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## Joint Risk Assessment

# North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

North Wales Fire Authority (the Authority) has made progress in dealing with a range of risks and now needs to address agreed priority areas as identified in this year's joint risk assessment (JRA).

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## Summary

1. The Wales Audit Office delivers the Wales Programme for Improvement (Fire) on behalf of the Assembly Government by inspecting the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Authorities. This inspection consists of an operational assessment, undertaken by a Peer Assessment Team (PAT) observed by Wales Audit Office staff and a non-operational assessment undertaken by Wales Audit Office staff and informed by the audit work conducted by KPMG on behalf of the Wales Audit Office. The outcome of this process is a JRA agreed by the Wales Audit Office, PAT and officers of the Fire and Rescue Service. The JRA is updated each year and informs future audit and inspection regulatory work.
2. This report summarises the key issues to have emerged from the updated JRA which is now based on the Assembly Government's Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales. This updates the JRA which was presented to the Authority in 2008. The work undertaken examined progress made over the past year and was also informed by a thematic operational assessment, which considered the progress of the Fire and Rescue Service in addressing the risks identified in previous peer assessment reviews.
3. The key risks and priorities identified through the JRA process should inform the Authority's annual Improvement Plan and Risk Reduction Action Plan. It will also inform the Wales Audit Office in determining and focusing its audit and inspection work through the agreement of the Regulatory Plan which we will discuss with officers and present to the Authority.
4. This report covers high-level findings and is not exhaustive in listing every risk facing the Authority. The detailed findings are set out in the Risk Assessment Template (RAT) which will be made available to members in electronic format. Members may wish to consult the RAT for further information and detail. The RAT categorises the inherent risk and level of residual risk in each area of the WPI framework, using high/medium and low categorisations of risk which were discussed and agreed with senior officers.
5. This report is intended to set out some of the key issues for the Authority in a way that will inform Members and officers as they deliver and update their Risk Reduction and Improvement Plans to improve fire safety in North Wales.
6. The key messages of this report are:
  - The Authority has made progress in reducing the levels of operational risk identified by the PAT and is working to further improve the operational response of the Service.
  - The Authority has made progress in reducing the level of risk identified in the last JRA.

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- The risk of loss of life and injuries, service standards and co-responding remain as high risk. In addition the Fire and Rescue Authority faces further risks in respect of financial pressures, IT, Scrutiny, Home Fire Safety Checks, improving procurement and the retained duty system.

## **The Fire and Rescue Authority has made progress in reducing the levels of operational risk identified by the Peer Assessment Team and is working to further improve the operational response of the Service**

7. In 2008 the PAT reviewed the progress that the Service had made with 19 risks highlighted in previous PAT reports. The conclusions of the review were reported to Members at the meeting of the Executive Panel on 2 February 2009. The PAT concluded that:

“The overall opinion of the PAT was that the employees of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service were both professional and enthusiastic. The personnel had embraced the change of recent times and supported the Service approach to Community Fire Safety.”

8. The PAT Team reported that:
  - Chief Fire Officer’s Task Group – “Significant progress has been made in resourcing and implementing the recommendations of the Chief Fire Officer’s Task Group through strong management and political leadership.”
  - This leadership is further supported by the Chief Fire Officer’s decision to reconvene the Task Group, including representation from the Wales Audit Office, to review the outcomes of the progress to date. The outcome of this review is expected to be reported to Members in the autumn.
  - Fire Service Emergency Cover (FSEC) – “Progress has been made in the use of FSEC and resources attributed to this area. The service recognises the potential for greater use of this tool in the future once the data has been validated.”
  - Control Room – “The Service has successfully moved to a Joint Control Centre. They have adopted new mobilising and communications systems with no loss of service. The service can now demonstrate greater resilience in respect to Control’s core functions.”
  - Emergency Response – “The Service has introduced Personal Drill Records in support of risk critical training and has made recent development arrangements to support station based training from the centre. This process gives a strong foundation for consistent workforce development and safety critical training and will benefit from periodic reviewing and close monitoring.”
  - Local Resilience Forum – “Significant progress has been made to develop North Wales Fire and Rescue Service’s role within the Local Resilience Forum.”

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- Operational Polices – “The methodology for operational policy review has been determined and there is evidence of progress with implementation. Considerable progress has been made in monitoring and ensuring compliance via station visits and active monitoring.”
  - Road Traffic Collisions – “Considerable investment has been made by the Service to mitigate the effects of road traffic collisions within its service area. The formal adoption of the Service’s road traffic collision strategy has clarified its responsibilities within the road traffic collision partnership.”
9. The PAT also reported on areas for improvement for each risk identified by the Service as part of the review. These have been captured and progress and review of the JRA will be part of the planning and budget review meetings chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer reported through the new scrutiny committee.

## **The Fire and Rescue Authority has made progress in reducing the level of risk identified in the last joint risk assessment**

10. The Authority has made progress in reducing some of the high level risks identified in the last JRA. In particular, 10 high level risk areas have now been reduced to medium risk. These were in the areas of:
- Contribution to the Assembly Government’s social justice and supporting people agenda;
  - Reducing the carbon footprint of the Service;
  - Home Fire Safety Checks;
  - Reducing the commercial, economical and social impact of fires;
  - Protecting firefighters carrying out their duties;
  - Contingency Planning;
  - Flooding and Water Rescue;
  - Control Rooms (resilience and tri-control); and
  - Performance Management.
11. In addition, progress has also been made in a number of areas of medium risk including the role and responsibilities of Members, performance management, sustainability and equalities.
12. The current JRA highlights a number of areas where the Authority has made progress, including:
- The continuing development of the Chief Fire Officer’s Task Group recommendations. The Wales Audit Office is reviewing the progress of the Task Group under its Smarter Ways of Working project which will consider the outcomes of the work of the Group.

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- A new Joint Control room has been established and the service is now sharing facilities with North Wales Police which is improving both response and resilience.
  - The approval of a spare conditions policy along with the development of a key station plan to increase the continuity of the service in extreme conditions.
  - Reducing the impact of fires in non-domestic properties through targeting fire safety.
  - Continuing a challenging programme of Home Fire Safety Checks, along with targeting of vulnerable and at-risk households.
13. The Wales Audit Office review of Fleet Management found several examples of good practice. In particular the report found that the Service “has an approach to fleet management that makes good use of resources to support improvements in service delivery.”
14. The priorities for the Authority will be to implement the risk reduction measures outlined for those risks which remain as high and medium. The Authority’s Risk Reduction Plan and draft Action Plan (2009-10) sets out a series of actions intended to provide improvements in these areas.
15. Exhibit 1 below highlights examples of risks which have reduced from high to medium residual risk.

## Exhibit 1 Examples of Risks which have reduced from a High Residual Risk

| Aspect  | Description  | Potential Impact   | Mitigating Measures/controls  | Levels of inherent/residual risk |
|---|--|--|---|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Wider role of the FRS</b></p> <p><b>2.1 and 2.2</b></p> <p>Contribution to the Assembly Government's social justice and supporting people agenda.</p> | <p>Following on from a high level of accidental fire deaths and injuries in North Wales, a 'task group' was created which included the CFO, the Chief Constable of North Wales Police and the Chief Executive of Flintshire County Council. The output from the task group was 44 recommendations which are currently being implemented.</p>   | <p>Potential risk around capacity to deliver the objectives from the CFO's Task Force.</p> | <p>Data sharing protocols have been agreed with all Unitary Authorities in North Wales, North Wales Police, Wales Ambulance Trust and the Three NHS Trusts.</p> <p>CFO has overall responsibility for implementation of the recommendations and gets regular updates of agreed action plans.</p> <p>Undertake a review of the outcomes of the CFO Task Group recommendations supported by the Wales Audit Office's Smarter Ways of Working initiative, which will highlight the positive outputs from the work of the Task Group.</p> | H/M                              |
| <p><b>2.6</b></p> <p>Contribute to the Assembly Government's environmental agenda by reducing the 'carbon footprint' of the FRAs.</p>                       | <p>The FRA has made some progress towards meeting its obligations to assess and reduce its carbon footprint where possible. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Green Travel Plans.</li> <li>• Cycle to Work Scheme.</li> <li>• Monitoring of energy consumption across a range of usages.</li> <li>• Recycling schemes.</li> <li>• Tracking Fleet usage.</li> </ul> | <p>Failure to ensure a realistic reduction of carbon footprint</p>                         | <p>Maintenance of the vehicle fleet was reviewed as part of Wales Audit Office review of fleet management. This identified some areas of good practice, for example the use of an external company to monitor oil use.</p> <p>The FRA has introduced the 'Green Dragon' programme and has set up recycling facilities at its main stations.</p>   | H/M                              |

| Aspect   | Description  | Potential Impact  | Mitigating Measures/controls  | Levels of inherent/residual risk |
|--|--|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Protecting Firefighters carrying out their duties</b><br/><b>3.24</b></p> <p>Does the FRA make use of 'Violence At Work' guidance (prepared by Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA)).</p>  | <p>CFOA document used for recording of attacks utilising the Fires Of Special Interest (FOSI) form and submitted to CLG. Currently Service has completed the Draft Civil Unrest Policy and Domestic Violence Policy.</p> <p>The service has not been able to associate any individual cases to particular persons so therefore not progressed through the criminal justice system to date. All instances are reported to the North Wales Police.</p> <p>Seven attacks have been recorded against crews in North Wales for the Financial Year 2008-09, and these attacks have been recorded as physical and verbal.</p> | <p>Potential injury to fire-fighters.</p>               | <p>Incident reports are studied by the service operational support department and any best practice is used to improve the safety of Fire Fighters.</p>   | <p>H/M</p>                       |
| <p><b>Control Rooms (Resilience and Tri-Control)</b><br/><b>5.17</b></p> <p>How have FRAs engaged in exploring long-term partnerships and collaborative joint working arrangements with the other emergency services to enhance operational effectiveness and best value. (The arrangements should provide for resilience in respect of command, control, mobilisation and an all-Wales "fall-back" through integration and mutual support).</p> | <p>A new joint communication centre has been developed with North Wales Police which will improve resilience and response to incidents both within the FRA own area and provide for wider all Wales resilience.</p>  | <p>Potential failure to maintain control functions.</p> | <p>A new joint communication centre went live in October 2008. This is a joint arrangement with North Wales Police. Longer-term it is intended to accommodate the ambulance service into the communications centre.</p> <p>The Service is currently actively involved in the All Wales resilience project to link all three Fire and Rescue controls.</p> | <p>H/M</p>                       |



| Aspect   | Description  | Potential Impact   | Mitigating Measures/controls   | Levels of inherent/residual risk |
|--|--|--|--|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Systems and Structures</b></p> <p><b>7.1</b></p> <p>Does the FRA have in place systems and structures to monitor performance and ensure value for money of the service they provide?</p> | <p>The JRA in 2008 recorded that the FRA has a good track record of operation within its budget. The Improvement Plan and the Risk Reduction Plan give the overall strategic approach of the service</p> | <p>Potential Failure to ensure robust financial management</p> | <p>As recorded in the JRA the service is aware of its financial pressures and its need to maintain effective financial standing to ensure the delivery of the Service.</p> | <p>H/M</p>                       |

*Source: Wales Audit Office, Risk Assessment Template*

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## **The risk of loss of life and injuries, service standards and co-responding remain as high risk. In addition the Fire and Rescue Authority faces further risks in respect of financial pressures, IT, Scrutiny, Home Fire Safety Checks, improving procurement and the retained duty system**


16. The level of risk remains high in three main areas reflecting the Service's continuing efforts to prioritise in these areas. These high risk areas are:
  - reducing the loss of life and injuries in fires and other emergency incidents;
  - service standards are under review by the Assembly Government but the service recognises the key pressure of delivering preventative activities to households currently outside the Assembly Standards which involve the ability of the Service to respond to incidents within set time periods; and
  - the current policy around co-responding.
17. In addition to those high level risk noted above, the JRA highlighted a number of areas where medium levels of risk remain, which included:
  - While the Authority has a good track record of operating within its budget, it faces significant financial challenges in the future which may affect its budget. While financial management and financial statements remain as low risks, financial standing remains a medium risk.
  - Addressing the high and medium level risks identified in the Wales Audit Office review of IT systems.
  - Implementation of the recommendations of the Wales Audit Office report on Scrutiny, in particular the creation of the new Audit and Scrutiny Committee.
  - While the service is working effectively with its partners, challenges remain in ensuring the service maintains its momentum in delivering Home Fire Safety Checks.
  - While progress has been made in procurement this remains a medium risk which reflects the further work that is required
  - The Retained Duty System (RDS) provides the Service with the bulk of its employees and, while it remains a medium risk, the current review of the RDS system by the Assembly Government will have an impact on the service, along with the ongoing need to maintain levels of recruitment and retention with the RDS.
18. Exhibit 2 below highlights examples of risks that have remained as medium residual risk.

**Exhibit 2: Risks which have remained as medium residual risk**

| Aspect  | Description  | Potential Impact  | Mitigating Measures/controls   | Levels of inherent/<br>residual risk |
|---|--|---|--|--------------------------------------|
| <p><b>Financial Standing</b><br/>1.5</p>  | <p>The Authority has a good track record of operating within its budget and its overall financial position is sound with actual expenditure in 2007-08 being below budget by only £2,000. Latest budget monitoring report estimates outturn for 2008-09 will be an underspend of £115,000.</p> | <p>Potential failure to ensure robust financial management.</p> | <p>The Authority is aware of its financial pressures and its need to maintain effective financial standing to ensure the delivery of the Authority.</p>                      | <p>M/M</p>                           |
| <p><b>Service Standards</b><br/>3.18</p> <p>For those properties outside the Standard, preventative activity and initiatives should be implemented by the FRA. (FRS/RRC/S/004).</p>                   | <p>The FRA has maintained its ambitious target of achieving 30,000 Home Fire Safety Checks per year. Current provisional out-turn figures report that over 31,000 Home Fire Safety Checks have been delivered in 2008/09.</p>  | <p>Potential failure to meet agreed National Standards.</p>     | <p>Considerable effort has been placed on HFSCs particularly targeting vulnerable and at risk households in both urban and the extensive rural areas of the Service.</p>     | <p>M/M</p>                           |
| <p><b>Procurement</b><br/>4.5</p> <p>Has the FRA achieved Level 3 of the sustainable procurement assessment framework (produced by Value Wales)? If not does it have plans to achieve it by 2009.</p> | <p>The FRA has not achieved this level.</p>  | <p>Failure to comply with the framework.</p>                    | <p>The FRA is currently in negotiation to see whether North Wales Police Authority's Procurement Department can undertake this on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Service.</p> | <p>M/M</p>                           |

| Aspect  | Description  | Potential Impact   | Mitigating Measures/controls   | Levels of inherent/residual risk |
|---|--|--|--|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Climate Change and Sustainability</b><br/><b>4.8</b></p> <p>How has the FRA contributed to a sustainable Wales by demonstrating statutory compliance with, and corporate responsibility on, environmental issues?</p> | <p>The FRA is progressing with Green Dragon and other initiatives.</p>                       | <p>Potential failure to demonstrate statutory compliance and demonstrate effective corporate responsibility.</p> | <p>The FRA is seeking to achieve level 1 of the Green Dragon programme. In addition the Wales Audit Office Fleet Management Review noted some areas of good environmental practice.</p>  | <p>M/M</p>                       |
| <p><b>Mutual Assistance</b><br/><b>5.7</b></p> <p>Has the FRA developed arrangements to support a potential deployment of operational staff at Gold and Silver Command levels across Wales and across borders?</p>          | <p>The FRA has undertaken a range of reviews of operational procedures and competencies.</p> | <p>Potential failure to provide the service.</p>   | <p>The FRA has undertaken audits of key roles and competencies at all levels including silver and gold. <b>The PAT (2008) noted that:</b> “a debrief process to capture and communicate outcomes has been implemented and the development of these processes will allow the organisation to learn from itself”. The Team also noted five areas for further development (Risk16).</p> | <p>M/M</p>                       |

| Aspect   | Description  | Potential Impact                                      | Mitigating Measures/controls  | Levels of inherent/residual risk |
|--|--|---|---|----------------------------------|
| <p><b>Retained Duty Systems (RDS)</b></p> <p><b>6.16</b></p> <p>Is the FRA working towards establishing a sustainable RDS system which recognises the importance of the individual's commitments and rewards them sufficiently for that?</p> | <p>The Improvement Plan highlights the importance of RDS staff.</p>  | <p>Potential failure to maintain sustainable RDS.</p> | <p>The FRA has no current plans to change the RDS payment system as any salary system is currently unaffordable.</p>  | <p>M/M</p>                       |
| <p><b>6.17</b></p> <p>Does the FRA have innovative approaches to improve the recruitment of RDS staff?</p>   | <p>Assembly Government committed to reviewing operation of RDS in Wales by 2011 and make recommendations to Ministers.</p> | <p>Potential failure to recruit RDS.</p>              | <p>The FRS is currently developing a business to business programme with other public service bodies to assist in recruitment. Some measured success in South Gwynedd has been achieved as part of the trial.</p> | <p>M/M</p>                       |



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