



Highland Performance Report

Covering the activities and performance in support of the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland



SCOTTISH
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE
Working together for a safer Scotland

April - September 2023

**Working together
for a safer Scotland**



ABOUT THE STATISTICS IN THIS REPORT

The activity totals and other statistics quoted in this report are provisional in nature and subject to change as a result of ongoing quality assurance and review.

Because all statistics quoted are provisional there may be differences in the period totals quoted in our reports after original publication which result from revisions or additions to the data on our systems.

From 2015-16 onwards responsibility for the publication of end-year statistical data transferred from the Scottish Government to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS). This change of responsibility does not change the status of the figures quoted in this and other SFRS reports reported to the Committee.

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INTRODUCTION

The 6-monthly monitoring report covers the SFRS's performance and activities in support of the six priorities in the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland:

- Priority 1 – Domestic Fire Safety
- Priority 2 – Unintentional Harm
- Priority 3 – Non-Fire Emergencies
- Priority 4 – Deliberate Fire Setting
- Priority 5 – Non-Domestic Fire Safety
- Priority 6 – Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals
- Priority 7 – Operational Resilience and Preparedness















As well as supporting the six priorities in the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland, this monitoring report shows how SFRS activities and performance contribute to the wider priorities of the Highland Council Community Planning Partnership (CPP), as set out in the Highland Community Plan.

The figures in this report are provisional, to provide the Committee with the SFRS's direction of travel in the Highland area, in terms of performance against headline indicators and targets. Most figures will not change; however, members should note that there may be some small variations for some indicators when the final confirmed figures are published by the SFRS.

The Highland Council Scrutiny and Audit Committee agreed to the Local Fire and Rescue Plan for Highland, covering the subsequent 3-year period. In support of delivering the priorities in this plan, 14 headline indicators and targets have been set, and form the basis of the report.

PERFORMANCE SUMMARY

The table below provides a summary of the six-months (April - September 2023) activity and year-to-date (YTD) progress, based on annual targets set against headlines indicators. It aims to provide – at a glance – our direction of travel during the current reporting year.

Q1 & Q2: All Incidents Attended – 2003		
<p>HI 1 Accident Dwelling Fires</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 47 Incidents YTD – 47 Incidents</p>	<p>HI 2 ADF Fatal Casualties</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 0 YTD – 0</p>	<p>HI 3 ADF Non-Fatal Casualties</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 3 YTD – 3</p>
<p>HI 4 Home Fire Safety Visits</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 1025 Visits YTD – 1025 Visits Annual Target – 4000</p>	<p>HI 5 Non-Fire Emergency</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 373 Incidents YTD – 373 Incidents</p>	<p>HI 6 Road Traffic Collisions (RTC)</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 99 Incidents YTD – 99 Incidents</p>
<p>HI 7 Fatal RTC Casualties</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 3 YTD – 3</p>	<p>HI 8 Non-Fatal RTC Casualties</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 67 YTD – 67</p>	<p>HI 9 Deliberate Fires</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 158 Incidents YTD – 158 Incidents</p>
<p>HI 10 Deliberate Primary Fires</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 33 Incidents YTD – 33 Incidents</p>	<p>HI 11 Deliberate Secondary Fires</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 125 Incidents YTD – 125 Incidents</p>	<p>H12 Non Domestic Fires</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 52 Incidents YTD – 52 Incidents</p>
<p>HI 13 Fire Safety Enforcement Audits</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 161 Audits YTD – 161 Audits Annual Target – 592</p>	<p>HI 14 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals</p>  <p>Q1 & Q2 – 525 Incidents YTD – 525 Incidents</p>	

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Of the 14 headline indicators and targets, the following performance should be noted for the six-month period April to September 2023:

- There were **47 Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)** which is below the 3-year average. The majority are classed as low severity, requiring little or no intervention from the Service and minimal fire damage. There were **0 ADF Fatalities**, and **3 ADF Casualties**. All ADF's are offered HFSV's and agency referrals where required.
- We attended **99 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)** which is above average. There were **3 RTC Related Fatalities and 67 RTC Related Injuries**. The number is comparable to previous years and our Prevention teams are working with partner agencies through the Highland Road Safety group, Older driver Virtual Reality Scheme and Road Safety Scheme for new drivers.
- A total of **158 Deliberate Fires**, these include **33 Deliberate Primary Fires and 125 Deliberate Secondary Fires** which is above the 3-year average. Referrals are made to other agencies for those at risk within our communities.
- There were **52 Non-Domestic Building Fires** which is average.
- We undertook **161 Fire Safety Enforcement Audits. Supported Short Term Let enquiries and work streams, concluded 3 prohibitions and 3 current action plans**
- We attended **525 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)** this is below the 3-year average. From the 1st July, the way we attend UFAS changed (See Appendix 2). **As a result, there was a significant reduction in Q2 (196) in comparison to Q1 (329).**
- Our Community Safety Advocates and Station personnel undertook **1025 Home Fire Safety Visits**. The majority targeted the most at risk in our communities.
- From the 1st April – 30th September we have paid our On-Call employees over 30k to complete Home Fire Safety Visits.
- Our firefighters continue to train in all aspects of their role to ensure they are operationally prepared for what is required and we continued to gather information on local risks to assist us in an emergency through our operational intelligence visits and exercises.
- We continue to support partnership delivery of road safety programmes with our partners as well as working to reduce fire-related antisocial behaviour through targeted youth engagement activities and thematic action plans, as well as our Youth Volunteer programme and Fire Skills courses.
- In areas of Highland, we have seen successful recruitment and availability (**16 appliances above 90% and 33 above 70%**). However, we do face some challenges in areas where population levels are low or decreasing. To support our On-Call stations, increase recruitment and provide cover we employ 11 full-time rural Watch Commanders (the highest number across Scotland) and have rolled our two Highland trials to support availability.
- A joint mobilising process whereby two appliances who do not have safe minimum crewing numbers available can meet at an agreed rendezvous point to give them enough crew to safely respond to the incident;
- A formalised process which will allow On-Call staff to undertake paid duties at other stations to increase their staffing levels, undertake prevention activities and thereby increase appliance availability.
- The improvements and learning we have made have assisted in the On-Call improvement programme and recommendations to improve the service.
- Across Highland, we have **96 people in the recruitment process** for On-Call.

There has been a large increase in local initiatives, some of which you can see in Appendix 1 highlighting the fantastic work our crews are involved in, away from emergency response.

PRIORITY 1 – DOMESTIC FIRE SAFETY

HI 1 – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)

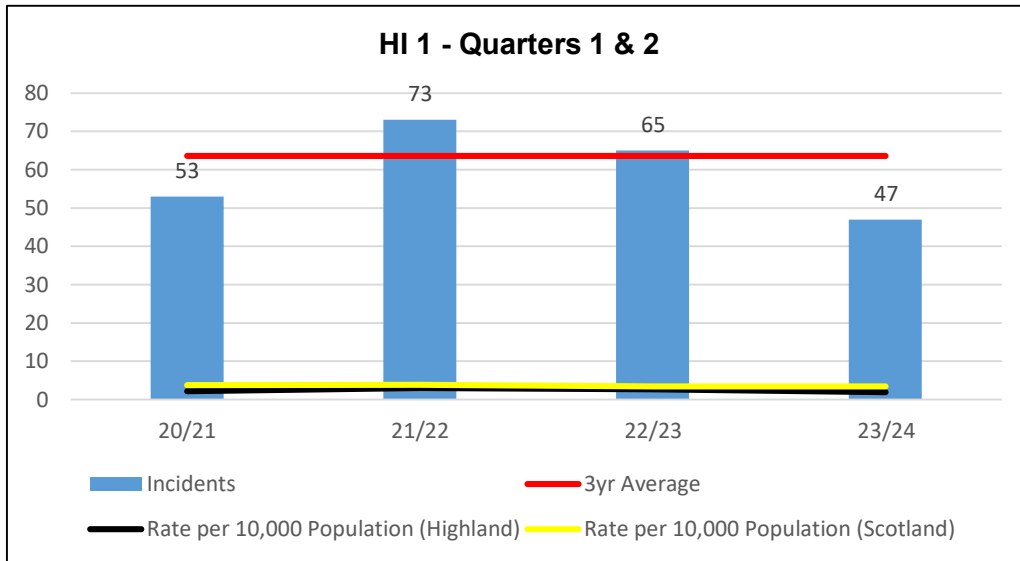


Table 12023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 1: ADF's	53	73	65	47

HI 2 - ADF Fatal Casualties & HI 3 - ADF Non-Fatal Casualties

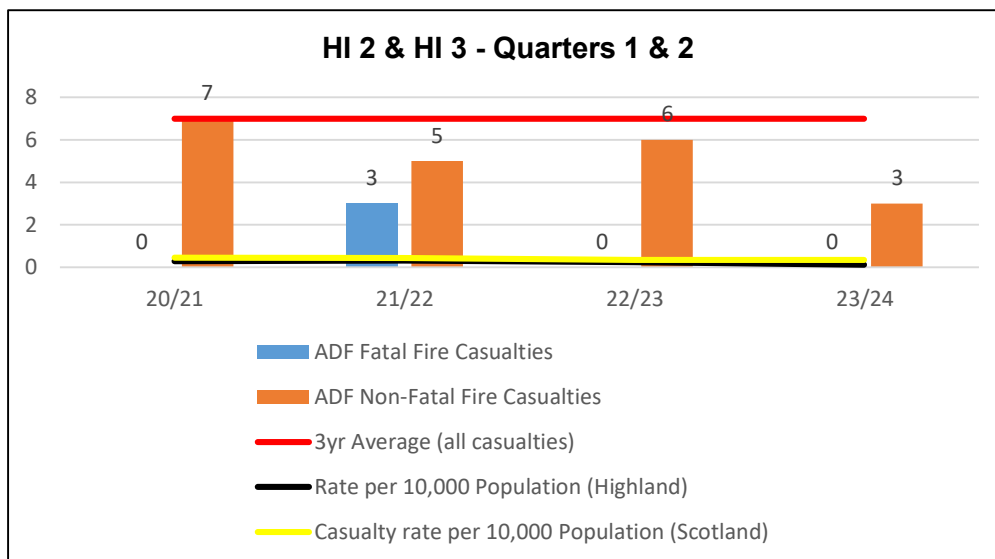


Table 2: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 2: ADF Fatal Casualties	0	3	0	0
HI 3: ADF Non-Fatal Casualties	7	5	6	3

What we aim to Achieve

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

There were **0 ADF Fatalities** for this period and year to date

There were **3 ADF Casualties** which is below the 3-yearly average. Furthermore, the overall **47 Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)** is lower than previous years and well below the 3-year average. The majority are classed as low severity, requiring little or no intervention from the Service and minimal fire damage.

All ADF's are followed up with HFSV's and agency referrals where required.

PRIORITY 2 – UNINTENTIONAL HARM

HI 4 – Home Fire Safety Visits

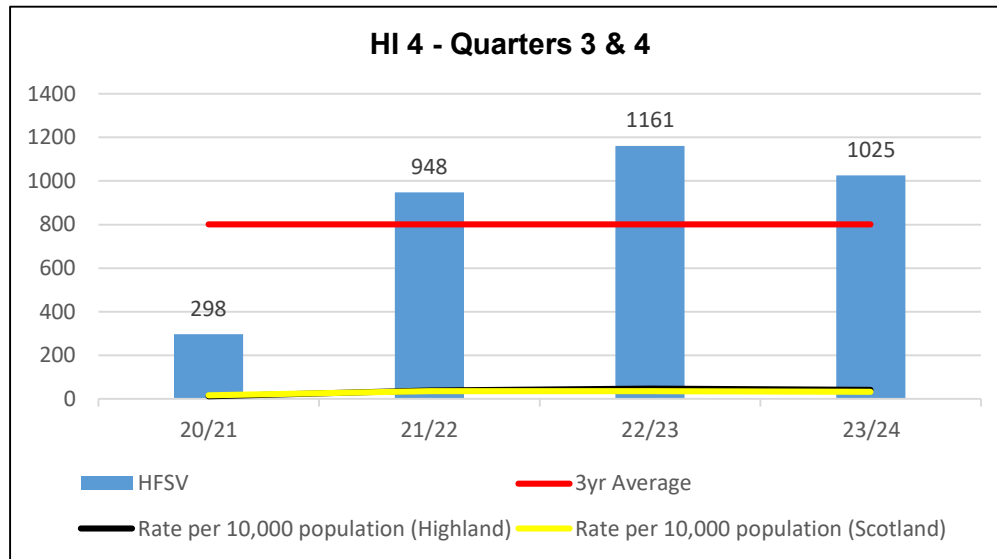


Table 3: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 4: Home Fire Safety Visits	298	948	1161	1025

What we aim to Achieve

- 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

Our Community Safety Advocates and Station personnel undertook **1025 Home Fire Safety Visits**. Post COVID the Highland area have cleared a substantial backlog of requested HFSV's. As a result, any High-risk referrals made to us they are completed within 4 weeks unless the individual is still in care or require a multi-agency visit and subject to availability of other agencies.

In this period we have made 13 referrals to partners, including, NHS Police Scotland, Child wellbeing and Deaf services.

PRIORITY 3 – Non-Fire Emergencies

HI 5 – Non-Fire Emergency Incidents (this figure includes RTCs)

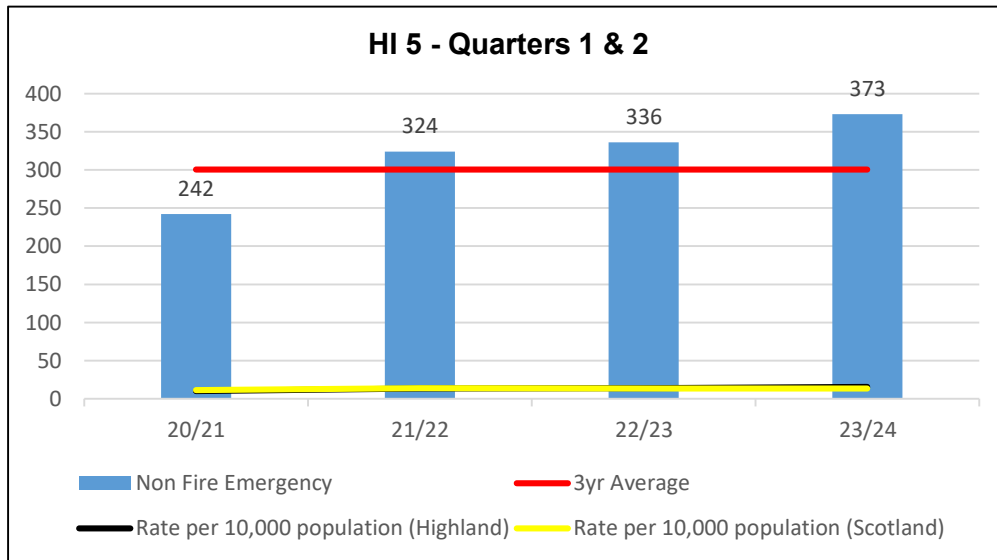


Table 4: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 5: Non-Fire Emergency Incidents (all Special Service)	242	324	336	373

HI 6 – Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Incidents

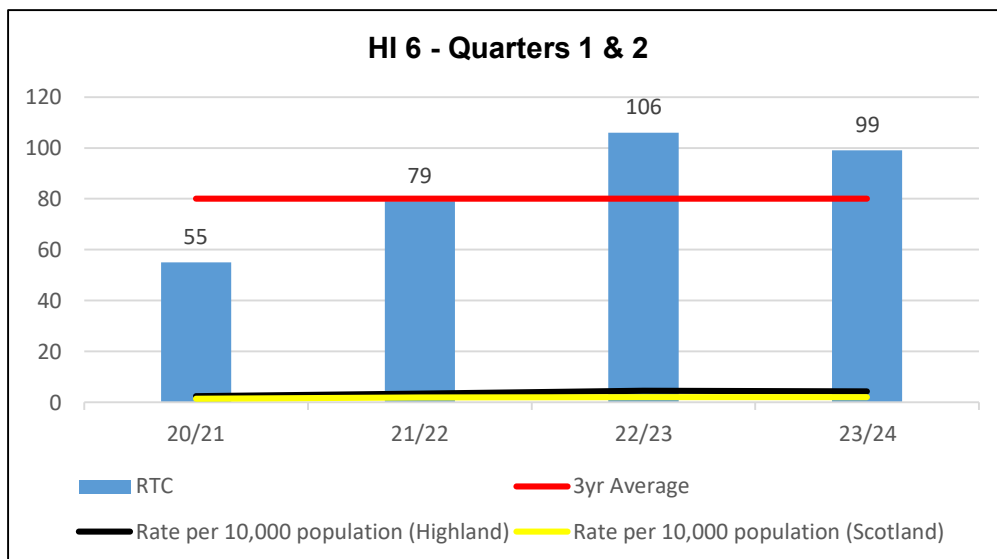


Table 5: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 6: RTC Incidents	55	79	106	99

HI 7 – Fatal RTC Casualties & HI 8 – Non-Fatal RTC Casualties

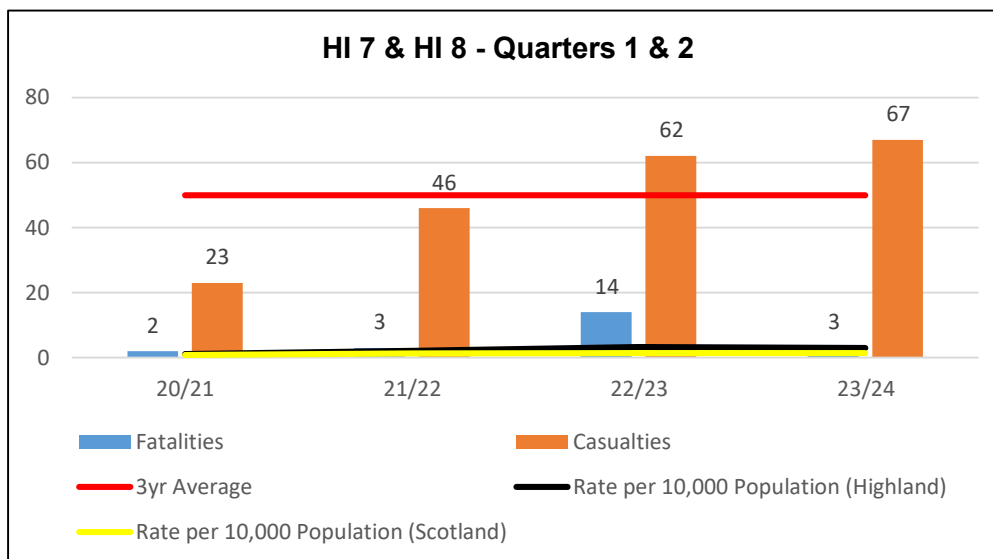


Table 6: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 7: Fatal RTC Casualties	2	3	14	3
HI 8: Non-Fatal RTC Casualties	23	46	62	67

What we aim to Achieve

- 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

We attended **373 Non- fire emergencies** during this period which has shown an increase. The type of incidents includes RTC's. Inter-agency, animal assist, water rescue and Hazardous Materials.

We attended **99 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)** which is above average, however, lower than the previous year. There were **3 RTC Related Fatalities** which is **significantly lower than the previous year.** and **67 RTC Related Injuries.** The number is higher than in previous years and **our Prevention teams are working with partner agencies through the Highland Road Safety group, Older Driver Virtual Reality Scheme and Road Safety Scheme for new drivers.**

We have **purchased 5 additional community access Automated External Defibrillators (AED)** to be installed outside fire stations bringing our total community access AED's to 17. Events are now planned to deliver CPR and AED training to our local communities.

PRIORITY 4 – DELIBERATE FIRES

HI 9 – Deliberate Fires

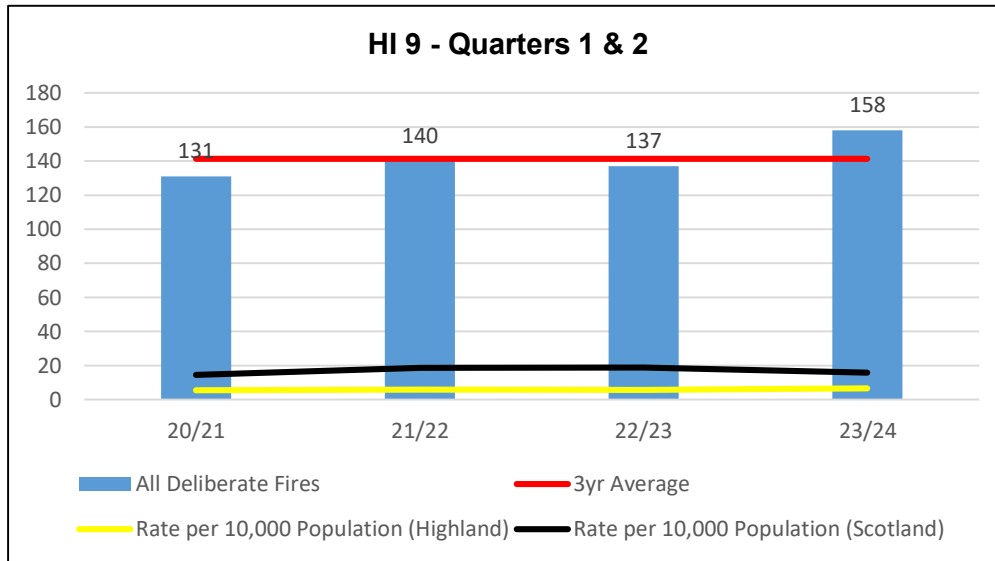


Table 7: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 9: Deliberate Fires	131	140	137	158

HI 10 – Deliberate Primary Fires

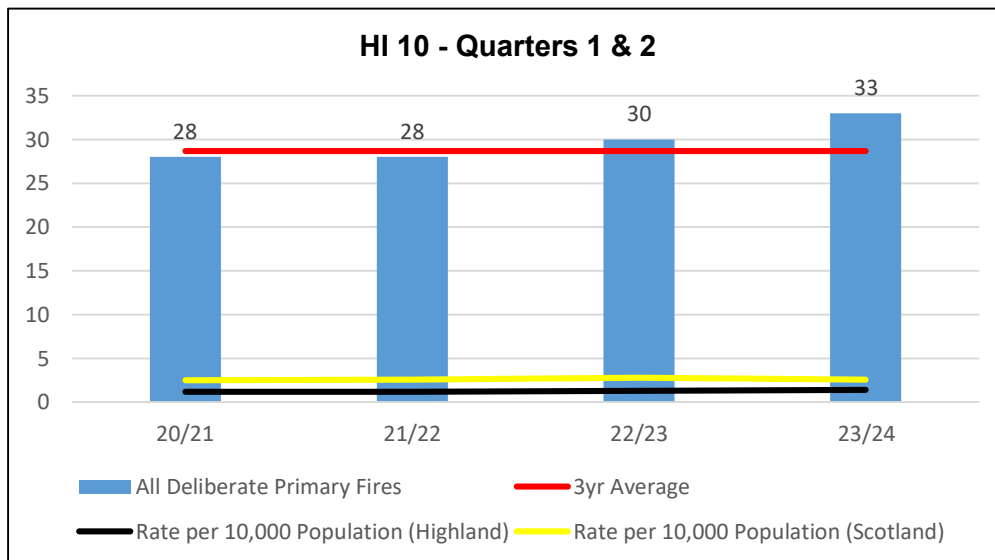


Table 8: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 10: Deliberate Primary Fires	28	28	30	33

HI 11 – Deliberate Secondary Fires

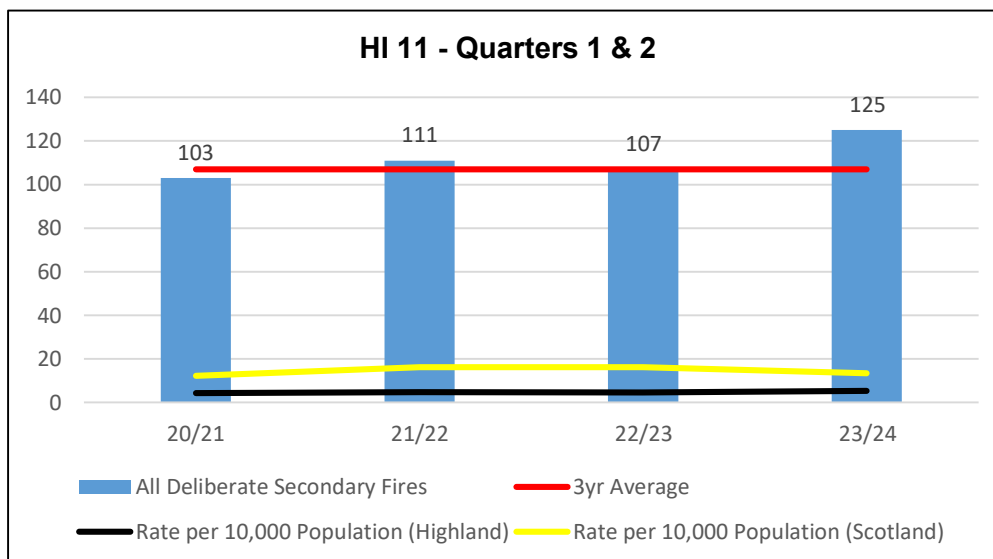


Table 9: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 11: Deliberate Secondary Fires	103	111	107	125

What we aim to Achieve

- 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

Deliberate fires 158 for the period, higher than the previous year and slightly above the 3-yearly average.

Deliberate primary fires 33 for the period, higher than the previous year and slightly above the 3-yearly average.

Deliberate secondary fires 125 for the period, higher than the previous year and slightly above the 3-yearly average.

The number of deliberate fires was below the National average per 10,000 of the population.

Our Station personnel have undertaken engagement activities with Prevention teams in targeted areas and information sessions at Schools, clubs and recreation areas.

Since the 1st April we have delivered two further Fireskills courses (Thurso in May, Kyle of Lochalsh in September 2023), with 20 attendees. Further courses are planned this year.

PRIORITY 5 – Non-Domestic Fire Safety

HI 12 – Non-Domestic Building Fires

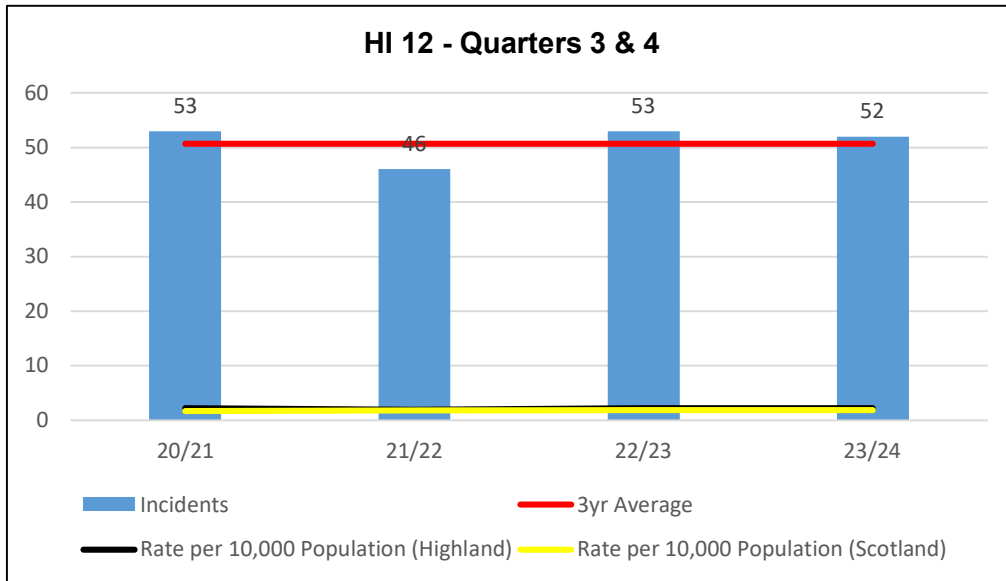


Table 10: 2022/23 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 12: Non-Domestic Building Fires	53	46	53	52

HI 13 – Fire Safety Enforcement Audits

A total of 161 audits were undertaken during Quarters 1 and 2.

What we aim to Achieve

- 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

We attended **52 non-domestic building fires** this period which is comparable to last year.

To support our communities in complying with their obligations we have conducted **161 audits during this period**. The numbers were affected by a number of retirements, new team members currently studying for the required qualifications and our teams answering questions and giving advice on the introduction of Short term let licensing.

Our Fire Safety Officers also concluded **3 prohibitions from earlier in the year and 3 current action plans on non-domestic buildings** and are working with the responsible persons for compliance.

PRIORITY 6 – REDUCING UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS

HI 14 – Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

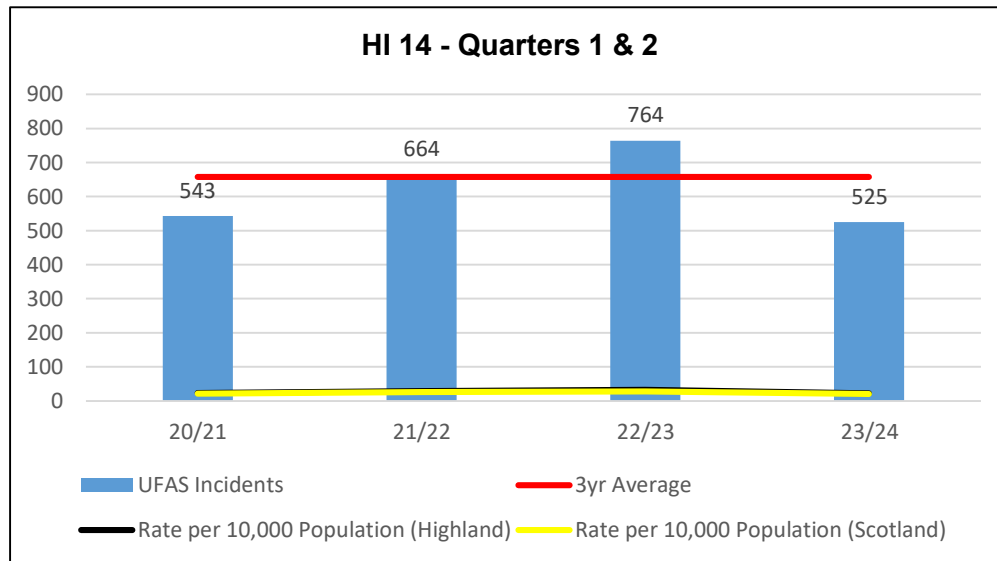


Table 11: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 14: UFAS Incidents	543	664	764	525

What we aim to Achieve

- 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

We attended **525 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)** this is below the 3-year average and shows a decrease for the year. From the 1st July, the way we attend UFAS changed (See Appendix 2). **As a result, there was a significant reduction in Q2 (196) in comparison to Q1 (329).**

We have continued our engagement with these premises and made recommendations to reduce occurrences.

One of the priorities of SFRS is to reduce the amount of UFAS calls we attend. The Fire Safety Enforcement Officer (FSEO) engage with duty holders during the audit process to offer advice on reducing unwanted activations including considering cost-effective technical solutions (e.g.re-positioning fire detector heads and changing detector types).

PRIORITY 7 – OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE AND PREPAREDNESS

What we aim to Achieve

- 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

During this period, we delivered our quarterly training commitment to operational firefighters, whereby we trained and tested their preparedness to deal with a variety of incident types.

Firefighters continue to carry out Operational Intelligence within their station area so that they are aware of the associated risks and hazards, and if required can take effective actions in dealing with incidents at these sites. All this information is continually updated on our tablets carried on frontline appliances thus giving our staff information at the point of need.

In areas of Highland, we have seen successful recruitment and availability (**16 appliances above 90% and 33 above 70%**). However, we do face some challenges in areas where population levels are low or decreasing.

To support our On-Call stations, increase recruitment and provide cover we employ 11 full-time rural Watch Commanders (the highest number across Scotland) and have rolled our two Highland trials to support availability.

- A joint mobilising process whereby two appliances who do not have safe minimum crewing numbers available can meet at an agreed rendezvous point to give them enough crew to safely respond to the incident.
- A formalised process which will allow On-Call staff to undertake paid duties at other stations to increase their staffing levels, undertake prevention activities and thereby increase appliance availability.

Since the 1st April 2023, there have been 11 successful Joint mobilisations and over 6k spent on paid duties resulting in hundreds of hours of additional availability for Highland (Note this will not reflect in the availability figures).

The improvements and learning we have made have assisted in the On-Call improvement programme and future recommendations.

Station Establishment and Availability

- 2 x Wholetime Duty System appliances at 1 Station
- 61 x On-Call Retained Duty System appliances across 52 Stations
- 6 x On-Call Volunteer Duty System vehicles / Community Response Units across 6 Stations

These Stations serve the 238'00 Highland population (Highland.gov.uk)

***Please note the availability figures do not include Joint Mobilising availability.**

Station	Apr – Sept 23 Availability* %	Male	Female	Staff
Acharacle	52.28%	5	0	5
Achiltibuie	9.16%	6	0	6
Applecross	60.43%	4	1	5
Aultbea	88.84%	10	0	10
Aviemore	87.81%	10	1	11
Balintore (CRU)	N/A	7	0	7
Beauly	76.61%	11	0	11
Bettyhill	21.48%	5	0	5
Bonar Bridge	7.50%	4	1	5
Broadford	41.62%	5	1	6
Cannich	0.51%	3	0	3
Carrbridge (CRU)	N/A	5	1	6
Cromarty (CRU)	N/A	6	2	8
Dingwall - 1st Appliance	99.29%	17	1	18
Dingwall - 2nd Appliance	74.67%			
Dornoch	99.18%	13	0	13
Drumnadrochit	81.48%	11	1	12
Dunbeath	44.67%	8	0	8
Dunvegan	47.80%	4	1	5
Durness	90.53%	7	0	7
Fort Augustus	81.69%	8	2	10
Fort William – 1 st Appliance	100%	18	1	19
Fort William – 2 nd Appliance	90.10%			
Fortrose	52.32%	5	3	8
Foyers	71.60%	8	0	8
Gairloch	91.02%	8	2	10
Glenelg	80.23%	5	1	6
Golspie	87.20%	10	0	10
Grantown – 1 st Appliance	90.99%	7	1	8
Grantown – 2 nd Appliance	17.02%			
Helmsdale	74.78%	7	0	7
Invergordon - 1st Appliance	99.99%	17	2	19
Invergordon - 2nd Appliance	66.76%			
Inverness Retained	91.10%	14	1	15
Inverness Wholetime *	N/A	62	10	72
John O Groats	59.39%	9	0	9

Kilchoan	28.87%	4	1	5
Kingussie	90.57%	10	0	10
Kinlochbervie	64.55%	6	1	7
Kinlochewe	65.71%	6	0	6
Kinlochleven – 1 st Appliance	84.15%	9	3	12
Kinlochleven – 2 nd Appliance	8.75%			
Kyle	94.85%	12	0	12
Lairg	92.98%	8	1	9
Lochaline	45.80%	3	2	5
Lochcarron	22.63%	4	0	4
Lochinver	0%	2	0	2
Lybster (CRU)	N/A	5	1	6
Mallaig	78.91%	6	0	6
Muck (CRU)	N/A	0	1	1
Nairn – 1 st Appliance	97.75%	19	1	20
Nairn – 2 nd Appliance	72.59%			
Nethybridge (CRU)	N/A	0	0	0
Newtonmore (CRU)	N/A	9	0	9
Portree	83.32%	8	0	8
Raasay	81.15%	5	0	5
Ratagan (CRU)	N/A	0	0	0
Scourie	0.05%	2	1	3
Spean Bridge (CRU)	N/A	9	0	9
Staffin	0%	2	1	3
Strontian	54.37%	6	2	8
Tain	89.70%	12	0	12
Thurso - 1st Appliance	99.32%	16	2	18
Thurso - 2nd Appliance	46.60%			
Tongue	0%	4	0	4
Torridon	65.28%	4	4	8
Uig	43.53%	5	0	5
Ullapool - 1st Appliance	98.94%	14	4	18
Ullapool - 2nd Appliance	85.68%			
Wick - 1st Appliance	97.54%	18	0	18
Wick - 2nd Appliance	62.99%			

585 Station based personnel

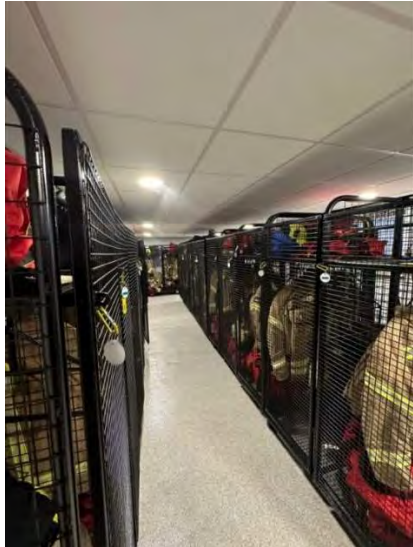



11 Rural Wholetime Watch Commanders

11 Station Commanders, 3 Group Commanders, 1 Area Commander

In addition, Prevention, Protection, Training, non-operational and business support staff

APPENDIX 1: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

This section provides details of community safety engagement programmes undertaken within Highland during the first and second quarter of 2023-24, in support of our priorities.

Inverness Fire Station Refurbishment	
<p>Inverness Fire Station is the first within Scotland to have dedicted decontamination facilities and routes for firefighters.</p> <p>All staff have been involved in the programme of work and how this can help improve and inform future works.</p> <p>The next programme of work for refurbishment is Dingwall Fire Station, plans for a new Station at Uig and further projects across Highland.</p>	
	
New Fire appliances come to Highland	
	<p>New Fire appliances come to Highland</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thurso 26th September 2023 • Lochcarron 19th October 20223 • Strontian 25th October 2023 • Kinlochbervie, Dornoch Date TBC

Recruitment and rural communities



A family Holiday to Skye led to a new career and a new life for German born Miriam. The On Call firefighter is now appealing to others to follow in her footsteps to protect rural communities.

Cuppa with the Crew events to be held again across the Highland area during the winter months

Thurso Fire Station open day raises an amazing £131.50

Working together for a safer Scotland

CUPPA WITH THE CREW AT INVERGORDON FIRE STATION

Come along to Invergordon Fire Station on Monday 30th October from 2-5pm where we will be providing somewhere warm for a chat, a hot drink, and some biscuits, completely free of charge. All are welcome.

With Halloween & Bonfire Night both taking place next week we will also be providing some seasonal safety information for all ages.

Thurso Community Fire Station @ThursoFire_ · Sep 11

What an absolute amazing day we had for our open day ☀️ We raised a total of £1371.50 and we couldn't have done it if it wasn't for the generous community that came to see us. Thanks everyone for coming & to all the volunteers, suppliers other agencies for the support #SFRS

150 - Highland and 2 others

Fireskills courses back up and running

Michael Humphreys @Mike_Humphreys_ · May 25

Really pleased to be at Thurso community fire station for the Fire Skills pass out presentation @SFRSYourSafety @LSQ_Highland @HighlandCouncil

Since the 1st April we have delivered two further Fireskills courses:

Thurso in May
Kyle of Lochalsh in September

with 20 attendees. Further courses are planned this year.

Fort William demonstrate their skills during a local Councillor visit

Che Scott @Che_Scott_SFRS · Nov 1
 It was great to welcome Councillor Sarah Fanet to Fort William Fire Station last night. The crews were able to demonstrate their skills in the yard and gave Councillor Fanet an opportunity to talk with the crews and meet our new trainees to talk about their journey so far.



Foyers Joint training with Scottish Ambulance Service

Stewart Macpherson @foyersfirle · Oct 20
 Foyers and @FAfirestation had some invaluable joint training and familiarisation with Scottish ambulance service, if attending incidents and @Scotambservice ask us to get a bit off kit, we will be able to assist, partnership working.



Firefighter Trainee courses



Trainee Courses this period

April 2023 Trainees

Kinlochleven x 2, Drumnadrochit, Torridon, Beauly, Kyle, Invergordon.

June 2023 Trainees

Staffin, Aviemore, Kyle of Lochlash x 2, Invergordon, Golspie, Beauly, Bonar Bridge, Fortrose, Altbea.

September 2023 Trainees

Aultbea, Fort Augustus, Portree, Achiltibuie, Invergordon, Fortrose, Thurso.

“Things are Hotting up” on Skye with the release of a Charity music video

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service @fire_scot · Sep 1
 Our German isn't up to scratch, but we're pretty sure this means our on call firefighters at @DunveganFire rock!

While listening to "Things Are Hotting Up", why not consider joining our on call band? 🎵

ow.ly/pRWI50PFQL5



We released the video to a very positive reception! It has been viewed over 100,000 times on social media (over 49k times on Dunvegan's twitter page alone) – it was promoted on various accounts on Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, LinkedIn as well as YouTube and Instagram.

An online recruitment session for the Skye & Raasay district were also promoted with 11 attendees (5 were female, 6 male).

As a result, 9 people are in the recruitment process for the Skye and Raasay district

Wildfires

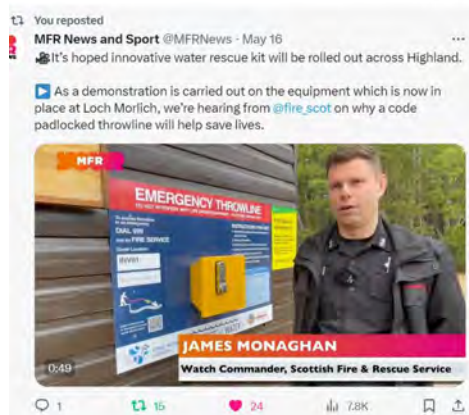


There were a number of Wildfire this period.

MSP Kate Forbes lodged a motion of thanks to Firefighters who tackled the Wildfire in Cannich amongst others.



Portsafe boards coming across the Highland area



- Aviemore
- Inverness coming soon
- Other locations to be announced

Highland Councillor engagement sessions



- April 2023 – Invergordon Community Fire Station and Training Centre
- October 2023 – Via video conference

Thank you for all those who attended and contributed to the sessions.

APPENDIX 2: Recent Questions & Answers

Development of Local Fire and Rescue Plans

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board has made the decision to postpone the development of new Local Fire and Rescue Plans.

As you will be aware SFRS, like all public bodies, is facing challenging financial and operational circumstances. In May 2022, the publication of the Scottish Government's Resource Spending Review (RSR) indicated a flat cash budget for resource and capital spending for the period 2023/24 to 2026/27. Since publication, and the subsequent additional funding awarded by Scottish Government for 2023/24, we have continued to review the funding available to us and the changes we require to make to achieve potential savings options.

We have developed a package of change proposals to address the financial challenges we face this year. For 2023/24, this includes the temporary withdrawal of ten appliances; a reduction of High Reach Appliances; the move to dual crewing for both fire and water rescue at Polmadie; the closure of our West Service Delivery Area Headquarters at Hamilton; and a review of our Corporate Services.

However, we will need to make further changes in coming years. We will be consulting on proposals to make permanent changes next year and therefore, we don't feel that we can, at this point, ask you to consider local priorities for your area when we expect that more change will follow.

In the meantime, we will complete a review of current Local Fire and Rescue Plans, and we will be able to share these reports with you by the end of the year. This will be used to help inform our options development process for service changes next year and we will be including key stakeholders, including local authorities, in this process.

We would anticipate that once we have completed options development and a full public consultation on our proposals, we will be in a position to revise the local plans and ensure they take cognisance of any operational changes we make.

We hope that you understand our rationale for the delay. There is no doubt that difficult decisions will have to be made but we are committed to minimising the impact of our changes. The safety of our communities and staff remains, as always, at the heart of what we do.

We look forward to working with you in the future to discuss wider service change.

RRU / minimum four crew

- We have fire appliances known as Rapid Response Units which are located at various On-Call community fire stations here in the Highland area and across Scotland;
- It was previously stated that we would explore the possibility of crewing these appliances with a minimum of three firefighters as a measure to help improve availability;
- We always indicated this had to be balanced against maintaining the safety of our crews when responding to emergency incidents;
- Following our review, and at this time, we are not in a position to adapt our current safe systems at work and standard operating procedures to crew these vehicles with three firefighters;
- We will therefore continue to maintain the required minimum of a minimum crew of four in the best interests of both our staff and the communities they protect;
- The minimum four crew members must consist of an officer in charge with a valid incident command certificate, a driver with a valid emergency response certificate and two qualified BA wearers;
- Community and firefighter safety will always be our number one priority;
- There are a number of other measures that we are exploring to improve appliance availability and enhance our recruitment and retention of On-Call firefighters.

APPLIANCE AVAILABILITY – MEDIA REPORTING

- We are aware of recent media reports regarding availability in the Highland and elsewhere in our North Service Delivery Area;
- We do of course accept that there are crewing and recruitment challenges, not only here in Highland but across Scotland and the UK.
- A further review of our availability in our most recent performance report shows high levels of availability in the Highland.
- For example, from April – Sept 2023 **16 appliances were above 90% (Fort William 1st and 2nd, Invergordon, Thurso, Dingwall, Dornoch, Ullapool, Nairn, Wick, Kyle, Lairg, Inverness On Call, Gairloch, Grantown, Kingussie, Durness) and 33 above 70%).**
- However, we do face some challenges in areas where population levels are low or decreasing.

OPERATIONAL RESILIENCE – NATIONAL

- We will always maintain fire cover and ensure we continue to attend at every emergency;
- We have capacity and flexibility to operate as a network so that we can strategically place appliances and personnel from stations wherever they may be required;
- Fire stations can temporarily have an insufficient crewing level for a number of reasons – this includes staff training, sickness, multi-agency training exercises for operational preparedness, and other commitments;
- Across Scotland, we have 54 On-Call Support Officers to help maintain appliance availability and assist in the delivery of training;
- We have also introduced a pre-recruitment engagement programme (PREP);

- PREP introduces candidates into the station environment for up to 12 weeks prior to their selection tests and helps them to more fully understand the role and the level of commitment required.

ON-CALL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAMME

- Nationally, we have established an On-Call Improvement Programme;
- This is a comprehensive and full-scale review of how we recruit and retain On-Call firefighters, training and response options and contracts;
- **Attraction and recruitment process** - we aim to improve the candidate experience and communications as well as better preparing candidates for selection tests and identifying their support needs;
- **Training, competence and response matters** - our dedicated and skilled On-Call support officers will assist this and all the projects by providing research and insight from other services across the UK;
- **Contracts** - we will create a suite of potential options for contracts whilst considering how these may influence how stations are crewed;
- I hope that this provides you with an insight into the expansive and innovative steps we are taking to drive continuous improvement in our On-Call capability, not only here in the Highlands but across Scotland

HIGHLAND SPECIFIC MEASURES

- There is no simple solution to crewing challenges but we are doing everything possible to ensure we can provide the best service possible;
- Across Highland, there are 11 full-time on-call support officers who review crewing daily and give On-Call cover during evenings and weekends;
- We have also introduced innovative options to increase appliance availability;
- This includes a joint mobilising process whereby two appliances who do not have safe minimum crewing numbers available can meet at an agreed rendezvous point to give them enough crew to safely respond to the incident;
- We have also introduced a formalised process which will allow On-Call staff to undertake paid duties at other stations to increase their staffing levels, undertake prevention activities and thereby increase appliance availability.

ON-CALL RECRUITMENT

- We currently have 96 people in the recruitment process;
- We are continuing to actively recruit for On-Call firefighters across Highland and local stations throughout Highland hold community open days, events and Fireskills courses;
- Ultimately we need people to step forward and would encourage people from all walks of life to join us as we work to protect our communities;
- We are committed to driving forward improvements and we will continue to engage and work with key stakeholders and communities to achieve this;
- I would also ask that you assist us to help promote our recruitment efforts in the areas you represent;
- I hope this information reassures you not only of our commitment to firefighter and community safety but to enhancing this wherever possible.

AUTOMATIC FIRE ALARM (AFA) - UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS (UFAS)

- Each year, we attend around 28,000 automatic fire alarm (AFA) callouts to commercial business and workplace premises. However, 98% of these are false alarms. We usually mobilise two fire appliances to each AFA call out. This equates to 64,000 productive crew hours lost and 57,000 unnecessary blue light journeys undertaken each year. **It also means that the crew is unable to attend emergencies where lives could be at risk.**
- From 1 July 2023, we stopped attending AFA call outs to commercial business and workplace premises, such as factories, offices, shops and leisure facilities unless a fire has been confirmed. Our control room operators now ask anyone who reports a fire alarm to check whether there is an actual fire or signs of fire, before sending the nearest fire appliance. This does not apply to sleeping premises, such as hospitals, care homes, hotels or domestic dwellings who will receive the full pre-determined attendance (PDA). This change follows the SFRS public consultation in 2021.
- Fire and Rescue Services must make provision for extinguishing fires and for protecting life and property in the event of fires. They must also plan for dealing with calls for help when there is a fire. However, there is no legal duty placed upon them to respond to calls originating from AFA systems for the purpose of establishing whether there is a fire. In relevant premises, as defined by the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005, the employer/owner or persons who exert control over the premises, known as the dutyholder, must as far as is reasonably practicable, ensure that the premises are safe for its occupants in the event of a fire.
- We contacted key stakeholders across Scotland, such as the Scottish Business Resilience Centre, to inform them of this change and ask that they notify their members. We emailed 2,500 dutyholders and 1,000 relevant stakeholders across Scotland on Monday 6 February 2023. We will also be using our website and social media channels to reach as many businesses as possible.

For more information please visit:

[Scottish Fire & Rescue Service: Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals \(UFAS\) \(firescotland.gov.uk\)](https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/unwanted-fire-alarm-signals-ufas/)

COMMUNITY ASSET REGISTER

- The Community Asset Register is a Scotland wide database of volunteers willing to help during an emergency. The database plots assets on a map so if an emergency incident occurs we can identify those who could help. Assets can be people with either skills or equipment.
- There's no obligation on volunteers to provide support, as we will always respond to deal with emergencies. But, if we believe a volunteer could help, we ask if they're available. If they are, we explain where they should go and what they should do.
- Volunteers acting under our instruction, are insured and can claim certain expenses, such as mileage, however we don't pay hourly rates for their time.

To register: <https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/your-area/community-asset-register/>

FINANCE

- On 21 February, the Scottish Parliament approved the budget for public spending in Scotland for the next financial year.
- Our overall funding increased by £11 million (3.1%) to £363.7 million. Our resource budget was set at £304.207 million, an increase of £10 million. The capital budget

remains static at £32.5 million and the remaining £1 million budget increase relates to non-cash budget to cover depreciation of our assets.

- The cost of living has increased pressure on us all and pay negotiations have been challenging. A support staff pay increase of five per cent was agreed for 2022/23 and an increased offer to firefighters of seven per cent for 2022/23 and five per cent for 2023/24 was accepted.
- The Scottish Government's Justice Portfolio intends to allocate an additional £4.4 million at the Autumn Budget Revision to support the recent firefighter pay agreement.
- However, despite this welcomed increase in funding, once we factor in pay rises and inflation to arrive at a final budget, we need to find savings of £11 million to balance our income and expenditure for the year ahead, in line with legal requirements.
- Following on from this, we are prioritising spending in line with **our vision** and **2022-25 Strategic Plan** outcomes
- It is a challenging budget and we are required to make savings this year of £11 million and anticipate flat cash funding in future years will mean further savings will be required for each of the subsequent three financial years to negate inflation and pay increases.
- There will be no compulsory redundancies; and we are in the same financial boat as other public sector organisations in Scotland.
- SLT and our directorates have identified savings for 2023/24 of £11 million and are considering savings for future years.
- We will need to reduce expenditure over the financial year, which we recognise will have an impact on staffing even though it is supported by a no compulsory redundancies policy. Although this is challenging, it is necessary to maintain a balanced budget position and align with the financial parameters set by the Scottish Government.
- The agreed budget enables us to provide the resources to continue to provide an emergency response to fire and rescue incidents, continue recovery from COVID-19, including mental health initiatives, and enable the Service to continue its work on fire prevention and fire safety with vulnerable households. In addition, the proposed budget will be used to maintain our commitment to protecting our staff and communities from new and emerging risks and provide additional resources to support our change portfolio.
- The proposed budget also includes taking positive steps to decarbonise our Service, improve energy efficiency and reduce environmental risks as part of our climate change response plan.
- Our workforce is our most important asset in delivering our strategic priorities and objectives with £245.8 million (80%) of the proposed budget allocated to employee costs: being wholetime, operations control, On-Call and support staff. The remaining £62.3 million (20%) of the budget is allocated to property, supplies and services, third parties, legacy financing costs, other costs and income.
- The £11 million in recurring savings for 2023/24 is split between £6 million in staff costs and £5 million in other general business costs.

Chief Officer Ross Haggart addresses the potential impact of future savings on the Service
[Chief Officer Ross Haggart addresses the potential impact of future savings on the Service - YouTube](#)

Criminal Justice Committee Pre- Budget Scrutiny:
[Criminal Justice Committee | Scottish Parliament TV](#)