



Update from the Chief

As you read this newsletter you will see that Highlands and Islands Fire and Rescue Service goes from strength to strength. In the last newsletter I spoke of the Community Response Units coming online and now I can report that they have been responding to incidents and saving life. Community safety work has blossomed and throughout the Service we have conducted 1690 home visits fitting smoke detectors and making people safer. We are improving our buildings, vehicles, rescue equipment, firefighting equipment and decontamination facilities. Communication throughout the Service is ever improving, including this newsletter, the website, regular area officer meetings and the formation of a new communication forum. I am pleased to say that in the next three months we will be issuing new uniforms for both operational and support staff and a significant expansion of our IT facilities will begin.

These are exciting times with lots of improvement and change taking place, only possible because of our enthusiastic and dedicated workforce. Wholtime firefighters are embracing their expanding roles in areas such as search and rescue, where they are learning new skills and providing an ever improving service. Retained firefighters have surpassed the expectations of many with their commitment to community fire safety and the Community Response firefighters are developing into a unique and highly effective service. Control room staff do so much more than mobilising, our communications team are laying the foundation for our future IT networks and the workshop personnel continue to be innovative in both production and maintenance of vehicles. The officers and support staff are all working flat out to make sure that the improvements are delivered on time, efficiently and effectively.

Ours is a shared success, whether by using our search and rescue skills in Inverness, preventing fires on the northern most tip of Shetland or carrying out a rescue on the most southerly point in Highland. I have little doubt that the future holds many more challenges but it is only by working together and showing mutual respect for each other that we will continue to excel as a fire and rescue service.

CFO Brian A Murray

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA)

The Service expects a CPA style review, with a team from Audit Scotland likely to be visiting the Service in mid June.

CPA is a form of audit devised by the Audit Commission in England as part of the inspection regime for local government. Services in England were inspected between January and May 2005, the outcomes being made public in July 2005. (The methodology and reviews are available at www.audit-commission.gov.uk/fire)

Alex MacAllister will maintain responsibility for the CPA process, balancing the needs of this with his day to day responsibilities for Corporate Services. Further assistance as necessary will be provided by Derek Wilkie in his capacity as ADO – Performance Management.

DO Billy Wilson has been seconded from his Area Command post to act as the Service's "CPA Staff Officer". He will have specific responsibility ensuring that as far as possible the Service is well prepared for the CPA.

Historic Buildings National Fire Database

Fire poses a major threat to built heritage with an average of one major historic building in Scotland being lost to fire every month. The Historic Buildings National Fire Database was begun in 2002 to address weaknesses in the information available to operational fire crews when attending incidents in Category A-listed buildings in Scotland.



*The Lodberry,
Lerwick, Shetland*

The project is managed by Historic Scotland, accommodated by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) and co-ordinated by Grampian Fire & Rescue Service on behalf of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Services.

The database is for the sole use of the Scottish Fire & Rescue Services. The principal aim of the project is to improve the effectiveness of firefighting operations by making fire risk information on particular premises available to incident crews. The project deals specifically with safeguarding the historic fabric of the building and not contents salvage. A secondary aim is to gather statistics on the occurrence of fires in historic buildings.

The type of information incorporated in the database includes architectural descriptions, photographs and plans, access routes and water supplies. Additionally, identification is made of priority areas of high historic significance and building structure that may adversely affect firefighting operations. The database produces a double sided A4 report summarising site specific information which is to be carried on local firefighting appliances. Additional database information is available to the incident commander via Service Control.

Sub Officer Mark Loynd is the local project co-ordinator and will be visiting all of the 239 A-listed properties in the service area. The Shetland visits have been completed with Orkney and the Western Isles to



*Muckle Flugga Lighthouse,
Unst, Shetland*

follow in the near future. As can be seen from the photographs, A-listed buildings take many forms from domestic to industrial and ancient to relatively modern.

Introduction of New Undress Uniform/Station Workwear



In 2005 the Service undertook a review to assess the provision of personal protective equipment for personnel when undertaking Community Fire Safety and other operational activities.

The Review Team was constituted as a sub group of the Appliance, Equipment and Uniform Committee and represented all sectors of the Service. With the application of Best Value to the Fire Board, Highlands & Islands Fire & Rescue Service collaborates on issues in respect of procurement with other Fire Services as a member of the Scottish Fire Service Procurement Group. As such, in carrying out the review, the team took into account the significant research already undertaken by the other Services and organisations into the subject.

The outcome of the Review found that the existing arrangements were out of step with the other Scottish Fire & Rescue Services and considered the style dated. Executive Command endorsed the recommendations of the group in September 2005. The recommendations were seen to be in line with the initiatives completed by other Fire Services and would provide an efficient, cost effective solution in addressing the modernisation agenda of the Fire & Rescue Services.

All garments have been selected to conform to the highest standards for durability, compatibility with PPE supplied, comfort, style and fit for purpose.

A target date is set for no later than 30th June, 2006 for all issues to be completed.

Benbecula Fire Station 30th Anniversary



The evening of Saturday 4th of February saw a gathering of firefighters both past and present coming together to celebrate over 30 years of service to the communities of Benbecula and throughout the Uists, congregating in the Dark Island Hotel, Liniolate. A selection of firefighters from throughout the Islands along with their guests were joined by the Chief Fire Officer and the Convener. All enjoyed an evening of great music, good food and dancing.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Lohcarron Smoke Alarms

Lohcarron has finally become the first village in the UK to have smoke alarms fitted in every house.

At the end of a long campaign run by District Officers and local firefighters 206 smoke alarms – supplied free by Slough-based firm Kidde Safety – were eventually fitted and 372 houses visited to offer fire safety advice and home fire safety visits.

Local firefighter, Duncan Ross, said "We started the '100% – No Excuses' campaign on 1st November 2004 and we completed most of the installations in about one month. After that we had to revisit some houses until we finally got the occupiers in. There was a lot of detective work that had to be done in order to find holiday home contacts and where people lived, so this delayed the project for a period."

"One of the main problems encountered by firefighters," said Mr Ross, "was the lack of smoke alarms in households occupied by elderly residents, due in large part to the 'myth' that they go off all the time."

Every house within the village's 30 mph zone that didn't already have an alarm has now been fitted and local firefighters hope to extend coverage to the whole area in time.



The official opening of Lochcarron Fire Station will be in March 2006 and a community open day will be held shortly after this.

Opening of Lochmaddy Fire Station



Lochmaddy Fire Station was officially opened on 4th February 2006 by the Convener of the Fire Board Mr Drew MacFarlane Slack. Assistant Divisional Officer Martin Haigh hosted proceedings and

following his opening address invited the Chief Fire Officer forward to speak to those assembled.

The Chief Fire Officer welcomed everyone present and thanked them for attending; he spoke highly of the Lochmaddy crew and their dedication and patience over the years, giving comment to both the changes and development within the whole of the Fire Service at this time.

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE...

Retirements:

Stn O Phil Westnidge – December 2005

DO Jim Haggarty – January 2006

Stn O John Docherty – January 2006

Promotions:

Stn O Robert Scott to ADO, Sutherland in January 2006

ADO Nick Dunford to DO, Deputy Commander North (Ullapool) in February 2006

ADO Mike White to DO, Deputy Commander South (Kyle) in February 2006

Sub O Mark Loynd to Stn O, Shetland in February 2006

INCIDENTS OF NOTE

Barn Fire at Cabrich



Crews from Beauly and Inverness were called out to a barn fire at Cabrich, on 27th June at 17.22hrs. They were faced with a well developed fire which involved vehicles, quad motorcycles, gas cylinders and asbestos. The fire was brought under control quickly although crews were in attendance for a considerable time due to the construction and contents of the barn.

Community Response Units (South Command)



Following the recent upgrade of several Community Response Units to an intervention role at road traffic collisions, units in South Command have already been busy.

Days after having gone on-the-run, Spean Bridge attended a fatal RTC on the A82 just three miles from the village. They were first on the scene from the Fire Service and put into action all that they had learned during their training. They were back in action on the 30th December when a vehicle tried overtaking a bus in icy conditions. The vehicle lost control and slid sideways in front of the bus. Luckily no one was injured at this incident.

Carrbridge also attended an RTC on 27th December where again luckily no one was injured at this incident.

Grant Street Chimney Fire



Inverness Crews attended a Fire at Grant Street on 18th January 2006. Although this was not a serious incident, the hydraulic platform was required to attend due to the location and type of property. As you can see from the picture this caused a lot of disruption.

MEETINGS

Internal Communication Forum

Good internal communication has long been recognised as having a positive effect on any organisation.

To help us improve in this area HIFRS has set up a Communication Forum which involves members from both North and South Command, and from uniform and non-uniform personnel. Members of the forum include:-

DO Uisdean MacLennan	-	01463 227000
DO Alan Edwards	-	01463 227000
DO David Gill	-	01463 227000
T/ADO Derek Wilkie	-	01463 227006
Stn O Phil Green (Dornoch)	-	01862 811044
Sub O David MacLeod (Tain)	-	01862 892744
Ff Dougie Campbell (Red Watch)	-	01463 227000
Kim Coutts (HQ Admin)	-	01463 227007

If anyone has any suggestions or points they wish to be raised at the next meeting (20th April 2006, Invergordon Fire Station), please contact any of the above.

TRAINING

Training and Information Days



A training and information day was held in Lairg on Saturday, 28th January 2006. The picture shows Retained Officers from the north mainland stations.



A training and information day was held in Kirkwall on Friday, 3rd and Saturday, 4th March 2006. The picture shows Retained Officers from Orkney Islands district.

PEOPLE

Harry Stagg CRM/IRMP Data Analyst



Harry joined the service in January 2006, having worked at The Highland Council as a Geographic Information Analyst (GIS). Harry's role is to develop and meet the data requirements for the IRMP team specifically the mapping elements. He

enjoys outdoor activities including snow sports, climbing and walking.

Long Service & Good Conduct Medal



Sub Officer James "Murphy" MacEachan was presented with his 20 year long service and good conduct medal.

Reading the Queen's citation, Assistant Divisional Officer Martin Haigh (District Officer Western Isles) expressed his appreciation

for the dedication and commitment shown by "Murphy" over his career to date.

The Chief Fire Officer was called to the floor and after expressing his thanks on behalf of the Fire Board members, the Fire Service and the local communities presented 'Murphy' with his medal which in its uniqueness is individually stamped with the recipients name.

Retirement of Firefighter John R MacCormick



The evening function held in the Lochboisdale Hotel, Isle of South Uist was presided over by Chief Fire Officer Brian Murray and Assistant Divisional Officer Martin Haigh (District Officer Western Isles). Honouring Firefighter MacCormick, Martin thanked him for the service he had provided throughout his 30 years and 7 months to both the communities of the Uist's and to the Fire and Rescue Service.

We hope that you have enjoyed reading the Newsletter but if you have any comments or wish any items to be included in the June issue please contact T/ADO Derek Wilkie on telephone number 01463-227006 or derek.wilkie@hifrs.org

Dear Friends and Colleagues



From the left, Eddie, David, Kenny and Alan outside Freeman Hospital, Newcastle.

Just a quick thank you from Kenny McDonald to everyone who kindly sponsored his fellow runners and Kenny on their relay run from Raigmore Hospital, Inverness to Freeman Hospital, Newcastle. They did the run last September in memory of Kenny's late wife Nicola who died following a heart transplant operation at the Freeman Hospital on 11th August 2004.

Thanks to everyone's generosity they have raised the magnificent sum of **£10,294**. Kenny's intention is to donate £4000 to the Coronary Cure Unit in Raigmore Hospital with the remainder going to Ward 26 of the Organ Transplant Department at Freeman Hospital.

Over £3000 has already been donated to the Highland Heartbeat Fund.

Many thanks again, Kenny McDonald

Benbecula Firefighters meet the Queen

Sub Officer Alasdair MacVicar and Leading Firefighter Donald MacIsaac were presented to Her Majesty the Queen during a ceremony held in Buckingham Palace during February. They were accompanied by Assistant Divisional Officer Alan Rayner who found himself dealing with the storms of January 2005, alongside the crew from Benbecula Fire Station as well as crews from across the Uist's.

They were joined by other emergency service personnel and rescue workers from across both the UK and other areas of the world in order to be recognised for their efforts and commitment.

The ceremony was held during the evening of the 15th of February and recognised not only the work carried out by the 500 representatives present but the continuing work carried out throughout the emergency services by all emergency service personnel UK wide.



Website: www.hifrs.org

Our website home page has recently been changed which has resulted in the site being easier to navigate.

Stations and departments are still encouraged to update their web pages on a regular basis with any news or events that are happening within their area.

If you have any information you wish to be included in the website, contact either your district officer, department head or T/ADO Derek Wilkie.

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT / IRMP

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT

Making our communities safer is one of the key drivers for all members of staff in our Service. The Community Risk Management Department, headed by DO Trevor Johnson, delivers risk reduction strategies for the communities of the Highlands and Islands using support, guidance and expertise in two functional areas:

- Community Safety Team
- Integrated Risk Management Team

The Community Safety Team, managed by Divisional Officer Alec Featch, deals with all legislative fire safety issues and provides training, advice and safety resources in order to deliver Community Fire Safety education and awareness for communities including identified vulnerable groups.



Gordon Cook (above), recently retired Station Officer in Wick, has joined the team for a temporary period as a Community Response Leading Firefighter. Gordon will be based in the Area Command Office in Wick and he will be working with Units in Caithness and Sutherland to help progress Home Fire Safety visits and the roll out of the Youth Development Programme to other areas within the Service.

The Community Safety Team can be contacted on 01463 227176.

The Integrated Risk Management Team, managed by Divisional Officer Alec Kidd, offers support and guidance in the targeting of our resources to meet our risk reduction strategies for communities throughout the Service area.

Harry Stagg has recently joined the team as Data Analyst. Harry, who previously worked for the Highland Council, brings considerable analytical skills to the department which will benefit the Service's risk reduction strategies.

The IRMP Team can be contacted on 01463 227170.

Whilst you will note that a number of exciting new projects are mentioned in this newsletter, we would like to hear from Units who have taken part in innovative local Community Safety initiatives, so that we can share ideas, learning opportunities and good practice that will enable us to reach out to those who need us most.

Home Safety Visits – Free Replacement Equipment



As we know, Home Safety visits can sometimes highlight the need for us to advise householders to throw away equipment that has seen its day, or may be just plain dangerous!

We have identified funding from the Wellbeing Alliance, Community Safety Partnership in Highland to provide replacements for some everyday items that should help in our effort to improve safety in the home, particularly for our more vulnerable residents such as older people or those with young families.

We have purchased a number of these items which we will shortly issue to each District Office for distribution to their respective areas. Items available include:

- Smoke Detectors
- Multi way adaptors
- Deep Fat Fryers
- Large button telephones
- Fire Guards



Protocols for the issue of these items have been developed by the Community Safety Team and will be distributed in the near future. Anyone requiring further information should contact Graham Clark on 01463 227176.

The Scheme currently covers the Highland Council area only, but we do hope to explore partnerships in our other constituent authorities to extend this to our full Service area.

Fire Board Risk Review Framework

At the October meeting of the Highland and Islands Fire Board, the draft IRMP Action Plan 2006/2007 was presented and approved for distribution to stakeholders for consultation.

At this meeting, the Board also agreed a Risk Review Framework which will form the basis of the risk review of the Service area. This review which will fulfil the requirements of IRMP will consider a wide range of factors which contribute to the risk within communities.

Whilst it is anticipated that the full review will be carried out over an extended period of 5-7 years, an overall phased approach will be adopted. The first phase of the review will be to analyse the current performance of many aspects of Service resources. Central to this first phase will be the sustainability of stations / CRU's, including the performance in areas such as ongoing establishment figures, availability to respond to incidents on all occasions, response times, levels of CFS activity etc.

Throughout the review we will continue to utilise the FSEC toolkit to analyse risk and act as a key driver in risk reduction initiatives.

COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT / IRMP

PARTNERSHIP WORK

Safe Highlander for Older People



Experiential learning has long been recognised as one of the best ways to get messages across to school pupils throughout the Highlands and the Islands, but as we know, one of our more vulnerable groups are those who are older and live alone.

In our efforts to address this, we have joined forces with our Community Safety Partners from other organisations in Highland, such as Northern Constabulary, Highland Council, NHS Highland, pupils from Inverness Royal Academy and Age Concern to deliver a pilot programme based on the Safe Highlander event currently delivered to Primary 7 pupils throughout our Service area.

The event will be held at The MacKenzie Day Centre, Inverness and those attending will benefit from advice on: Personal Safety; Fire Safety; Home Safety; Health; Falls Prevention; Food Safety/Hygiene and Energy Advice.

In a role reversal, young people (who would previously have benefited from the support of older people at their events) will act as guides, mentors and assistants for the day. It is hoped that this will help to bridge the generational gap and improve understanding between the two groups.

First Responder

Local Firefighters in Helmsdale have volunteered to work with the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) to provide a First Responder unit for their village.

This First Responder initiative, which was introduced earlier this month, will contribute to community safety by providing a local response to life-threatening medical emergencies. The unit will always be supported by the usual ambulance attendance provided by SAS. To ensure effective partnership working in this area of activity the Service has worked closely with the SAS to develop a Memorandum of Understanding which defines how the initiative will be managed.

To enable the volunteers to undertake this role the SAS has provided detailed training on how to deal with life threatening incidents such as heart attacks and choking, a defibrillator, mobile phones and a vehicle.

Road Safety

For many years now, The Service has worked closely with Road Safety experts in both Northern Constabulary and our four constituent local authorities. In more recent years, this partnership has attracted the interest of Health professionals and those who look after our road networks, such as BEAR Scotland.

This collaboration has ensured that we are able to influence the joint working initiatives currently being promoted through work in schools and communities throughout our area.

The Fire and Rescue Service is well respected for its expertise in rescue and extrication, but the activities we undertake in the promotion of road safety education and awareness raising are less well known.

In order to reduce risk, we as a Service have offered our support through joint working initiatives with Road Safety Officers, Police and Health Promotion staff. By working in partnership with these organisations, we can reach many more members of the public, provide education, training and publicise the messages we need to get across to target groups.

We hope to keep you informed through this newsletter of any initiatives happening in your area, so that you can offer local support, in collaboration with our partner agencies.

In the Highland area, we are working on the promotion of Pass Plus. This discounted Scheme is aimed at those who have just passed their test, and offers a block of six additional driving lessons covering driving: in town; at night; rural/single track roads; in all weather; on motorways; dual carriageways. Participants can then benefit from cheaper car insurance, improved driving skills and more confidence. For further information, contact Cathie Way on 01463 227170.



In schools throughout Scotland, a new educational resource is to be introduced. Crash Magnets pack includes a DVD and teaching materials which deal with issues related to Road Safety embracing: Health Education, Citizenship and Personal Safety.

Within Crash Magnets topical issues such as speeding, drink driving, belting up distraction and peer pressure are currently being addressed.

Crash Magnets will shortly be going out to all Secondary Schools in Scotland for use in S3/4 and S5/6 Personal Social Development programmes. Anyone wishing to find out more can contact Graham Clark on 01463 227176 or view the Road Safety Scotland newsletter on their website on www.srsc.org.uk.