

2021



LOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

HIGHLAND

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Foreword

I am honoured to be able to write this short foreword, on behalf of Highland Council.

This Council enjoys, and benefits greatly from, its excellent connection and relationships with all our vital Emergency Services, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, since its formation in 2013.

The area we cover with the 999 services is close to the size of Belgium and includes the harshest terrain and climate anywhere in the UK, as well as a vast coastline.

As tourism continues to grow the responsibilities placed on the Fire service also increase, as has also occurred with Covid 19.

This plan follows a long tradition of practical and useful documents, covering the varied aspects of all that a modern Fire Service deals with on a 24/7 basis.

I hope that you do not have to use the Fire Service in an emergency but, if you do, I can assure you that the men and women of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will give you the best possible service.



Councillor Matthew Reiss
Highland Council

Introduction

As Local Senior Officer for Highland it gives me pleasure to present the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland 2021-2024.

This Local Fire and Rescue Plan has been developed to support the delivery of agreed local outcomes for the communities of Highland, in conjunction with the Scottish Government's strategic priorities for SFRS as stated within the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016, and the organisational priorities contained within the SFRS Strategic Plan 2019-2022.

We will continue our strong tradition of working in partnership to identify those at greatest risk within our communities so that we may direct our resources innovatively and effectively. Delivering positive community outcomes is central to our ambition and this approach enables not just the delivery of targeted prevention and protection activities aimed at improving community safety, but strong commitment to lead and contribute to Community Planning Partnerships in order to build community resilience and reduce inequalities.

Our ambitions on prevention and improving community outcomes must be equally matched by our focus on maintaining our operational readiness and resilience to ensure that we can respond to assist our communities in their times of greatest need. This is built upon the delivery of an efficient, effective and modern fire and rescue service with strong core values of Safety, Teamwork, Respect and Innovation.

Early in 2020 we faced an unprecedented challenge in the form of a global pandemic. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we dramatically changed how we worked so that we could continue to deliver an emergency service whilst keeping our staff and the public safe.

The pandemic is expected to have a long-lasting effect on society and this will change the way in which we deliver our services in the long-term. The full implications are not yet known and this makes it difficult to make any far-reaching plans with certainty. As such we will keep the priorities of this Plan under regular review to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate whilst we focus on ***'Working Together for a Safer Scotland'***



Derek Wilson
Local Senior Officer – Highland

National Context

Scottish Ministers set out their specific expectations for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016. This provides the outline we should follow to ensure our resources and activities are aligned with the Scottish Government's Purpose and national outcomes.

Our [Strategic Plan 2019-22](#) has been designed to meet these national expectations. Set against a complex and evolving backdrop our Strategic Plan encapsulates our mission, values and our strategic outcomes and objectives.



To ensure we can prevent the worse from happening or to be fully prepared to respond should we called, we need to be aware of any new changing risks which threaten the safety of communities or the workforce. When developing our most recent plan, cognisance was given to: our changing population and the forecasted rise in over 75s; doing what we can to balance social and economic inequality; climate change and the devastating impact the inclement weather can have on peoples' lives and livelihoods; and the threat of terrorism.

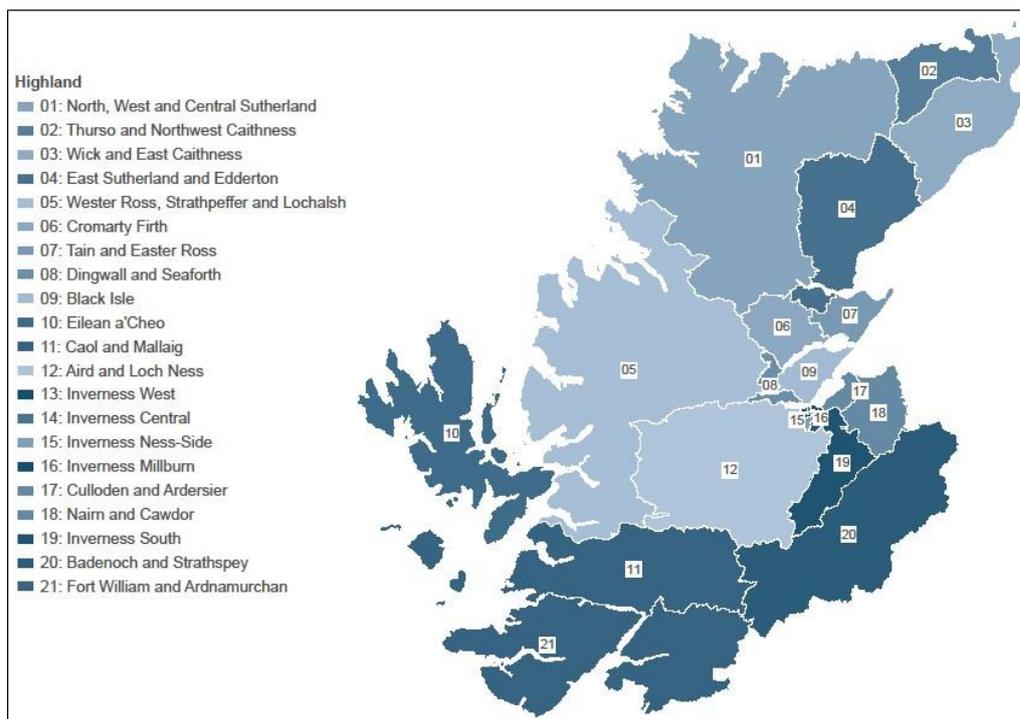
Our Strategic Plan is supported by a three-year Strategic Plan Programme which provides details on all the activities we intend to carry out to successfully achieve our ambitions. The

Programme informs our Annual Operating Plan, which provides specific detail on the actions we carry out each year, and from which our performance is scrutinised.

This Plan is a statutory Local Fire and Rescue Plan. It sets local direction to meet the strategic outcomes and objectives outlined above. It also demonstrates how we will contribute to Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs).

Local Context

Highland is the most northerly local authority area of the Scottish mainland and with a land area of 10,225 square miles, covers approximately one third of the Scottish landmass. It has a land border with Moray to the east, Perthshire to the south and Argyll & Bute to the south west and is surrounded by more than 3000 miles of coastline. Highland is an area of stunning natural beauty and is diverse in its topography from the northern inner Hebridean islands off the west coast, the rugged mountainous areas in the west to the flatter more arable lands of the east, interspersed with many glens and lochs, perhaps the most famous being the Great Glen and the world renowned Loch Ness.



Highland has some of the most remote and sparsely populated areas within the United Kingdom combined with a number of more urbanised areas in the larger towns of Wick, Thurso, Tain, Invergordon, Alness, Dingwall, Nairn, Aviemore, Granttown on Spey, Fort William and Portree. The most populated area is the city of Inverness, which accounts for around 34% of the Highland population.

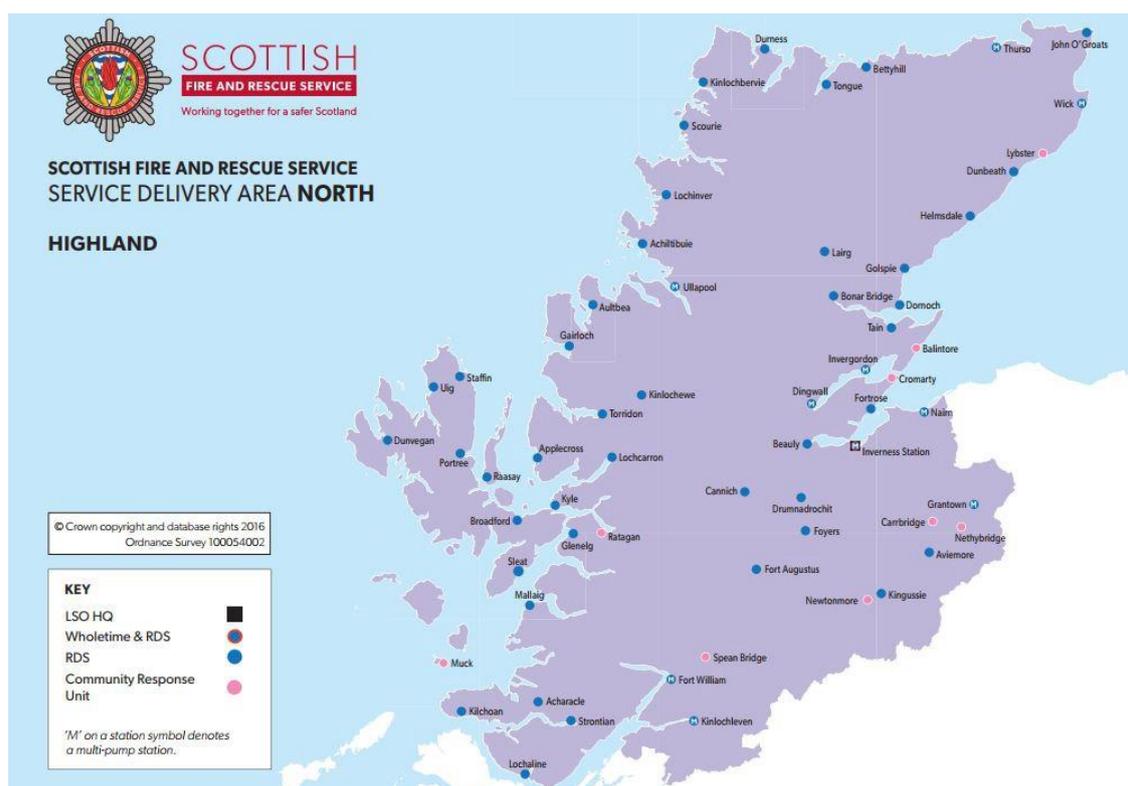
The overall population of Highland is 232,950 which is the 7th highest of all 32 Local Authority areas in Scotland and current projections indicate that this population is expected to increase to over 250,000 by 2035. Highland generally has an older age profile than the rest of Scotland with persons aged 60 or over making up 27.9% of the population, compared to the national average of 24.2%. Across Scotland over the next 25 years, the age group projected to increase the most is the 75+ category. As Highland already has a higher percentage of elderly residents this will almost certainly alter the local risk profile.

With such a large landmass it is unsurprising that the natural environment in Highland features highly. The area has a high percentage of special interest and conservation areas when compared to the rest of the country and the renewable energy sector is also an area of growth, given the vast natural resources available.

In terms of the local economy, manufacturing, construction, further & higher education, public services, forestry and agriculture all feature. The tourism and service sectors have seen an increase due to attractions such as the North Coast 500 and The Cairngorms National Park combined with the many natural features, vistas and significant historic sites throughout the area.

Operational risks for SFRS in the Highland area are varied and wide ranging. In addition to the domestic risk, there is also commercial and industrial risk, a significant transport risk from roads, railways and airports, marine risk from the many ports and harbours and associated vessels, rural risk from vast expanses of forestry, moorland and remote settlements, including special conservation areas, risk from the renewable energy sector, agricultural risk and of course an ageing population and the changes to the socio demographics associated with this.

Operational response across the Highland area is provided from a total of 61 Community Fire Stations. There is 1 permanently staffed station in Inverness, 51 part-time or Retained Duty System stations and 9 Community Response Units spread across the area. Inverness Community Fire Station also provides specialist capabilities in the form of swift water rescue, a heavy rescue unit, a high reach appliance and a mobile incident command unit. Fort William additionally provides specialist capability through the provision of a swift water rescue team.



Within Highland, the total number of emergency incidents attended by SFRS has reduced over the past 3 years as have the overall number of fires, however incidents categorised as non-fire emergencies and false alarms have increased.

In terms of fire related activity, accidental dwelling fires have decreased and Highland is rated as 28 out of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities most likely to have an accidental dwelling fire. The statistics in terms of accidental dwelling fire casualties show a reducing trend and low likelihood of occurrence which is welcome. In terms of

accidental dwelling fire fatalities, Highland has the highest incidence per 10,000 head of population in Scotland. This is clearly not a statistic to be proud of and it is essential that a focus remains on reducing the number of accidental dwelling fires through risk identification, community engagement, community education, partnership working and the delivery of targeted prevention activities.

The number of deliberate fires within the Highland area is below the national average, however, wildfires fall within this category and given the vast expanses of moorland and forestry within the area, this is a particular risk at certain times of the year. Wildfires can have a devastating impact on lives as well as the built and natural environment, often with significant financial burden to landowners and businesses as well as SFRS in terms of the protracted operational response, which is often required. It is therefore important that we maintain a focus on reducing this type of incident through a process of engagement and partnership working.

Non-Fire Emergencies (NFE) have increased in number across the Highland area over the last 5 years and now account for more than 15% of all operational responses. These incidents can take many forms such as flooding, forcing entry, chemical incidents, rescue of persons from machinery, rescue of persons from height and animal rescues. By far the most common NFE response by SFRS resources in Highland is to Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). These incidents account for more than 36% of NFE responses. In Highland, 85% of casualties and 80% of fatalities are as a result of RTCs.

Whilst many incidents within Highland result from an actual and confirmed emergency, in 2019/20 alone, 59% of emergency responses were to false alarms. These alarms may have been from a genuine belief that there was a fire, or from a malicious report of fire, however, the vast majority are alerts of fire generated by automatic fire alarm systems, which following attendance and investigation are identified to be false. These unwanted activations have a significant impact on the occupants and business conducted within a building, not to mention the SFRS resources that are diverted from other activities to attend these incidents.

Responding to emergencies to assist people in their times of greatest need is a key priority for SFRS in Highland, however we are also equally committed to being an effective and key partner, strong supporter and active member of the Highland Community Planning Partnership. The introduction of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 has presented further opportunities to enhance community planning in Highland and SFRS will continue to support the nine Community Partnerships in Highland through active membership and leadership.

We will, at all times, look to adopt a preventative approach to community and fire safety as we firmly believe that prevention is always better than the cure. In developing this Local Fire and Rescue Plan, SFRS will seek to ensure it plays a key role in delivering the objectives of the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan which is founded on partnership and focused on delivering improved outcomes and reducing inequalities.

Performance Scrutiny

The Highland Local Fire and Rescue Plan is scrutinised and approved via Highland Council's administration and governance route of the Communities and Place Committee.

To ensure performance monitoring is consistent with the SFRS performance management framework we will work with our managers, staff representatives and wider partners to develop a comprehensive set of performance measures against the outcomes, priorities and objectives outlined within this Local Fire and Rescue Plan.

These measures will form the basis of our future performance reports, which will enable us to continue to provide relevant, accurate, timely and consistent data and information to maintain effective scrutiny and challenge both at national and local levels.

In support of this Local Fire and Rescue Plan, individual Station plans will be developed which will detail more localised activities and give ownership to our Community Fire and Rescue Stations across Highland.

In terms of local oversight and performance reporting, Local Group Commanders and Station Commanders, and/or deputy, will report local performance quarterly to the ten Area Committees in Badenoch & Strathspey, Black Isle, Dingwall & Seaforth, Caithness, City of Inverness, Easter Ross, Isle of Skye & Raasay, Lochaber, Nairnshire, Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh, and Sutherland.

The Local Senior Officer, and/or deputy, will report update on progress against this plan, overall performance, and any other matters deemed relevant to the delivery of Fire and Rescue Service matters in Highland annually to a meeting of the Highland Communities and Place Committee.

Local Priorities

1. Domestic Fire Safety

Background:

Domestic fires can have devastating impacts upon individuals, families and communities, and place multi-agency resource demands upon response, intervention and recovery. As a result, fire safety in the home is a key prevention strategy for SFRS.

Highland is 28th out of 32 in the Local Authority rankings of areas most likely to have an accidental dwelling fire per 10,000 head of population. This is a very positive statistic when compared to the national average, sadly however statistics also indicate those who do have an accidental dwelling fire in Highland are more likely to die than in any other Local Authority area in Scotland. We will strive to change this by using opportunities to prevent these incidents occurring in the first place.

We will achieve it by:

- Promoting and undertaking Home Fire Safety Visits (HFSVs) to those deemed most vulnerable and at risk from fire and/or harm
- Focussing on cooking related fires which have accounted for the highest percentage of ignition causes for accidental dwelling fires
- Promoting SFRS Home Fire Safety online questionnaire and remote advice to those who do not wish personnel to enter their home (e.g. due to Covid-19 concerns)
- Focusing engagement activities in those areas where service demand has been identified.

Performance Indicators:

- Number of accidental dwelling fires
- Number of accidental dwelling fires casualties and fatalities
- Number of Home Fire Safety Visits delivered and safety advice provided remotely

Expected Outcomes:

- Downward trend in the number of accidental dwelling fires.
- Downward trend in the number of accidental dwelling fires casualties and fatalities.

2. Unintentional harm

Background:

Unintentional harm in the home can present itself in many forms, however the most common relate to slips, trips or falls which predominantly involve the elderly. It is widely acknowledged that unintentional harm in the home presents significant issues to public health and challenges public service resources. The impact can be significant and a preventative approach is necessary to keep people at home longer, improve quality of life, reduce inequalities and improve outcomes.

SFRS is a national lead for Building Safer Communities Phase 2: Reducing physical and psychological harm and champion 'Home Safety'

SFRS staff across Highland will work closely with our community planning partners to share information, ensure there is a local focus on identifying the most vulnerable within our communities, and improve outcomes.

We will achieve it by:

- Utilising our HFSV programme to assess for non-fire related risk and refer those persons deemed at high risk to appropriate partners for provision of additional support
- Working with our partners at a local level to share information where risks in the home have been identified and to provide solutions to reduce the risk and ultimately protect people from harm
- Develop and engage in innovative partnership opportunities to reduce unintentional harm

Performance Indicators:

- Number of Home Fire Safety Visits delivered and safety advice provided remotely
- Number of referrals to partner agencies

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduced societal and economic cost of unintentional harm or injury
- Improved safety and wellbeing of Highland residents
- Support independent living of vulnerable residents within our communities

3. Non-Fire Emergencies

Background:

Our highly trained and well-equipped personnel across Highland respond to an increasingly wide range of Non Fire Emergency (NFE) incidents such as Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's), flooding, medical emergencies, chemical incidents, rescues from height, animal rescue, and assisting partner agencies.

Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs) continue to generate the greatest NFE demand upon SFRS resources within Highland. SFRS continues to invest in specialist rescue capability within Highland and will respond to NFE incidents whenever requested, however our strong focus on prevention through partnership has developed through the years and we will continue to seek opportunities for innovative engagement such as use of our Virtual Reality (VR) road safety capability.

We also recognise the opportunity for SFRS to be involved in building community resilience to increase Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OHCA) survivability rates through educating the public in Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR). We will seek to safely develop opportunities to incorporate this into our community engagement activities as the pandemic eases.

We will achieve it by:

- Continuing to work in partnership through Highland Road Safety Group, including the delivery of the multi-agency Driving Ambition programme
- Support and promote the reduction of harm from OHCA by developing opportunities to incorporate CPR training into engagement activities
- Contribute to the Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership
- Staff development and allocation of resources to meet local and national needs

Performance Indicators:

- Number of Non Fire Emergency incidents
- Number of Road Traffic Collision incidents
- Number of Road Traffic Collision casualties (fatal and non-fatal)
- Number of CPR engagements delivered

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduction in number of Road Traffic Collisions
- Reduction in number of Road Traffic Collision casualties (fatal and non-fatal)
- Reduce the social and economic impact of Non Fire Emergencies
- Support the safety and wellbeing of those living, working, and visiting Highland
- Increase the number of people within communities who are CPR trained

4. Deliberate Fire Setting

Background:

Highland is primarily impacted by deliberate fire setting within both the traditional wildfire season and around bonfire night. Deliberate fire setting takes various forms and while a small proportion involves occupied buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures (primary fires), the majority are grass, bushes, refuse etc in outdoor locations (secondary fires).

We have built strong communication links with partners and communities which allow us to share information and target resources at those areas of greatest demand. Where we can work with partners to identify those responsible we will seek to deliver education and diversionary activities to raise awareness of the social and economic impact of anti-social behavior related fires.

Wildfires can significantly impact upon communities, critical national infrastructure, farming and our natural heritage as well as creating substantial demand upon the resources of SFRS and partners. We will work closely with the Scottish Wildfire Forum and focus on partnership working to raise awareness, reduce the number and severity of incidents, and consequently the impacts on the environment, communities, and emergency response across Highland.

We will achieve it by:

- Work with Community Planning Partners to develop targeted joint risk reduction strategies which mitigate the social and economic impact of deliberate fires
- Work collaboratively with Scottish Wildfire Forum partners to develop joint risk reduction strategies which mitigate the environmental, economic and social impact of wildfires
- Continue to utilise SFRS Firesetters and Fireskills education and diversionary programmes across Highland and explore additional partnership approaches
- Develop and introduce the SFRS Youth Volunteer Scheme to Highland
- Delivery of Thematic and multi-agency Action Plans designed to meet local need

Performance Indicators:

- Number of deliberate fires
- Number of primary deliberate fires
- Number of secondary deliberate fires
- Number of Fireskills courses delivered

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduction in the number of deliberate fires
- Reduction in incidences of anti-social behaviour related fires
- Diversion of perpetrators from anti-social behaviour towards positive destinations through education and diversionary activities
- Improved community outcomes and reduced impact on the environment and economy

5. Non-Domestic Fire Safety

Background:

The SFRS has a statutory duty to promote fire safety and to operate as an enforcing authority in relation to securing compliance with Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. To do so we have adopted an approach of providing advice and guidance to encourage and support duty holders to achieve compliance. Where necessary however, formal enforcement powers are applied which can result in the issuing of notices and/or prosecution for non-compliance.

In general, all workplaces and business properties are classed as non-domestic premises and consequently come within the scope of Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. This legislation is designed to not only prevent fires from occurring but to ensure that in the event of fire, persons are alerted, fire spread is restricted and the occupants are able to safely escape from the building.

Given the variety of premises which fall within the scope of the Act SFRS has developed a fire safety enforcement framework based on a combination of life risk and historical incident data across building uses and occupancy types. Sleeping risks are deemed to be a particularly high fire risk as most fatal fires occur at night when people are less vigilant. As a result, the fire safety audit programme includes premises such as Hospitals, Residential Care Homes, and accommodation.

We will achieve it by:

- Engaging with duty holders of all relevant premises to assist them to understand and comply with the duties and responsibilities placed upon them by the Act
- Following a local enforcement audit delivery programme in accordance with the SFRS Fire Safety Enforcement Framework
- Undertaking post fire audits in all relevant premises
- Identify fire trends in building types locally and conduct appropriate thematic fire safety audits

Performance Indicators:

- Number of Non-Domestic fires
- Number of Fire Safety Enforcement audits completed

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduction in the number of non-domestic fires
- Support for duty holders to understand their duties and responsibilities to comply with fire safety legislation
- Reducing the social and economic impact of non-domestic fires and supporting business continuity and employment in Highland
- Contributing to the protection of our built and natural heritage

6. Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

Background:

An Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal (UFAS) incident can be defined as '**An event which has required an operational attendance by the fire and rescue service due to the unwanted actuation of a fire alarm system**'. Within the last three years UFAS activity has accounted for around 55% of all operational incidents attended by local SFRS crews. Each incidence of UFAS brings not only business disruption, but increased road risk due to unnecessary blue light journeys and considerable cost to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service budget.

Responding to UFAS incidents significantly impacts the wider community as well as the primary employers of our part time retained firefighters. Our staff also face disruption to firefighter training programmes and the delivery of our preventative community safety activities. Furthermore, when fire appliances are responding to UFAS incidents, they are not available for other life critical calls and every UFAS incident therefore diverts life critical resources to non-critical events.

Although private businesses may be affected through disruption and financial loss, medical and education establishments are affected by the impact upon their care provision and teaching programmes.

On each attendance our responding Firefighters provide advice to occupiers to prevent re-occurrence and our Fire Safety Enforcement Officers monitor UFAS incidences and engage with the most frequent offenders.

We will achieve it by:

- Investigate the cause of every alarm actuation attended and provide advice to the responsible person to prevent re-occurrence
- Identify premises with high UFAS activity levels and determine if they are compliant with Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, where necessary providing advice, action plans or implementing enforcement action
- Implement SFRS's UFAS policy to target and reduce unnecessary demand at a local level
- Continue to work in partnership with NHS Highland to reduce UFAS activity levels
- Develop and explore engagement opportunities to raise awareness of UFAS impacts

Performance Indicators:

- Number of UFAS incidents

Expected Outcomes:

- Reduction in the number of UFAS incidents across Highland, particularly amongst the highest offenders
- Reduction in unnecessary demand on Retained Firefighters and their primary employers
- Reduced road risk for SFRS staff and the wider community
- Release capacity for staff training and community engagement through reduction in UFAS attendance
- Reduced costs to SFRS associated with UFAS response

7. Operational Resilience and Preparedness

Background:

The Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Fire (Additional Function) (Scotland) Order 2005 define the duties of the SFRS in relation to responding to emergencies. Across the Highland area there are a total of 61 Community Fire Stations providing an operational intervention capability. A key element of delivering operational resilience is ensuring that we have enough staff to ensure that we can respond when required.

It is essential that we have the right resources, in the right place, at the right time and that all of our firefighters have the necessary skills, knowledge, expertise and understanding of the risks they face. This level of preparedness allows them to respond safely and effectively to a wide range of incidents to deliver essential, and often lifesaving, interventions within our communities at times of greatest need.

Our personnel routinely respond to emergency incidents with partner agencies, however on occasion large scale, complex and/or major incidents require an additional level of coordinated response and management. The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places additional duties on SFRS as a Category 1 responder to ensure that sufficient planning and preparation takes place to allow for an effective response to large scale incidents and major emergencies.

We will achieve it by:

- Monitoring Station crewing levels and engaging with communities and employers to promote Retained and Community Response Firefighter recruitment across Highland
- Developing holistic and innovative approaches to recruitment and retention of operational staff
- Delivering structured, risk based, effective training planned to support both acquisition and maintenance of skills for operational staff in line with SFRS policy
- Collation and production of operational risk information to inform Firefighters of relevant high risk and special risks sites throughout Highland
- Continuing our productive relationship with multi-agency partners and Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership to undertake pre-planning, develop response plans, and to adopt an integrated emergency management approach
- Implementing operational response solutions that meet local and organisational needs as part of Service redesign

Performance Indicators:

- Station establishment figures and crewing confidence levels
- Maintenance of completed Operational Risk Information

Expected Outcomes:

- Responding to and resolving operational incidents in a safe, effective and efficient manner that keeps staff, partners, and the public safe
- Contributing to wider safety by focusing on preventing emergencies occurring
- Planning and preparing for response and mitigating the social and economic impact of emergencies upon communities
- Reinforcing local resilience within communities and in Community Fire Stations

Review

To ensure this Local Fire and Rescue Plan remains flexible to emerging local or national priorities a review may be carried out at any time but will be reviewed at least once every three years. A review may also be carried out if the Scottish Minister directs it or if a new Strategic Plan is approved. Following a review, the Local Senior Officer may revise the Plan.

Contact Us

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service,
Highland LSO Area HQ,
16 Harbour Road,
Longman West,
INVERNESS,
IV1 1TB

Phone: 01463 723 000

Website: www.firescotland.gov.uk

Follow us on Twitter: @fire_scot
Local Senior Officer: @LSO_Highland

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