



Update from the Chief

This will be my last contribution to the Service Newsletter, having reached the end of my secondment to Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service.

I have found things both challenging and rewarding over the past 15 months.

The rush towards the reform of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, justified by the financial downturn, is somewhat puzzling, given the Scottish FRS is a high performer and represents less than 2.3% of Local Government spending. That said, there is still much to do across the Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service to ensure we can perform to reflect all of the expectations of our communities.

We still have 35 Fire Stations that are in need of basic facilities and functions and the establishment of four larger district teams, designed to provide focused support to all Fire Stations, will take some time to become fully effective.

Plans are in place and action is being taken to address all aspects of the Service's known challenges. The quest for reform will, however, inevitably have some diversionary impact upon the delivery challenges the Service and Fire Board have agreed are needed.

The rewards in working with colleagues in the Highlands & Islands are equally considerable and I have been genuinely impressed with the positive attitudes and commitment shown by staff from across all aspects of the Service. Finance and status have their place, but they mean little without the respect of the communities we serve.

Throughout my time in the Highlands & Islands, I have seen strong evidence that this Service is highly regarded at all levels of engagement and long may it continue.

With the exception of my experiences of driving the A9 on a regular basis, I have enjoyed every part of my short time in the Highlands & Islands and would like to offer my sincere thanks to you all for your support during my tenure.

David Wynne
Chief Fire Officer

Highlands & Islands to host 2011 Scottish Extrication Challenge



The Service will host the 2011 Annual Scottish Extrication and Trauma Care Challenge at Fort William Fire Station, on Saturday 28th May, 2011.

Every Fire Service in Scotland will be sending teams to compete and Fort William, as current Scottish Champions, will be defending their title.

Although this is the Scottish Challenge, we will be running our own Service Challenge simultaneously and Stations from across the Service are encouraged to enter and test their skills against teams within our own Service and the best in Scotland.



United Kingdom Rescue Organisation (UKRO) Assessors will use National Standards of Best Practice to assess competing teams across Medical, Technical and Command discipline areas. Upon completion of the scenario all teams will be provided with a full debrief and feedback on their performance.



Running alongside the Extrication Challenge is the Trauma Challenge, where teams of two Firefighter-medics deal with a myriad of simulated rescue scenarios, again to make the casualty stable and then release them from the entrapment.

We have received considerable interest from other Fire & Rescue Services, although HIFRS Stations have the first option over other teams.

To guarantee places Team Captains should confirm via email directly to Martin Haigh (martin.haigh@hifrs.org) by Monday 7th March.

NEWS IN BRIEF

2011 Photography Competition



The 2011 Photography Competition is now open for entries. All entries should be emailed to photocomp@hifrs.org. If you have any questions, please contact Susan Sutherland on 01463 227081 or susan.sutherland@hifrs.org.

The closing date is Friday 29 April 2011 and winning photographs will be presented at The Service Awards Ceremony on 24th June,

so good luck to all who enter and we look forward to seeing more winning photographs displayed in our Service buildings, as well as featuring them on our Service website and in wider Service publications.

Further details are available in the Staff Area on HI-Light.

Foundation Services - Underpinning Service Delivery

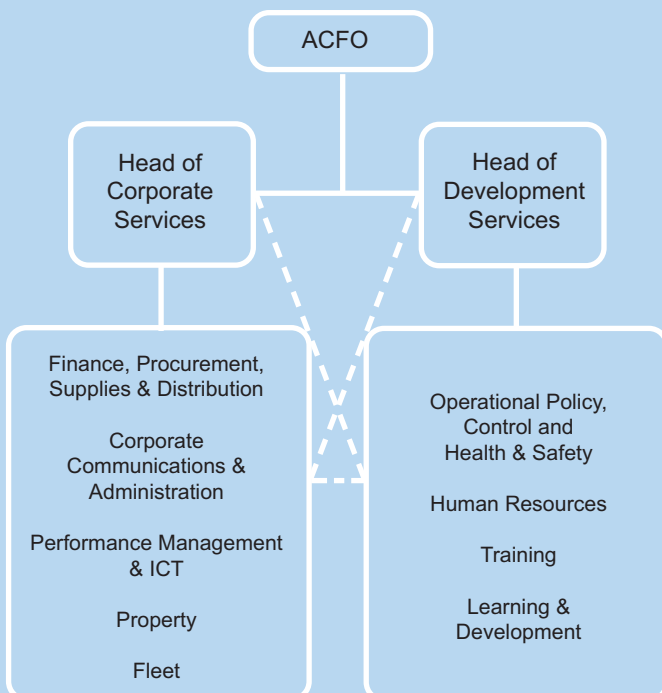
As part of the management restructure we have been looking at how we can best organise the departmental function that supports the Service and maintain the infrastructure that allows Stations and District level personnel to deliver our service effectively.

As a result, Support Services have been renamed Foundation Services and has been divided into two streams:

Development Services deals with the recruitment, training, development of people for all roles within the service as well as defining equipment requirements and ensuring the equipment is deployed and used in a safe and effective manner.

Corporate Services deals with the infrastructure of the Service, including premises, vehicles, supplies and administration of the service ensuring we comply with the myriad of legislation that goes with being a stand alone local authority.

Foundation Services is organised as follows:



EVENTS

Lands End to John O'Groats Charity Cycle

Eight Firefighters from the Service will be cycling 871 miles from Lands End to John O'Groats from 4th to 11th June to raise money for the Highland Hospice, The Fire Fighters Charity and Crossroads Inverness.



You can win £300 if you guess the correct time they take to complete the final stage. Sponsor forms will be available from Stations, District Offices, Service Training School and the Training Department. Donations can also be made via

virginmoneygiving.com. Further information can be found on HI-Light in the Staff Area - Staff Events.



Tunnel to Towers 25th September 2011

This event is held in memory of the heroic life and death of Stephen Siller, a New York Fire Fighter, and all the 9/11 victims. The 2011 event will be the 10th anniversary of the tragic events of 9/11.

This 5km run / walk traces the path he took on that fateful day. Over 20,000 participants take part in this event and the 2011 event is expected to be even bigger.

The Fire Fighters Charity is taking a team of UK Fire Fighters to New York for this event and would love for you to join them!

You can register now for this amazing event at: www.firefighterscharity.org.uk/running

For further details, please contact Jan Mattison on 07825 180961 or Jmattison@firefighterscharity.org.uk

Thank You from the Firefighters Charity

I have received a letter from the Chief Executive of the Firefighters Charity, thanking the Service's personnel for our ongoing support. As of 17th January, the Service has raised an impressive £49,454 in the 2010/11 financial year, which contributes significantly to the high level of service expected and received from the Charity.

As we know, the Charity is valued by thousands of men and women from the Fire Service Community and in our area alone, the Charity last year helped 25 beneficiaries, through either therapy/recuperation at one of the three centres or via the support network and helpline.

I appreciate that we live in a difficult financial climate, but would echo the sentiments of the Charity in commending you all for your continued efforts and to encourage your continued support as volunteers and fundraisers.

David Wynne
Chief Fire Officer

CHIEF'S COMMENDATIONS

A number of Service personnel were awarded the Chief's Commendation at the meeting of the Highland and Islands Fire Board on Friday 28th January.

A total of 14 personnel ranging in Role from Firefighter to Senior Commander were awarded the Commendation for their efforts at the Culloden Care Home Fire on 18th October 2010.

Group Manager John MacDonald said that "We were fortunate in the fact that many of the residents were sitting eating in the one area when the fire started. Some of the residents understood fully what was going on, including the magnitude and scale of what was facing them, but some, because of their illnesses, weren't necessarily as aware as others so we did try to explain it to them."

Speaking after the presentations, Chief Fire Officer David Wynne said that he was "delighted to make the awards to Service personnel, recognising the vital role they played as first crews on scene, ensuring all staff and residents were safely evacuated from the



premises with no injuries. Whilst today is about congratulating our Firefighters, I fully acknowledge the vital role that our colleagues from Northern Constabulary and the Scottish Ambulance Service played on that evening, as well as the generous and noteworthy efforts of community members."

John MacDonald, Matthew Leavesley, Steven MacLean, Robert Kelly, Alastair MacKenzie, David MacDonald, Innes Simpson, Gordon Morrison, David MacLeod, Kenneth MacLennan, Stephen Ross and Sean Clynych are pictured above with the Chief Fire Officer and Highland and Islands Fire Board Convener, Richard Durham.

Cherie Pumphrey and Derek Collie were unfortunately unable to attend the presentation, but will receive their Commendations at a later date.

From the Archives - 16 Years Ago

Special Service - Fire Cover for Film Crews

A flavour of Hollywood has reached Lochaber this year, with film crews on location in the district filming 'Braveheart', starring Mel Gibson and 'Rob Roy' featuring Jessica Lange and Liam Neeson. Fire Crews from Fort William, Mallaig and Kinlochleven, provided fire cover during the filming of action scenes involving the burning of the film sets.

This was done as a special service, raising over £12,000 in revenue.

*Extract from Highland and Islands Fire Brigade Firemaster's Report
April 1994 - March 1995*

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT TEAM

The Service Improvement Team (as reported in the September Issue) commenced their duties on the 19th July 2010, and will continue to operate until the restructure of the organisation is completed in March 2011 when the newly established District Teams commence their duty.

The skill set of the Service Improvement Team has complemented their tasks, which includes operational training, station management training, fire safety inspections, recruitment and IT infrastructure improvement amongst many others.

The team have been busy and at the end of January had conducted over 113 fire safety audits with their work concentrating on high risk premises.

They have also undertaken an operational and managerial training needs analysis, and provided a training package for all Fire Stations which can be downloaded from the "Retained Training" area on HI-Light.

The team have undertaken recruitment campaigns in areas where recruitment difficulties have been traditionally experienced. To date over 1,767 households have been targeted throughout the entire Service area resulting in over 39 expressions of interest to join the Service.

Nineteen Watch Managers training courses have been delivered to 3 Station Managers, 78 Watch Managers and 82 Crew Managers at the following locations:

Lerwick	Kirkwall	Stornoway
Ullapool	Fort William	Thurso
Kyle	Inverness	Dornoch
Benbecula		

It is the team's intention to deliver two more courses and they will be held at Fire and Rescue Headquarters in Inverness.

Currently the team are visiting all of the Services 95 Retained Fire Stations, when they will deliver a revised training package, undertake a Station audit, undertake a property survey on behalf of the Service's Property Manager, and deliver Incident Recording training at specific Fire Stations.

New Viewing Gallery at Invergordon



The viewing gallery, essential for our students to fully participate in our Fire Behaviour courses, was recently unveiled at the Service Training School in Invergordon.

The gallery has been named the 'Williamson Suite' in recognition of T/WM Michael

Williamson who retired last year after taking the lead in the design and installation units. Michael was assisted during the project by CM Neil Ramsay who remains as one of the specialist Fire Behaviour Instructors.

The first dedicated Fire Behaviour Course will be delivered on the 19 April 2011, and we are proud to be one of the first Services in Scotland to have such a specialist facility in the field of Fire Behaviour.

PEOPLE

John Leslie



Shapinsay Firefighter, John Leslie, recently retired after a not insignificant 33 years of service.

During his time John saw the Service change name three times, from Northern Fire Brigade to Highland & Islands

Fire Brigade, to the current Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service.

Group Manager David Clark presented John with his retirement axe on behalf of the Chief Fire Officer at an informal buffet arranged by his colleagues from Shapinsay Station.

Erik Stout & Mervyn Walker

Watch Manager Erick Stout and Crew Manager Mervyn Walker, both of Kirkwall Fire Station were recently presented with their Long Service & Good Conduct Medals.

Group Manager David Clark presented both Erik and Mervyn with their medals at a buffet dance where several retired members and colleagues from the North Isles also attended.



Robert Mainland



Deputy Chief Fire Office, Trevor Johnson presented Robert Mainland, Crew Manager at Rousay with his Long Service & Good Conduct Medal on 12th February 2011.

Robert was presented his medal following the opening ceremony of the new Station at Rousay, when the Station was officially opened by ex Sub Officer William (Billy) Kemp.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading the Newsletter but if you have any comments, wish any items to be included in the next issue, or would like a copy of the Newsletter in a different format, please contact Denise Sutherland on telephone number 01463-227009 or denise.sutherland@hifrs.org

Craig Findlay, David Main & Malcolm MacSween

Congratulations to Craig Findlay, Firefighter - Green Watch, David Main, Firefighter - Red Watch, and Malcolm MacSween, Firefighter - Blue Watch. All three Firefighters achieved their SVQ Level 3 Operations in the Community award.



Craig is pictured receiving his certificate from T/Station Manager Ross Nixon (left), David is pictured with Group Manager Dave Leishman (centre) and Malcolm is presented his certificate by Group Manager Robert Scott (right).

NEWS IN BRIEF

Middle Manager ADC

The Service, in conjunction with Grampian FRS and Tayside FRS ran a Middle Manager ADC at the beginning of December 2010. Despite Scotland having the worst snow and ice storms in recent history during that week, the majority of participants battled through the adverse weather conditions to attend the event.

The Service would like to congratulate all those who were successful.

There is to be a Strategic ADC held nationally in 2011, but dates have still to be confirmed.

Service Awards 2011

Following the huge success of the Commitment to Excellence Awards over recent years and to recognise the hard work and commitment of our staff, an Awards Ceremony will be held on Friday 24th June 2011 at the Town House, Inverness.



Throughout the Highlands and Islands, our personnel continue to provide an excellent service to the public. Have you, your colleagues, or fellow team members made an outstanding effort in serving the community? Are you aware of someone who

has made an exceptional individual or team effort in their every day role? If you can answer yes, then why not nominate?

There are three nomination categories within the "Commitment to Excellence" element of the evening:

- Excellence in Community / Youth Engagement
- Excellence in Service Delivery
- Emergency Operations

For more information on each category and to submit nominations, please refer to the Staff Area of Hi-Light. The closing date for nominations is **Friday 6th May 2011**.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Rousay Station Opening



DCFO Trevor Johnson, and Andrew Drever, Vice Convener of the Fire Board, attended the opening of Rousay Fire Station on Saturday 12th February together with Orkney Councillors Bobby Leslie, Graham Sinclair and Jimmy Moar.

The Station was officially opened by Mr William Kemp, the former Sub Officer of Rousay Fire Station.

The Station is a modern design centrally located at Frotoft and will provide upgraded Fire & Rescue to the communities of the islands of Rousay, Egilsay and Wyre, providing facilities for full welfare and training accommodation for the crew, including a substantial garage for the appliance.

Fire Board Vice Convener Andrew Drever said that the "investment on Rousay clearly shows the commitment of the Board and the Service to continuous improvement in Fire & Rescue Service in remote peripheral communities.



New Heavy Rescue Vehicle

Inverness Station took delivery of their new Heavy Rescue Unit (HRU) on Monday the 7th of February.

All four watches undertook an HRU training day at the Training Department Seafield Road where a lecture, kit familiarisation and three LGV scenarios were covered by Watch Manager John MacDonald.



The appliance is fitted with top of the range hydraulic equipment. The hydraulic cutters are capable of producing 107 tonnes of cutting power.

Some of the new equipment consists of high pressure air bags capable of lifting 23 & 58

tonnes respectively and a rescue support system for stabilisation will work in sync with the XL stab fast for cab stabilisation.

There is also a work platform for use at truck or coach collisions which gives easy access to the cab area for casualty care and fluid extrication.

The HRU will attend all LGV, coach, train and aeroplane incidents throughout the mainland area. It will also be available to attend other appropriate incidents on request by the Incident Commander.

The HRU will greatly enhance the Service's capability at heavy rescue incidents, which in turn will deliver a better response to those who are unfortunate to be involved in a road traffic collision.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Update

Throughout February consultation meetings have been held with OiCs of stations (and wider staff) to explain the challenges faced by the Service and to explain an approach to developing possible solutions.

As highlighted in the "Update from the Chief", the Service faces significant financial challenges into the future, initially to provide appropriate stations and equipment and then to maintain these assets.

In addition, through the work that has been undertaken as part of the IRMP, it is recognised that some stations present sustainability issues that need to be addressed. These occur for a variety of reasons but mainly result from a community being unable to support stations due to the population profile becoming older, a limited number of personnel being available during the day or a reluctance of people to come forward to be recruited. It is encouraging that a number of communities have rallied to support stations once these issues have been pointed out.

Considering both the financial and demographic challenges it is clear that HIFRS must develop long term solutions that will provide a sustainable and affordable service for our communities.

A key element of this will be to consider the actual needs of the communities based upon risk. Some of the areas that are currently being explored are listed below, each will require us to challenge our current methods of working:

- The appropriate provision of vehicles and equipment for all stations;
- Different methods of delivering training and how training can be supported
- More flexible and appropriate approaches to RDS availability expectations
- If the recruitment of a 'standard fighter' is sustainable for some stations?

The second round of consultation meetings will be held commencing in late March 2011 at which outline proposals will be presented.

From the Archives - 36 Years Ago

HGV Driving Tests

Throughout 1975 the important duty of training men for the H.G.V. driving test was carried out. At Headquarters 80 hrs. of instruction was undertaken for wholtime firemen; whilst 17 periods of 5 hrs. duration was provided for retained personnel. Additional training for retained men was given at the members respective stations. Of the 23 men who undertook the H.G.V. driving test 16 were successful in achieving pass certificates.

It is foreseen that 1976 will be an active year for H. G.V. instruction. The regular change round in retained personnel and the recent influx of young wholtime firemen make it important that a high level of training is maintained and a satisfactory pass level maintained.

*Extract from Northern Fire Brigade Annual Report
1st January 1975 to 31st December 1975*

FIRE BEHAVIOUR UNITS

The Highland and Islands Fire Board has recently invested in new training facilities at Invergordon, and Sumburgh Airport, in partnership with Highlands and Islands Airports, on the Shetland Isles. These facilities complement the Gas simulation unit already in use at Fort William.

The training units emulate the conditions a Firefighter will face in any room fire, and part of the training involves learning techniques on how to apply water so that conditions are controlled without causing so much steam that Firefighters within the compartment are scalded. Temperatures within the training units can be in excess of 750°C.



The investment signifies a huge step forward in the training and continued development of the Service's Firefighters, allowing them to not only observe Fire Behaviour phenomena such as backdraught and flashovers at close range, but also to build knowledge and experience by physically tackling such phenomena.



The facilities based at Sumburgh Airport will provide easier access for those Firefighters based on the Shetland and Orkney Islands.

In addition, Firefighters from Sumburgh Airport will receive training

in the new facilities, and it is hoped other organisations who use breathing apparatus from across the Region will make use of the fire behaviour units, thus increasing their value to the area.

A facilities tour and demonstration event for our partners and the media will be held at Invergordon on 29th March 2011.

From the Archives - 26 Years Ago

Kingussie Garage - 7th February 1985

One appliance from Kingussie was called to a car on fire in this Garage. Attempts by garage staff to extinguish the fire proved unsuccessful and some minutes elapsed between ignition and the Brigade being summoned. Upon arrival the crew made an immediate attack on the car which was totally involved and, being under repair, was positioned over a pit. Conditions having become untenable for the crew owing to the voluminous quantities of smoke being generated, the crew withdrew to don Breathing Apparatus. At that point, an explosion occurred which, apart from the severe structural damage immediately caused, totally involved the garage in fire. Fortunately, owing to the withdrawal, no injuries were sustained.

Fire fighting efforts had then to be concentrated on the protection of adjacent threatened property. Ultimately, appliances from Kingussie, Aviemore, Grantown-on-Spey and Inverness attended the incident using 5 main jets and 2 hosereel jets to extinguish the fire.

*Extract from Highland & Islands Fire Brigade Annual Report
1st January - 31st December 1985*

ON THE RUN

In the last article, we looked at ways we can communicate visually on the incident ground. This time, we will consider how we raise the alarm, hopefully before an accident occurs as a result of our ongoing Dynamic Risk Assessment process.

Automatic Distress Signal Units (ADSU)

If a breathing apparatus (BA) wearer is in distress, that is if severe injury has occurred or there is risk to life, s/he should activate the ADSU which is attached to the set harness (clearly visible on the right shoulder of the BA wearer in the photograph). Any BA team hearing the ADSU must make their way to the sound if they consider that they have sufficient air, to render assistance. (Technical Bulletin 1/97, CMP6C).



It is important that the person who is in distress has his/her ADSU sounding so that supporting teams assist the right person.

Summoning Assistance (Breathing Apparatus)

When wearing BA, 'loud, slow and regular hand clapping' is a recognised signal to gain the attention of other teams, but it is not a distress signal. (Technical Bulletin 1/97, CMP6C).

Verbal Instructions

'**Still**'- is used by any crew member to prevent an accident happening: all crew members remain perfectly still until the danger has been addressed.

'**Rest**'- used by instructors (or those taking a training session) when the need arises to make a learning point; the crew remain still whilst the issue is corrected.

'**Carry on**'- is used after 'still' and 'rest'. The crew carry on with the task/training. (Fire & Rescue Service Manual, Vol 4, Foundation Training & Development).

Hand-Held Radios

It is good practice to equip each BA team with a hand held radio so that they can communicate easily with the BA entry control officer on dedicated channel 3. In addition to sounding an ADSU, a BA team in distress is advantaged if they can communicate their difficulty and location to any supporting teams. Moreover, it gives the BA team in distress comfort knowing that assistance is on its way.

All staff should be aware that the hand-held radios are **not intrinsically safe and therefore should not be used in a flammable atmosphere.**

Evacuation of Premises Signal

For evacuation of a premises, the recognised signal is repeated short blasts on a whistle of the 'Acme Thunderer' type, which should be carried by all crew managers and above.

On hearing this signal, personnel must report to the control point/unit, where the manager in charge of every appliance will carry out a roll-call to make sure that everybody is accounted for. (Fire & Rescue Service Manual, Vol 4, Foundation Training and Development).

If you have any comments to make or suggestions for future articles, please send them to michael.white@hifrs.org.