

<b>WYFRA</b>	<b>FULL AUTHORITY</b>	<b>27 JUNE 2008</b>	<b>ITEM No</b>
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**REPORT OF:** CHIEF FIRE OFFICER/CHIEF EXECUTIVE

**TITLE OF REPORT:** FIRECONTROL & FIRELINK PROJECT  
UPDATE

**PURPOSE OF REPORT:** TO ADVISE MEMBERS OF PROGRESS  
TOWARDS MIGRATION TO FIRECONTROL  
REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE AND THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF A NEW DIGITAL MAIN  
SCHEME RADIO SYSTEM

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**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT DETAILS:**

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**EXEMPTION CATEGORY:** NONE

**BACKGROUND PAPERS:** CLG STRATEGIC BUSINESS CASE

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 FiReControl**

1.1.1 The FiReControl project is part of the *fire resilience programme*, which is led by Central Government's Communities & Local Government department and comprises three major projects:

- *New Dimension*, is delivering special purpose vehicles and equipment to the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) in England and Wales, together with the necessary command and support arrangements, to tackle natural disasters and major incidents
- *Firelink*, which will deliver a national digital radio network for the FRS in England, Scotland and Wales capable of interoperation with all FRSs and other emergency services
- *FiReControl*, which will deliver a network of regionally-based control centres (RCCs) for England, operated from purpose-built accommodation. FiReControl will make full use of the capabilities offered by Firelink and will provide the necessary capabilities to ensure effective use of New Dimension assets.

1.1.2 There are significant dependencies between the three projects, in particular inter-relationship of the FiReControl and Firelink projects.

### **1.2 Firelink**

1.2.1 The purpose of the Firelink project is to provide all FRSs with communication facilities necessary to mobilise resources in response to receipt of emergency calls and maintain communications between the control room (Regional Control Centre) and the incident commander and other responding resources. The system that Firelink will deliver is based on the Airwave network, which is a national TETRA (Terrestrial Trunked Radio) *secure* digital wide area radio network used by Police and Ambulance services throughout England, Scotland and Wales.

1.2.2 The project will replace each FRS's current main scheme radio technology with a single wide-area communications capability in England, Scotland and Wales.

## **2 INFORMATION**

### **2.1 FiReControl**

2.1.1 The FiReControl project will deliver a network of nine regional-based control centres, in new purpose-built accommodation equipped with modern technology. The project aims to deliver the following:

- greater ability to use control centre capacity nationally to meet extremes of operational demand placed on the service (arising, for example, from major incidents or high volumes of calls), thereby delivering an improved service to the public
- increased levels of security and resilience in terms of buildings and technology to ensure continuity of service in case of natural or man-made disasters, or failures of systems
- provide the FRS in England with the operational capabilities that are currently available to only a few, thereby improving the effectiveness of both control room and front line operations. Examples of these capabilities include: provision of risk and other critical operational data to firefighters via mobile data terminals in all appliances or on handheld terminals for officers; making full use of caller location capabilities offered by the telecommunications operators; and provision of tools for risk management and resource planning
- economies of scale in call-handling and incident management, to bring efficiency across the whole service up to the levels achieved by the largest FRS control rooms, while still meeting or exceeding current performance levels
- facilitating and enabling further change within the FRS, for example partnership working between FRSs.

2.1.2 While the new control centres will introduce and make possible major changes across the Fire and Rescue Service, the overall responsibility for all aspects of their operation will remain with FRAs. This will be achieved by virtue of the fact that FRAs within a given region will have political ownership of the company which will be established to govern the RCC. Yorkshire and Humberside's local authority controlled company (LACC) is due to be formally established in Sept/Oct 2008 but it is already operating in a shadow board capacity by means of Regional Management Board representation.

2.1.3 The Regional Control Centres will be located at:

North East:	Belmont Business Park, Durham
North West:	Lingley Mere Business Park, Warrington, Cheshire
Yorkshire and Humberside:	Paragon Business Park, Wakefield, West Yorkshire
East of England:	Cambridge Research Park
East Midlands:	Willow Farm Business Park, Castle Donington, Leicestershire
West Midlands:	Wolverhampton Business Park
South West:	Blackbrook Business Park, Taunton, Somerset.
South East:	Kite's Croft, Fareham, Hampshire.
London:	Merton Industrial Park, Morden.

## **2.2 Firelink**

- 2.2.1 The Firelink project is an essential national investment in radio communications for the Fire and Rescue Service. It will bring improved resilience and interoperability within the service and with other blue light services and, as such will play an important part in making sure the Fire and Rescue Service can respond to all types of incidents. It will support national roaming for all FRS vehicles, allowing resources to work beyond their own boundaries and communicate more readily with the police and ambulance service. It will also bring better voice quality and improved security of communications traffic by the emergency services.
- 2.2.2 The current FRS radio systems are the responsibility of individual fire authorities. This has led to differences in the type and nature of existing systems and has limited the level of interoperability between fire brigades and with the other emergency services. The majority of existing wide area radio systems, installed in the 1970s, are now becoming obsolete and expensive to maintain. Following the events of 11<sup>th</sup> September 2001 it became necessary for the FRS and other emergency services to prepare to respond to a major terrorist or other incident in a more effective and professional way.
- 2.2.3 Given the new challenge of developing a major incident response capability, Ministers reviewed this strategy and considered a number of options for replacing FRS radio systems. In May 2002, Ministers announced a new competition for the procurement of a national wide area radio system for the fire and rescue services in England and Wales called Firelink to replace the existing regional strategy that had been progressing for a number of years up to that point. This resulted in the award of the Firelink contract in March 2006 to the supplier O2 Airwave.
- 2.2.4 Governments CLG department is centrally managing, supporting and funding the implementation of Firelink. Scotland has since joined the Firelink project with the Scottish Executive funding the installation in Scotland. The Firelink project is also designed to meet the requirement to ensure voice communication at major incidents between the fire, police and ambulance services. The achievement of radio interoperability across the three primary emergency services (and a small number of others, including the Ministry of Defence) is being managed by overview governance arrangements. The project is scheduled for completion in late 2009.
- 2.2.5 Firelink will act as the enabler for FiReControl to operate effectively, which will modernise fire service controls and operational mobilising in England by a phased migration from the current 46 control rooms to the nine Regional Control Centres.
- 2.2.5 Operational continuity measures have focused on improving interoperability now and refreshing infrastructure, where this has been necessary prior to replacement with the Firelink system.

### **3 TIMESCALES**

#### **3.1 FiReControl**

3.1.1 The rollout of Regional Control Centres will take place during 2010-11. The Yorkshire and Humberside RCC is scheduled to be fully operative in May 2011.

#### **3.2 Firelink**

3.2.1 The Firelink project is being delivered in 3 distinct phases.

Phase A: Installation of communications facilities in five operational vehicles commencing June 9<sup>th</sup> 2008. This trial of the system will run until the end of July 2008 the purpose of which is to assess the effectiveness of communications between WYFRS control room and mobile appliances prior to the fit out in all appliances and officer cars.

Phase B: Pending successful conclusion of Phase A, Phase B involves the installation across the entire WYFRS operational fleet and selected ancillary vehicles. This is scheduled to commence on December 15<sup>th</sup> 2008 and will run until mid March 2009. On successful completion of this Phase the existing main scheme radio will be de-commissioned.

Phase C: Phase C is when each FRS cuts over to the new Regional Control Centres and full functionality of the system is achieved. Phase C is currently scheduled for January 2011 for West Yorkshire.

### **4 PROJECT DELIVERY**

4.1 The WYFRS FiReControl/Firelink Rollout Board is the main decision making body for both projects. Chaired by the DCFO, the Board consists of relevant heads of department, project team members and representatives from the technology providers of both projects.

4.2 The Board oversees four constituent working groups that deliver the relevant sub-sections of the two projects. These are:

#### **Firelink Rollout Group**

- determines efficient assurance of delivery of Firelink.

#### **FiReControl/Firelink Training Group**

- addresses training issues across both projects.

#### **FiReControl Data Transition Group**

- addresses issues arising from data transition and migration to ensure compatibility with the RCCs data formats and systems.

#### FiReControl Convergence Group

- addresses issues of harmonisation regarding terminology, operational procedures and common ways of working to ensure operational compatibility with the RCC new way of working arrangements.

- 4.3 The National FiReControl Project team disseminates work, following approval by FRS Principal Officers who meet monthly at the national Senior Operations Group (SOG), to FRSs via centrally funded Regional Project Support offices (RPSO). Yorkshire and Humbersides' RPSO is based here in West Yorkshire.
- 4.4 Each FRS has a funded full time project Co-ordinator. WYFRS also provides a deputy co-ordinator to ensure project continuity, a full-time team of 3 to carry out convergence work and will shortly appoint a team of 3 to carry out data transition and migration work.
- 4.5 The national Firelink Team provide regional Delivery and Co-ordination Managers to assist Firelink co-ordinators in each FRS. The FiReControl Co-ordinator and Deputy also co-ordinate the Firelink project within WYFRS

## **5 CURRENT STATUS**

### **5.1 FiReControl**

- 5.1.1 The FiReControl/Firelink Co-ordinator maintains a detailed transition plan that indicates planned tasks and responsibilities. Currently, preparations for data transition and migration, convergence work and preparation of plans for re-allocation of out-of-scope activities are foremost. Out-of-scope activities are identified tasks that our current control room undertakes but that the RCC will not. One of the major convergence activities, the introduction of a national format for appliance and officer call signs, will be introduced in WYFRS in mid 2009. Numerous events have taken place to ensure staff awareness of both projects. The FiReControl/Firelink Co-ordinator carries out regular station visits to update operational staff on progress.
- 5.1.2 To ensure operational continuity and efficiency up until cut over to the RCC, work is in progress to install a new integrated command and control system (ICCS) in the current control room. This will allow West Yorkshire to fit mobile data terminals as part of phase B Firelink installations and secure the use of status update data capability.
- 5.1.3 The next iteration of the national business case will be published on 30<sup>th</sup> June 2008. It is expected that regional annexes will accompany the business case providing additional information relative to the Yorkshire and Humberside region however, it is unlikely to include detail of national cost apportionment of resilience costs between regions.

## **5.2 Firelink**

- 5.2.1 Plans for Phase A are well established with relevant personnel having received training during May 2008 in preparation. Plans for Phase B are also advanced with training for all operational staff planned for late 2008. WYFRS have secured early delivery of mobile data terminals from CLG in order to maintain its status messaging facility. These will be installed alongside the Firelink radios during Phase B.

## **6 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 The Authority has provided CLG with analysis of expenditure in 2006/7, which will be used by them to calculate the potential savings once cutover is achieved. These savings will then be compared to the cost of the RCC to establish whether genuine savings have been accrued by WYFRA.
- 6.2 CLG have discussed their assumptions with regional treasurers who have been allowed to comment prior to the release of the revised business case. This took the form of a general discussion rather than a detailed consultation exercise therefore the next iteration must be seen as a CLG document rather than a locally verified study.

## **7 EQUALITY & FAIRNESS ISSUES**

- 7.1 All appointments to the teams outlined above have been made within the parameters of equality and fairness selection procedures.

## **8 CONCLUSIONS**

- 8.1 WYFRS are meeting all timelines and requirements. Plans for all aspects of both projects are in place and are being continually monitored and adjusted where required to meet the requirements of both WYFRS and the FiReControl and Firelink national projects.