



## **AGENDA ITEM: 7**

### **NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY**

**21st June 2010**

#### **AERIAL LADDER PLATFORMS (ALPs)**

**Report by Paul Claydon, Assistant Chief Fire Officer**

#### **Purpose of Report**

- 1 This report is to seek Members' endorsement of the Executive Panel's recommendation that the Authority change its attendance standard for ALPs from 20 minutes to 30 minutes and as a consequence, does not seek to replace one of the four existing special appliances.

#### **Introduction**

- 2 In 2006 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority decided upon a 20 minute attendance standard for its ALPs which resulted in the maintenance of the fleet of four appliances, based at Wrexham, Rhyl, Llandudno and Bangor.
- 3 With the existing ALP based at Wrexham coming to the end of its fleet life in 2012, the opportunity has arisen to review the existing attendance standards prior to the start of the procurement process.
- 4 The capital cost of replacing an ALP is significant. It is approximately £600,000 which is a cost to the revenue budget of £50,000 per year, for the life of the vehicle.

#### **Information**

- 5 The predominant use of ALPs is the application of firefighting water from an elevated platform, and to assist firefighters to gain access for firefighting at upper levels.

- 6 Modern buildings, along with modern construction techniques that are applied when old buildings are refurbished, almost preclude the use of ALPs for rescue purposes. This is reinforced by building regulations, fire safety and health and safety legislation. Statistics also show that rescues from fires by ALPs are rare and are mainly used for rescues of a specialist nature.
- 7 See Table 1 for Mobilising data over the last three years which demonstrates the instances when ALPs were deployed and for what purpose.
- 8 The risks involved in moving from a 20 minute to 30 minute attendance standard for ALPs are minimal because incident data shows that the ALPs are not used as a rapid response appliance. In relation to all incidents attended they are normally deployed on request to the latter stages of an incident. In only 7% of incidents (10 out of 147) was the ALP deployed in the first 30 minutes. Due to the time it takes to set up and the resources required to support its operation the ALP's attendance is not as time critical as other operational appliances.
- 9 As to where ALPs should be based, the following information should be taken into account.
- 10 Wrexham ALP is used more than any other across North Wales (see Table 1). There has been a suggestion that the Wrexham area could be covered by the ALP based in Chester. This would require an agreement under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to allow a Chester based ALP to cover Wrexham and its surrounding areas. Previous discussions with Cheshire Fire and Rescue have indicated some concerns over the location of the next nearest ALP should the Chester appliance not be available. The provision of aerial appliances is also a feature of Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service's current Risk Reduction Plan.
- 11 Bangor ALP covers the least number of incidents but it is available for the educational establishments of Bangor, the Western extremities of North Wales and the Isle of Anglesey which includes the port of Holyhead and the nuclear power station, Wylfa.

- 12 ALP cover for the central coastal strip of North Wales is currently provided by Llandudno and Rhyl. If a 30 minute standard was applied, then an ALP stationed at Rhyl would ensure a 30 minute attendance time continuum stretching from Holyhead to Wrexham. The same ALP stationed at Llandudno would leave a deficiency east of Rhyl which includes the Point of Ayr and Mostyn Dock and Greenfield industries.
- 13 The Authority will recall concerns expressed in the past by hoteliers in the Llandudno area about the provision of aerial appliances. However the legal position under the Fire Safety Order is that the hotel is responsible for providing an appropriate means of escape without reliance on any external assistance; safe evacuation should be inherent within the design of the building and not dependent upon the use of an ALP as a means of escape.
- 14 In the event of a technical failure or any non availability of an ALP, the remaining two aerial appliances will be located at Bangor and Wrexham to maintain optimum coverage.
- 15 One of the issues previously linked to earlier reviews of ALP provision was that of staffing. Prior to 2008 ALPs had a dedicated crew of one firefighter per watch. With the Authority decision to transfer this dedicated provision into Community Safety there are no longer any staffing issues directly connected to any decision surrounding ALPs.

## **Recommendation**

- 16 Members are requested to endorse the recommendation of the Executive Panel to change NWFRS' attendance standard for ALPs from 20 to 30 minutes and as a consequence, not to replace one of the ALPs when it reaches the end of its fleet life.
- 17 In addition Members are requested to give an indication of their preference regarding the location of the ALPs. However it is recognised that there is a need for a considerable amount of information prior to deciding upon the locations of the three ALPs. The Chief Fire Officer is willing to provide a series of briefings for Members regarding this matter prior to bringing it back to the next Fire and Rescue Authority in October 2010.



## ALP Incident Breakdown

		Persons at height	W/Tower	Chimney	Animal Res	Access	Dangerous Structure	Total
Bangor	2006		1			1		2
	2007							
	2008		1					1
	2009		1	3	1	2	1	8
Llandudno	2006		2	2	3	2	2	11
	2007	2		2		4	1	9
	2008	1	2	3		2	2	10
	2009		1	4	1		2	8
Rhyl	2006	5	5	3	1	2	1	17
	2007		3			2		5
	2008	1	6	2	1	1	3	14
	2009		4	2		2	1	9
Wrexham	2006		4	3		2	1	10
	2007	4	3	5	1	5	2	20
	2008		6	2		1	1	10
	2009		1	7	2	2	1	13
<b>Total</b>		<b>13</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>28</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>147</b>

Table 1