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This circular is	Relevant to the National Framework		
Status	This circular informs senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service of progress with the Fire and Resilience Programme.		

Fire and Resilience Programme Highlights – March 2008

Issued by:

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Performance, Planning and Finance Division

Addressed to:

**The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Clerk to the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority
The Commissioner of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority
The Chief Fire Officer**

Please forward to:

Summary

This is the first of a series of “highlights” notes, which will replace the bulletins previously issued on the Fire and Resilience Programme. The purpose is to inform senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service of progress with the Programme. They will be issued monthly.

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1.0 FiReControl Business Case

- 1.1 Following feedback from the LGA and other stakeholders, Ministers have agreed to release the next version of the full business case in June, when it should be possible to provide information on current control rooms' operating costs and a number of other important assumptions such as the staffing model, the FM contract and group services. A business case Assumptions Review Group is being established to provide assurance that the assumptions are prudent and credible. The Group will be chaired by Jerry Willmott and will include other members of the Project Board, SOG and the key delivery working groups. Representatives will be drawn from all nine regions.

2.0 Strategic Consultancy Contracts

- 2.1 CLG has decided not to proceed with re-tendering its strategic consultancy contracts for the Fire and Resilience Programme in 2008. Instead, it will extend the existing contracts with Mott McDonald, PA and SERCO in relation to Firelink, FiReControl and New Dimension respectively beyond the current September 2008 end-date. The detailed terms of the proposed extension will follow discussion between CLG, the Scottish Government and the Welsh Assembly Government, as well as with the consultants themselves. The decision follows a recent OGC Health Check of FiReControl.

3.0 Integrated Concept of Operations

- 3.1 The Department has taken the initial steps in developing an integrated Concept of Operations (Conops) for the Fire and Resilience Programme, centred on major incidents. This reflects that fact that:
- the New Dimension Conops needed refreshing in the light of the near-completion of roll-out of the capabilities;
 - further development was needed of the FiReControl Conops, particularly in respect of mobilisation of officers;
 - an operational framework was needed to inform a number of outstanding procurement decisions.
- 3.2 A draft Integrated Conops has been prepared in consultation with the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser's Unit and FRS personnel working within the three projects. This has been circulated to the Firelink Principal User Group and the FiReControl Senior Operations Group for feedback and comment, and it is envisaged that the final version will be endorsed by CFOA.
- 3.3 The Department has listened closely to the views of those who will be using the equipment provided by the Programme. The Integrated Conops is a way of formalising this.

4.0 Mobile Data Terminals

- 4.1 The National Project Manager of Firelink and the Project Director of FiReControl wrote to Chief Fire Officers on 25 January to advise them of the position on the roll-out of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). A number of FRSs had said that they would like this to be brought forward to coincide with the operational roll-out of Firelink radios (Phase B of the Project) rather than just before the cut-over to the Regional Control Centres. However, the Firelink contractors, Airwave, have advised that early MDT roll-out would have a significant impact on the overall Firelink roll-out timetable, potentially doubling the time required for Phase B, which in turn would significantly increase costs. For these reasons, it will not be possible to roll out MDTs generally as part of Phase B. However, the Department will continue to explore whether, in very exceptional circumstances, it may be possible to roll MDTs out early without risking the Phase B schedule.
- 4.2 Both the Firelink and FiReControl teams have invested considerable effort in trying to find a practical way through this issue. They will continue discussions with Airwave to establish the earliest practicable date they would be able to install MDTs in each of the FRSs. The provision for response to USAR emergencies, developed by the New Dimension Programme, is a network of 20 strategically located USAR capabilities (plus one strategic reserve) hosted by 17 FRAs in England and one in Wales.

5.0 New Dimension Maintenance Contract

- 5.1 The procurement of the New Dimension long term maintenance contract for the hundreds of vehicles and associated kit purchased under the programme is now at bid evaluation stage, where the four bidders have been invited to submit their final bids. Bids will be evaluated in March/April with a view to final contract award in June/July and commencement of the maintenance service on 1 October this year.

6.0 Search Dogs recruited to New Dimension

- 6.1 The Fire Minister, Parmjit Dhanda, announced on 12 February the recruitment of 20 urban search and rescue (USAR) dogs as part of the New Dimension programme at a cost of £430,000. Four of the dogs will be assigned to London and the other 16 to specialist units at FRSs across England, so that they can be deployed swiftly across the country if an incident occurs. Funding for USAR dogs will go to: Avon, Buckinghamshire, Devon & Somerset, Essex, Hampshire, Hereford & Worcester, Kent, Lancashire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London, Merseyside, Norfolk, Tyne & Wear, West Sussex and West Yorkshire. Leicester FRS will have the lead role in co-ordinating training and establishing a national USAR dog duty rota.

7.0 Fire & Rescue and Resilience Programme Board

- 7.1 A new Programme Board has been established, as part of general changes to CLG's governance arrangements. The Board will oversee all aspects of fire policy, including the Fire and Resilience Programme. It will replace both the Fire and Resilience Programme Board and the Fire and Resilience Programme Executive. Its monthly meetings will alternate between agendas focusing on Programme and wider fire modernisation issues.

7.2 The first meeting, on 28 February, had a modernisation agenda. CFOA have nominated their President to sit on the Board, with the Vice-President as an alternate. The LGA have nominated their Deputy Chief Executive, John Ransford, who used to sit on the Programme Executive. The Department is extremely grateful to Councillor Robert Wilkinson and Barry Dixon for their valuable contribution to the Fire and Resilience Programme Board.

8.0 Peter Betts

8.1 Peter Betts, the Director of Fire and Resilience in CLG, wrote to Chief Fire Officers on 15 February to inform them that he would be leaving his present post at the end of March to take up a job as head of the UK's international negotiation team on climate change, an area in which he has spent a considerable part of his previous professional life. As Peter has said, he will leave his present post with regret, having immensely enjoyed his time here. An announcement about his successor will be made in due course.

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