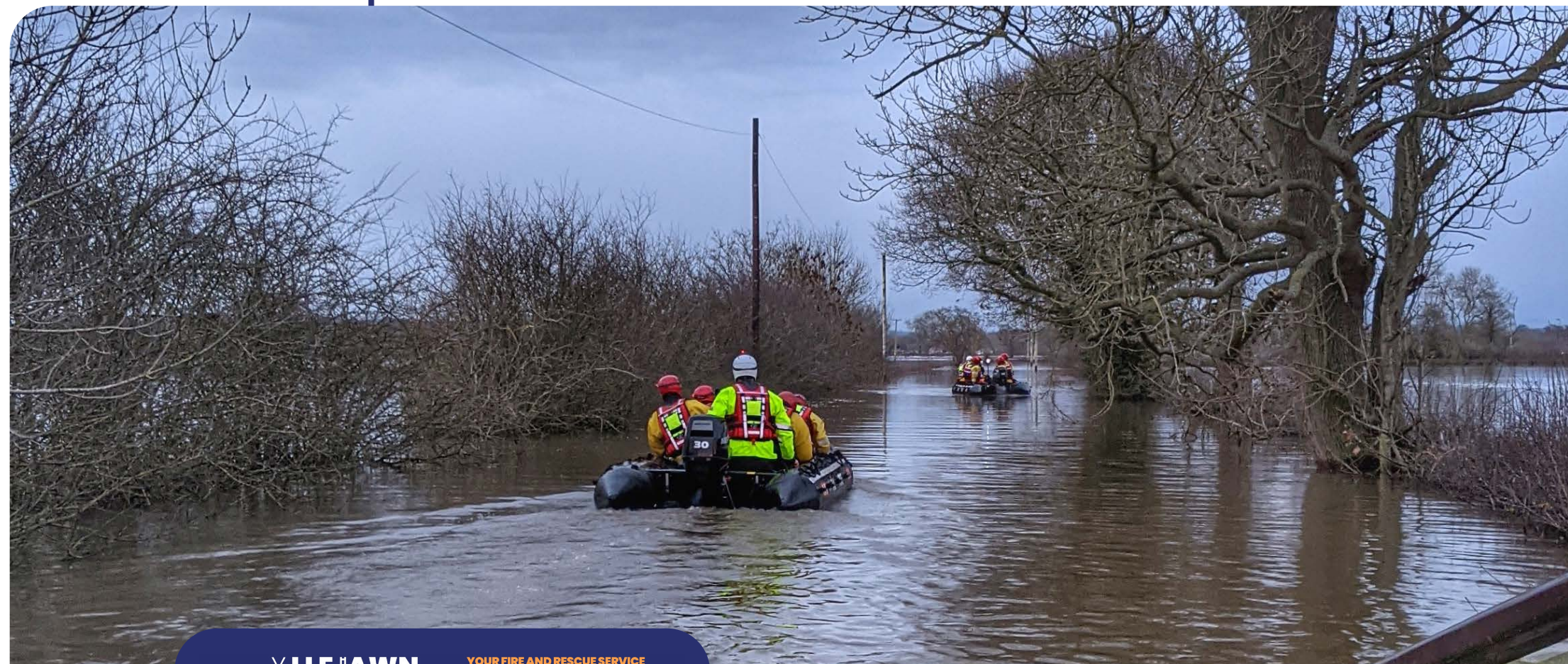
Our control room was busy with over 200 calls received at the height of the storm, with crews or officers attending 56 calls. Operational staff assisted at 48 properties and 28 casualties were rescued over two days of severe weather.



Officers worked closely with partners from other emergency services and local authorities in the planning and preparation for this widespread flooding.

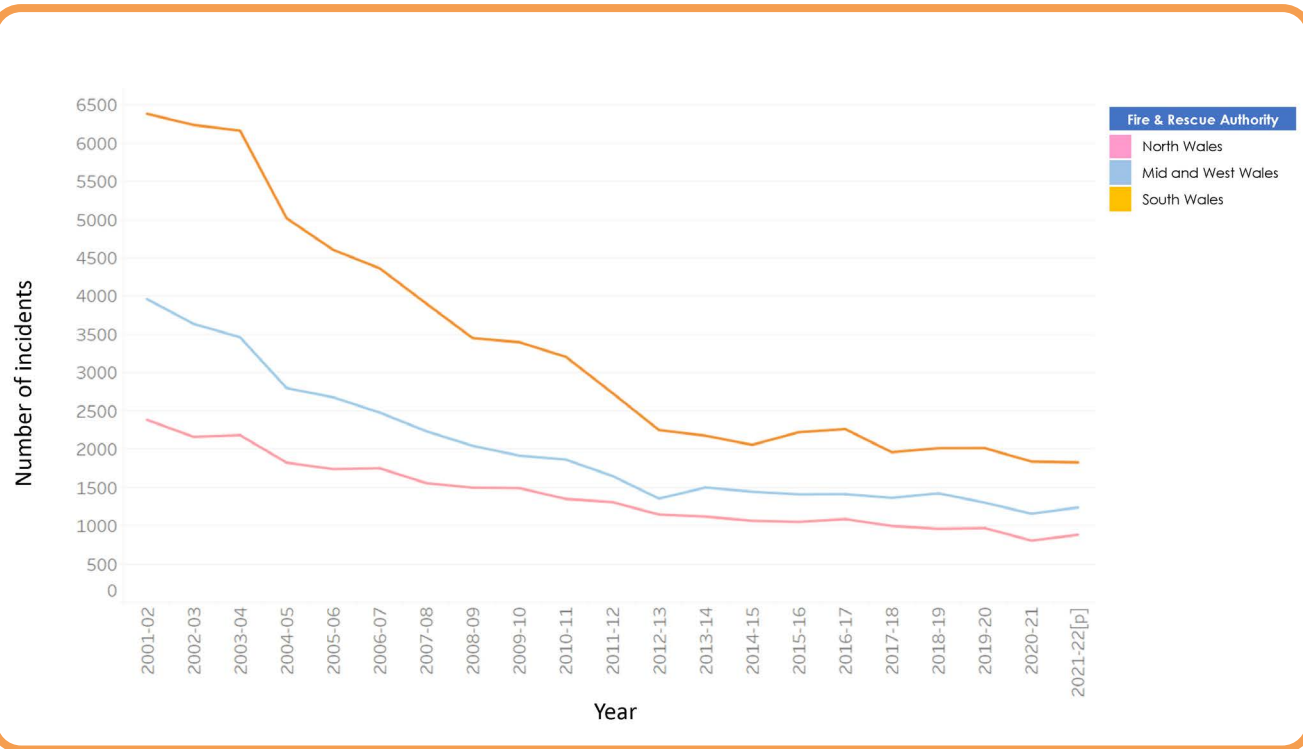
The worst areas affected were Ruthin and Bangor-on-Dee where residents from the local community were evacuated from their homes, and rest centres were opened whilst flood warnings and flood alerts were in place across North Wales.

We want to continue helping the communities we serve to be safe whatever the weather – and the effects of climate change mean we need to be able to adapt to respond to the challenges our communities face.





Right place, right time, right skills to help to strengthen prevention and protection

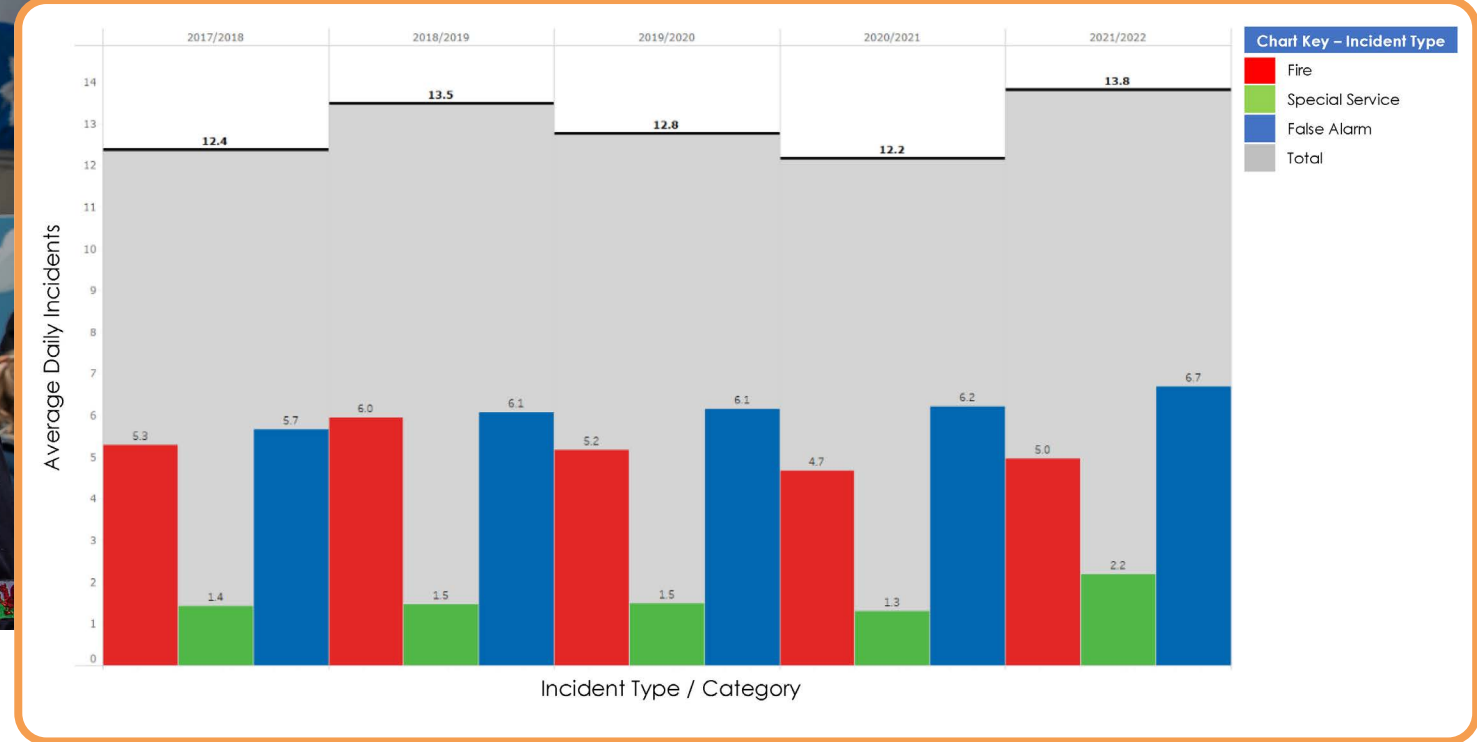


Number of primary fires by Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities

North Wales Fire and Rescue Service focuses on prevention as the cornerstone of protecting our communities.

Preventing incidents from happening in the first place is better for everyone and we work hard to prevent fires and other incidents.

The number of primary fires – those that are potentially more serious fires that harm people or cause damage to property – have decreased significantly across the whole of Wales over the last ten years thanks to our focus on prevention, and have remained static over the last five years.



Average Daily Incident Volumes 01/04/2017 - 31/03/2022

In 2022/23, our staff completed 18,052 safe and well checks to help prevent fires in the home, by encouraging smoke alarm ownership to provide an early warning in the event of a fire and by delivering essential fire safety advice to residents.

You can register for a free safe and well check by texting details to 07507303678, filling in the online enquiry form at www.northwalesfire.gov.wales or by calling 0800 169 1234 between 9am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.





Developing our options for the future

We have been working together to develop the best way of providing our emergency cover in the future, ensuring we can be in the right place, at the right time, with the right skills.

Based on our modelling work and on our own professional experience, we have explored a variety of different scenarios and through a series of pre-consultation workshops, seminars and focus groups we have gathered insights and feedback from a wide range of people, including staff and representative bodies, members of the public, council representatives, local vulnerable groups and members of our Fire and Rescue Authority.

These sessions were used to look at exactly what was important to consider in improving our emergency cover services across North Wales.

We then carried out further stakeholder sessions comprising a wide cross section of people to help us develop a refined list of potential options for the future, all of which are viable and which reflect what is most important to everyone.

These options were developed on the basis of the following criteria:

- **Emergency cover** – how our fire appliances respond to emergency calls.
- **Protection and prevention services** – how we keep your homes and businesses safe.
- **Affordability** – keeping our services as affordable as possible, providing best value for money.
- **Workforce** – impact of changes on our teams.
- **Fair and equitable service** – having our staff at the right place, at the right time and with the right skills.
- **Social value** – recognising the impact of any changes we make on our communities.

Key themes arising from this engagement included:

- **Finance** – understanding the budgetary pressures. Is the review of emergency cover financially driven?
- **Future risks** – climate change and new technology may place more demand on resources.
- **Prevention and protection** – how our engagement with the public and businesses are affected.
- **Communication** – key to aid understanding of the challenges faced and impacts of any proposals.

We are committed to ensuring that our review of emergency cover and this consultation process do not inadvertently disadvantage anyone and, wherever possible, that we are proactive in ensuring equality, diversity and inclusion. Our Equality Impact Assessment can be viewed on our website: www.northwalesfire.gov.wales

Some of what stakeholders had to say

Staff

"Extremes of weather may dictate a necessity for greater wildfire response."

"Negative impact on staff of changing duty systems or station location - staff losses."

"Be more bold and communicate our value for money and don't accept budget restrictions."

Local and national external senior leaders

"Are other funding streams available from Welsh Government?"

"Understanding on if the Emergency Cover review is driven by financial pressures?"

"Take out inefficiencies."

"5-year medium term budget plan requested."

"Formally designate that on a daily basis coverage would be located according to risk."

"A reduction in Wrexham's appliances has previously been controversial and has the potential to be controversial again."

Staff representative bodies

"Opinion of employees is important."

"Can staff be transferred or redeployed to other fire and rescue services?"

Future Risks

"Cuts to fire and rescue services would be seen as the fault of local Council."

"Increased fires with increased populations."

Focus groups held online

"Do you consult with strategic planning in regards to increase in population and houses within the community?"

"Who will the consultation be aimed at, how it will take place and what it will look like?"

"Being open and transparent throughout the process and not the final design will be key during the consultation."

"What are the potential risks and effect on preventative work?"

"The Service needs to be looking at prevention work with current landlords and people within the communities."

"Regarding the volume of incoming African people to the area, especially in Wrexham - can prevention work for these people be considered within the emergency cover review?"

Further stakeholder cross section session

What is important to you when we are making decisions regarding the services we offer?



**Availability/
Partnership**

Services

**Rural
cover**

Community

**Wildfire
response**

**Prevention
services**

**Correct
resources**

Cover

**Areas -
response**

**Response
times**

**Appropriate
cover**

**Agency
partnerships**

**Partnership
approach**

**Level of
cover**

**Partnership
with other
agencies**

Service

**Working in
partnership**

**Available
pumps**

**Resources
and Response**

Are there any other areas of feedback or considerations in relation to our pre-consultation on the Emergency Cover Review you wish us to consider?

**Wales
provision**

**Sets of
firefighters**

**Grounds
or other
types**

Location

Risk

Need

**Appliance
cover**

**Incidents
of wildfires**

**Rural
Areas**

**Skill
sets**

Wildfires

**Remote
wildfires**

**Account
of fires**

Cover

**Special
Appliances**

**Rural
availability**

**Staff
relocation**

Staff

**Wholetime
rural firefighter
personel**

**Best
suited**

Discounting one of the options following our pre-consultation work

One of the options involved no change, staying as we are and accepting the availability risk.

However, on the basis that this option does not meet the criteria of the Emergency Cover Review for a fair, sustainable and equitable emergency response across the communities of North Wales, this option is not being taken forward for public consultation.

What options are you consulting on: what do they mean for our communities and our staff?

Three options were chosen for public consultation and these have different implications for helping to ensure we can be there for you **at the right place, right time and with the right skills.**

Option 1

- Maintain a 24-hour response model at our existing wholetime stations, with Rhyl and Deeside fire stations changing to a day crewing duty system.
- The addition of three day staffed stations located at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau utilising the reallocation of wholetime firefighters following changes at Rhyl, Deeside and the Rural Wholetime Duty System.

Option 2

- A response model where Rhyl and Deeside fire stations change to a day staffing duty system.
- Wrexham's third fire appliance is removed, maintaining one fire appliance staffed by wholetime firefighters and one appliance staffed by on-call firefighters.
- The redistribution of staff from Wrexham, Rhyl, Deeside and the Rural Wholetime Duty System enables the addition of three day staffed stations, located at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau and a reduction in wholetime firefighter numbers by 22.

Option 3

- A response model where Rhyl and Deeside fire stations change to a day staffing duty system.
- Wrexham's third fire appliance is removed, maintaining one fire appliance staffed by wholetime firefighters and one appliance staffed by on-call firefighters.
- The redistribution of staff from Wrexham, Rhyl, Deeside and the Rural Wholetime Duty System enables the addition of two day staffed stations, located at Porthmadog and Dolgellau and a natural reduction in wholetime firefighter numbers by 36.
- The closure of five on-call fire stations at Abersoch, Beaumaris, Cerrigydrudion, Conwy and Llanberis, resulting in the reduction of on-call firefighter numbers by 38.

The table presented on pages 36–37 includes more detailed comparisons of the options and more information is also available on our website: www.northwalesfire.gov.wales

What would be the impact on our emergency response?

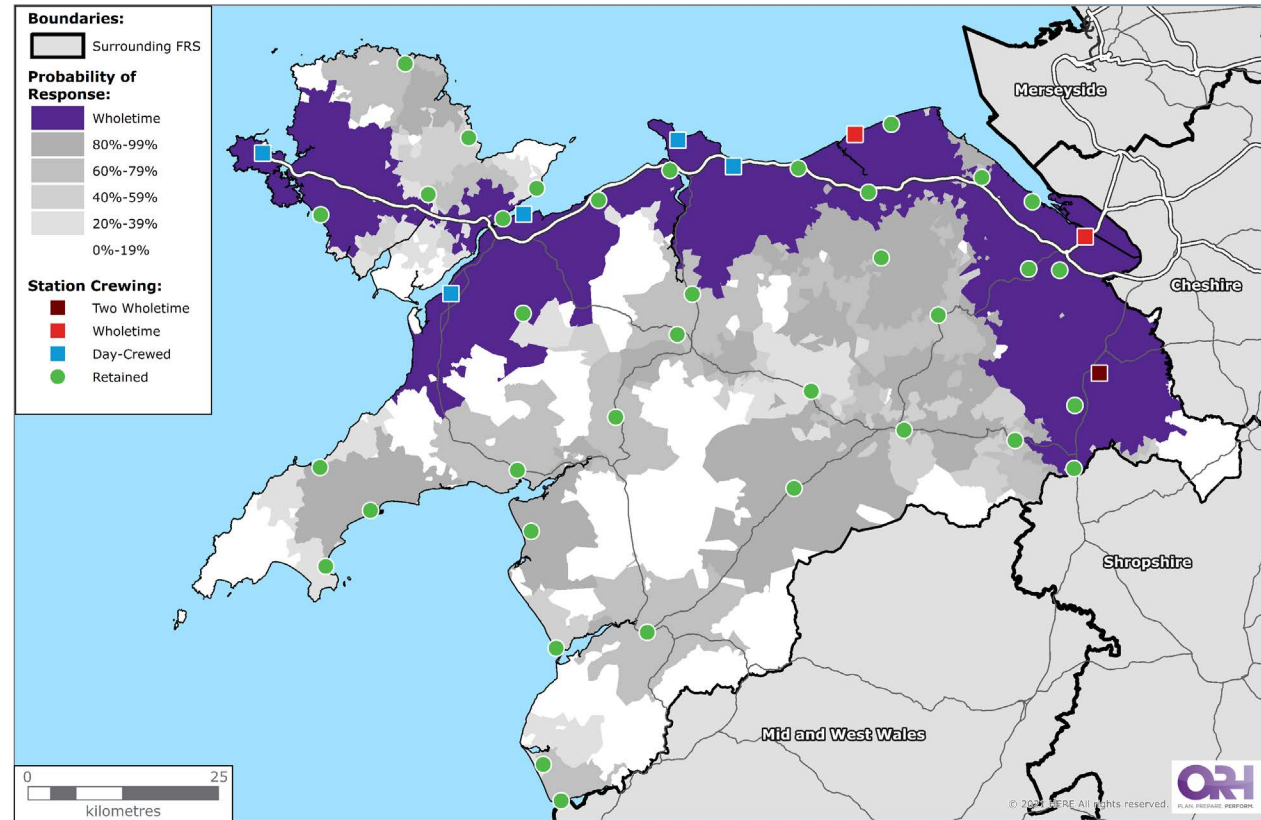
We looked at the average probability of a location receiving a response in 20 minutes during the day for all the different options under consideration – to be able to compare our emergency response.

We know the availability of on-call staff is challenging during the day time, whilst being more robust during the evening which is a credit to the dedication of our staff.

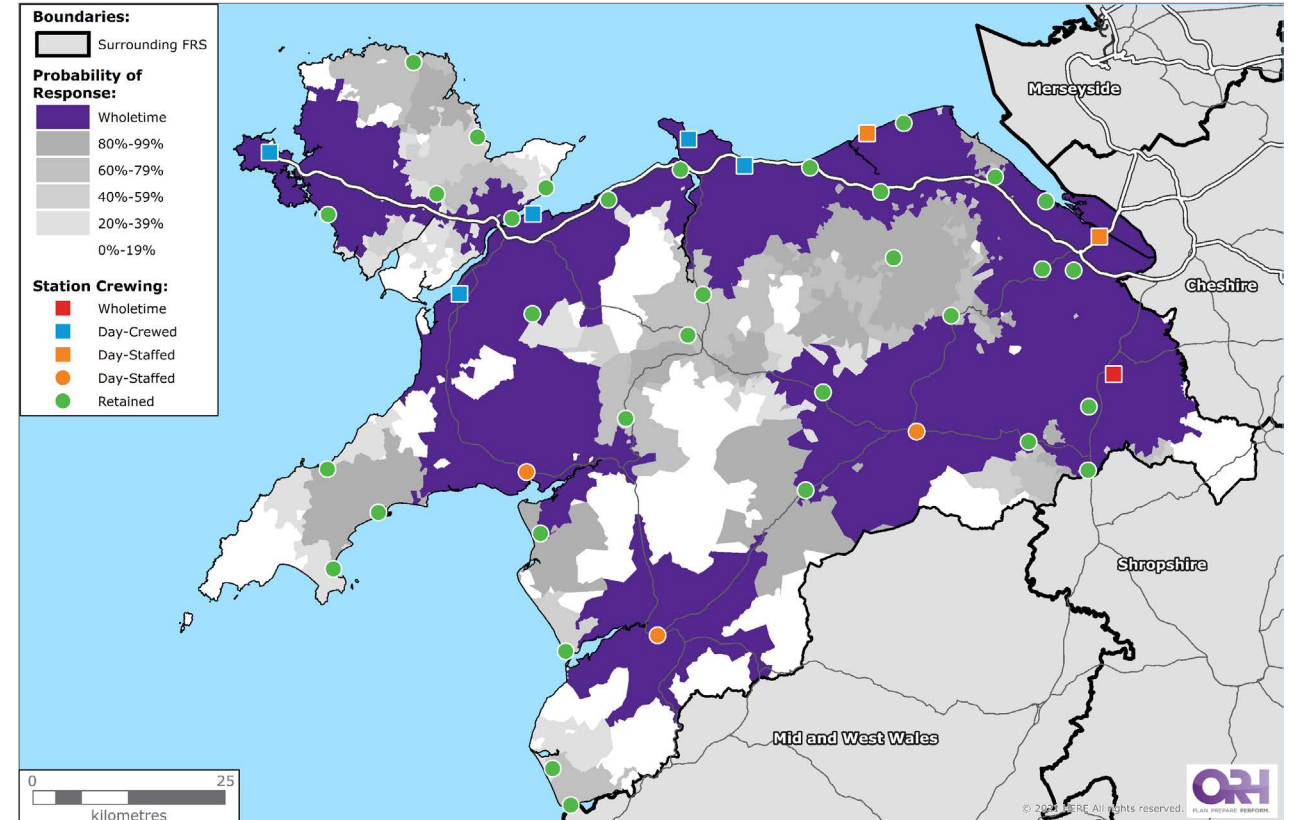
Therefore, to best illustrate the differences between the options, the maps on the next page show 100% wholetime availability in purple and on-call availability in shades of grey, depending on average availability (over five years).



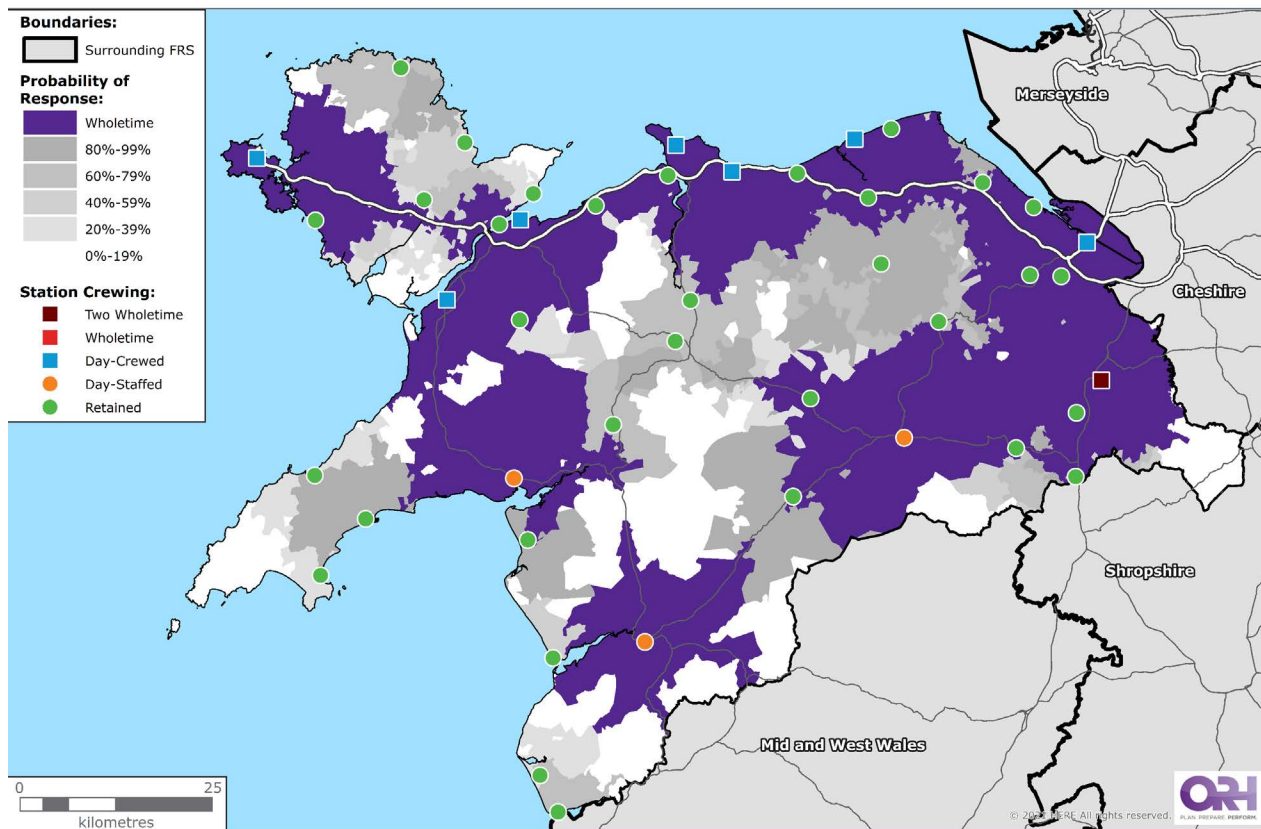
Current arrangements



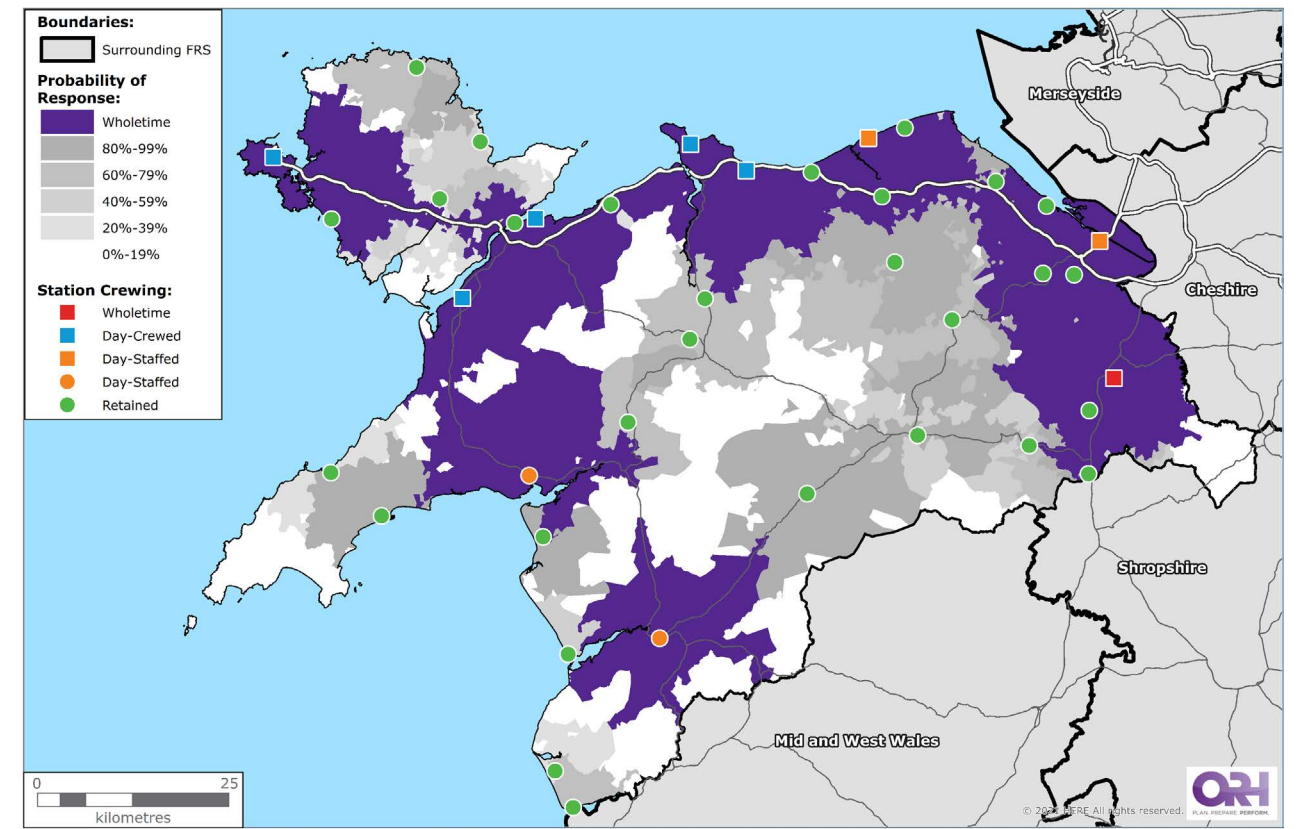
Option 2



Option 1



Option 3





Why have additional day staffed fire stations?

The three options under consideration all involve changing the way we staff some of our fire stations during day time hours, from a retained duty system crewed by on-call firefighters to a day staffed duty system crewed by wholtime firefighters, which would be a new duty system for North Wales.

Day staffing means that fire stations would be crewed by full-time firefighters during 12 hours of the day (e.g. 8am until 8pm), supplemented by on-call firefighters, and reverting to being fully on-call fire stations overnight.

Day staffing would need to be agreed locally with staff if this was decided as a way forward. Other fire and rescue services in the UK already operate this type of staffing model.

What do we mean by aiming to provide the fairest possible service?

There are a whole range of factors that come into play when considering how we can provide the fairest possible service across all communities in North Wales and the challenge for us as a Service is finding the right balance in meeting all our objectives.

Firstly, we need to be able to respond to a variety of different incidents including flooding, wildfires, house fires, road traffic collisions, industrial incidents, water safety challenges and so on.

We also need to ensure that we respond in a timely manner to be able to provide the most effective response possible to you, the public - whoever you are, wherever you live in North Wales and whatever your needs. We know our population is aging and as a result we expect people may require more of our assistance in the future.

We still need to work to protect businesses and keep members of the public as safe as possible by preventing incidents from happening in the first place.

And equally importantly, we have the highest commitment and duty of care to our staff, their safety and their wellbeing.

The locations proposed for day staffing, and some of the reasoning for this, are as follows:

Porthmadog: Greater improvement in response compared to other local stations. Availability support from neighbouring on-call stations. Station facilities will support a change with minimum investment (Options 1, 2 and 3).

Dolgellau: Strategic location in South Gwynedd with better transport networks for a greater response impact. Availability support from neighbouring on-call stations. Station facilities will support a change with minimum investment (Options 1, 2 and 3)

Corwen: Strategic location covering South Denbighshire with networks into other on-call areas across several local unitary authorities. Availability support from neighbouring on-call stations. Station facilities will support a change with minimum investment (Options 1 and 2).



Why change from wholetime to day staffing at Rhyl and Deeside?

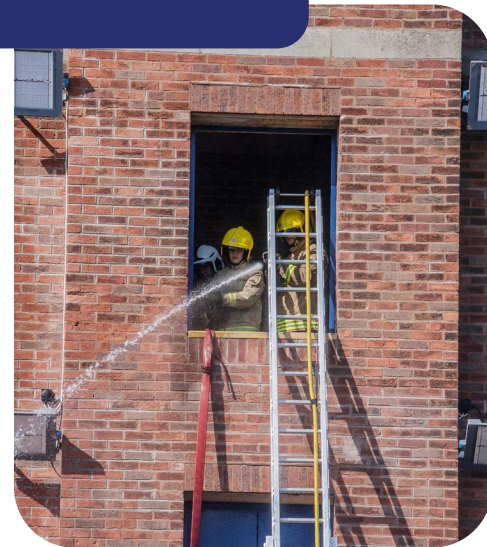
Option 1 proposes changing Rhyl and Deeside fire stations to the established day crewing duty system, as described earlier.

Under Options 2 and 3 we are proposing to change two of our wholetime fire stations – Rhyl and Deeside – to a ‘day staffing’ model.

We considered the volume of incidents across the day time and night time, the level of risk across the affected areas, and the availability support from neighbouring on-call stations.

We also considered the current incident volume at these stations which is more comparable with our existing day crewed fire stations.

This would also help to create the firefighter capacity required in order to implement day staffing in all three options and enhance our response in more rural areas.



Why remove Wrexham fire station's third appliance?

Removing Wrexham's third appliance as part of Options 2 and 3, together with the proposed change at Rhyl and Deeside fire stations, would enable us to redistribute staff and enhance our response in more rural areas.

Again, we considered the volume of incidents across the day time and night time, the level of risk across the affected areas, and the availability support from neighbouring on-call stations.

We know that over five years across North Wales, our average attendance time with one fire appliance is under 11 minutes and we currently attend 93.6% of all incidents within 20 minutes. The demand placed on us by industry is low, with Wrexham attending on average 25 non-residential primary fires a year. Work done to reduce incidents at HMP Berwyn has also resulted in far fewer fire and rescue service attendances than when it first opened.

There would be no change to the 24/7 response of our first appliance from Wrexham with these proposals.



Why consider closing five on-call fire stations?

Option 3 is not taken lightly as it involves considering the permanent closure of five on-call fire stations.

It also means fewer firefighters and therefore a reduction in local job opportunities, impacting the social value in those communities.

In all, it is envisaged that 74 fewer firefighters (wholetime and on-call) would be required if this option was adopted – which equates to 11.5% of our total number of firefighters in the Service.

It would therefore reduce our operational response and result in greater risk to our communities.

This option does however help to reduce budget pressures at a time when financial challenges are greater than ever.










All the options will result in asking North Wales households to pay more for our services in future in order to meet these challenges – but Option 3 would mean households would be asked to pay less than the other options (£4.41 a year less per household than Option 2, and £8.14 a year less per household than Option 1).

Whilst Option 3 would clearly impact staff and our communities in certain locations, we would work hard to keep this to an absolute minimum and would be committed to working closely to support any staff who may be affected by these changes.

Factors for identifying on-call fire stations considered for closure with Option 3

- Incident numbers.
- Modelled impact on average response times if the station was removed.
- Modelled impact on average response times if the station was 100% available.
- Capacity of neighbouring stations to absorb call volume.
- Appliance utilisation rates.
- Current establishment – financial savings.
- Longer term financial savings – rates, utilities, equipment and training costs.

Please refer the table on the next page which summarises the options.

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3
Station and/or Duty System Changes	Rhyl and Deeside move to Day Crewing	Rhyl and Deeside move to Day Staffing and Wrexham's 3rd appliance is removed	Rhyl and Deeside move to Day Staffing and Wrexham's 3rd appliance is removed
Wholetime Stations Introduced	Day Staffing at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau	Day Staffing at Corwen, Porthmadog and Dolgellau	Day Staffing at Porthmadog and Dolgellau
Station Closures	None	None	Abersoch, Beaumaris, Llanberis, Cerrigydrudion and Conwy
Wholetime Staff Numbers	No Change	22 Fewer Wholetime Firefighters 12% Reduction	36 Fewer Wholetime Firefighters 19% Reduction
On-Call Staff Numbers	No Change	No Change	38 Fewer On-Call Firefighters 8% Reduction
Percentage of North Wales households receiving a 1st response within 20 minutes	Increased to 92.7% 	Increased to 92.2% 	Decreased to 91.5% 
Difference with current response model	2,148 more households receive a response within 20 minutes 	321 more households receive a response within 20 minutes 	2,087 less households receive a response within 20 minutes 
Change in Prevention and Protection Activity per annum	1740 extra residential safe and well checks.  Increased industry and business engagement in rural areas	1740 extra residential safe and well checks.  Increased industry and business engagement in rural areas	1160 extra residential safe and well checks.  Increased industry and business engagement in rural areas
Social Value	Increased community engagement in rural areas e.g. school visits, safety campaigns, partnership events. Increased potential for future wholetime employment opportunities in South Denbighshire and Gwynedd	Increased community engagement in rural areas e.g. school visits, safety campaigns, partnership events. Increased potential for future wholetime employment opportunities in South Denbighshire and Gwynedd	Reduced community engagement and reduced employment opportunities in the 5 areas where on-call stations would be closed. Increased potential for future wholetime employment opportunities in South Gwynedd
Estimated cost per household per annum	£171.02	£167.29	£162.88
Difference with 22/23 cost per household per annum	£20.36 increase	£16.63 increase	£12.22 increase

 negative change

 positive change

How to respond



Your views are important to us and we would like to hear from you.

We want to know what you think about our options for providing emergency cover services in North Wales before we make any final decisions about the future of our services.

This document provides you with the information you need in order to respond to the questions about our proposed options for our future emergency cover services.

The questions are set out in our questionnaire which is available on paper or online at www.northwalesfire.gov.wales.

Before completing our questionnaire, you may wish to look at the detailed supporting information also available on our website.

If you don't have access to the internet, you can call us on 07787 578 386 and we can send you paper copies of supporting information.

The public consultation takes place between Friday 21 July and midnight on Friday 22 September 2023.

You can follow us on social media for updates on our consultation:



@NorthWalesFire
#RightPlaceRightTimeRightSkills



@Northwalesfireservice



/north-wales-fire-and-rescue-service



There are several different ways you can get involved and tell us what you think

Attend an in-person event or virtual meeting

During the public consultation, we are holding a series of community engagement events to gather consultation feedback and hear what people think. You can find details of all events on our website:

www.northwalesfire.gov.wales

If you cannot access the internet, please call or text us for details of events on 07787 578 386.

Invite us to your group

We can also visit local support groups to gather feedback. If you're a member of a community group and you would like us to come and talk to your group, call or text us 07787 578 386 or email us on:

EmergencyCoverReview@northwalesfire.gov.wales

Formally respond to our consultation

You can share your views with us up until midnight on **Friday 22 September 2023.**

To let us know what you think you can:

Return a completed paper questionnaire – post free of charge to:
Freepost ADOLYGIAD TAN/FIRE REVIEW.

Complete the questionnaire online at
www.northwalesfire.gov.wales.

Or scan this QR code which will take you straight to our online questionnaire.

If you cannot complete the questionnaire:

Send an email to: EmergencyCoverReview@northwalesfire.gov.wales or a letter to: **Freepost ADOLYGIAD TAN/FIRE REVIEW.**

Or call / text us to share your views on 07787 578 386.

Our website offers information in English and in Welsh and provides a user-friendly assistive toolbar so that you can read and understand everything in ways that work best for you. This includes a read aloud functionality, larger text and the ability to view the information in a wide range of additional languages.

This information is also available in an easy read format which you can request by emailing us at EmergencyCoverReview@northwalesfire.gov.wales or calling or texting us on 07787 578 386.



What happens next?

We have not made any decisions yet and we will remain open-minded about the solution until after all the feedback, evidence and information has been gathered and considered.

After the consultation closes on Friday 22 September 2023, all the feedback gathered will be analysed to produce a report setting out what people have said about our proposed options.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority will consider the feedback, along with a wide range of other information and evidence, such as incident data, workforce data and financial data. The Authority will use all the feedback, evidence and information to decide how to proceed.

We will continue to share information and updates about this programme of work. We will publish the consultation findings report and key papers that will inform decision making on our website.

The final decision-making meeting of the Fire and Rescue Authority will be recorded and made available on our website to allow those interested to hear the discussion about how the decision is made.

We will publish details of this Fire and Rescue Authority meeting on our website: www.northwalesfire.gov.wales.

After the final decision has been made, any changes to our emergency cover would take place in a phased approach, as part of our 2024/28 Community Risk Management Plan.

We are committed to continuing to engage with a range of people as changes are made. Details about progress will also be shared on our website.



YOUR FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
RIGHT PLACE
RIGHT TIME
RIGHT SKILLS



DO YOU TEST YOUR SMOKE ALARMS WEEKLY?

Weekly testing of your smoke alarms is the best way to ensure you can escape your property as quickly as possible in the event of a fire.

Working smoke alarms provide an early warning, allowing you to call the fire and rescue service immediately.

You can now get a weekly reminder to test your alarm via email by sending your email address to: press@northwalesfire.gov.wales



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

