



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

1 October 2023 – 31 March 2024

**Working together
for a safer Scotland**

 **The Highland
Council**
**Comhairle na
Gàidhealtachd**

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 seven 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 Seven 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 (October 2023 – March 2024) 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.

Q3 & Q4: All Incidents Attended – 1486		
<p>HI 1 Accident Dwelling Fires</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 59 Incidents YTD – 106 Incidents</p>	<p>HI 2 ADF Fatal Casualties</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 1 YTD – 1</p>	<p>HI 3 ADF Non-Fatal Casualties</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 5 YTD – 8</p>
<p>HI 4 Home Fire Safety Visits</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 1039 Visits YTD – 2065 Visits Annual Target – 4000</p>	<p>HI 5 Non-Fire Emergency</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 370 Incidents YTD – 744 Incidents</p>	<p>HI 6 Road Traffic Collisions (RTC)</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 85 Incidents YTD – 185 Incidents</p>
<p>HI 7 Fatal RTC Casualties</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 2 YTD – 5</p>	<p>HI 8 Non-Fatal RTC Casualties</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 66 YTD – 133</p>	<p>HI 9 Deliberate Fires</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 76 Incidents YTD – 234 Incidents</p>
<p>HI 10 Deliberate Primary Fires</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 18 Incidents YTD – 51 Incidents</p>	<p>HI 11 Deliberate Secondary Fires</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 56 Incidents YTD – 181 Incidents</p>	<p>H12 Non Domestic Fires</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 34 Incidents YTD – 86 Incidents</p>
<p>HI 13 Fire Safety Enforcement Audits</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 188 Audits YTD – 355 Audits Annual Target – 592</p>	<p>HI 14 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals</p>  <p>Q3 & Q4 – 312 Incidents YTD – 838 Incidents</p>	

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS

Of the 14 headline indicators and targets, the following performance should be noted for the six-month period October 2023 to March 2024

- There were **59 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 **1 ADF Fatalities**, and **5 ADF Casualties**. A joint investigation with Police Scotland was conducted into the fatality and a Case conference planned.
- Our Community Safety Advocates and Station personnel undertook **1039 Home Fire Safety Visits**. The majority targeted the most at risk in our communities. There were also 402 declined visits in this reporting period and 848 over the year.
- We attended **85 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)** which is about average. There were **2 RTC Related Fatalities and 66 RTC Related Injuries**. The number is higher when compared to previous years and our Prevention teams are working with partner agencies through the Highland Road Safety group and Road Safety Scheme for new drivers at every High School.
- A total of **76 Deliberate Fires**, these include **18 Deliberate Primary Fires and 56 Deliberate Secondary Fires** which is comparable to the 3-year average. Referrals are made to other agencies for those at risk within our communities.
- There were **34 Non-Domestic Building Fires** which is below average.
- We undertook **355 Fire Safety Audits for the year (the second highest figure over the last 10 years)**, we also **concluded 2 prohibitions and 1 enforcement in 2023/24, completed 12 action plans with 22 currently still open**.
- **We completed 1083 Short Term Let enquiries in 2023 with an expected rise in 2024.**
- We attended **312 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)**, which is well below the 3-year average after the changes made to how we respond to UFAS.
- Our firefighters continue to train in all aspects of their role to ensure they are operationally prepared for what is required, and we continue 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 35 above 70%**). However, we face some challenges in areas with low or decreasing population levels. To support our on-call stations, increase recruitment, and provide coverage, we employ 11 full-time rural watch commanders (the highest number across Scotland) and continue our 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 respond to the incident safely;
- A formal process 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.
- Our improvements and learning have assisted in the On-Call improvement programme and recommendations to improve the service.
- Across Highland, we have **69 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, which highlights the fantastic work our crews are involved in outside of emergency response.

PRIORITY 1 – DOMESTIC FIRE SAFETY

HI 1 – Accidental Dwelling Fires (ADF)

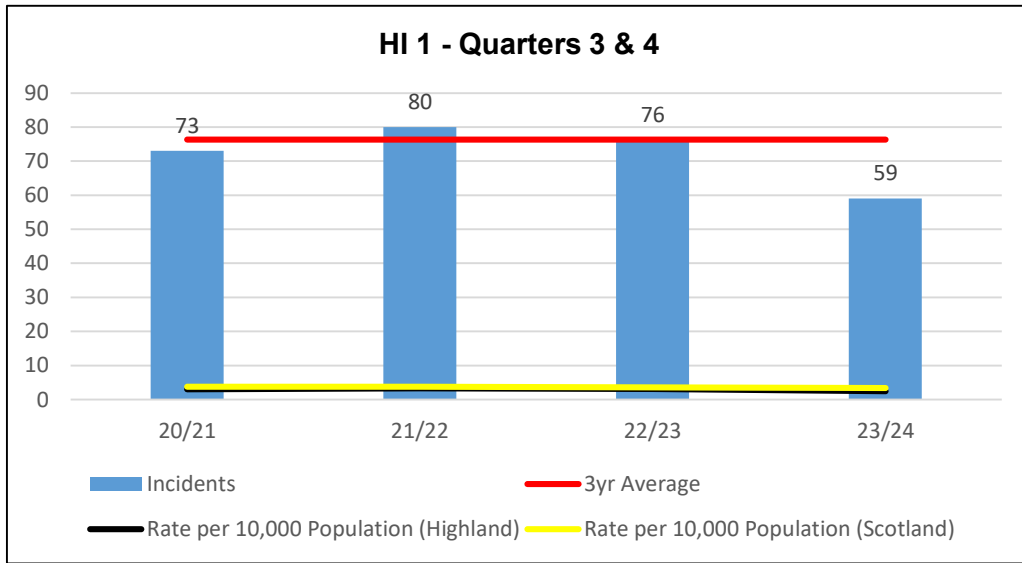


Table 12023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 1: ADF's	126	153	141	106

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

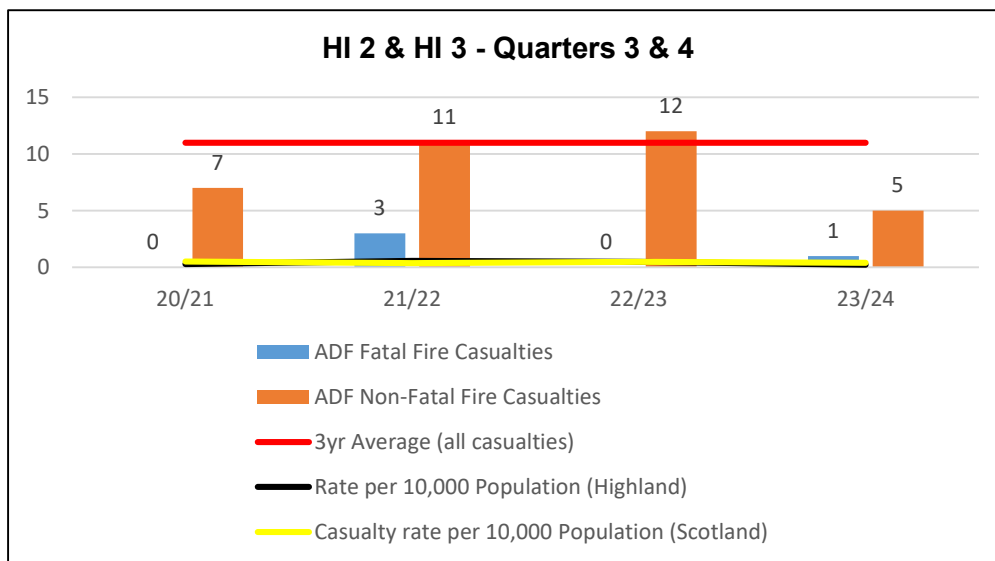


Table 2: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 2: ADF Fatal Casualties	0	6	0	1
HI 3: ADF Non-Fatal Casualties	14	16	18	8

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 **1 ADF Fatalities** for this period and year to date. Consequently, a joint investigation was undertaken with Police Scotland and a case conference to be organised.

The local area was offered Home Fire Safety visits and reassurance by the local Fire Crews and Prevention teams.

There were **5 ADF Casualties** which is below the 3-yearly average. Furthermore, the overall **59 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.

We have also completed the engagement program discussing fire safety with Ukrainian residents in Highland.

PRIORITY 2 – UNINTENTIONAL HARM

HI 4 – Home Fire Safety Visits

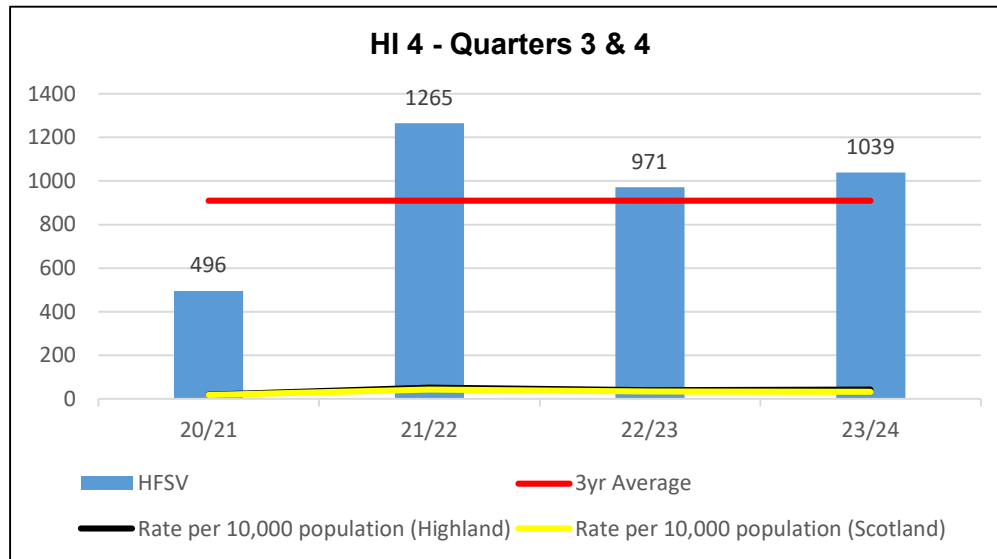


Table 3: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 4: Home Fire Safety Visits	794	2213	2132	2065

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 **1039 Home Fire Safety Visits** bringing the **total for the year to 2065**. This is below the target for the year.

We need an increase in referrals to achieve more Home Fire Safety visits. Therefore, we have completed Risk Recognition Training with 5 care companies over the last few months and monthly Teams sessions have been booked to cover all staff estimated approximately 150 staff will be trained in Risk Recognition and Referrals.

Every referral made to us are contacted multiple times to attempt to arrange a visit, however, there were 848 declined visits for the year 2023/24.

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 62 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)

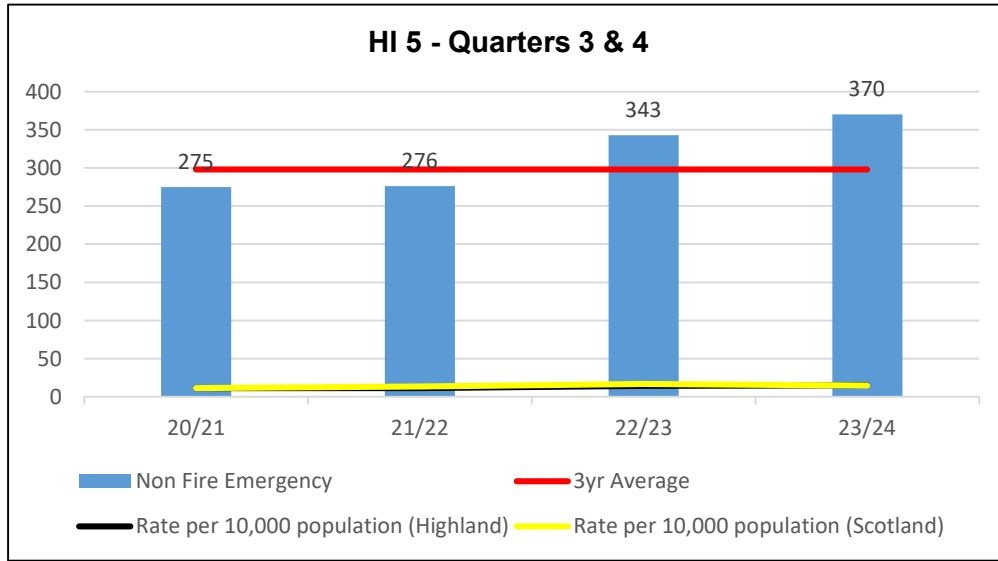


Table 4: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 5: Non-Fire Emergency Incidents (all Special Service)	517	600	679	744

HI 6 – Road Traffic Collision (RTC) Incidents

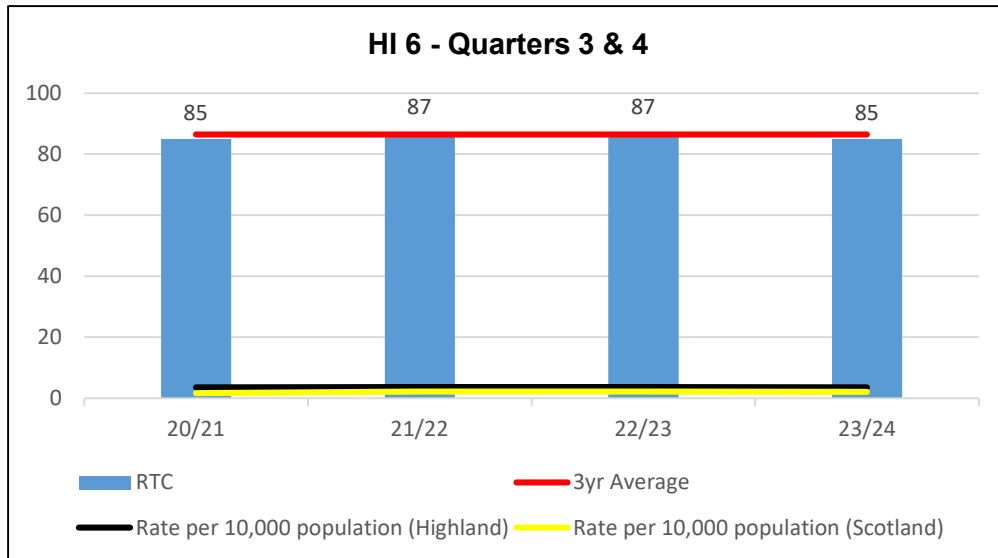


Table 5: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 6: RTC Incidents	140	166	193	185

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

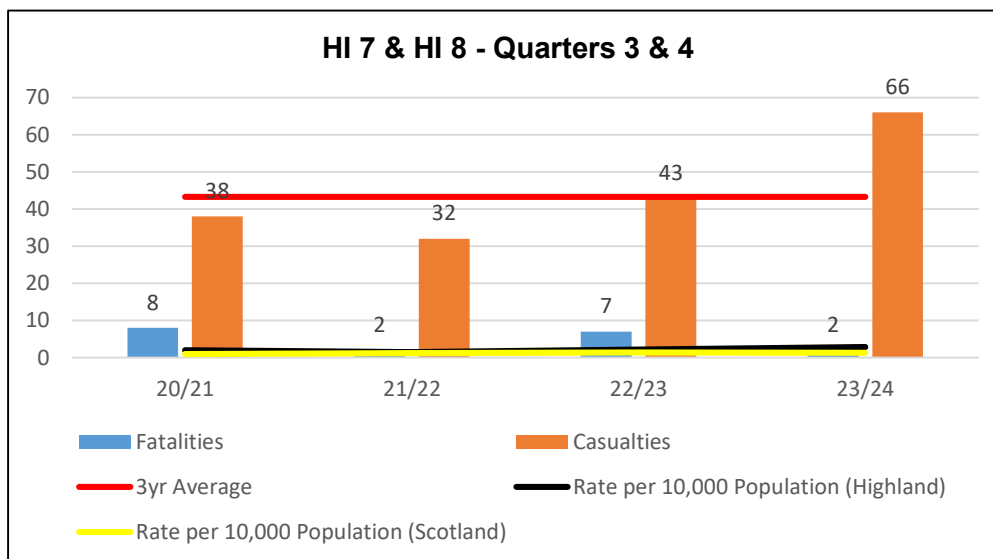


Table 6: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 7: Fatal RTC Casualties	10	5	21	5
HI 8: Non-Fatal RTC Casualties	61	78	105	133

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 **370 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 **85 Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs)** which is average, however, lower than the previous year. There were **2 RTC Related Fatalities** which is lower than the previous year and **66 RTC Related Injuries** which is an increase on previous years.

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. This includes Road Safety Talks to all Highland Secondary Schools, our future new drivers (**31 Schools booked for Engagement, 16 completed 1072 pupils engaged with**).

PRIORITY 4 – DELIBERATE FIRES

HI 9 – Deliberate Fires

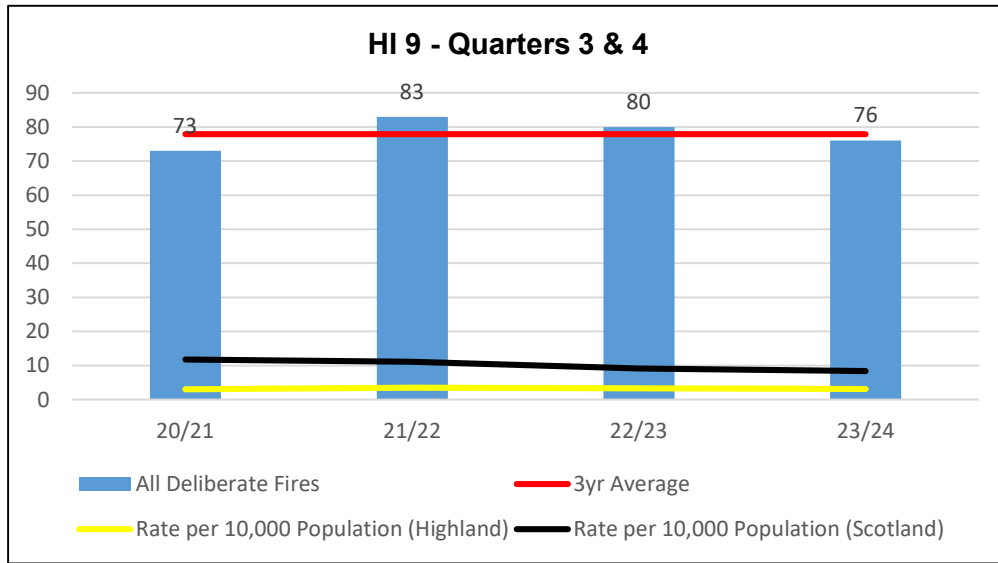


Table 7: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 9: Deliberate Fires	204	223	217	234

HI 10 – Deliberate Primary Fires

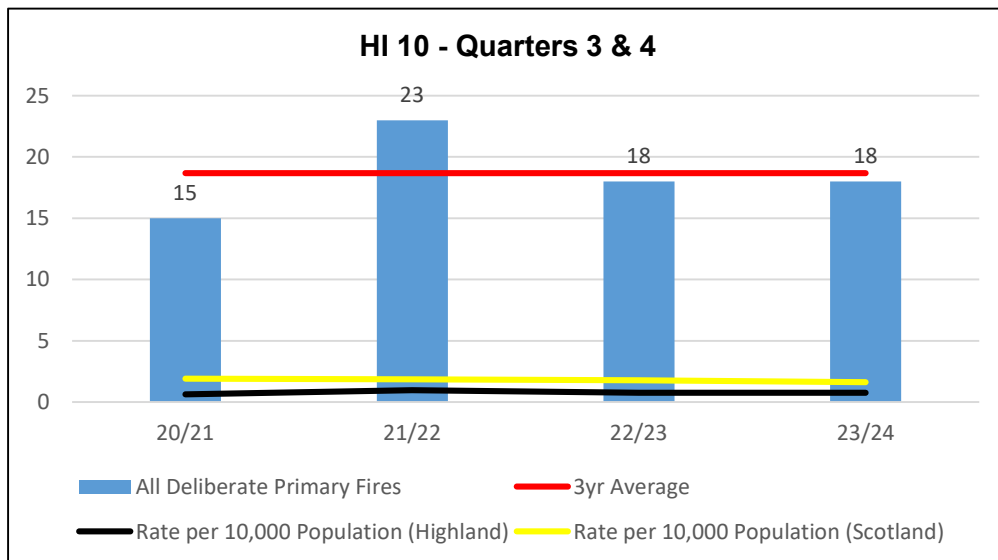


Table 8: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 10: Deliberate Primary Fires	43	51	48	51

HI 11 – Deliberate Secondary Fires

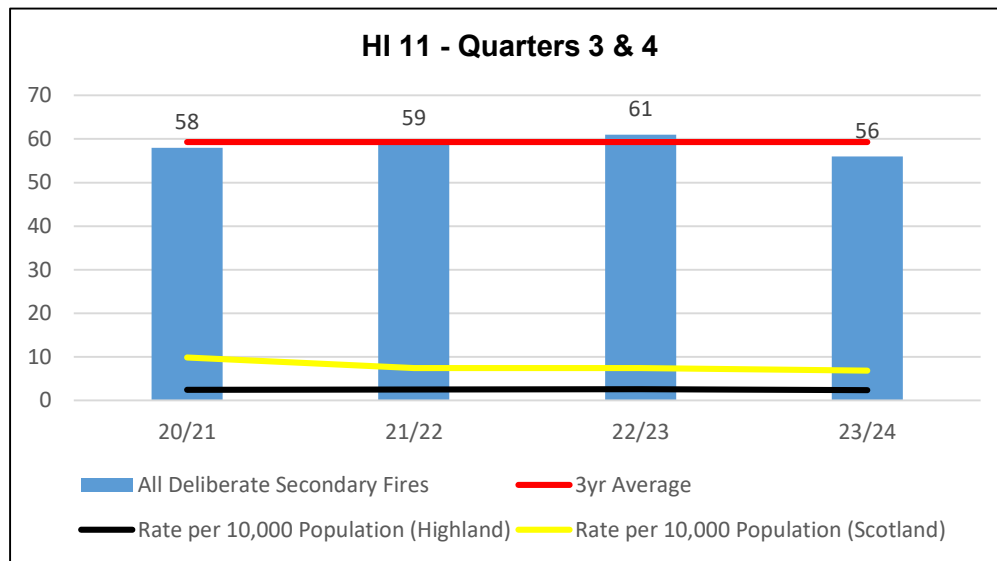


Table 9: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 11: Deliberate Secondary Fires	161	170	168	181

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 76 for the period, slightly lower than the previous year and slightly below the 3-yearly average.

Deliberate primary fires 18 for the period, is the same as the previous year but slightly below the 3-yearly average.

Deliberate secondary fires 56 for the period, is lower 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 previous report we delivered further FireSkills courses in Kyle of Lochalsh and the first ever Female Fire Skills course held at Broadford Fire Station. Further FireSkills planned for this year.

PRIORITY 5 – Non-Domestic Fire Safety

HI 12 – Non-Domestic Building Fires

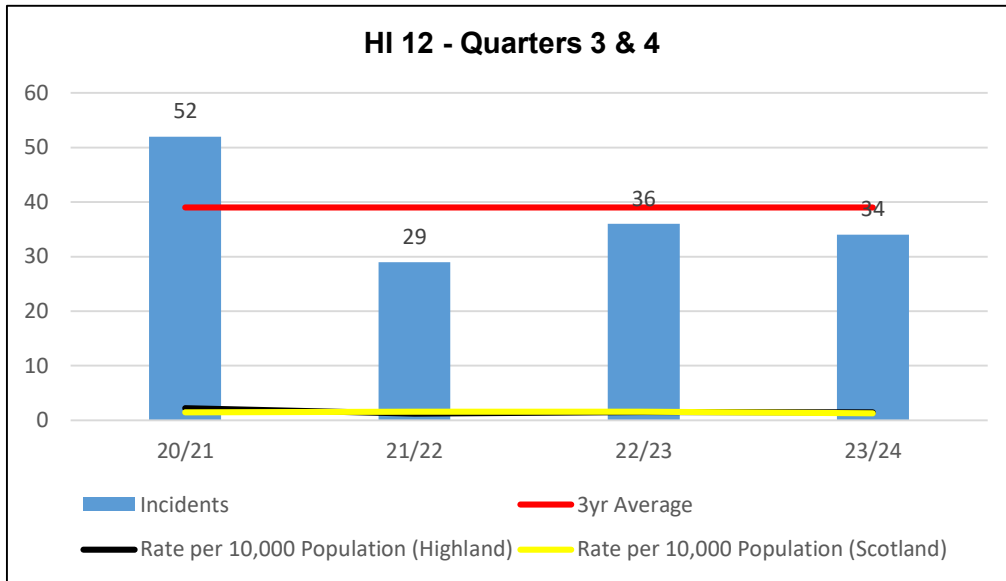


Table 10: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 12: Non-Domestic Building Fires	105	75	89	86

HI 13 – Fire Safety Enforcement Audits

A total of 188 audits were undertaken during Quarters 3 and 4.

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 **34 non-domestic building fires** this period which is slightly below last year.

To support our communities in complying with their obligations we have conducted **188 audits during this period bringing the total to 355 Fire Safety Audits for the year 2023/24 (the second highest figure over the last 10 years)**

We also **concluded 2 prohibitions and 1 enforcement in 2023/24, completed 12 action plans with 22 currently still open.**

Furthermore, the team completed over 1600 Short Term Let applications since Jan 2023 with an expected rise this year.

Despite the successful number in comparison to the previous 10-year period, the numbers of audits completed were affected by some previous retirements earlier in the year, 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.

PRIORITY 6 – REDUCING UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SYSTEMS

HI 14 – Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals

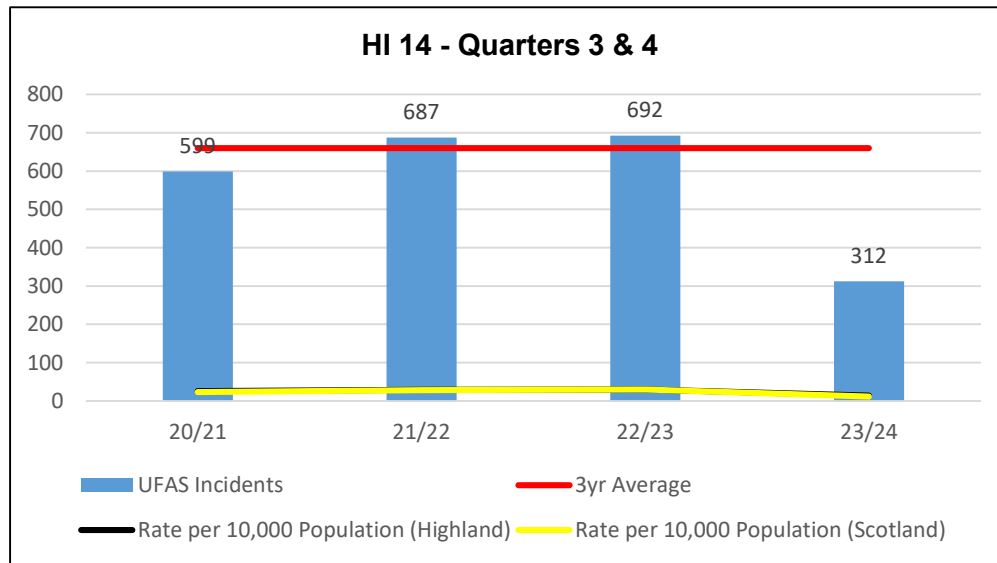


Table 11: 2023/24 Year Performance

	20/21	21/22	22/23	23/24
HI 14: UFAS Incidents	1142	1351	1456	838

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 **312 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)** this is well below the 3-year average and shows a decrease for the year.

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.

The time of writing this report the exact number of successful Joint Mobilisations were not available. However both trials have continued to receive positive feedback and a report is being delivered with recommendations to end the trials and a tool to use as business as normal.

In areas of Highland, we have seen successful recruitment and availability (**16 appliances above 90% and 35 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 continued to support availability through our two Highland trials.

- 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 time of writing this report the exact number of successful Joint Mobilisations were not available. However, both trials have continued to receive positive feedback and a report is being delivered with recommendations to end the trials and a tool to use as business as normal.

Please note the Highland Trials do not contribute to the availability figures provided.

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	Oct 23 – Mar 24 Availability* %	Male	Female	Staff
Acharacle	57.16%	5	0	5
Achiltibuie	49.18%	6	0	6
Applecross	50.25%	4	1	5
Aultbea	92.48%	10	0	10
Aviemore	85.89%	11	1	12
Balintore (CRU)	N/A	8	0	8
Beauly	82.13%	12	0	12
Bettyhill	27.68%	6	0	6
Bonar Bridge	23.31%	4	1	5
Broadford	47.27%	5	1	6
Cannich	0%	2	0	2
Carrbridge (CRU)	N/A	6	1	7
Cromarty (CRU)	N/A	6	2	8
Dingwall - 1st Appliance	99.97%	16	1	17
Dingwall - 2nd Appliance	69.39%			
Dornoch	99.49%	13	0	13
Drumnadrochit	85.68%	12	1	13
Dunbeath	56.17%	7	0	7
Dunvegan	52.79%	4	2	6
Durness	78.35%	7	0	7
Fort Augustus	89.17%	9	2	11
Fort William – 1 st Appliance	100%	19	1	20
Fort William – 2 nd Appliance	90.61%			
Fortrose	78.99%	6	3	9
Foyers	81.52%	7	0	7
Gairloch	96.57%	7	2	9
Glenelg	67.44%	5	1	6
Golspie	94.68%	10	0	10
Grantown – 1 st Appliance	92.06%	9	2	11
Grantown – 2 nd Appliance	8.54%			
Helmsdale	80.37%	7	0	7
Invergordon - 1st Appliance	99.99%	17	2	19
Invergordon - 2nd Appliance	88.05%			
Inverness Retained	93.66%	15	0	15
Inverness Wholetime *	N/A	61	11	72
John O Groats	54.91%	9	0	9

Kilchoan	38.21%	4	1	5
Kingussie	83.76%	8	0	8
Kinlochbervie	70.37%	6	1	7
Kinlochewe	50.64%	5	0	5
Kinlochleven – 1 st Appliance	83.46%	9	3	12
Kinlochleven – 2 nd Appliance	18.84%			
Kyle	98.79%	12	0	12
Lairg	83.20%	7	2	9
Lochaline	38.19%	4	2	6
Lochcarron	44.32%	5	0	5
Lochinver	0%	2	0	2
Lybster (CRU)	N/A	5	1	6
Mallaig	79.14%	6	0	6
Muck (CRU)	N/A	0	1	1
Nairn – 1 st Appliance	97.32%	19	0	19
Nairn – 2 nd Appliance	71.80%			
Nethybridge (CRU)	N/A	0	0	0
Newtonmore (CRU)	N/A	9	0	9
Portree	90.25%	9	0	9
Raasay	78.67%	6	0	6
Ratagan (CRU)	N/A	0	0	0
Scourie	0%	1	0	1
Spean Bridge (CRU)	N/A	8	0	8
Staffin	0%	2	1	3
Strontian	61.14%	5	2	7
Tain	91.52%	10	0	10
Thurso - 1st Appliance	99.85%	13	2	15
Thurso - 2nd Appliance	57.36%			
Tongue	31.51%	4	0	4
Torridon	69.66%	4	3	7
Uig	50.48%	5	0	5
Ullapool - 1st Appliance	98.91%	14	4	18
Ullapool - 2nd Appliance	79.44%			
Wick - 1st Appliance	99.28%	18	0	18
Wick - 2nd Appliance	71.64%			

570 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 third and fourth quarter of 2023-24, in support of our priorities.

<p>Station Refurbishments</p> <p>The completed refurbishment at Inverness Fire Station was the first in Scotland to dedicate decontamination facilities and routes for firefighters.</p> <p>The refurbishment at Dingwall Fire Station is now well underway and will offer 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>New appliance, equipment and capabilities come to Highland</p> <p>5 x New Fire appliances come to Highland between September 2023 and April 2024</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thurso • Lochcarron • Strontian • Kinlochbervie • Dornoch
<p>8 x New Ultra Light weight appliances (currently located at most Volunteer Stations)</p> <p>Upgraded from previous Ultralight weight appliances to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4x4 capability • On Board Water Tank • High pressure water application • Latest Battery operated hydraulic cutting/spreading rescue equipment • New Automatic External Defibrillators 	<p>Latest Technology issued across Highland All Stations received new:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Latest Thermal Image camera • Battery operated hydraulic cutting equipment • Latest Radios 

New All-terrain Vehicles Wildfire Training and PPE coming soon to:

- Ullapool
- Invergordon

Enhanced Wildfire Training and PPE (Tier 2)

- Lybster
- Balintore
- Newtonmore
- Spean Bridge
- Cromarty
- Carrbridge
- Fort Augustus
- Kingussie
- Aviemore
- Kyle of Lochalsh
- Fortrose
- Dornoch
- Gairloch
- Dunbeath



Thurso Fire Station Car Wash

Thurso Community Fire Station
@ThursoFire_

On the 23rd March we held a car wash in which we raised £600, last night we presented 50% of that to the local good cause that we part raised for, pictured is WC Mackay presenting £300 to 2nd Thurso Scout Group, the other £300 was donated to @firefighters999 well done all 🌟



First ever Female FireSkills course held at Broadford

Karla Stevenson @Karla5188 · Mar 8

Happy #IWD2024!
What a fantastic way to mark it, so proud of these young women who completed their FireSkills course today!! Great to see so many come to see their presentation today!
#InspireInclusion



Future Highland Drivers

Road Safety Talks to all Highland Secondary Schools, our future new drivers

(31 Schools booked for Engagement, **16 completed 1072 pupils engaged with**).

SFRS Highland Community Safety
@SFRSHighlandCAT

🚗📱 Today we attended Lachaber High School - Fort William to discuss Road Safety. This is part of our Highland Road Safety Initiative to all Schools. 150 pupils from S4 to S6 attended and now have an understanding of the hazards and risk associated with driving. 🚗🚗



12 New Recruits complete their Initial Training at Invergordon

About a month after one of newest recruits as born his father headed off to complete his initial training at Invergordon.

18 years later his father was able to watch his son complete his initial training at Invergordon.



Raasay SFRS @RaasaySFRS · Mar 11

Replying to @RaasaySFRS

A little extra information about our newest recruit. About a month after he was born I headed off to do my week long basic fireskills course at Invergordon. Now 18 years later I'm so proud to have my son join me when the call comes in.

#wearesfrs



Highland Councillor engagement sessions

Thank you for all those who attended and contributed to the session. We hope to make the next one in person.

APPENDIX 2: Recent Questions & Answers

Have your say

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has launched an [online survey](#) as we consider future changes to our emergency service.

There are issues that we must address with our ageing estate while ensuring that we are best placed to meet the changing community risk across Scotland.

The survey, titled Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say, is open until 30 June 2024 and marks the first stage in our engagement with communities, staff, representative bodies, partners and elected members.

We want to be a modern fire and rescue service that is ready for the challenges of Scotland's future.

We want to do more for our communities, not just by responding to incidents but by stopping them from happening. To make sure we have the right resources in the right place at the right time we need to change.

We want to hear your views on what you want from the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

[SFRS launches Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say survey \(youtube.com\)](#)

Pre-consultation / process

- We have launched an online survey to capture the views of communities across Scotland as we consider changes to our service.
- We have a proud history and we want to build on this success to be a modern fire and rescue service ready for the challenges of Scotland's future
- This the first stage in our engagement with staff and people across Scotland
- We will be running events and speaking to staff and communities over the next two months.
- We have identified areas we could change to ensure our Service is fit for the future.
- The views we gather will help us to develop change options for full public consultation later this year.

Finance

- We recognise that the need to modernise and address issues with our estate requires investment.
- SFRS is not immune to financial challenges for the whole public sector in Scotland.
- We face pressures in both our resource and capital budgets so we must find ways to better use our resources.
- We have a legal duty to deliver a balanced budget.
- Last year we had to make immediate financial savings.
- This required difficult decisions to be made and while fortunately we are not in the same position this year.
- But we need to make permanent changes to move forward.

- Our resource budget was increased by £13.6 million for 2024-25; and increased capital investment by £10.3 million.
- But we need to plan beyond 2025 and ensure we are a sustainable organisation.

Driver for change – Risk

- We know that some of our fire stations and resources are not located in the right place to meet risk and demand.
- We have spent years building our knowledge of changing community risk across Scotland through the development of our Community Risk Index Model (CRIM).
- This model considers historical incident data and captures information about the people we serve.
- This includes where they are located, the types of buildings and environments they occupy and the way that nature may impact them.
- This helps us to identify where our stations and appliances resources should be based to best meet current risks and keep communities safe.
- Our knowledge of risk will help to inform where we need to locate stations, how we crew our appliances and how we operate from our stations.

Driver for change – What we respond to

- Fires still make up the majority of incidents we attend but this number of fires has reduced over time.
- House fires have decreased by almost half in the past 20 years (8,131 in 2003-04, 4,305 last year, -47%)
- The total number of fires across Scotland has reduced by 56% in the same period (61,762 in 2003-04, 26,825 last year).
- While fires overall have decreased, the number of other incidents we attend has increased.
- Non-fire incidents such as flooding, road traffic collisions, rescues and assisting other agencies have increased by 83% over the past decade (9,166 in 2013-14, 16,783 last year).
- Non fire incidents increased from 11% in 2013-14 to 17% last year of the total incidents we attended. We expect this rise to continue.
- At the same time, we have witnessed a continued reduction in fire-related deaths and casualties.

Driver for change – Climate change

- We expect climate change to intensify and present further challenges that we must be prepared to meet.
- Last year we saw extreme weather events that placed an unprecedented demand on our service.
- This included one of the largest wildfires on record at Cannich in the Highlands and Storm Babet, which devastated many communities in the north east.
- These types of incidents require the deployment of hundreds of firefighters and often occur in areas where we do not have permanently staffed stations.
- Wildfires in Scotland are bigger, last longer and ultimately this requires a more significant response.
- Since 2010 there have been eight wildfires recorded which have lasted more than five days. All eight of these incidents have been since 2018.

- Flooding risk has increased steadily over the past decade – we have attended more than 15,000 flooding incidents in the past decade.
- We have prioritised investment and bolstered our fleet in recent years with the addition of 20 specialist water rescue boats and the implementation of 25 dedicated wildfire stations across Scotland.
- However, we must ensure that we have the resilience and the correct equipment in place to respond effectively.

Driver for change – Ageing estate

- Some of our ageing buildings are no longer fit for purpose and require urgent action;
- In 2018 Audit Scotland described our backlog in capital spend requirements as “insurmountable”;
- We have hundreds of fire stations without provisions such as dedicated locker rooms, dignified facilities or sufficient showering facilities;
- Our buildings need to be safe, provide welfare facilities and comply with guidelines around decontamination after incidents to help protect our firefighters’ health;
- We do not have the budget to address this and doing nothing is simply not an option;
- We must find a permanent solution.

Driver for change – RAAC

- We have 14 fire stations with Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) panel issues.
- The 14 community fire stations affected are Crewe Toll, Cumbernauld, Dalkeith, Galashiels, Hawick, Helensburgh, Huntly, Liberton, Livingston, Marionville, Milngavie, Portree, Stewarton, Tranent;
- This was identified in 2019 and we took measures to protect our staff and operations;
- We have in place temporary supports to reinforce areas of the roofing, and we have maintained operations from these locations;
- We continue to monitor these measures;
- In most cases, the safest and most cost-effective solution is to rebuild;
- We do not have the budget to rebuild or meet the costs to maintain or upgrade our estate;
- Replacing the 14 fire stations with RAAC would cost in the region of £77 million;
- SFRS continues to engage with the Scottish Government and partners on this subject.

Driver for change – Contamination risk

- Research shows that firefighters’ mortality rate from all cancers is 1.6 times higher than the general public and that firefighters are developing cancer at higher rates and at younger ages.
- We have undertaken a substantial review of how our appliances, staff and personal protective equipment (PPE) are decontaminated during and following an incident.
- We know that some of our buildings do not have appropriate decontamination provisions and, in some cases, limited welfare facilities.
- To mitigate this risk, specialist decontamination wipes have been supplied to all fire appliances and training centres; a station zoning system has been trialled to limit contaminant spread; and our medical tests now include enhanced cancer screening questions.

Driver for change – Staffing

- The success of SFRS is down to our staff.
- Our firefighters, operations control, fire enforcement officers, community action teams and support staff are all dedicated to keeping Scotland safe.
- We want all our staff to receive the highest quality of training which equips them with the skills, expertise and values the public expect.
- For operational staff we want to invest in more training sites and more instructors, so training is accessible across Scotland to better prepare our staff to deal with the modern risk and challenges.
- We also need to work harder to make SFRS representative of the communities we serve.

What changes could we make – Development of FF role

- We are committed to working with our staff and representative bodies to develop the role of the firefighter to take on wider prevention and emergency response activities.
- To achieve this, we would need to agree a new employment contract and role of firefighters with their representative bodies.
- We have an ‘agreement in principle’ with the Fire Brigade’s Union (FBU) but this would need additional funding to fully implement.
- We would also need to invest further in training and equipment to support our firefighters to take on any new roles.
- Diversifying the role of firefighters could provide additional support to meet the needs of local communities.
- For example, we could support Scottish Ambulance Service to provide an emergency medical response and support the most vulnerable in our communities.
- The benefits to the people of Scotland in working closer with our public service partners could be significant.

What changes could we make – Location of resources

- The location of our community fire stations and fire appliances across Scotland has not changed significantly over time.
- We know that some of our stations are not located in the best places to meet the current risks.
- There are potential options to change where our stations and appliances are located.
- This could involve merging stations in similar geographical locations .
- Merging or moving stations would allow us to better use our resources elsewhere and invest in new stations where required.
- By changing our footprint, we can reduce our running costs, reduce our capital backlog and potentially generate income from sites being sold.
- The construction of new buildings would also help to address issues with contamination and suitable welfare facilities while providing staff with a newer, modern workplace.

What changes could we make – How and when we staff resources

- Our wholetime firefighters are split across five groups (watches).
- This is called the 5 Watch Duty System and allows us to provide permanent crews at our wholetime stations 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

- Our on call (retained) firefighters provide the same full range of emergency services as wholetime colleagues but generally carry out these duties while holding primary employment in various other fields.
- We also have on call (volunteer) stations and Community Response Units (CRUs) who respond to specific types of incident via a pager system.
- We currently have 23 multi-pump stations which operate using a mixed duty system arrangement.
- This is where a station has more than one pumping appliance – typically two pumping appliances and/or a specialist vehicle.
- One pumping appliance is crewed by wholetime firefighters on the 5WDS whilst the other pump is crewed by on call firefighters who respond from their home or primary workplace.
- We also have one community fire station which combines a wholetime and day duty crewing model.
- The day duty system and other alternatives mean appliances are crewed at specific hours based on data which shows when they are needed.
- A mix of duty systems are common elsewhere in the UK.
- There may be some areas where changing our duty systems would be appropriate to meet the risk and demand.
- This could allow for staff to be deployed into other risk critical areas such as training and prevention.

What changes could we make – How we attend emergencies

- Our crewing model – which is the number of firefighters in appliances that attend an emergency – is another area we could explore for change.
- Different models are used throughout the UK and there could also be options to change the crewing arrangements for different appliances in individual stations.
- We could also adopt bespoke measures to increase availability in other areas.
- For example, blended crewing, where on call firefighters can be temporarily posted to wholetime stations to ensure appropriate levels of crewing are maintained or wholetime firefighters deployed to on call stations to fill short-term crew or skills shortages.

Operational changes 2023-24

- In 2023, the SFRS Board approved an initial savings plan across the whole organisation;
- This included the temporary withdrawal of 10 second or third wholetime fire appliances for an initial 12-month period from September 2023;
- This decision was supported by data and modelling which identified the appliance withdrawals that would have the least impact on emergency response times;
- We continue to monitor the impact of the temporary appliance withdrawals.

Battery Energy Storage Systems

We can advise, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) continuously engage with the Scottish Government and Building Standards regarding a range of fire safety issues that may impact on the built environment, of which BESS is one of many priorities.

SFRS do not regulate building standards but can, and do, get involved with consultations for new and emerging premises types with regard to fire risk and fire safety. Specifically, for BESS construction, SFRS continue to engage with building standards and local planning teams on this issue to ensure any additional and exceptional risks from these premise types are identified and managed accordingly. Ultimately, it is the remit for building standards to ensure that appropriate legislation and regulation is in place, and the responsibility of Local Authority Building Control to verify construction projects against the requirements.

SFRS are working closely with the Scottish Government to ensure that the processes in place are appropriate review and comment on these types of premises during the planning stages.

Please be assured that the safety of our firefighters and communities is a priority. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service will respond to all reports of fire which are received and have the ability to deploy a range of standard and specialist resources as determined by the needs of the incident. At these incidents, personnel will employ a range of Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) in order to effectively and safely resolve the incident, alongside working with partner agencies to mitigate the risk and impact to the public and the environment. The SOPs in use by SFRS are informed by the National Operational Guidance (NOG) produced by the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) and this guidance includes incidents involving rechargeable batteries.

We would advise you to contact the Local Authority Building Control Team with any questions/concerns.

BESS sites do not fall within the building warrant consultation process and we are not made aware of these in the same format as other consultations. That said, we have processes in place to respond to such proposals and make comment where necessary around any concerns or issues we foresee when responding to such incidents and for making effective preparations to deal with any incidents should the need arise.

When considering these proposals, we look at appliance access and water supplies amongst several other things and follow national guidance produced by the National Fire Chief's Council for BESS systems.

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/>