

**Working together  
for a safer Scotland**



**SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Working together for a safer Scotland

# LOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN FOR HIGHLAND



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## Foreword

I am genuinely pleased to be able to write this short foreword on behalf of Highland Council.

The Council prides itself on the long standing and outstanding relationships it enjoys with our partners in the Emergency services, including the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Together we and our partners cover the largest geographical landmass in the UK, presenting unique challenges including terrain and a myriad of place names, derived from differing cultures.

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

Welcome to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland.

This 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, as well as the organisational priorities contained within the SFRS Strategic Plan 2016 – 2019.

Our ambitions within Highland continue to be working in partnership to identify those at greatest risk within our communities. This allows for the delivery of targeted prevention and protection activities with the overall aim of improving community safety, building community resilience, reducing inequalities and delivering positive community outcomes.

In addition to our ambitions around the prevention agenda, we are equally focused on maintaining operational readiness and operational resilience to ensure that we can respond and provide an efficient, effective and modern fire and rescue service and emergency intervention capability, to assist our communities in their times of greatest need.

This plan sets out our priorities to allow us to deliver against these stated ambitions.

It is clear to SFRS that the risks and challenges we face and the needs of our communities have changed over recent years and indeed continue to change. It is therefore essential that as a modern and progressive organisation, we adapt and transform to meet those risks and changes ensuring that we are well positioned to address the needs of the communities we serve whilst retaining a focus on ***'Working Together for a Safer Scotland'***

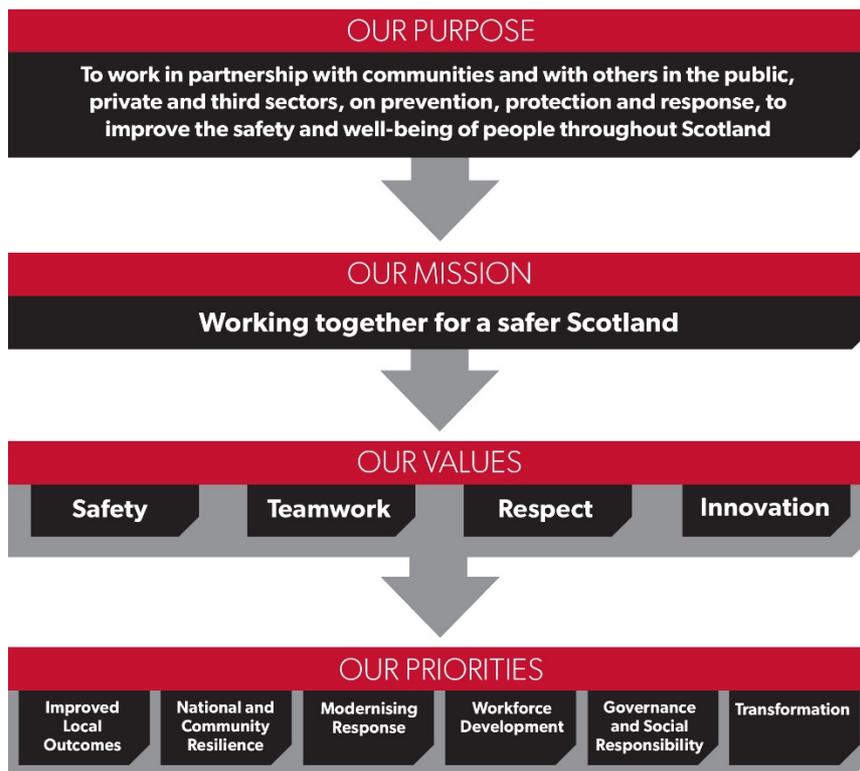


**John MacDonald**  
**Area Manager**  
**Local Senior Officer – Highland**

## 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 2016-19 has been designed to meet these national expectations. Set against a complex and evolving backdrop, our Strategic Plan encapsulates our mission, values and strategic priorities.



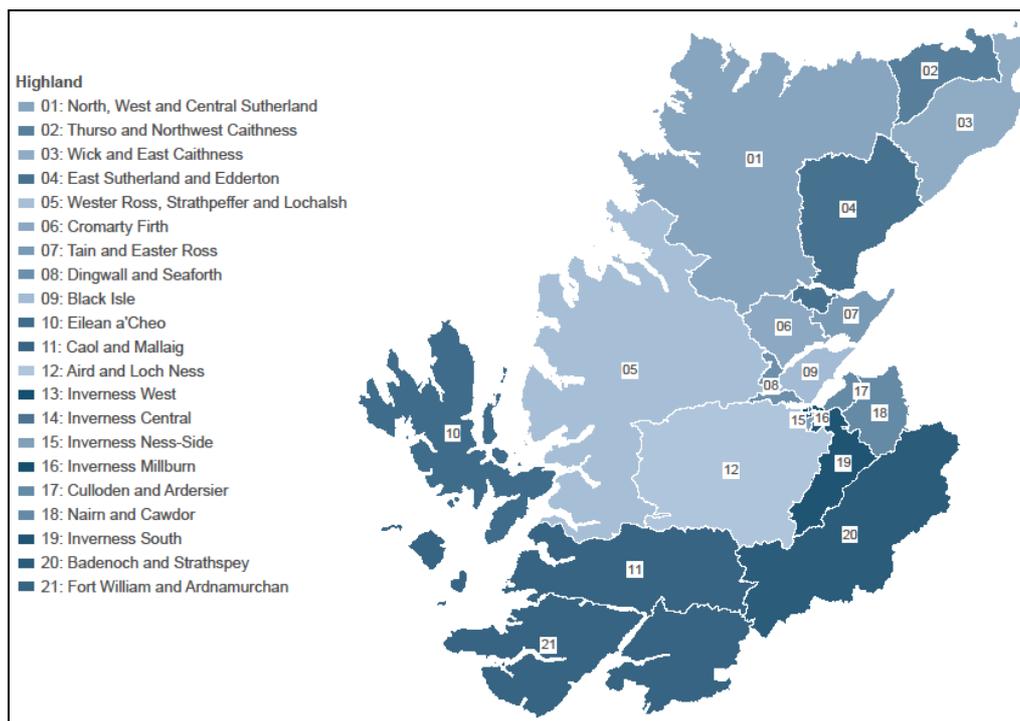
These have been shaped with due regard to the challenges we face and to what we need to achieve to be a highly effective, sustainable public service.

Operating within a climate of significant financial uncertainty and public service reform means we need to transform how we operate. This will particularly include how we prepare for and respond to changing societal needs, the impact of climate change and the threat of terrorism.

Strong leadership, supported by sound governance and management arrangements are at the very core of our foundations. These arrangements will direct and provide assurance that we comply with our statutory responsibilities. In addition, they will provide Local Senior Officers with supporting mechanisms to deliver services specifically tailored to local needs.

## 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 mythical and 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, Grantown 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 7<sup>th</sup> 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.

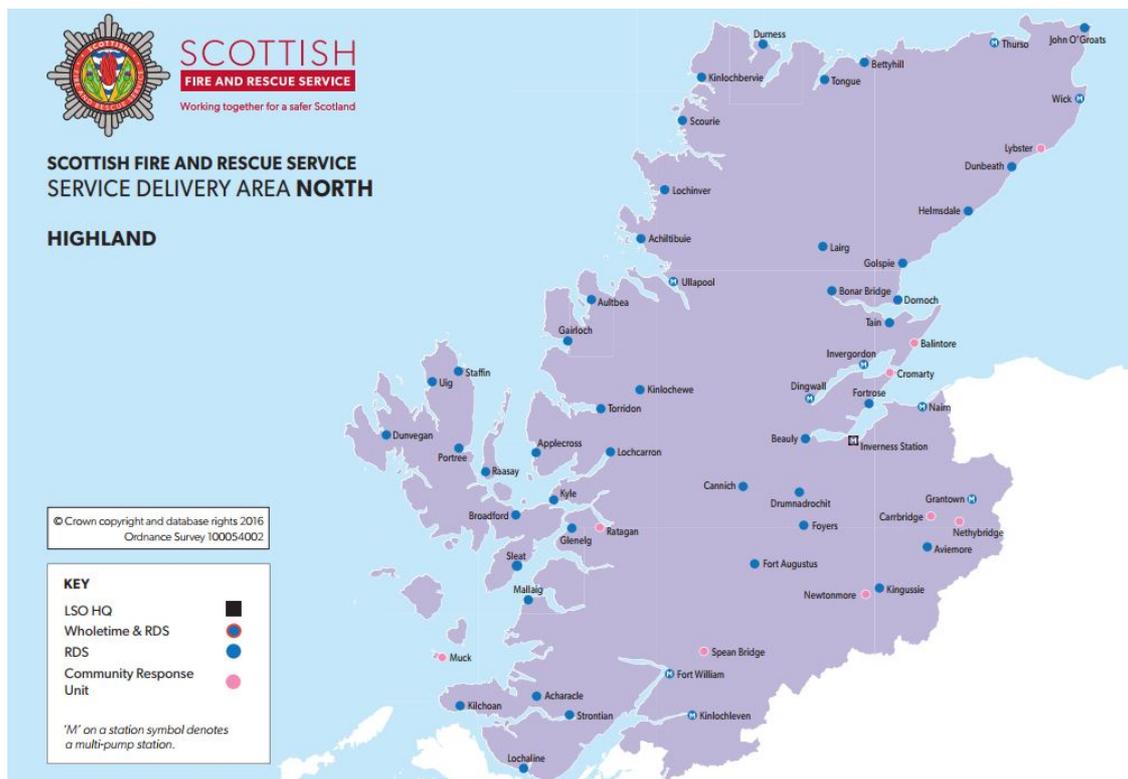
With such a large landmass it is unsurprising that the natural environment in Highland features highly. The area has a high percentage of special interest and conservation areas when compared to the rest of the country and the renewable energy sector is also an area of growth, given the vast natural 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 has been identified as a location for investment in terms of specialist capability and the provision of a swift water rescue team.



Within Highland, the total number of emergency incidents attended by SFRS has reduced over the past 5 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 31 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 2015/16 alone, 57% 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 recent 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.

In terms of local oversight and performance reporting, Station Managers and Group Managers will report local performance quarterly to the eight Local Committees in Caithness, Sutherland, Ross & Cromarty, City of Inverness, Nairnshire, Badenoch & Strathspey, Lochaber and Isle of Skye & Raasay. The Local Senior Officer will report pan Highland performance annually to a meeting of the Highland Council.

## Local Priorities

### 1. Domestic Fire Safety and Unintentional Harm

Domestic fires usually have a devastating impact on individuals, families and sometimes whole communities. The demand placed on resources in terms of response, intervention and recovery can also be significant and this is not solely focused on the Fire and Rescue Service, it impacts on all partners. This is why fire safety in the home is a key prevention strategy for SFRS.

Of the 32 Local Authorities in Scotland, Highland is currently 31<sup>st</sup> in the ranking of areas most likely to have an accidental dwelling fire per 10,000 head of population. Whilst this is a positive statistic when compared to the national average, the local statistic in relation to fire fatalities is the opposite. If a person has an accidental dwelling fire in Highland, they are statistically more likely to die than in any other Local Authority area in Scotland. This is something we must change and the only meaningful way to do so is to prevent the incidents occurring in the first place.

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. The impact can be significant and a preventative approach is necessary to keep people at home longer, to reduce inequalities and to improve outcomes. SFRS staff across Highland will work closely with our community planning partners to share information and ensure there is a local focus on identifying the most vulnerable within our communities.

**We will aim to improve domestic fire safety and contribute to reducing unintentional harm across the Highland area.**

#### **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*
- *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 in Highland 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*
- *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 Safety Visits delivered.*

#### **Expected Outcomes:**

- *Reduction in the number of accidental dwelling fires*
- *Reduction in fire related casualties and fatalities*
- *Reduced societal and economic cost of unintentional harm or injury*
- *Improve the safety and wellbeing of Highland residents*
- *Support the independent living of vulnerable residents within our communities.*

## 2. Non Fire Emergencies

Firefighters have a very high standard of training and have access to both traditional and modern rescue equipment. This has resulted in the Fire and Rescue Service responding to a wider range of Non Fire Emergency (NFE) incidents. NFEs account for around 15% of SFRS operational activity in Highland, however given recent trends and the ever changing risk profile, this figure is anticipated to increase.

The incident types range from water rescue, flooding, rescue of animals, rescue of persons, rescues from height, forcing entry, chemical incidents, medical emergencies and responding to terrorist incidents to name but a few. However, by far the largest demand on SFRS resources for NFE response within Highland is that of Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs). SFRS has invested in specialist rescue capability within Highland and will continue to respond to NFE incidents whenever requested, however the prevention approach will always be better than intervention. As such, at a local level within Highland, SFRS will play a key role in working in partnership to support the reduction of risk with particular focus on the area of greatest demand, that being road safety.

We also recognise that there is potential to further expand the role of SFRS across the Highland area to include providing support and intervention for non fire emergencies, such as responding to Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrests (OHCA). There is also an opportunity to promote and support community resilience to improve survivability rates from OHCA across Highland through engagement and education.

**We will aim to contribute to reducing the number of NFE incidents making Highland a safer place to live, work and visit.**

**We will achieve it by:**

- *Working in partnership and contributing to the work of the Highland Road Safety Group including the delivery of the Driving Ambition programme.*
- *Working in partnership to develop arrangements to facilitate appropriate intervention capabilities to support medical incidents*
- *Staff development and allocation of resource and capability to meet local and national needs*
- *Supporting and promoting the reduction of harm from OHCA including the delivery of Cardio Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) training to local communities.*

**Performance Indicators:**

- *Number of NFE Incidents and NFE Casualties*
- *Number of RTC Incidents and RTC Casualties*
- *Number of CPR courses delivered.*

**Expected Outcomes:**

- *Reduction in the number of NFE and RTC incidents*
- *Reduction in NFE and RTC casualties and fatalities*
- *Reduce the social and economic cost of non-fire emergency incidents*
- *Support for the safety and wellbeing of those living, working and visiting in Highland and contribute to delivering improved outcomes.*

### 3. Deliberate Fire Setting

Deliberate fire setting within Highland is primarily related to two specific periods within the year, the traditional wildfire season in spring and the lead up to bonfire night in the autumn. Although the majority of deliberate fires are focused on these specific times of the year, within Highland deliberate fire setting occurs all year round, some of which can be classed as fire related anti-social behaviour and of a criminal nature.

Whilst a small proportion of deliberate fires occur in buildings, vehicles and outdoor structures (primary fires), the majority are classed as secondary fires (grass, bushes, moorland, refuse, etc.) and in most occasions occur in outdoor locations.

Working in partnership with Community Planning partners and the communities themselves, we will seek to combine our information to identify those parts of our communities that are being affected by fire related anti-social behaviour. We will work with partners to determine those responsible and then raise awareness of the impacts of irresponsible behaviour through engagement activity and where appropriate diversionary activities.

We will also work closely with the Scottish Wildfire Forum to reduce the number and severity of wildfires within the Highland area. Wildfires can have significant impacts on people, livestock and our natural heritage and SFRS will focus on partnership working to reduce the number of incidents and consequently the impacts on the environment and the community.

#### **We will aim to reduce the number of deliberate fires in Highland.**

##### **We will achieve it by:**

- *Working in partnership with community planning partners to identify areas of need and then developing joint intervention/prevention strategies to reduce the impact of fire related anti-social behaviour*
- *Continuing to utilise our Firesetters and HI Fires education and diversionary programmes to raise awareness of the impact of fire related anti-social behaviour*
- *Continue to work with partners in the Scottish Wildfire Forum to develop joint risk reduction strategies to mitigate the impact of wildfires and the social and economic cost to the community*
- *Delivery of Thematic Action Plans in line with the SFRS seasonal calendar and the wider prevention agenda.*

##### **Performance Indicators:**

- *Total number of deliberate fires*
- *Number of primary deliberate fires*
- *Number of secondary deliberate fires.*

##### **Expected Outcomes:**

- *Reduction in the number deliberate fires*
- *Reducing incidences of fire related anti-social behaviour*
- *Improved outcomes for local communities and protection of our natural and built environment*
- *Diverting perpetrators away from anti-social behaviour through access to education programmes and/or diversionary activities.*

## 4. Non Domestic Fire Safety

Within Highland, from 2011 to 2016, fires within non domestic premises accounted for around 7% of all fires attended. When compared to the national average, across the 32 Local Authority areas, Highland is ranked 19 out of 32 for the rate of non-domestic fires per head of 10,000 population.

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.

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. In order to discharge this duty, SFRS has adopted an approach of providing advice and guidance to duty holders to encourage compliance. When necessary, formal enforcement powers are applied which can result in the issuing of notices and/or prosecution for non-compliance.

Given the variety of premises types that come 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. This assessment is then used to create a fire safety audit programme, where premises that present a higher degree of risk from fire are subject to regular Fire Safety Enforcement Audits in order to promote and ensure compliance.

**We will aim to improve non domestic fire safety and reduce the number of fires in non-domestic premises.**

**We will achieve it by:**

- *Undertaking our fire safety enforcement audit programme in accordance with the SFRS Fire Safety Enforcement Framework*
- *Undertaking a post fire audit in all relevant premises*
- *Engaging with duty holders in relevant premises to help them to understand and to promote the duties and responsibilities placed upon them by Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005*
- *Working with partners to ensure that building standards and where applicable, fire engineered solutions are incorporated into building proposals at the earliest possible stage.*

**Performance Indicators:**

- *Number of all non-domestic fires*
- *Number of Fire Safety Enforcement Audits completed.*

**Expected Outcomes:**

- *Reduction in the number of fires in non-domestic premises*
- *Support for the business community to ensure compliance with fire safety legislation*
- *Improved outcomes for local communities and protection of our natural and built environment.*
- *Reduced financial loss and the consequential impact on the public and private sectors from the occurrence of fires and other emergency incidents.*

## 5. Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

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 Highland area, from 2011 to 2016, UFAS incidents accounted for 46% of all operational incidents attended by local SFRS crews which equates to more than 8500 incidents. The Department for Communities and Local Government estimated that the cost of every UFAS incident is in the region of £1970 which puts real pressure on already stretched budgets.

Responding to UFAS incidents has a significant impact not only on SFRS resources but also on the wider community and the primary employers of our retained firefighters. They result in unnecessary blue light journeys, increased road risk, increased emissions from appliances, disruption to firefighter training programmes and disruption to the delivery of community safety activities. 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.

Across the Highland area the majority of Community Fire Stations are staffed by retained firefighters and responding to UFAS incidents can have a negative impact on the primary employers of retained firefighters who have to leave their work to respond to UFAS incidents. There is also the disruption to the business in the building where the alarm has activated as a result of evacuation and the consequential impact on the internal work processes.

**We will aim to reduce the number of UFAS incidents within Highland.**

**We will achieve it by:**

- *Investigating the cause of every alarm activation at the UFAS incidents attended*
- *Analysing the data collected from every UFAS incident attended and work with occupiers to develop demand reduction plans for poor performing premises*
- *Identifying if premises that are repeat offenders and have a high incident activity level are compliant with Part 3 of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, and if not, implementing appropriate enforcement action*
- *Implementation of the service's UFAS policy to target and reduce unnecessary demand at a local level.*

**Performance Indicators:**

- *Number of UFAS incidents.*

**Expected Outcomes:**

- *A reduction in the number of UFAS incidents across the Highland area*
- *A reduction in unnecessary demand on retained firefighters and their primary employers*
- *Reinvest the capacity realised from the reduction in UFAS incidents to further enhance operational resilience and to increase the capacity throughout Highland to deliver more work within the prevention and safety agendas*
- *A reduction in the risk to firefighters and communities through reduced operational activity*
- *A reduction in the unnecessary costs associated with UFAS incident response as well as a reduction in the SFRS carbon footprint as a result of fewer journeys.*

## 6. Operational Resilience and Preparedness

SFRS has a statutory duty to respond to fires and other emergencies. Across the Highland area there are a total of 61 Community Fire Stations providing an intervention capability. A key element of delivering operational resilience is ensuring that all our fire engines can be crewed at all times.

It is essential that all our firefighters have the necessary skills, knowledge, expertise and understanding of the risks they face. This will provide a level of preparedness that allows them to respond effectively, with a focus on safety, to ultimately deliver an essential service to our communities in their times of greatest need.

SFRS personnel routinely respond to emergency incidents with partner agencies, however on occasion large scale, complex and/or major incidents will 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 and major emergencies.

**We will aim to enhance operational preparedness and operational resilience across the Highland area.**

**We will achieve it by:**

- *Promoting retained and community response firefighter recruitment at all stations across the Highland area*
- *The provision of structured, risk based and planned training to support the acquisition and the maintenance of skills for operational personnel, in line with the SFRS training for operational competence policy*
- *The collection, collation and presentation of operational risk information for high risk and special risk locations throughout Highland*
- *Working with multi agency partners and the Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership to undertake preplanning, to develop multi agency response plans and to adopt an integrated emergency management approach*
- *Embracing the SFRS transformation agenda and implementing operational response solutions that meet organisational and local needs.*

**Performance Indicators:**

- *Station establishment figures and crewing confidence levels for all Community Fire Stations across the Highland area*
- *Number of Operational Risk Information visits completed*
- *Attendance at and contribution to the Highland and Islands Local Resilience Partnership.*

**Expected Outcomes:**

- *Provision of an effective and efficient Fire and Rescue Service to all communities in the Highland area*
- *A reduction in the financial burden and the disruption caused to our communities when an emergency occurs*
- *Reinforcing local resilience in 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

We are fully committed to continually improving the service we provide to our communities and recognise that to achieve this goal we must listen and respond to the views of the public and our partners.

We use all feedback we receive to monitor our performance and incorporate this information into our planning and governance processes in order to continually improve our service. We are proud that the majority of feedback we receive is positive and we are keen to hear examples of good practice and quality service delivery that exemplifies the standards of service that we strive to provide for the communities of Scotland.

If you have something you'd like to share with us or you would like more information, you can get in touch in a number of ways:

Write to:                    Scottish Fire and Rescue Service  
                                 Highland Area Headquarters  
                                 16 Harbour Road  
                                 Longman West  
                                 INVERNESS  
                                 IV1 1TB

Phone:                      01462 222700

Visit our website:        [www.firescotland.gov.uk](http://www.firescotland.gov.uk)

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Local Senior Officer:    @JMacDonald\_SFRS

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