



# **Fire Brigades Union Tayside**

## **Response to the 2009/10 IRMP Consultation Document**

## Legislative Background

Why do Fire Authorities have to produce an IRMP?

The requirement to produce an Integrated Risk Management Plan is laid out in the National Framework Document, as directed by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005.

The Act states;

### **40 Framework document**

*(1) The Scottish Ministers shall prepare a document—*

*(a) setting out priorities and objectives for relevant authorities in connection with the carrying out of their functions; and*

*(b) containing—*

*(i) such guidance in connection with the carrying out of any of those functions; and*

*(ii) such other matters relating to those authorities or those functions, as the Scottish Ministers consider appropriate.*

### **41 Adherence**

*(1) In carrying out their functions, relevant authorities shall have regard to the document prepared under section 40(1).*

The document referred to above is the National Framework Document which expands on more detailed requirements such as;

*9. In summary, Fire and Rescue Authorities must each have in place and maintain*

*an IRMP which reflects local need and which sets out plans to tackle effectively*

*both existing and potential risks to communities. They should also:*

- produce annual action plans on which they have fully consulted their local communities and stakeholders (including Fire and Rescue Authority staff), allowing twelve weeks for the consultation;*

- take account of Scottish Government or HM Fire Services Inspectorate guidance in producing their plans, incorporating good practice identified across*

*Scotland; and*

- make efficient and effective use of resources to implement the IRMP and the*

*action plan, including using more efficient and flexible working practices where appropriate.*

Scottish Government guidance, referred to above, takes the form of a four point template;

- Stage 1. Identify existing and potential risks to the community.
- Stage 2. Evaluate the effectiveness of current preventative and response arrangements.
- Stage 3. Identify opportunities for improvement and determine policies and standards for prevention and intervention.
- Stage 4. Determine resource requirements to meet the policies and standards

Risk management in this context refers to;

- The ability to reduce the incidence and impact of risk.
- Deciding on risk levels considered appropriate.
- The benefits of risk control measures

## **Vision Statements -v- Focused Risk Reduction Plan**

In this IRMP it isn't hard to find "key objectives" along the lines of:

"We propose to make more effective use of our organisational resources so that we can continue to provide the highest standard of community safety and emergency response service to all the communities in Tayside."

Few people would argue that this is a good idea, but it isn't a plan

- How good are intervention services currently?
- What is the current impact of fire on the community?
- By how much will the impact of fire be reduced?
- How long will it take to achieve the reduction?
- What are the resource implications?
- What are the training implications for staff?
- How much will it cost?
- Is there an equality and diversity impact?
- What is the health and safety impact?
- How will the reduction in impact be measured?

By mistaking a vision for a plan, the IRMP fails to be an adequate replacement for the missing checks and balances.

- With no tangible targets, at the end of the IRMP cycle the FRS is free to describe almost anything as being evidence of successfully achieving the objective.
- Without any assessment of the resource implications, it is quite possible that the objective may have to be shelved anyway.
- Worse than shelving the proposal, pushing forward with such a broad proposal could be dangerous if it is under resourced, staff don't receive sufficient training, and health and safety implications are not embedded.

If the IRMP is a high level corporate vision instead of a practical, performance based business plan, the delivery of the fundamental core business of the FRS will be entirely in the hands of individual employees, rather than being the subject of corporate control. At best, if corporate control is operated (but outside of the IRMP process), the delivery of the fundamental core business of the FRS will be a private matter between FRS managers and FRA Members - which is an equally unacceptable situation.

As long as men and women are put on fire engines and sent to emergencies, or are given public buildings and workplaces to inspect, their ingenuity and commitment will cause them to 'get the job the done'. But the dedication of employees can only go so far in compensating for a lack of corporate control. It is an old adage that *failing to plan is planning to fail*. Failing to plan the core business of an FRS means planning to fail to reduce risk to the community and planning to fail to ensure safe systems of work for employees.

## Summary

The Fire Brigades Union looks forward to any opportunity to discuss the future of the fire and rescue services we provide to the community. As an organisation we have been at the vanguard of the move to risk based fire cover and remain convinced that this is the correct way to allocate limited resources. Whilst we have concerns over the style and content of the document and how the information is presented we wish to concentrate our response on a number of key issues contained in this years consultation document.

In particular;

- Proposed arrangements for Forfar
- Proposed arrangements for Balmossie
- Proposed arrangements for Perth
- Proposed arrangements for a "Combined Aerial Rescue Pump" or CARP

The FBU agrees with the current Scottish Government policy that savings from public services should not be from front line services. Some elements of the key proposals from Tayside Fire & Rescue Board appear to be driven more from the viewpoint of cutting costs than from the position of managing and reducing risk.

We believe that there is an alternative, where without increasing the cost of the service, a number of improvements to resource use can be obtained whilst still providing the public with the emergency response service they expect and deserve.

## Arrangements for Forfar.

The initial reaction to the Tayside Fire Board proposal to position wholetime crews at Forfar on a dayshift basis is that this is an increase in resources. However the proposal is to then utilise these crews to carry out community fire safety work in the wider Angus area. This will require the movement of one fire engine away from the Forfar area during each day. This is therefore a reduction in resources for a significant population in Angus.

For some time the FBU has campaigned (see Making Tayside Safer 2007) to have additional resources available in Angus and eastern Perthshire. Our proposal is to utilise an appliance from Dundee, on a rotational basis, to carry out CFS work within these areas. We believe this offers significant advantages over the current proposal.

Crews based at Forfar will have all of the regular work to undertake as well as their CFS duties, including training, routine testing and maintenance. There is a wide range of training requirements now placed on firefighters to ensure that they maintain a vast range of skills. Each crew member must remain competent in such things as pumps, ladders, breathing apparatus, firefighting techniques, water rescue, working at height, urban search and rescue, chemical incidents etc etc. The FBU proposal would see the commitment to maintaining these skills remain with stations in Dundee. With seven full time appliances to choose from the commitment for any one crew would not disturb their ability to remain fully trained. For example;

- An average month will see each watch do 8 dayshifts
- There are four stations
- Each station will do 2 days in Angus
- Stations rotate crews so it is likely that any individual will do 1 day per month.
- This allows maintenance of skills for the individual
- Rotating the committed station also allows the whole watch to receive training at the one time.

The major advantage of utilising appliances from Dundee is that once they had been handed over to the dayshift and been checked, they would be available to make their way to the planned location for that day and be able to carry out CFS from the time they arrive.

The FBU proposal would be to pre-plan the work so that the crews would attend CFS at the various towns and villages throughout the county. However this could also allow the provision of emergency response where a known shortage exists within the Retained Duty System stations. For example; A Dundee appliance (eg O1-2 from Blackness Road) is programmed to visit Letham on a particular day. On the day in question the station at Brechin report that they have insufficient crews available that day. The Dundee appliance could then be sent to the Brechin area and carry out work there. This of course would require co-ordination between appointments in Letham etc but that is a situation currently experienced when crews receive a fire call and have to miss an appointment.

The above proposal maintains the current situation of having 2 front line appliances fully crewed using the retained duty system (RDS) to provide 24 hour cover.

**The FBU proposal is - to not locate wholetime crews at Forfar but to commit to appliances from Dundee supporting the work done in Angus and eastern Perthshire by attending those areas on a daily basis and conducting CFS work.**

## Arrangements for Balmossie

It is widely recognised that Balmossie is one of the quieter stations in Tayside, however even those who are most supportive of the Tayside Fire Board proposals accept that the area covered by the station has unique characteristics. The principal amongst these is that it is very much a commuter belt, with large numbers of people leaving the area in the morning to go to work and returning at night. The Tayside Fire Board proposal is to maintain the wholetime appliance cover during the day and remove it at night. This proposal seems to invert logic.

It should be noted that when Police forces are considering their resources they take account not just of crime statistics but also of the "fear of crime". It can be claimed that the appliances at Balmossie attend relatively few fires, however the reassurance that people feel by having a fully crewed fire station located within their community should not be dismissed. The other duties that these crews undertake locally also contribute to reducing the "fear of fire".

The FBU proposal is to utilise the appliance elsewhere during the day and potentially the evening but to maintain the emergency response commitment during the night. This would be done by including the Balmossie appliance O3-1 in the rota of appliance committed to increasing the CFS workload in Angus. This could be done either directly by sending the appliance to the county or indirectly by sending the appliance to another Dundee station, thereby releasing that station's resources. For example O3-1 might be directed to go to Macalpine Fire Station and at the same time an appliance from Macalpine might be sent to Blairgowrie to carry out CFS.

The above proposal also maintains the current situation of having an additional front line appliance fully crewed using the retained duty system (RDS) to provide 24 hour cover.

**FBU Proposal - to utilise the wholetime appliance and crew from Balmossie to allow one of the seven Dundee appliances to be committed to CFS duties in Angus and east Perthshire. The appliance returning to home station at night to provide night-time cover for the dormitory area covered by the station.**

## Arrangements for Perth

The FBU has been calling for improvements in the level of fire cover for Perth now for some time, (see Making Tayside Safer 2007, 2008 and Supplementary No 1). We acknowledge the proposals made by Tayside Fire Board and the willingness of managers to discuss alternative options. In response we believe the FBU proposals offer flexibility and a willingness to adapt in order to achieve the best arrangements for the town of Perth and the surrounding area.

It is our belief that at least one additional appliance is required for the area and should be used to support the existing resources when they are called out, (currently support is supplied by Dundee). Additionally the extra appliance could be committed to enhance the current CFS work by being able to attend a wider range of locations than is currently the case.

Whilst a key factor in the desire to secure additional resources for Perth is the ability to increase the scope and working range for crews carrying out CFS, there is also a significant benefit of breaking the over-reliance on appliances from Dundee to provide back-up cover. When the current resources at Perth are committed to a fire call an appliance is mobilised from Dundee to provide cover. This appliance makes its way to Perth under normal road speed and regulations. Until that appliance arrives the whole of the town of Perth and the area protected by the station in Perth is without fire cover. This creates a clear gap in the "risk management" strategy, additional resources would alleviate that gap and consequently free up the time currently spent by Dundee crews driving along the A90, allowing them to use their time more constructively.

In an ideal environment this additional resource would be met with an increase in establishment in order to crew the appliance. We are however well aware of the current fiscal constraints on Fire Boards and are willing to discuss options that would previously have been difficult for the FBU to consider. To this end we are proposing that a "High Reach Third Pump" be allocated to Perth and replace the current Aerial Ladder Platform. This would maintain the high reach capability at the station but also supply an extra pumping appliance.

The detail of crewing arrangements for the appliances at Perth would be for formal discussion between managers and FBU but the commitment is given to consider all options and to undertake constructive dialogue. We call on the Fire Board to show an equal commitment to reach the best solution for Perth by considering all options including the establishment of a retained duty system element within the Perth establishment.

**FBU proposal - to increase the resources at Perth with the addition of an extra appliance. The additional resources allowing the maintenance of fire cover and an increased commitment to CFS in western and northern Perthshire.**

In all of the above proposals we see no fundamental reason why a similar process could not be carried out if required during the evening hours, with appliances again being sent to target specific locations in the two counties. There would be an increase in fuel usage but that should be seen in context of a substantial increase in preventative work being carried out in hard to reach locations. The fuel increase might also be offset by savings made elsewhere (see arrangements for Perth).

The above proposals meet the guidance and ethos of risk based fire cover in that they make improvements in one area without a detrimental impact in another. They allow maintenance of full levels of resources in Forfar and protect the publically sensitive issue of night-time cover for Balmossie. They eliminate the shortfall in fire cover in Perth and allow a significant increase in the work done in CFS.

The Tayside Fire Board proposals for the above rely heavily on a significant and detrimental change to the current shift patterns for firefighters. Any move to impose a new shift pattern that was outwith the current agreed National Conditions of Service would almost certainly be met with a negative reaction. We believe the FBU proposals avoid potential conflicts, delivers significant increases in CFS commitment and maintains the current standards at Forfar, increase the fire cover in Perth, whilst protecting night-time cover in Balmossie.

**FBU proposal - maintain the current shift system but utilise resources in a more flexible and efficient manner.**

Documents are available from;

[www.fbutayside.org](http://www.fbutayside.org)

or

[www.fbuscotland.co.uk/region/brigades/tayside.htm](http://www.fbuscotland.co.uk/region/brigades/tayside.htm)

For further information contact:

FBU Tayside Brigade Secretary  
Jim Malone  
07801 047613