



'SHAPING OUR FUTURE SERVICE: YOUR SAY' SFRS PRE-CONSULTATION

Report by Chief Executive

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The report covers the Comhairle's draft response to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' Public Pre-Consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is undergoing a process of change as it develops into a thoroughly modern fire and rescue service, ready for the challenges of Scotland's future. To deliver the best service to communities, the SFRS must have the right resources in the right place at the right time and, through this Pre-Consultation, the community is invited to comment on the SFRS's plans going forward.
- 2.2 The challenges facing the SFRS are changing. For example, the number of house fires tackled is decreasing but the number of flooding and wildfire events requiring an SFRS response is growing. Traditional industries are contracting, older fire stations are no longer fit for purpose and people are living longer at home, presenting a different profile of risk to the emergency services. Inter-agency prevention of incidents rather than SFRS response to incidents is now the priority.
- 2.3 The Pre-Consultation Questionnaire seeks views on a number of possible changes that the SFRS could make to adapt to these new challenges. The role of the firefighter, the location of stations and appliances, the crewing model and rationalisation of corporate buildings are all under review in this consultation.
- 2.4 The draft Comhairle response (attached as an appendix) recognises the need for change but places an absolute priority on maintaining an effective SFRS presence across the dispersed geography of the Western Isles. The right resources should be in the right place noting the ageing demographic of island communities and the need for rapid response times, even in the most remote communities.
- 2.5 In its response, the Comhairle undertakes to work with the SFRS to provide an inter-agency, holistic and preventative service to island communities, underpinned at all times by comprehensive coverage with appliances and trained firefighting personnel. The Comhairle will, where appropriate, support the SFRS with shared services, co-location and carbon reduction activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle note the report and approve the Appendix: 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' (Online Survey) as SFRS develops its Strategic Service Review Programme (SSRP).**

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Appendix: 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' Questionnaire

Background Paper(s): Na h-Eileanan An Iar Local Fire and Rescue Plan Review 2023

IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	None
Corporate Strategy	Support caring and resilient communities and quality of life
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say', closes on 30 June 2024

CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This is the first stage of SFRS engagement with staff, communities, trade unions, partners, elected representatives and people across Scotland. SFRS are hosting events and speaking to communities over the next two months to find out what they want and need from the fire and rescue service.
- 5.2 The views SFRS gather through the Pre-Consultation engagement, and the Online Survey, will assist in the development of change options to include in the full Public Consultation later this year.
- 5.3 Changes that could be implemented to adapt the SFRS service could include all, some, or a combination of the following: developing the firefighter role; changing where stations and appliances are based; changing how and when staff are resourced; changing how emergencies are attended; and rationalising of SFRS corporate buildings.
- 5.4 It is also important that the SFRS Pre-Consultation exercise is fully island proofed to mitigate against any potential negative outcomes in Na h-Eileanan An Iar.

Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say - Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Questions marked with an asterisk * are required.

1. About you*

How would you best describe yourself?

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ SFRS staff – operational
- ☐ SFRS staff – support
- ☐ Member of the public
- ☐ Other emergency service
- ☐ Business / commercial sector
- ☒ Local authority
- ☐ Elected member
- ☐ Other public organisation (e.g., NHS)
- ☐ Third sector / voluntary organisation
- ☐ Community group
- ☐ Trade Union / Representative bodies
- ☐ Other

2. Our people

Section 2 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document describes the variety of incidents within SFRS and the different responsibilities we have.

To ensure the highest possible levels of community and firefighter safety, SFRS needs to have firefighter duty systems with the right staffing levels available to attend incidents at the time of day when there is most risk. Do you:
(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

In an area of highly dispersed population, it is necessary to maintain an SFRS presence in multiple locations. If the service becomes too centralised, response times for more peripheral communities could become unacceptably long, endangering life and property. Any change in provision should be island-proofed so that island residents do not suffer any diminution of service, regardless of location.

3. Service priorities

Section 3 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document outlines the need for SFRS to change.

From the list below, please select up to four issues that you feel should be priorities for SFRS. Please rank these in order with one being the most important and four being the least important.

Rank number	Statement
2	Crews should be based in areas where there is more risk and demand.
1	SFRS should have the right resources (i.e. fire appliances) in the right place – based on analysis of risk.
4	SFRS should work alongside communities to build resilience and better prepare for significant events, including flooding and wildfire.
	Fire stations should have dignified changing facilities for firefighters.
	Reassurance that any changes won't make me or my family less safe.
	There should be a visible SFRS presence near where I live.
3	SFRS should undertake prevention work to protect the most vulnerable in communities.
	SFRS needs to demonstrate best value for public money.
	SFRS should strive to reduce its carbon footprint wherever possible.

4. Investing in change

Section four of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document outlines the need for SFRS to make better use of our resources.

One way we can do this is to work in partnership with other public bodies (e.g. Police Scotland and others) to explore how we can provide better value for the public. Do you:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

The Comhairle and its public sector partners invest heavily in community services, and SFRS should make every effort to work in partnership with these services so that our communities receive maximum value from cross-sector investment. A good example might be collaboration between SFRS and the care service to identify and support those most vulnerable in our communities, raising awareness of risks and delivering preventative measures.

5. Our appliances

Section 5.2 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document (Changing Where Our Stations and Appliances Are Based) outlines why we need to review where our appliances are located. For communities to be safe, we need to have the right resources in the right place.

SFRS should have fire appliances located based on risk in local communities.

Do you:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

The time it takes to reach an emergency in the island situation should not be underestimated. Locating appliances according to population may enhance per-head-of-population cover but emergencies in well-populated areas will be accessed within minutes. An emergency in a distant island community could take one hour to reach from a centre of population. As far as possible, appliances should be based in local communities.

6. Where we're located

Section 5.2 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document (Changing Where Our Stations and Appliances Are Based) outlines why we need to review where our fire stations are located. To do this, we must consider how the communities we serve have changed and are continuing to change.

6a) SFRS should have fire stations located based on risk in local communities.

Do you:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

This depends on the definition of a 'Fire Station'. Providing there is one or more appliances, sufficient personnel living locally and a suitable assembly point in place for these firefighters, it may be possible to service local communities at a level below full fire station. This will be a judgement for SFRS but comprehensive coverage by appliance and trained personnel should be maintained at all costs.

6b) SFRS should consider sharing premises with partners (e.g., Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland and local authorities) to provide a better service for our communities. Do you:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Where the difference between an SFRS presence in a rural community hinges on the availability of co-located premises, this option should be taken up. Again, comprehensive coverage by appliances and trained personnel should be the absolute priority and, if co-location supports this objective, it should be pursued.

7. Our role in local communities

Our prevention, preparedness and protection work can help reduce the risk of fires and other potentially life-threatening situations. It can also help us better plan for events such as flooding and wildfires.

7a) SFRS should work with community partners (e.g., local authorities, and others) to further reduce these risks. Do you:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Agree strongly
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

The Western Isles Emergency Planning Coordinating Group (WIEPCG) coordinates resilience and emergency planning within the Western Isles. As referenced above, by working with the Local Authority and its partners, fire safety awareness can be enhanced and preventative measures for identified priority groups rolled out. Good examples are awareness raising within the educational system, and support for the vulnerable through the care system.

7b) SFRS should contribute towards Net Zero by, for example, reducing our own carbon emissions. Do you:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Agree strongly
- ☒ Agree
- ☐ Neither agree nor disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Disagree strongly
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

Reduction in carbon emission should be pursued wherever possible but never at the cost of increased risk to our communities. The Local Authority can support SFRS with thinking towards carbon reduction.

8. Consulting with our communities

SFRS may wish to hold a future public consultation on some of the issues detailed below. **Please tell us to what extent you think the public should be consulted on each issue.**

(tick the box under the statement that best applies to each change proposal)

Change proposal	The public should be fully consulted	The public don't need to be consulted but should be informed	The public don't need to be consulted	Unsure
Changes to firefighter role (e.g., to include emergency first aid responder)		✓		
Modernisation /upgrade of a fire station(s)		✓		
Closure of a fire station	✓			
Moving a fire station to a new location	✓			

Change proposal	The public should be fully consulted	The public don't need to be consulted but should be informed	The public don't need to be consulted	Unsure
Permanent removal or relocation of a fire appliance(s)	✓			
Changes to firefighter duty systems			✓	
Sharing locations with other partners (e.g., Police, Ambulance, local authorities.)		✓		
Building a new fire station	✓			

9. Any other comments

The Comhairle recognises the vital role carried out by SFRS in keeping our communities safe and fully supports the service going forward. The Comhairle views it as critical that SFRS retains an appliance and personnel presence across all communities in order to keep response times at a safe level. The Comhairle will continue to work with SFRS to maintain and enhance the current service through shared services, co-location and carbon reduction activities.

10. Equality monitoring

Why are we asking for equality information?

We collect equality information to help us plan and deliver services as part of our Equality Duties (Equality Act 2010). The information you provide:

- helps us assess and improve our performance.
- helps us to identify and address the needs of our employees and the communities of Scotland.
- ensures we are interacting in a balanced way with people with protected characteristics as defined by the Equality Act (2010).

Do you need to answer every question?

No. The information you provide is voluntary and anonymous, but by answering as many questions as possible, it will give us a better understanding of who we are engaging with and what we need to do to continue to be as inclusive as possible.

Data Protection and Privacy Notice

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) is committed to protecting your personal information. The processing of personal data is covered by the General Data Protection Regulation 2018 and Data Protection Act 2018. Further information on how SFRS will process this data can be found in our [privacy notice](#).

Equality and Diversity

Your age:

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Under 16
- ☐ 16-25
- ☐ 26-40
- ☐ 41-55
- ☐ 56-70
- ☐ Over 70
- ☒ Prefer not to say

Your sex

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☒ Prefer not to say

Do you consider yourself to be trans, or have a trans history?

(e.g., non-binary, trans man, trans woman)

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Prefer not to say

Your sexual orientation

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Heterosexual / Straight
- ☐ Gay/Lesbian
- ☐ Bi
- ☒ Prefer not to say

If you prefer to use another term, please provide this:

Disability

Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Prefer not to say

Care experienced

Do you have experience of having been in care?

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☒ Prefer not to say

Ethnicity

What is your ethnic group?

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☒ Scottish
- ☐ Other British
- ☐ Irish
- ☐ Gypsy / traveller
- ☐ Polish
- ☐ Roma
- ☐ Other white ethnic group
- ☐ Pakistani / Scottish Pakistani / British Pakistani
- ☐ Indian / Scottish Indian / British Indian
- ☐ Chinese / Scottish Chinese / British Chinese
- ☐ Black or Caribbean / Scottish Black or Caribbean / British Black or Caribbean
- ☐ Arab / Scottish Arab / British Arab
- ☐ African / Scottish African / British African

Religion/Faith

What is your religion/faith?

(tick the one that best applies)

- ☐ Church of Scotland
- ☐ Roman Catholic
- ☐ Other Christian
- ☐ Jewish
- ☐ Muslim
- ☐ Sikh
- ☐ Hindu
- ☐ Buddhist
- ☐ Other
- ☐ None
- ☒ Prefer not to say

Postcode

What is the first part of your postcode?

HS1