

Report to	Executive Panel
Date	11/02/2019
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Subject	Developments in the provision of National Resilience Assets in North Wales



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To inform Members of changes to the provision of National Resilience assets in North Wales.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11 September 2001 the UK Government provided funding to develop a number of National Resilience (NR) assets to deal with potential terrorist attacks in the UK.
- 3 Those assets included Incident Response Units (IRUs) which were developed to decontaminate large numbers of people following any large scale chemical or biological releases. Initially, two IRUs were located in North Wales – one in Bangor and one in Deeside – but following a review of the national provision of these vehicles in 2016 the IRU based in Deeside was decommissioned.
- 4 A more recent review of the planning assumptions and methodology for providing mass decontamination has identified that smaller, more agile units would be more effective than IRUs as they would take less time to set up and start to decontaminate people.
- 5 Consequently, the IRU based in Bangor will be replaced with a Mass Decontamination Unit (MDU) during 2019/20.
- 6 This change will have no financial impact on the Authority as the NR assets and ongoing revenue costs are funded in Wales through a grant from the Welsh Government.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7 That Members note:
 - (i) the result of the UK Government's revised planning assumptions and methodology for determining requirements for National Resilience assets in the UK; and

- (ii) the decision to replace the Incident Response Unit based in Bangor with a Mass Decontamination Unit during 2019/20.

BACKGROUND

- 8 Following the terrorist attacks in the United States on 11th September 2001 the UK Government provided funding to develop a number of assets known as National Resilience (NR) assets for fire and rescue services across the UK to deal with potential terrorist attacks. These included:
- Incident Response Units (IRUs) to decontaminate large numbers of people following large scale chemical or biological releases;
 - Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) teams to assist in rescuing and recovering individuals trapped following building collapses;
 - Detection, Identification and Monitoring (DIM) officers to detect, identify and monitor different chemical, biological, radiological and nuclear contaminants following releases, and
 - High Volume Pumps (HVPs) to move large volumes of water over long distances.
- 9 The distribution of these assets was based on planning assumptions that considered the probability and possible sites of terrorist attacks in the UK with regard to, for example, major transport hubs, critical utility distribution centres and major centres of population.
- 10 The revenue provision to maintain these assets and to train and maintain the competence of staff to use them was funded by the UK Government in England and the Welsh Government in Wales.
- 11 Of the seven IRUs and four HVPs allocated to Wales, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service was provided with two IRUs (which were placed in Bangor and Deeside) and one HVP (which was placed in Llandudno).
- 12 In 2010 ownership of the assets was transferred to fire and rescue authorities (FRAs).
- 13 In 2016 the planning assumptions were revised to take account of the changing nature of terrorist attacks, and subsequently the number of IRUs in the UK was reduced from 70 (7 in Wales) to 46 (4 in Wales).

INFORMATION

- 14 During 2017/18, in England, a further review of the planning assumptions, methodology and requirements for decontaminating large numbers of people led to the replacement of IRUs by Mass Decontamination Units (MDUs).

- 15 MDUs are smaller and more agile which means that the time taken to set up the equipment and decontaminate people is reduced by approximately 50%.
- 16 A similar review of the planning assumptions has now been completed in Wales. Based on the same assumptions that were used by the Home Office in England, and, subject to ministerial approvals, the four IRUs in Wales will therefore be decommissioned and replaced with five MDUs. Officers from the Service have liaised with officials from Welsh Government, colleagues from England and the representative bodies in anticipation of this change during the 2019/20 financial year.
- 17 The impact of this change in North Wales is considered to be minimal. The IRU currently based in Bangor will be replaced by a MDU which will also be based in Bangor. There will be no financial implications for the Authority because the cost of any necessary additional equipment will be funded as part of the national resilience capital grant, and the cost of ongoing staff training and maintenance of competence will be covered by the annual national resilience revenue grant.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	None identified.
Budget	No budgetary implications to the Authority as capital and revenue costs will be covered by National Resilience grants.
Legal	The transfer of assets and any legal implications will need to be confirmed and the Authority assured that the current agreement will remain following the change in the asset.
Staffing	None identified.
Equalities/Human Rights/Welsh Language	None identified.
Risks	Prior to the proposed change, confirmation will be required from the Welsh Government that this change will not introduce any legal or financial implications for the Authority.