

**NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
FIRE AUTHORITY EXECUTIVE PANEL REPORT**

DATE:	23 rd February 2004
REPORT BY:	CHIEF FIRE OFFICER
PURPOSE OF REPORT:	To seek members' approval to submit the attached response to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister as part of the formal consultation on the Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework

1. **INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 In December 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published the Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework. The National Framework Document (NFD) is a central pillar of the UK Government's modernisation agenda and both builds on, and complements, the Bain Report and the White Paper published in June 2003. Members will also be aware of the publication of the Fire and Rescue Services Bill, which had its second reading in the House of Commons on 26 January 2004 and was due to enter the Committee stage on 10th February.
- 1.2 The NFD has three principal objectives:-
- To provide clarity about the outcomes and objectives the Government wants to be achieved
 - To set out what the Government expects Fire and Rescue Authorities and Regional Management Boards to do in order to meet those objectives
 - To explain what the Government will do to support Fire and Rescue Authorities and Regional Management Boards to meet these objectives
- 1.3 The NFD ostensibly applies to England only. It makes reference to the UK Government's commitment to "devolving responsibilities for fire fighting and fire safety issues in Wales to the National Assembly". The Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) is currently developing its own Framework document which, it is understood, will be published in the Spring for consultation.
- 1.4 At the last meeting of the Panel on 14 January 2004, members decided that, notwithstanding the relevance of much of the NFD to England only, it was important to respond to those issues which, it was felt, had a read-across to Wales and to make a formal response before the consultation deadline to that effect. The consultation period closes on Friday 12 March 2004.

1. **INTRODUCTION** *(continued)*

- 1.5 The attached draft letter, therefore, seeks to provide the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister with constructive and relevant feedback to the NFD whilst recognising that, for this Authority, it is the Welsh Framework document that will carry the greater significance.

2. **RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Members are asked to endorse the attached draft response.

DRAFT

CAT. 2

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Cllr T Roberts
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Dear Mr Lawrence

DRAFT FIRE AND RESCUE NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

The North Wales Fire Authority welcomes the opportunity to make comment on the Draft Fire and Rescue National Framework; our observations are appended below.

1. Firstly, the Authority notes the Government's commitment to devolving responsibility for fire fighting and fire safety issues in Wales to the National Assembly. Clearly, the publication of the Wales Framework Document will be the main driver for change in Wales and we are mindful of this position in making comment on the "English" framework document. We have, therefore, confined our observations to those issues in the English document that we feel could legitimately be described as cross-cutting.
2. In the light of the above, we make no comment on the work of Regional Management Boards and associated issues raised in Chapter 2 of the document that relate to resilience; collaboration on common services; procurement; control rooms and human resources. This is because we believe that these, and other, issues will be addressed in the Wales Framework in due course.
3. This Authority welcomes and supports the National Framework provisions in respect of:-
 - Integrated Risk Management Plans (paragraph 1.6)
 - Community Fire Safety (1.16)
 - Arson Reduction (1.23)
 - Building Regulations (1.27) – and would emphasise our belief that the provision of sprinklers leads to major improvements in safety levels, mitigation of fire damage and reduction of the impact of serious fires on communities as a whole both in financial and human terms.
 - Regulatory Reform Order (1.30) – we would be delighted to see more obvious progress on this issue.
 - Crown Premises (1.33)
4. Clearly, both New Dimension issues and the Firelink project are works in progress in which Wales is playing a significant role. We believe that his involvement should continue.

5. We support the principles outlined in Chapter 5 in respect of fire service staff although, again, the methods and structures will be driven through the Welsh Framework. We found, however, that the draft Appointments and Promotions Regulations (which have been the subject of a separate response) did not, in our opinion, address fully the objectives set out in paragraph 5.17 of Chapter 5 and look forward to a refining of the draft.
6. In respect of Chapter 6 – 8, we are again supportive of the principles detailed but remain mindful that their achievement may be via different methods once the aims of the Assembly become clearer via the Wales Framework. We would, subject to the wishes of the Assembly, expect to continue our long established support for the Fire Service College and to maintain our current position in Wales of being at the forefront of IPDS.
7. Finance and performance management issues will also have a Welsh dimension given that, for example, Welsh combined fire authorities are not precepting authorities and that the Assembly, we expect, will wish Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities to be involved in the Wales Programme for Improvement rather than the Best Value/Comprehensive Performance Assessment regime.

Yours sincerely

Cllr Trevor Roberts
Chairman, North Wales Fire Authority