

**DRAFT RESPONSES FROM THE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY TO THE ISSUES
RAISED BY CONSULTEES REGARDING
THE DRAFT RISK REDUCTION PLAN 2007-08.**

Contrib.	= numeric contributor code
Code:	
N	= complimentary or supportive comment
E	= suggested correction to, or indicating error in draft RRP document
D	= negative comment, disagreeing with a proposal in the RRP
X	= general observation (including some not directly related to the RRP consultation)
Z	= suggested amendment or addition to the proposals in the RRP
Q	= posing a question

ABOUT THE DRAFT RRP DOCUMENT

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response
6004	N	Complimenting the Authority on its 'informative' draft RRP.	Evidently, the consultation document appealed to some readers more than others. Producing documents that live up to everyone's expectations is probably impossible, but we will certainly take the criticisms on board, and try to design a document that appeals to even more readers next time.
6005	N	Complimenting the Authority on producing 'a very well presented and informative' document.	
6007	N	Complimenting the Authority on its 'extremely well written and attractive' RRP consultation document.	
60011	N	Congratulating the Authority on producing a 'document that is easy to read and which contains so many initiatives that will add to the safety of the people who live in, work in and visit North Wales'.	
60013	D	Complaining that insufficient data sets have been included in the draft RRP.	
60013	D	Complaining that 'the consultation is poorly constructed and difficult to read', with 'statistical evidence presented in a misleading manner with yearly and four yearly statistics being jumbled up in the same paragraphs'. Complaining also that there is insufficient detail to allow an assessment to be made of whether or not the safety of the communities served by the Authority will be improved.	
6001	Z	Preferring to see the Authority reduce the number of proposals in its RRP to just half a dozen clear improvement actions that can be tracked to completion.	
60010	Z	Suggesting that the RRP document could have been structured around just three headings - 1. Definite plans; 2. Areas of service to be reviewed; and 3. Points to consider and develop.	

COMPLIMENTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF SUPPORT

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
6003	N	Noting that the progress made by the Authority in recent years is encouraging, and expressing particular support for the role of County Safety Managers.	The Authority is greatly encouraged by these expressions of support, and would like to share in thanking staff for their continuing commitment to providing excellent public services in North Wales.	9)
6003	N	Thanking the Authority for the 'excellent service that you provide'.		10)
6006	N	Pleased that the Authority is addressing the challenges that the Civil Contingencies Act introduced.		11)
6006	N	Applauding the Authority for establishing and developing even closer working relationships and protocols with unitary authorities.		12)
6006	N	Conveying personal gratitude to Service personnel for their dedication, and in many cases, their bravery.		13)
6007	N	Supporting the Authority's intention to collaborate on an all Wales basis in terms of road traffic collision initiatives, occupational health and procurement.		14)
60010	N	Supporting the Authority's plans to install more rescue equipment on all fire engines.		15)
60010	N	Supporting the Authority's plans to develop a co-ordinated strategy for managing down the incidence and severity of road traffic collisions.		16)
60010	N	Supporting the Authority's proposal to implement a strategy to provide education and prevention to households outside the 10 minute Service Standard.		17)
60010	N	Supporting the plan to improve the availability of site information for crews attending an incident.		18)
60010	N	Supporting the Authority's stance on environmental issues.		19)
60010	N	Supporting the Authority's intention to provide development opportunities for its Members, and suggesting that consultation with staff and representative bodies should form part of their development programme.		20)
60013	N	Supporting the Authority's proposal to upgrade all hydraulic rescue equipment on all front line fire and rescue appliances.		21)
60013	N	Supporting most of the community fire safety initiatives being proposed by the Authority.		22)
60013	N	Applauding the Authority's plans to expand the delivery of safety through schools and local communities.		23)
60014	N	Supporting the development of the new community fire station in Rhyl.		24)
60014	N	Welcoming the emphasis being placed on the community elements of the work of the Service.		25)
60015	N	Supporting the community-based work undertaken by the Service.		26)
60015	N	Supporting the Authority's plan to provide additional rescue equipment on all fire engines.		27)
60016	N	Expressing the view that the contents of the draft RRP document, a 'very full and comprehensive document', are very encouraging, especially as the Authority is evidently aware of scattered communities with more isolated properties.		28)

DEFICIENCIES AND ERRORS IN THE DRAFT RRP DOCUMENT

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
6005	E	Pointing out that some of the symbols on the map on page 22 do not correspond to the legend.	We are grateful to all who took the time to spot these copy-editing issues. Because of the costs involved, we do not intend to reprint the consultation document, but we will ensure that: 1. the symbols on the map on p. 22 are correct the next time it is produced; 2. action points relating to extending FACE (p.26) and working with the Police (p.29) will be added to the Action Plan for 2007-08; 3. the source of statistics will be referenced in future publications. Please note that there is a printing error on page 23. The number of households in the 80% that fall within the attendance 'under 10 minutes' category should read 222,981, giving a column total of 279,311.	29)
6008	E	Pointing out that 2 items that appear in the main document are missing from the action plan on page 52. These relate to: 1. FACE being extended to 12-17 year olds (p.26); and 2. working with the Police as well as other authorities (p.29);	2. action points relating to extending FACE (p.26) and working with the Police (p.29) will be added to the Action Plan for 2007-08; 3. the source of statistics will be referenced in future publications. Please note that there is a printing error on page 23. The number of households in the 80% that fall within the attendance 'under 10 minutes' category should read 222,981, giving a column total of 279,311.	30)
60013	E	Pointing out inconsistent figures for the number of households in North Wales, and that this number is different from the 2001 census figure. Also, that maps in the document 'do not correspond when examined together'.	To answer the specific point raised about the number of dwellings and households in North Wales, we agree that referencing the source of such information in future will assist with consistency. For information: a) CIPFA statistics state that there were 298,076 chargeable domestic properties in North Wales, according to the Land Registry CT1 form at October 2004. This is the source used for calculating BV142iii (accidental dwelling fires). b) The dwelling stock estimates published in the most recent Welsh Housing Statistics suggest that there are just over 299,000 dwellings in the area. c) The 279,311 figure came from an addition of the mapped areas of North Wales.	31)
60013	E	Pointing out that the sources of statistical evidence are not referenced.	a) CIPFA statistics state that there were 298,076 chargeable domestic properties in North Wales, according to the Land Registry CT1 form at October 2004. This is the source used for calculating BV142iii (accidental dwelling fires). b) The dwelling stock estimates published in the most recent Welsh Housing Statistics suggest that there are just over 299,000 dwellings in the area. c) The 279,311 figure came from an addition of the mapped areas of North Wales.	32)

COMPLAINTS AND EXPRESSIONS OF DISSATISFACTION

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
60015	D	Complaining that the time of year for consultation on the RRP is inconvenient as most Councils are in recess in August.	Whilst sympathising with this, the requirement to undertake a 12 week consultation and to publish by 31 st October every year makes it difficult to see how the Authority could improve matters. However, in future years, it should assist Councils to know that this is an annual consultation, thereby allowing them to plan accordingly.	33
6009	D	Expressing a view that an all-Wales fire control would be a better alternative than any move towards co-terminosity with the Police which would result in 'Police primacy'.	The Authority is committed to securing the best possible alternative for the people of North Wales.	34
60010	D	Expressing cynicism that the decision not to aim for an all-Wales fire control has not been taken objectively, given the cost comparisons involved.	The cost of any proposal has to be considered alongside its cashable and non-cashable benefits. Working in partnership with other members of the Welsh public service 'family' is increasingly seen as being part of developing Wales as an international exemplar for how small countries deliver public services.	35

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
6006	X	Although supportive of the Authority's partnership approach on many issues, warns against unnecessary duplication of financial and human resources in such an approach.	These wide-ranging observations and opinions have been noted.	36)
6009	X	Expressing surprise that the Service cannot already send plans for buildings and hazard information to crews on appliances. Expressing the view that personal visits to premises is the best way to gather information for safe emergency actions.		37)
60010	X	Expressing disappointment at the lack of definite action points for the next two years, and surprise that best practice over the past three years in other FRSS has not been mentioned. Consequently assumes that this either means that big changes over the next two years have been excluded from the draft, or that opportunities to improve have not been taken up, and that very little change is, in fact, planned.		38)
60010	X	Stressing the importance of canvassing the opinions of, and involving, Retained Duty System employees.		39)
60013	X	Expressing concern that safe systems of work are not being set up at incidents because being able to deal with specific scenarios requires that defined numbers of firefighters should attend within a specified number of minutes of each other (i.e. between the first one arriving and the last one arriving).		40)
60013	X	Accusing the Authority of using the IRMP to 'provide cost savings rather than tackling risk', and hoping that this will not continue with RRP.		41)
60010	D	Complaining that the RRP document 'doesn't give much direction to the workforce'.		42)
60010	D	Dismay that three years on from the first IRMP, little progress has been made in relation to introducing co-responding.		43)
60010	D	Disappointment at a lack of involvement of the Retained Firefighters Union in the Authority's programme of human resources reviews.		44)
60010	D	Objecting to the re-introduction of the attendance time standards, as 'they do not actually apply risk based emergency cover, suitable use of resources or flexibility for the modernisation of the Service'.		45)
60010	D	Complaining about the standard, currency and availability of promotional literature for Retained Duty System employees to use at small community events.		46)
60010	D	Complaining about the poor, slow and unreliable IT links to Retained Fire Stations.		47)
60014	D	Whilst supporting the Authority's plans to put additional rescue equipment on all fire engines, proposing that an Emergency Tender be retained in Colwyn Bay to serve the central area of the A55, and links to the A470 and the A5.		48)
60015	D	Disagreeing with the Authority's plans in relation to 'Land Rover type emergency tenders' on the basis that smaller vehicles such as these can negotiate narrow lanes, unmade paths and rough terrain where larger appliances cannot.		49)

SUGGESTIONS FOR ADDITIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
6003	Z	Suggesting that County Councillors' own newsletters would provide a useful vehicle for informing the public how to contact their local County Safety Manager.	We consider this to be an excellent idea that we will pursue.	50)
60012	Z	Suggesting that it could be immensely important to the community to see sprinklers being made compulsory in all new or refurbished public buildings such as sheltered housing, hospitals and schools.	We agree wholeheartedly with this proposal, and can reassure the writer that Members and Managers alike already lobby extensively about these.	51)
6006	Z	Suggesting that the Authority could ask local housing authorities and housing associations to remind their tenants of the importance of having smoke alarms fitted, and of maintaining them in good working order.		52)
6008	Z	<p>Suggesting that additional actions be considered for inclusion in the action plan on page 52, based on issues already featured in the main document. Where this is not possible, suggesting that these be given the next level of priority. These relate to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. not waiting for funding from Firelink (p.31) before introducing mobile data units in fire engines, but seeking alternative funding sources in the meantime; 2. getting a detailed map of all SSSI areas (p. 34) from the Countryside Council, and depositing such maps in the appropriate fire stations; and 3. finding a way of storing plans of large buildings and maps of areas so that crews can access them easily. 	<p>Notwithstanding our commitment to improving accessibility of relevant information to those who need it and at the time they need it, we are aware of the need to ensure that any solution is sustainable and will not preclude other – possibly better - options.</p> <p>1. Firelink Fire and Rescue Service Circular W-FRSC(06)09 (March 2006) announced that the Assembly had joined the UK Government in procuring the new radio communication system (Firelink), and would be investing between £44 million and £45 million in it over the next 10 years. The new radio scheme will roll out across the UK from 2006, and Wales should be fully operational on it by mid 2009.</p> <p>2. Maps of SSSIs 12.5% of Wales is covered by SSSIs, totalling over 264,000 hectares. Electronic information is easier to hold in its most up-to-date version, avoiding the need to keep replacing paper versions. This also assists crews attending from fire stations further afield, which is often the case with larger scale fires.</p> <p>3. Floor Plans In addition to the comments above, we are also aware of the need to ensure the security of information relating to buildings.</p>	53)
60010	Z	Suggesting that any plans to improve the availability of site information should extend into neighbouring Authority areas where North Wales crews routinely attend.		54)
60012	Z	Suggesting that laptop computers could be installed in fire engines to provide information about interior plans of unfamiliar buildings.		55)

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
6009	Z	Pointing out that the plan makes no reference to Salvage (protection of particular items from damage during firefighting operations – particularly pertinent in the case of irreplaceable or particularly high value objects).	Salvage measures form part of existing operational procedures.	56)
6009	X	Making an observation that the cost of co-responding is likely to be significant as it will be mainly in rural areas, resulting in additional call-out fees for personnel on the Retained Duty System. States that this begs the question of whether a reciprocal arrangement is to be adopted for certain fire incidents.	The Authority is committed to securing value for money whilst continuously improving services.	57)
6009	Z	Suggesting that Service Level Agreements with constituent authorities might be an economic way to provide specialist functions such as pay, pensions, legal, property management, occupational health and human resources.	Costs have to be considered alongside the cashable and non-cashable benefits, and the quality of the services to be provided.	58)
60010	Z	Suggesting that in addition to seeking to secure the necessary financial resources to deliver Home Fire Risk Assessments, the Authority should consider clarifying what alternatives it would consider if this was not forthcoming.	In future, the suitability and usefulness of partnerships will be considered by the new partnership review board.	59)
6009	X	Making an observation that presumably the cost of delivering a bilingual service is being met by the Assembly and constituent authorities.	Focussing on the Welsh perspective is increasingly seen as being part of developing Wales as an international exemplar for how small countries deliver public services. Any costs of bilingualism in Wales are now embedded within normal operating costs.	60)
60010	Z	Suggesting that the RRP should include more detail on the criteria for determining what is the best option in relation to occupational health service.		61)
6009	D	Expressing a view that on procurement issues, collaborating with one of the larger fire and rescue authorities in England or Scotland who have 'more clout for purchasing than the whole of Wales' would be a better alternative than a national procurement strategy for Wales.		62)
60010	Z	Pointing out that there is little written in the draft RRP on fire appliances, given that this was a subject raised in the IRMP. Pointing out, also, that the proposed review of Aerial Ladder Platforms within a year is not included.	The focus of RRP is on identifying and reducing risks, both to the community and to the Authority.	63)
60010	Z	Suggesting that consideration should be given to introducing bulk water carriers, thereby freeing up crews and fire appliances that are currently used to transport water.	Decisions already made in relation to fire appliances have not been revisited in the draft RRP for 2007-08.	64)
60010	Z	Pointing out that the consideration of alternative methods of transporting firefighters to incidents and of introducing larger capacity cab appliances appeared in the IRMP, but not in the draft RRP.	Because of the lengthy processes involved, work towards developing the 2008-09 RRP will begin during October 2006. The risks to all aspects of service delivery will be considered during this process.	65)
60013	Z	Suggesting that the draft RRP should detail the equipment that will be carried on 'the new rescue pumps', where remaining Emergency Tenders will be located, and the time it will take to transport specialist equipment (not stored on fire appliances) to incidents.		66)

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
60013	Z	Suggesting that the proposed trial of co-responding be delayed until the outcome of the High Court case.	Our Risk Reduction Plan is about finding ways to reduce risk. Any High Court ruling on whether firefighters can be contractually obliged to take part in co-responding schemes will be taken into account, but our primary focus will continue to be on improving public safety.	67)
60015	Z	Urging the Authority to provide more encouragement for people to apply to become Retained Duty System firefighters, and suggesting that any review of the retained duty system should take account of the need to make the job attractive to potential applicants.	Many Fire and Rescue Authorities in the UK encounter similar problems in recruiting and retaining firefighters who wish to work the Retained Duty System, who possess all the required personal qualities and attributes and who are available to provide cover in particular locations at times of day when there is a need. National campaigns are undertaken to present positive messages about the modern Service.	68)
60013	X	Making an observation that 'tackling the Authority's poor retained firefighter recruitment and retention record has been excluded from the RRP'.	National campaigns are undertaken to present positive messages about the modern Service.	69)
60012	Z	Suggesting that on the subject of recruitment of Retained Duty System firefighters, it may be that younger women have not yet considered it as a possible job opportunity.	We do not underestimate the difficulties associated with attracting a diversity of people to apply to join, and this is an area where we constantly strive to improve our effectiveness, making use of every opportunity to present a positive image of the Service as a good employer to all sections of its workforce.	70)
60010	Z	Supporting the wish to secure a more diverse workforce, and urging the Authority to manage the process of increasing numbers in some categories of employees very carefully so as to avoid alienating others.	The Service provides diversity awareness training for all its employees, and is unequivocal in its expectation that staff comply fully with its equal opportunities policy.	71)
60011	Z	Proposing that reviews planned by the Authority could be undertaken with other fire and rescue authorities.	As is already the case, this will be done where such an arrangement is beneficial.	72)
60014	Z	Suggesting that a reference to the involvement of the Service in the Danger Point centre in Talacre should be included in the RRP.	A reference will be added to the final version of the RRP 2007-08.	73)

SPECIFICALLY ABOUT AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM MANAGEMENT

Contrib.	Code	Comment/Issue Raised	Authority's Response	
60010	Q	Asking for a clear statement from the Authority regarding its intended policy on Automatic Fire Alarm false alarms, including how it proposes to counteract the inevitable reduction in remuneration for Retained Duty System employees.	It should be noted that the Authority's stance in relation to false alarms from automatic fire alarms is primarily focussed on non-domestic properties, and on systems that produce repeat false alarms, sometimes several times a day.	74)
6002	Z	Suggesting that a panel be set up to find ways by working with the fire protection industry to reduce the number of false alarms from automatic fire alarms.		75)
60013	N	Supporting the Authority's view that unwanted fire alarm signals can be reduced by proactive and positive intervention, coupled with the expansion of call management systems.	The Authority holds the view that false automatic fire alarm calls are a significant burden on the service, diverting resources that might be genuinely needed elsewhere, and that charging would represent a method of encouraging owners of premises to reduce unnecessary call outs.	76)
60014	Z	Suggesting that the Authority should look at charging for attendance at persistent repeat false alarms from automatic fire alarm systems.		77)
60014	D	Disagreeing with any proposal to refuse to turn out in response to an automatic fire alarm activation, proposing instead that 'this should at least warrant an attendance from the Fire Service'.	However, the Fire and Rescue Services (Charging) (Wales) Order 2006 issued by the Assembly in July 2006 did not bestow powers to fire and rescue authorities to charge for repeated call outs to these false alarms.	78)
60013	D	Opposing any suggestion to request members of the public to investigate fires if a fire alarm rings, on the basis that they would be put at increased risk.	Nevertheless, a great deal is still being done to try to find an agreed approach, that managers of premises that produce most of the problem false alarms can sign up to. In relation to the comment about RDS employees' remuneration specifically, attracting suitable applicants and providing employees with a rewarding career within the Service are two of the most important ingredients in being able to provide excellent public services, but we do not agree that this should be constructed around attendance at false alarms.	79)
60013	D	Expressing the view that a refusal to respond effectively to alarm actuated calls will result in increased fire fatalities, injuries, property damage and economic loss.		80)