



SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

# ANNUAL PERFORMANCE REVIEW REPORT

2023/24



Working together  
for a safer Scotland

**WELCOME TO  
THE SCOTTISH  
FIRE AND RESCUE  
SERVICE'S  
(SFRS) ANNUAL  
PERFORMANCE  
REVIEW REPORT  
FOR 2023/24.**

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# INTRODUCTION

This report has been written to inform the Annual Performance Review meeting that will be held on 10 September 2024. This meeting allows Scottish Government to undertake a formal review of our performance against the priorities that were set out within the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2022.

This report is structured around the seven Outcomes of the SFRS Strategic Plan 2022-25, which align to those of the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland. It captures information on some of the key activities that have been carried out to meet these priority requirements between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. This report provides a general snapshot of the Service on 1 April 2024. However, as the Performance Review Meeting will be held in September, there are occasions information has been updated to provide a fuller picture of progress.

During 2023/24 our dedicated crews have continued to provide an emergency service to the people of Scotland, attending over 80,000 incidents. We've continued to analyse community risk, carried out crucial training and worked to ensure that our people have the right equipment and facilities to help keep them and our communities safer.

Our prevention role has remained of critical importance, and we've worked closely with our partners to deliver targeted safety campaigns. We've also worked with businesses across the country to undertake fire safety audits and focused on our approach to this critical role.

The key highlights provided in this report would not have been possible without the dedication and professionalism of our people and, as our greatest asset, their physical and mental health has remained a priority. We've introduced in-house physiotherapy service; carried out a wellbeing survey; and introduced a risk-based approach to asbestos that ensures all operational staff receive asbestos screening on a rolling three year basis.

As well as the dedication of our own people, we recognise that many of the activities provided in this report could not have been delivered without the contribution of our partner agencies. Our approach to partnership working is an ever-evolving part of how we work to improve the safety and wellbeing of the people of Scotland. The combination of our skills, insight, resources and commitment with that of our partners is critical to helping us to achieve this purpose. As a result, we engage in many forms of partnership working





where the level of formality varies depending on the issues we are dealing with, but we always seek to achieve a common goal with our partners and agree actions for how that goal can be achieved to improve outcomes for the people of Scotland.

The highlights outlined have been carried out against a challenging financial background. Despite the additional funding awarded by the Scottish Government we required to carry out significant review and planning to identify the efficiencies required to achieve potential savings options.

The Service expects to experience ongoing cost pressures, which alongside the challenges facing public sector funding, will mean substantial savings are likely to be required over the coming years. We will require to remain agile and reform-focused in responding to an uncertain fiscal environment with the aim of ensuring services contribute strongly to Scotland's National Outcomes; maximise public value; and achieve our ambitions as set out in our Long-Term Vision and our Strategic Plan 2022-25.

To help us manage the demands arising from changing community risk across Scotland and to meet other change pressures, a programme of change proposals are being developed under our Strategic Service Review Programme (SSRP). The programme will look to examine how we can evolve and improve the Service, whilst working within the organisational constraints we face and the options available to us to meet our strategic objectives in the most effective and efficient manner.

Three significant changes have been implemented during 2023/24: the temporary withdrawal of 10 appliances; a reduction on the number of High Reach Appliances deployed from 26 to 16; and moving to dual crewing for both fire and water rescue at Polmadie.

We trust that you find this report insightful, and it provides sound evidence of our commitment to progressing the Strategic Outcomes of the SFRS Strategic Plan 2022-25 and, in turn, the priorities within Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2022.





# OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS 2023/24

Any data provided throughout this report is provisional and for internal management purposes only. Verified data is published in both annual statistical returns (Fire Safety and Organisational and Fire and Rescue Incident Statistics) at the end of August and the end of October each year. Further data is also included in our Annual Report and Accounts which will be published in December 2024

**36,619**

HOME FIRE SAFETY  
VISITS CARRIED OUT

( 40.58% FOR THE  
MOST VULNERABLE )

**80,415**

INCIDENTS ATTENDED

**40,330**

FALSE ALARMS  
ATTENDED

**24,035**

FIRES ATTENDED

**16,035**

NON-FIRE  
INCIDENTS

**£125k**

INVESTED IN PPE FOR  
FLOOD RESPONDER STATIONS

**33%**

OF LIGHT FLEET  
IS ELECTRIC

**£1.6m**

INVESTED IN WILDFIRE  
EQUIPMENT AND VEHICLES  
(AS PART OF A 3-YEAR ROLL OUT PROGRAMME)

**7,516**

EMPLOYEES

**3,423**

WHOLETIME  
OPERATIONAL STAFF

**6.5%**

OF OUR FIREFIGHTERS  
ARE FEMALE

**£305.418m**

RESOURCE BUDGET SPEND

**£32,922,470**

CAPITAL BUDGET SPEND  
(INCL. TRANSITION TO  
NET ZERO SPEND)

**£972,171**

CAPITAL SPEND ON  
TRANSITION TO NET ZERO

**£10.024m**

RESOURCE SAVINGS  
DELIVERED



# STRATEGIC SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 2, 3, 5, 6 & 7

The Strategic Service Review Programme (SSRP) was established in 2023 to explore how we deliver our services across Scotland while resolving immediate financial challenges that we faced during that financial year. Development of the Programme has resulted in significant planning, research and preparatory work for our teams and functions and impacts almost all the Strategic Outcomes of the Strategic Plan 2022-25. As such, SSRP is detailed in its own section of this report.

## OPERATIONAL CHANGES

A key focus for the Service, SSRP introduced three significant operational changes during 2023/24:

### Temporary Removal of Appliances

Due to resourcing challenges during 2022/23, we had to take an average of nine pumps off during day shifts and an average of eight pumps off during night shifts. Our current process for appliance withdrawal is a reactive approach that is both costly and disruptive.

To alleviate this pressure and to contribute to financial savings, we identified ten community fire stations where we temporarily removed an appliance whilst having the least impact on response capabilities.

### Reduction of High Reach Appliances

Our High Reach Appliances (HRAs) are national assets which are strategically placed to cover the whole of Scotland based on risk and demand. Our Operational Strategy 2022-32 identified the need to review HRA provision across Scotland to ensure a more even distribution and to remove older vehicles, particularly the Aerial Rescue Pumps from the fleet, which incur significant expense to maintain, replacing them with dedicated height or pumping appliances. As such, during 2023/24, we reduced the number of HRAs from 26 to 16, which will help to reduce our capital backlog.

### Dual crewing at Polmadie

All our Swift Water Rescue stations across Scotland operate a dual-crewed model, apart from Polmadie in Glasgow which is the only station in Scotland with a dedicated crewing model for water rescue. Dual-crewed means that crews are available to respond to water rescue incidents as well as other incidents using a normal fire appliance such as fires and Road Traffic Collisions. From September 2023, we standardised the crewing model at Polmadie to a dual-crewed approach. This means crews will be able to attend other emergency incidents.



Photo by Iain Masterton





## CORPORATE SERVICES

The Service is committed to undertaking a review of its corporate support services. A programme has been established under SSRP to take this forward.

In May 2023, we worked in partnership with Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority to explore further collaboration opportunities between SFRS and Police Scotland. Through greater collaboration between our organisations, we agreed to explore how collaboration could help improve the services we deliver to the public; and to help deliver efficiencies within corporate support services.

In November 2023, professional support was appointed to produce, working with SFRS and Police Scotland, an Outline Business Case (OBC) identifying potential collaboration options. The OBC explored issues such as service improvement opportunities; reducing shared costs; reduced estate footprint; and greater environmental benefits. Services in scope included: digital; finance; procurement; strategy, planning and reporting; people and development; fleet; estates; training, development and learning; transformation and change; and driver training.

The OBC was received in May 2024 and both Boards assessed the OBC findings. Several collaborative opportunities identified will be carried out under the auspices of the Reform Collaboration Group.

## ASSET MANAGEMENT

To release efficiencies, our corporate building at Hamilton was closed.

## NEXT STEPS

During 2024/25, the programme will look to examine how we can move forward and improve the Service, whilst working within the constraints of our allocated budget and the options available to us to meet our Strategic Objectives in the most efficient financial way.

The Service will commence a public consultation exercise with the people of Scotland through a series of engagement events and an online public survey. The views gathered will help us to develop and appraise change options that we will take forward for full public consultation to then inform the shape of the Programme.

Although the detail of the SSRP will not be agreed until we have finalised our engagement with the public and our stakeholders, we expect that it will generate significant change activity for us over the next three years and may potentially focus on:



- reviewing our service delivery footprint and enabling infrastructure, including where our stations and appliances are based
- how and when we staff our resources
- designing the future of operational training
- developing our prevention approach to meet the needs of our communities
- addressing the estates challenges, primarily Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete and the provision of toilet and washing facilities and contamination controls
- reviewing how we support and enable frontline service delivery, such as our corporate services.

Any new development areas will be planned and monitored closely alongside major projects like the New Mobilising System, Rostering, Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme and In Vehicle Systems, to collectively inform the long-term vision of SSRP.





# OUTCOME ONE:

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING IMPROVES AS WE DEPLOY TARGETED INITIATIVES TO PREVENT EMERGENCIES AND HARM

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 1, 2, 3,4 & 7



**W**e firmly believe that preventing problems from arising is better than dealing with them when they occur. Our approach to prevention helps people and communities stay safe and enables us to support work addressing wider inequalities.

## TARGETED MESSAGING

One of the ways we target our safety messaging is by employing evidence-based statistical analysis through the examination of emerging risks and trends. Through identifying the origin, cause and fire development, the analysis carried out by our Fire Investigation and Business Intelligence Teams has generated valuable insights into the patterns of fire-related harm within our communities, facilitating the implementation of targeted measures to reduce its impact.

By looking into factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, housing tenure, property types, dependencies and occurrence of incidents we have uncovered key factors contributing to fire incidents. This deeper understanding has enabled the implementation of specific measures aimed at reducing the impact of fires on our communities.

Analysis of fire incidents has established connections with broader socio-economic trends such as inequality, ageing population and deprivation, which allow identification of underlying systemic issues that contribute to increased fire risks. This gives a comprehensive analysis with a valuable insight into the intricate patterns of fire-related harm.

The outcomes of all fire investigations allow us to implement detailed, targeted measures aimed at minimising the impact of fires in our communities.

## Fire Safety Support and Education

A good example of targeting our safety messaging can be seen within our Fire Safety Support and Education (FSSE) Programme. This initiative seeks to engage with professionals from a wide range of disciplines to benefit individuals, families and communities. It is one of a suite of educational interventions designed to promote fire safety and is aimed at those, under the age of 18, who demonstrate an unsafe interest in fire or fire related anti-social behaviour.

Engagements can often be with some of the most vulnerable young people in society and the staff delivering the programme, FSSE Advisors, undergo specialist training to enable them to effectively communicate with the young person; be aware of factors that drive this type of behaviour such as the impact of Trauma and Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs); and employ strategies to encourage behaviour change.



## FIRE SAFETY SUPPORT AND EDUCATION (FSSE), DURING 2023/24

**173** YOUNG PEOPLE  
ENGAGED WITH

**160** ENGAGEMENTS  
WERE WITH  
PARTNERS

**142** MALE / **30** FEMALE / **1** DIDN'T  
DISCLOSE  
GENDER

Since April 2023, FSSE has engaged with 173 children and young people. Of this:

- 160 engagements were with partners such as Social Work, Education or Police Scotland
- 142 were male, 30 were female and one didn't disclose a gender

Significant work to enhance the programme has taken place, including the creation of a FSSE Core Group; digital feedback via QR code to allow access to instant course feedback from attendees; and an online monitoring system.

### WIDER SAFETY MESSAGING

Working alongside our partners, targeted fire safety messaging has been supplemented with wider community safety information where we have used a similar evidence-based approach to target groups who are at risk.

#### Water Safety

An example of this is our National Water Safety Project which was launched in April 2022 following a spike in water fatalities during

2021/22. This initiative, which supports Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy, saw the creation of a new Drowning and Incident Review (DIR) process. Created in conjunction with The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents, it aims to reduce accidental drowning deaths by 50% by 2026 and lessen the risk amongst the highest populations, groups and communities.

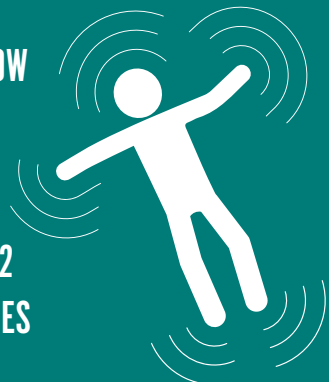
Up until now, the circumstances in many water-related fatalities have been unknown and the risk factors are unclear. The principal aim of the process is to gather all relevant data and information to help gain a better understanding of how to prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. The benefits of the DIR are anticipated at both local and national level in Scotland.

During 2023/24 our commitment to this project continued with a representative from SFRS acting as a Strategic Lead for Water Safety Scotland (WSS), undertaking the role of WSS Chair and implementation of Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy (SDPS) and the Ministerial Action Plan (MAP) on Water Safety.

Achievements of the Project included the continued establishment and support for Partnership Approach to Water Safety (PAWS) groups throughout Scotland, with PAWS groups now functioning in 30 of our 32 local authorities.



PAWS GROUPS NOW  
FUNCTIONING IN  
**30** OUT  
OF 32  
LOCAL AUTHORITIES  
IN SCOTLAND





Locally based SFRS staff have worked with their respective PAWS group to reduce water emergencies through the promotion of WSS education assets in schools and wider communities; sharing of nationally agreed safety messaging available via the WSS Communications Toolkit; and delivery of several multi-agency events - one of which took place to mark WHO's World Drowning Prevention Day 2023 and was attended by around 3,000 members of the public.

During the reporting period, 26 DIRs were delivered which significantly improved the drowning data for Scotland. The remaining five incidents that met the DIR criteria are currently in the evidence gathering phase.

The DIR has received international interest, with process and lessons learned being shared at the Eurosafe Conference in Reykjavik with European fire and rescue services and community safety partners throughout Europe.

### Youth Volunteer Scheme

As well as relying on our firefighters, Community Safety Action Teams, and Fire Safety Support and Education Advisers to share safety messaging, we were fortunate to be supported in this task by the members of the SFRS Youth Volunteer Scheme (YVS).



Our YVS created opportunities to improve life chances and empower young people to work together for a safer Scotland. Youth Volunteers were provided a safe environment in which they could learn essential life skills and develop positive relationships, whilst gaining a practical understanding of life at a working fire station. The YVS is open to 13 to 18 year olds and aims to reduce inequalities, develop citizenship, and promote health and wellbeing.

In March 2024, 13 of the identified 15 schemes have launched, with the most recent being in Tobermory. Schemes in Helensburgh and Falkirk are underway to launch in late summer (2024).

During 2023/24, a total of 213 Youth Volunteers (YVs) engaged with the scheme, with 52 YVs identified as vulnerable, and 18 as Care Experienced. Delivery of local schemes are supported by adult Volunteer Youth Instructors (VYIs), and over the period 105 were registered. VYIs collectively contributed over 4,000 volunteering hours through delivery of weekly sessions and supporting community events and volunteering activities.

In addition to weekly sessions, local schemes have:

- delivered 86 community engagement activities
- received 74 Saltire Award certificates

YVs have also put their First Aid and CPR skills gained through YVS into practice on three separate occasions when individuals from the scheme were able to provide medical assistance when confronted with an emergency situation outwith the course.

Furthermore, YVS Shetland has completed the first year of a unique pilot partnership scheme with the Police Scotland Youth Volunteers and is currently being evaluated. Preliminary findings are extremely positive, and a Parliamentary motion was submitted on behalf of the partnership to recognise its achievements.

## YOUTH VOLUNTEER SCHEME: APRIL 2023 – MARCH 2024

**213** YOUTH VOLUNTEERS

**4k** VOLUNTEERING HOURS

**86** LOCAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT EVENTS

**74** SALTIRE AWARDS CERTIFICATES



Feedback gained from young people, their families, and other stakeholders suggests that YVS contributes to the reduction of anti-social behaviour in local communities, and an increased awareness of fire, road and water safety.



### Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage

One of the more unique ways we share safety information is through our Museum of Scottish Fire Heritage (MoSFH).

The educational facility, which was officially opened in November 2023, has welcomed 9,573 visitors<sup>1</sup>, allowing our Museum Volunteers to use fire heritage as an effective way to promote current fire safety advice across a range of demographics and communities. The museum has also engaged with over 350,000 individuals online.

**9,573**

**VISITORS AT THE MUSEUM  
OF SCOTTISH FIRE HERITAGE  
(JUNE 2023 – APR 2024)**



**MoSFH WAS AWARDED  
VISIT SCOTLAND 5-STAR RATING**

The Museum has delivered events to target key audiences including families, early years and young people. These have included Bookbug; The Sums of Water (in conjunction with Maths Week Scotland); and a highly successful Doors Open day. This event alone saw over 2,500 visitors attend the museum and community fire station at McDonald Road, to learn about firefighting history, engage with current firefighters and speak with the Community Action Team.

Educational and outreach events have been delivered by volunteers out with the museum, including visits to schools and nurseries and attendance at Galas.

In March 2024, MoSFH was awarded Visit Scotland 5-star rating – the highest achievable quality standard for tourism in Scotland.

## PROTECTING THE VULNERABLE

**40%**

**OF HFSV WERE CARRIED  
OUT TO THOSE MOST  
VULNERABLE**

### Child and Adult Safeguarding

There are many opportunities for us to prevent emergencies by working with partners to identify and assist those who need more help. As a trusted emergency service, we often visit some of the most vulnerable members of society. During 2023/24, 40% of our Home Fire Safety Visits were carried out to those most vulnerable.

We are committed to ensuring that our staff have the knowledge and skills they require to confidently engage with all members of our community and ensure they know the action they should take if they have any concerns about child or adult welfare.

During 2023/24, work focused on strengthening the skills of our staff and improving the advice and tools available to assist them in recognising, responding, reporting, and recording risks faced by some of our most vulnerable children, young people and adults at risk from harm and abuse.

To achieve this, online Adult and Child Safeguarding, Hoarding and Self Neglect, and Domestic abuse e-learning modules were created for staff who come into direct or

<sup>1</sup> Between June 2023 to April 2024



indirect contact with children and young people, other family members and vulnerable adults. The modules have been supplemented with enhanced safeguarding training for those in regular contact with vulnerable people which also covers Human Trafficking and exploitation.

### Ageing Safely

Scotland has an ageing population, and whilst we recognise the valued contribution our older population makes, the increased number of older adults brings a challenge for public sector agencies to support older people living safely and independently into later life.

In recent years, SFRS has seen more individuals aged 60 and over either being injured or in some cases losing their lives to fire. In response, the Ageing Safely Framework has been developed. It considers current and emerging risks which older people face in Scotland, including the cost-of-living crisis, social isolation and factors around Health and Wellbeing. It provides guidance on how SFRS can focus resources to support our older communities and use preventative activities to reduce the issues mentioned above.

The framework also acknowledges the new and emerging risks such as Lithium-ion batteries (mobility scooters etc.), emollients, polypharmacy, and mental health and provides links to information and guidance.

The Framework's key objectives are to:

- Assist older people to remain independent and safe in their own homes
- Protect older people who live in Residential Care Homes, Care Homes with Nursing, and Sheltered Accommodation
- Assist in the prevention of accidental dwelling fires and incidents of unintentional harm
- Work with partners to provide support and guidance to keep older people safe



## UNWANTED FIRE ALARM SIGNALS (UFAS)

Our community safety prevention work is crucial, and we want to ensure that we have the capacity required to continue to develop this important part of our role.

During 2022/23, we were called to 31,381 Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS). These are fire calls which we attended but that turned out to be false alarms meaning no action was required to be taken by our crews. This made up 31.5% of the overall incidents that we attended that year.

Following extensive consultation, from 1 July 2023 our response to fire alarms in commercial business and workplace premises changed. From this date, our Operations Control teams challenged calls originating from an Automatic Fire Alarm System (AFA) activation in premises where there is no sleeping risk to ensure the call is not a false alarm.

Significant planning was required to implement the change. This work included internal policy amendments; training; regular engagement with a wide range of stakeholders; an updated reporting process; and the creation of guidance information for our Operations Control staff which was developed in conjunction with certification bodies of Alarm Receiving Centres.

Following the implementation of phase one of the UFAS Policy, the Service has recorded a significant reduction in UFAS incidents attended. Between 1 July 2023 and 31 March 2024, by challenging AFA activations, we did not require to attend 14,372 incidents.

This reduction has resulted in multiple benefits for the Service and communities, including increased capacity of Wholetime Firefighters to deliver prevention activities and prepare for emergencies. There has also been a reduction in blue light journeys, decreasing road risk for staff and the public.

BY CHALLENGING AFA ACTIVATIONS,  
WE DID NOT REQUIRE TO ATTEND

14,372

INCIDENTS



# OUTCOME TWO:

## COMMUNITIES ARE SAFER AND MORE RESILIENT AS WE RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO CHANGING RISKS

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 2, 6 & 7

**80,415**  
INCIDENTS ATTENDED

Our key role will always be to respond to fires and other emergencies. During 2023/24, we responded to 80,415 incidents across the country.

To respond effectively we often must adapt to changing risks and strategically decide how best to use our resources to ensure we continue to provide a resilient service to our communities.

### BANK ROSTER SCHEME

On call firefighters are a vital part of the Service. They help provide an emergency fire and rescue service to their local communities 24-hours a day. They report to the community fire station to respond to an emergency call out from their home or their primary place of work, during their agreed On call hours. Of our 356 fire stations across the country, 282 of them are On call stations.

To enhance the availability of On call appliances across Scotland, the Service piloted the Bank Roster scheme. The initiative involves the use of On call staff, and if necessary



Wholetime Duty System staff, who wish to be considered for additional paid bank shifts at other On call fire stations within their area. These stations are prioritised based on the provision of strategic fire cover.

The scheme is intended to provide an additional staffing option should a forecasted or unforeseen deficiency result in an On call fire appliance being unavailable. This scheme will benefit the people of Scotland by providing an additional tool to maintain appliance cover, enhancing resilience and our

**282**  
ON CALL STATIONS  
OUT OF 356 FIRE  
STATIONS





ability to respond to emergency incidents; and in supporting community safety initiatives. The scheme will also benefit the Service as it reduces our need to move fire appliances to maintain strategic fire cover, which will reduce the demands placed on both our Operations Control and operational staff.

The pilot, which was undertaken across six of our Local Senior Officer areas, is currently being evaluated in preparation for formal adoption across the service area.

## PROVIDING THE RIGHT EQUIPMENT

There's no doubt that we need to provide the right people and resources in the right place to provide Scotland with an efficient and effective emergency response service. Equally as important is ensuring that our firefighters have the right equipment and vehicles to carry out their varied role and to keep them safe.

During 2023/24, the following changes to vehicles, equipment and infrastructure were made:

SERVICE TO BUILD  
UP  
TO **80**  
MEDIUM WEIGHT  
APPLIANCES



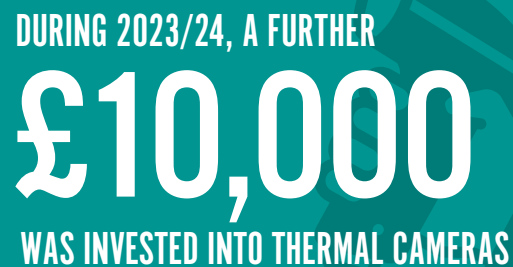
- **Medium Weight Rescue Pumps** – the Service procured a contract to build up to 80 Medium Weight Rescue Pumps. These units allow a fully capable and equipped rescue pump on a smaller vehicle which can operate on the smaller roads within the rural and remote areas of the Service. The second consignment consisting of fourteen appliances, have been inspected and signed off by the Fleet Section.

**344**  
BATTERY POWERED  
SYSTEMS IN USE  
ACROSS THE SERVICE



- **Battery Powered Rescue Equipment** – to prevent high pressure injection injuries, we are replacing hydraulic rescue equipment with battery powered equipment, with approximately £6million being invested in this equipment since 2020. In 2023/24, the rollout programme resulted in 344 battery-powered systems in use across the Service. A further 37 sets are due to be replaced in 2024/25, following which all front-line appliances will be operating battery systems.

DURING 2023/24, A FURTHER  
**£10,000**  
WAS INVESTED INTO THERMAL CAMERAS



- **Thermal imaging cameras** – a project to standardise thermal imagery equipment commenced in 2022/23 with a £100,000 investment to purchase 60 thermal imaging cameras for our frontline appliances. These were deployed during 2023/24 and a further £100,000 was invested. Every station now has access to at least one thermal imaging camera.

**1.2k**  
FIRE HOODS  
**238**  
SMOKE CURTAINS



- **Fire Hoods** – following the Grenfell Tower inquiry, we made provisions for 1,200 Escape Hoods and 238 Smoke curtains, ensuring that every frontline appliance has access to this equipment. The hoods help members of the public access clean air, reducing any chances of smoke inhalation while they are being rescued, or escaping, from incidents. Smoke curtains are used to stop the spread of smoke to an escape route and help firefighters rescue people from fires, particularly in high-rise buildings.
- **Flood First Responder Personal Protective Equipment** – the Service has a network of 20 Water Rescue Teams and 81 Flood First Responder (FFR)





# £125,000

## INVESTED INTO PPE FOR EACH FLOOD FIRST RESPONDER STATIONS

stations. In response to identified need, SFRS has invested £125,000 in new Personal Protective Equipment for each FFR teams. This includes personal floatation devices and water safety helmets.

- **Interim response model for Command Support Units** – following the removal of three Command Support Units (CSU), an exercise to provide interim options for the replacement of these vehicles was undertaken to maintain national resilience. The result of this saw dual purposing of Special Operations Response Unit (SORU) vehicles to provide a combined SORU/CSU capability. In Phase 1, the SORU was relocated from Govan to Milngavie (formally a CSU station) and work commenced to provide the necessary equipment, ICT and training to allow the vehicle to go on the run as a dual vehicle.

Phase two provided a dedicated CSU back into Inverness, with the dual SORU/CSU taking up position at Altens Community Fire Station. This move has provided the far north of Scotland with a Command Unit again and enhances the National coverage for CSUs.

It is anticipated that Phase three will take place in the East following a review and analysis of the first two phases. This phase will be dependent upon the availability of funds to purchase dedicated CSUs. This interim approach has allowed SFRS to maintain operational response and resilience.

## TESTING EQUIPMENT

As well as providing the right equipment to our firefighters, we need to ensure that it is regularly tested and maintained.



During 2023/24 work was undertaken to strengthen our testing and maintenance processes through the introduction of Equipment Information Cards (EIC). EICs are a standardised suite of documents which provide staff with instructions and a schedule for the testing and maintenance of Service equipment. A recording system has also been developed to ensure that all relevant information is documented and can be accessed as needed.

Quality assurance of equipment testing is integrated into the maintenance schedule, enabling line managers to ensure that adequate knowledge and understanding are in place to follow guidance and maintain equipment to a high standard.

As a result of these initiatives, the Service has a more accessible and user-friendly means of ensuring that our equipment is tested and maintained, thereby protecting the health and safety of our staff.

## PROVIDING THE RIGHT SKILLS: DEVELOPING THE TRAINING VISION AND STRATEGY 2023-2028

Ensuring that our firefighters are trained is critical to effective service delivery and protecting their safety.

Following a full review of operational training, a restructure has taken place within our Training function to ensure a more flexible, effective, and efficient training delivery model, with training being centrally co-ordinated and locally delivered.

The review also led to the publication of the new Training Vision and Strategy 2023- 2028. Through its implementation, the Service will ensure that a blended learning approach to training, including realistic practical acquisition and refresher training and continued application of our Training for Operational Competence Framework, meets the organisational training need of SFRS and ensures our staff are suitably trained to safely respond to incidents.

The new Training Vision and Strategy recognises the importance of multi-agency training. During 2023/24, the Service worked in partnership with both Police Scotland and Scottish Ambulance Service to deliver Tri-Service training, focused on reinforcing the fundamental principles of JESIP (Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles). This was done through the delivery of the Joint on Scene Incident Commanders course for staff from all three services.

The Service has continued to support and assist the Scottish Multi-Agency Resilience Training and Exercise Unit to deliver on its core function, to undertake realistic and meaningful training and exercises to identify key lessons that will improve interoperability and collective preparedness of the three blue light services in Scotland to respond to incidents and events.



# OUTCOME THREE:

WE WILL VALUE AND DEMONSTRATE INNOVATION ACROSS ALL AREAS OF OUR WORK

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 2, 3, 6 & 7

Photograph by Chris Watt

Innovation is about new processes and new ways of doing things. It allows us to look at the equipment we use or the services we provide and renew or update them by applying new processes, techniques or implementing new ideas that lead to improvement and modernisation.

During 2023/24, we have worked alongside partners on a range of modernisation initiatives including fireground radios, the Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme, and a range of developments to improve our On call processes.

## DIGITAL FIREGROUND RADIOS

During 2023/24 we received delivery of new digital fireground radios to replace existing analogue radios used on the incident ground.

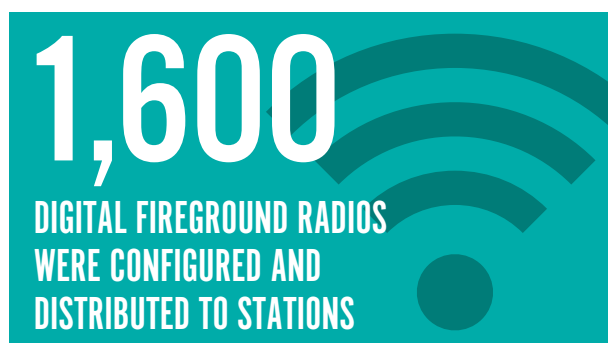
Following a proof-of-concept exercise where crews used the new devices at live incidents, 1,600 of these new devices were configured and distributed to stations across the country. A further rollout of an additional 1,600 devices will be carried out

in early 2024/25, with the aim of having all devices operational by mid-2025. The initial plan is to provide every appliance in Scotland with up to six new devices, with the contract providing an option to increase this number in future years.

The new radios will improve fireground communications and contribute to the safety of firefighters.

## EMERGENCY SERVICES MOBILE COMMUNICATION PROGRAMME AND THE IN-VEHICLE SYSTEMS PROJECT

The Emergency Services Mobile Communication Programme (ESMCP) was established to deliver new communications services to replace the current Airwave system. The new service will be called the Emergency Services Network (ESN) and will be used for emergency services critical communications.





We have been involved in the ESMCP since its inception, working with emergency services partners, Scottish Government (as sponsor of the Programme in Scotland) and the Home Office as owners of the Programme itself, to prepare for the implementation of the ESN.

There have been significant delays to the delivery of the programme, however, the physical network is now mostly built out. During 2023/24, the Service worked to maximise our preparedness for future ESN implementation, by progressing our In-Vehicle Systems project and working towards the implementation of ESMCP fixed vehicle devices. These will provide connectivity to our fleet whilst mobile, providing live data to crews en-route and on the incident ground.

The In-Vehicle Systems Project will deliver live and up-to date information to crews, initially through a second tablet device using a commercial SIM. The second devices were procured during 2022/23, and a pilot implementation was carried out early in 2023/24.

Following this successful pilot, additional Samsung devices were procured for installation into all appliances. CF33 devices, to replace the existed outdated Mobile Data Terminals were also procured and these will be implemented, alongside a new software solution during 2024/25.

## INNOVATING ON CALL PROCESSES

Innovation isn't just about the use of new technology, it's also about looking at new ways to approach things to help improve processes and outcomes. A good example of this can be seen through the work that has been carried out to address the ongoing challenges of recruiting and retaining our critical On call firefighters.

### Modular On call Training Delivery

One of the potential barriers to people joining SFRS as an On call firefighter is the training commitment needed during the first six months of service, with trainee firefighters being required to attend an initial training course, followed by a two-week Breathing Apparatus course. The training is necessary to ensure that trainee firefighters can undertake their role safely and effectively but can place considerable demand on them as they require time away from family and their primary employment. This is especially true in the more remote and rural communities of Scotland, where staff may have to travel considerable distances to attend a SFRS Training Centre.

To remove this barrier, the Service began a trial of a modular programme of training delivery, where trainees receive technical training sessions through a virtual classroom at home or at their local fire station, with the practical training elements



being delivered by SFRS instructors at a suitable fire station local to their location. The modular method means that the training can be delivered over an agreed period which suits the needs of the trainees and their home commitments. Following evaluation of this trial it is intended to have this modular training option available to local areas across Scotland.

This approach will remove barriers to recruitment and training, making On call a viable career option for members of the community who would otherwise be unable to commit to the existing training regime. This is particularly true of people who have caring responsibilities and would wish to provide service as an On call firefighter around their commitments at home. By removing barriers, the Service will realise greater appliance availability and reduce the demand in centralised training, freeing up capacity for our training sites to undertake other training.

### Local Practical Selection and Fitness Testing

This local delivery approach is also being explored for the completion of recruitment fitness testing. To join SFRS as an On call firefighter applicants must pass a Practical Selection Test (PST) and a fitness test.

Historically, candidates would be required to attend one of the 11 National PST sites to undertake these tests. To reduce the travel demand on applicants and remove barriers to recruitment, SFRS began trialling the local delivery of PST and fitness testing by training local officers to undertake these tests.

An evaluation of this trial is underway to shape how this is rolled out more extensively across Scotland.



## ON CALL MIGRATION TO WHOLETIME

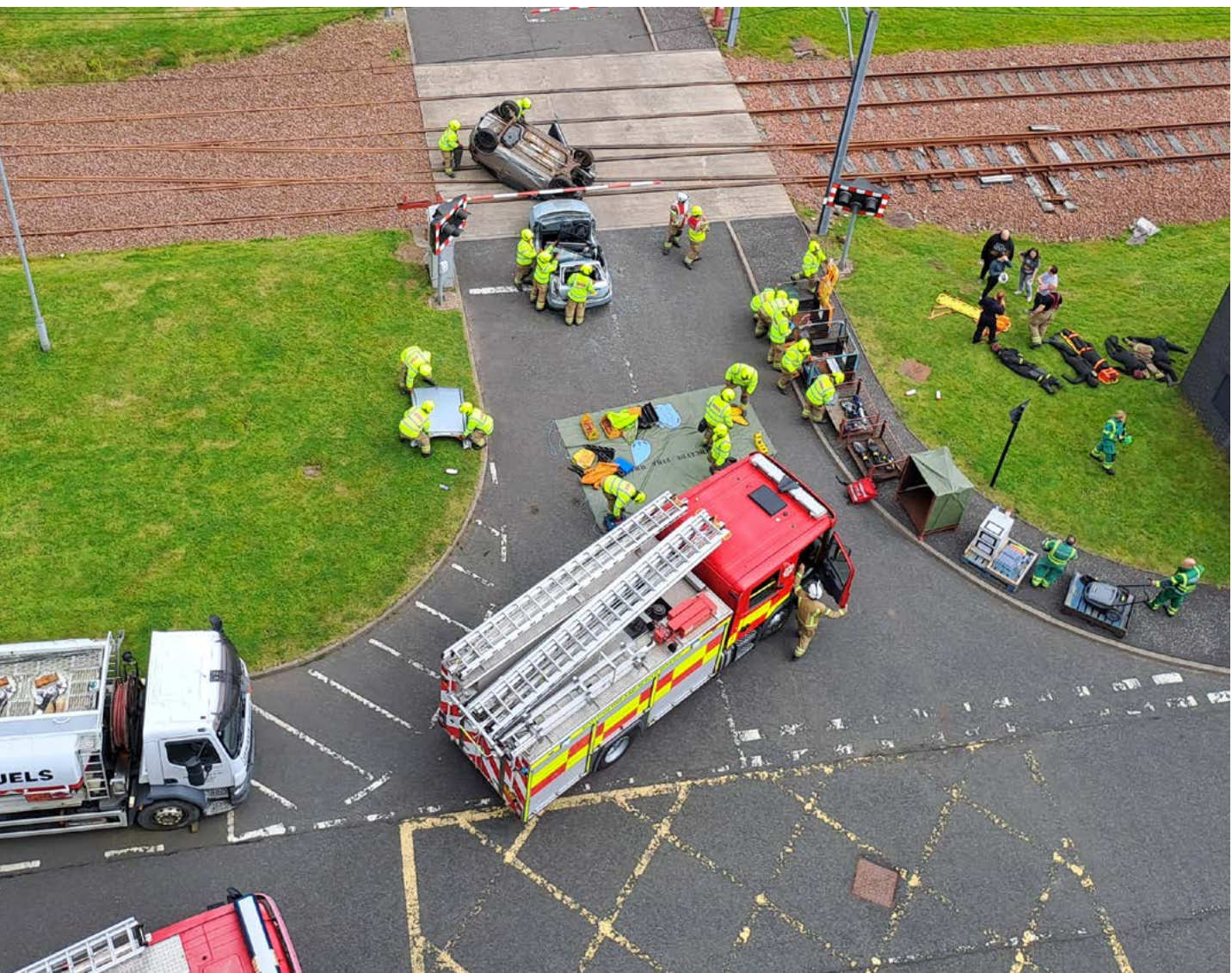
In 2022, SFRS trialled a pilot of a bespoke recruitment and training pathway to assist On call Firefighters migrate to the Wholetime Duty System (WDS). The process sought to recognise the prior training, experience and competence of those RDS staff (now known as On call) and to evaluate the feasibility of On call to WDS migration being a recruitment tool for the future.

The scheme identified suitable RDS candidates who were already in the application process to join SFRS as a WDS firefighter and allowed these candidates to follow a separate recruitment process, which was of a condensed timescale, and which took cognisance of their competency as firefighters within SFRS. This allowed for a more agile approach to their recruitment and selection, placing less demand on SFRS and the candidates. This was replicated during the training phase for the candidates, with a one-week migration training course being utilised as opposed to the current 14 week training course, allowing personnel to be posted to Community Fire Stations sooner – with the resulting benefit to appliance availability and strategic fire cover.

During 2023/24, following full evaluation of the pilot, On call to WDS migration was formally adopted as a recruitment option available to SFRS and work is ongoing to embed migration within our existing recruitment and training processes.

The new process condenses recruitment timescales allowing the Service to post firefighters to fire stations quicker, helping to maintain operational availability. Staff who are recruited this way are also expected to achieve competency in role quicker, when compared to the usual 36 months for non-migration recruits. This promotes positive workforce engagement and ensures recognition of the skills and competence of our On call personnel. It also allows the Service to populate our resourcing structure with competent firefighters and ensure a more equitable spread of firefighters in development across Scotland.

The migration pathway reduces the demands on the Service, when measured against the traditional recruitment pathway, due to a reduced need to resource and facilitate a full recruitment process and initial training course.





# OUTCOME FOUR:

## WE RESPOND TO THE IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE IN SCOTLAND AND REDUCE OUR CARBON EMISSIONS

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 1, 2, 4 & 7

Photograph by JASPERIMAGE

### EXTREME WEATHER AND WILDFIRES

As climate change continues to accelerate, we have continued to be on the front line in responding to the impacts of climate change in Scotland, including extreme weather events which have led to flooding and wildfires.

Wildfires can have a devastating impact on the environment. In April 2023, one such incident is estimated to have burned the second-largest amount of area on record for UK wildfires. According to records from the European Forest Fire Information, it is estimated that around 3,500 hectares were affected by fires in Lochaber, making it the biggest wildfire in the UK since 2008.

To ensure our preparedness, we continued to deliver our Wildfire Strategy to develop and enhance our wildfire capability, including training to ensure firefighters have the tools they need to manage wildfires effectively and safely.

Wildfire theory and practical training for all ten Tier 3 stations commenced in March 2024 and is scheduled to be completed by May 2024. A training implementation plan has been developed and will be delivered in the 2024/25 training year for all fifteen Tier 2 Wildfire stations.

SFRS  
NOW HAS

**10** TRAINED WILDFIRE  
TACTICAL ADVISORS



SFRS has increased the number of trained Wildfire Tactical Advisors to ten. These Tactical Advisors are trained to a level which enables them to provide operational tactical advice and support to SFRS Incident Commanders at Wildfire incidents.

Throughout the year, additional resources have been procured including 10 All-Terrain Vehicles and ten trailers, plus ten 4 by 4 vehicles for towing.

Partnership working and prevention are key elements of the SFRS Wildfire Strategy and SFRS has engaged with various stakeholders at local and national levels over the past year, to ensure Scotland has a progressive wildfire prevention and mitigation culture. This work will ensure that Scotland is resilient to the negative impact that climate change might bring, and that the devastating impact of wildfire on Scotland's rural communities is reduced.

### REDUCING OUR CARBON FOOTPRINT

As well as responding to the impacts of climate change, we are committed to reducing and limiting our own carbon emissions.

The Service was successful in bidding for grant funding to support pre-capital decarbonisation studies for a select



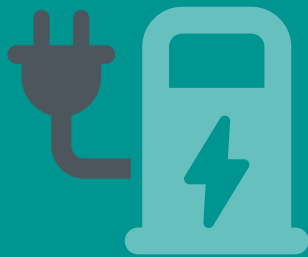
number of sites as part of a Scottish Green Public Sector Estates Decarbonisation Scheme (SGPSEDS) 'Pre-Capital' project.

The studies will support a Business Case that considers the opportunities, risks and needs for development, tendering and delivering decarbonisation investment projects at scale; with a view to future use of the SGPSEDS Capital Grant scheme.

The studies surveyed four of the most energy intensive SFRS sites to understand the opportunities and limitations in transitioning our estate to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2045.

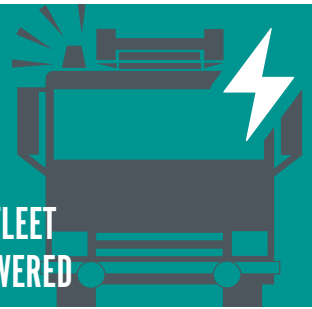
The reports advise that the carbon reduction opportunities on each site would cost in the region of £1 million, excluding additional electrical capacity costs, and would offer carbon savings ranging from 33 – 64 tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e annually. Additional savings would be gained in future years as the electricity grid continues to decarbonise. The works would, however, result in increased annual utility costs of between £10-80k when the heating systems were switched from natural gas to electricity. To apply the same works across all our 74 wholtime stations and larger corporate sites that have gas fuelled heating systems is estimated to cost in the region of £100 million. Even with this level of investment the buildings would not achieve our 2045 net zero carbon target due to their fabric, current condition and age.

WE PROCURED  
**20** ELECTRIC  
CARS AND  
**12** ELECTRIC  
VANS



As well as looking at our estate, work also continues to have a greener fleet of vehicles. Our first electric fire appliance went on the run in the summer of 2023 and during 2023/24 we procured 20 electric cars and 12 electric vans. In total, 33% of

**33%**  
OF THE TOTAL LIGHT FLEET  
IS NOW ELECTRIC POWERED



the total light fleet is now electric powered. The introduction of these electric vehicles will help with our efforts to meet our pledge to reduce carbon emissions by 6 per cent each year until 2030.

We need to do more if we are to achieve our commitment of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Unfortunately, during 2023/24 SFRS were unable to deliver any projects from our Carbon Management Plan 2020-25. This was due to a combination of internal financial pressures, limited external funding opportunities, and corresponding internal resourcing limitations.

The minimal capital allocation that SFRS receives is prioritised on essential repairs and upgrading works on our estate, such as RAAC roofing rebuilds and contaminant control adaptations. As a result, the Service is unable to fund carbon reduction projects from our existing capital allowance.

Further to this, financial parameters restrict SFRS from accessing Salix funding. This is the government funding scheme across the UK to support councils, schools, housing associations, hospitals and universities to boost energy efficiency and reduce environmental impact. We are also restricted from taking on any debt or loans. As a result, the Service is reliant on grant funding applications to fund carbon reduction projects, specifically the Scottish Government's 'Scottish Green Public Sector Estate Decarbonisation Scheme'. However, as funding is not guaranteed, planning large scale projects is very difficult as they must be fully designed, procured and delivered within the financial year.





# OUTCOME FIVE:

WE ARE A PROGRESSIVE ORGANISATION, USE OUR RESOURCES RESPONSIBLY AND PROVIDE BEST VALUE FOR MONEY TO THE PUBLIC

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 2, 5 & 7

As a public sector organisation, we are committed to managing our finances and resources responsibly to ensure that we provide the best value for money to the public.

One of the ways we do this is to ensure that we have planning processes in place to identify the activities we plan to undertake every year to deliver benefits to the people of Scotland.

## SFRS THREE-YEAR DELIVERY PLAN

To ensure the activities we undertake are aligned to the strategic ambitions of the SFRS Strategic Plan 2022-25, each year we develop an Annual Operating Plan. Unlike the Strategic Plan, which provides high-level aspirations for the Service, our annual planning document provides greater detail on the actions that we plan to carry out in the year ahead.

During 2023/24, we strengthened our approach to planning by further developing our 2024/25 Annual Operating Plan

to include a Three-Year Forecast of activities, as well as information on our formal change activities. Now entitled the '*SFRS Three Year Delivery Plan*', this three-year rolling plan clearly outlines the Service's priority activities for the period.

Our progress against each of the activities contained within the Plan will be monitored quarterly with updates being reported to Executive and Non-Executive Boards, ensuring these business-critical activities remain on track and that we continue to use our resources responsibly.

## MANAGING MAJOR CHANGE

It is crucial that we manage the major projects identified within the SFRS Three Year Delivery Plan effectively and efficiently to ensure they deliver against their objectives and realise anticipated benefits.

During 2023/24, extensive work has been carried out to review and update existing practices to ensure improved governance of projects, and to build effective project management methodology that fits the needs of SFRS. The resulting Portfolio Office Strategy provides an appropriate and enduring structure, with roles and services, designed to support the planning and delivery of strategic change and continuous service improvement initiatives across the organisation.

To ensure effective governance of these critical projects, a new governance and assurance structure has been implemented, consisting of:

- **Change Portfolio Investment Group (CPIG)** – the Executive Board responsible for identification and selection of initiatives for inclusion in the Change Portfolio, driven by SFRS strategic priorities and delivery of best value. CPIG identify the prioritisation of initiatives and ensure adequate resourcing.





- **Change Portfolio Progress Group (CPPG)** – the Executive Board providing effective oversight and monitoring of progress across the Change Portfolio, including the effective management of risk along with resolution of issues that may compromise delivery and benefits realisation.
- **Design Authority (DA)** – providing independent assurance that solution designs are fit for purpose, the DA will work to ensure that each component meets requirements and fully integrates within SFRS architectures, including all technology, data and business processes.

Aligned to the revised Change Portfolio governance and assurance structure, three KPIs were approved to be monitored: cost; time and financial benefits.

To support the implementation of upcoming change activities as outlined in SSRP, the Service worked in partnership with Cardiff University to deliver two cohorts of the Improvement Foundation Course. Upon completion of the course, employees were equipped to analyse a process using mapping and diagnostic techniques, as well as using a variety of problem-solving LEAN principles and tools to identify and tackle issues resulting in process and quality improvements. By ensuring that employees are trained in LEAN improvement techniques, continuous improvement across SFRS can be effectively standardised.

## DATA AND BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

Whilst planning for change it's important that we use data and business intelligence to support evidence-based decision making.

During 2023/24, work has continued to deliver against the first Business Intelligence (BI) Strategy implemented by the SFRS. Our Business Intelligence Strategy, published in 2021, aims to develop a strategic approach to the alignment of systems and the collection of data to enable better analysis. This will provide improved insights and evidence on which to plan for the future and deploy limited resources.

Several important developments have been delivered, such as the continued expansion of performance reporting and insights delivered through Power BI. Now, all executive areas of governance have a unified way to scrutinise the performance of SFRS. In the next phase, developments will focus on providing directorate and function level performance reporting that underpins the insights provided to executive scrutiny.

Developing people and skills has been another priority of the strategy and has progressed in several ways. Upskilling of our staff was a priority and continues to be so. Specialist training in areas such as data management, data architecture and



developer roles and in data governance are costly. Almost all upskilling of staff has been delivered through free to public sector Scottish Government initiatives or through low-cost online platforms such as Udemy.

Those using BI solution have also required training. All business intelligence solutions that have been developed have had a focus on upskilling relevant staff as part of the development journey. Training sessions and continuing learning forums were initiated, with Microsoft Viva Engage being used to allow staff to crowdsource answers and ideas, share their experiences, and ask questions directly to the people that built the products they are using. A quarterly BI bulletin was sent to all staff which promotes the latest products delivered and gives unique training/instruction on various Microsoft Office 365 applications such as Power BI and Excel.

Future development of people and skills will place a focus on the organisation's need for data governance and master data management. To fully understand our current strengths and weaknesses when using data, we undertook our first data maturity assessment in early 2024. The results of the assessment, released in June 2024, will allow us to look at our capability, effectiveness, and readiness to use data that is fundamental to achieving our strategic, operational, and corporate priorities. We will then engage with staff who have responsibilities for critical data assets that are used to inform the Service's progress towards these strategic goals and priorities. The intention is to make sure that all responsible staff contribute to developing a data governance framework that ensures everyone is driving value from data.

In support of the priorities of the BI Strategy, work has been undertaken to align SFRS statistics with that of the Home Office and, in turn, the rest of the UK. As part of that process more open data will be available through Scottish Government platforms, giving academics and researchers greater access to fire data.





# OUTCOME SIX:

THE EXPERIENCE OF THOSE WHO WORK FOR SFRS IMPROVES AS WE ARE THE BEST EMPLOYER WE CAN BE

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 6 & 7

**A**s an aspirational employer, we will aim to attract and retain the best people to deliver our services to the public.

As of 31 March 2024, we employed 7,516 members of staff; 86% of staff were male; and 14% are female.



## SCOTLAND'S FAIR WORK APPROACH

In support of Scotland's Fair Work Approach that defines work which offers effective voice, fulfilment, opportunity, respect and security we undertook several initiatives throughout the year.

To ensure our support staff receive fair and balanced pay, with attractive and supportive terms and conditions, we finalised the 2023/24 Support Staff Pay Settlement. Engagement on continuous improvement of Support Staff Job Evaluation arrangements and guidance has taken place, with revised arrangements being finalised for implementation early in 2024/25. To assist all groups of staff, a package of benefits was introduced to support colleagues with their financial wellbeing, alongside an ongoing review of our overall employee benefits offering.

Specific focus has been given to development of an SFRS-wide culture action plan, overseen by a Culture Development Group consisting of senior leaders to drive priority activity across SFRS. As part of this work, a six-week Colleague Experience Survey was launched in March 2024. The results of the survey will be used to inform objectives, recommendations and improvements as we strive to make working for the SFRS a positive and rewarding experience for all staff.

The Group also secured a tool for staff which strengthens our zero-tolerance approach to bullying, harassment and discrimination by providing a confidential reporting line where staff can voice their concerns freely and without fear, at any time of day or night. Launched in May 2024, Safecall provides a safe and secure platform for reporting any instances of dishonesty; unethical behaviour; corruption; health and safety breaches; harassment; bullying; or any forms of wrongdoing. This new resource will run alongside the formal Dignity & Respect Policy, associated procedures





and guidance, and network of Contact Advisors who already provide confidential advice to colleagues to complement internal procedures.

## EQUALITY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Whether it's in our employment practices or in the services we provide, our commitment to equality, diversity and human rights is an important part of our working culture. We believe that everyone should be treated with dignity, respect and consideration and that all our employees have a role to play in delivering this important agenda.

Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Human Rights (EDIHR) considerations have been made central to the development of SFRS' Cultural Action Plan, with EDIHR support identified for each of the sub-groups being progressed.

The Women's Experience Liaison Forum continued to meet throughout 2023/24 to enhance partnership working between management and representative bodies and progress women's inclusion in the workplace. Issues that have been prioritised include the provision of Personal Protective Equipment suitable for women and the improvement of suitable toilet and washing facilities. A similar group discussing issues important to LGBT+ employees has been established and is in the early stages of agreeing its terms of reference.

The Service's second [Gaelic Language Plan](#) was published. Immediate action was taken to implement the delivery plan included increasing the use of Gaelic in SFRS external communications and adopting Gaelic language skills as desirable criteria for those vacancies located in geographic areas where Gaelic is spoken by the local community in day-to-day life.

The Corporate Parenting Working Group continued to provide the main vehicle for progressing our responsibilities under the Children and Young Persons (Scotland) Act 2014 as it relates to care experienced young people. Refresher training was provided to senior managers on their responsibilities as a corporate parent; we marked Care Experience Week and Care Leavers Week with care experienced young people at a local level; and engaged directly with young people on understanding their perceptions of SFRS as an employer and service provider.

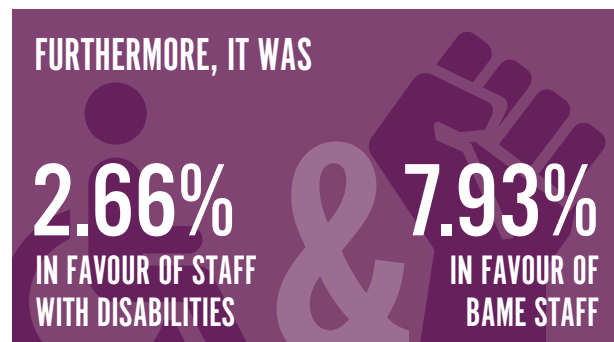
We published the [SFRS Equal Pay Statement and Pay Gap Report](#) in April 2023, which identified pay gaps related to gender, ethnicity, and disability, going beyond the statutory reporting requirements.

The pay gap between male and female employees has fallen consistently since the creation of SFRS and in December

2022 was recorded as being 2.98% in favour of women. This acknowledges the strong representation of women in senior positions within our support staff structure and the gradual, sustained increase in the number of women in uniformed roles.



The pay gaps between employees from the BAME communities or with disabilities was equally positive, these being recorded at 2.66% and 7.93% in favour of these employee groups respectively.



## THE PROVISION OF SUITABLE FACILITIES

As well as attracting a workforce that is representative of Scotland and providing a nurturing culture, we continued to work to try to provide our people with the suitable toilet and washing facilities required. During 2023/24, work took place at Newcraighall, Dingwall and Galashiels Community Fire Stations to reconfigure the internal layouts to provide sleeping accommodation and washing facilities, compliant with the Service's approach to control of contaminants from fire. Both Galashiels and Dingwall also require roof works to be undertaken. It is expected that the work at all three stations will be completed by December 2024.

The option to construct modern fire station accommodation connected to the existing Appliance Bay at Blackness Community Fire Station was approved in 2023/24. We have initiated the process of procuring a full design team to support and deliver the project which, on completion, will enable the disposal of the wider site and legacy buildings



which have been non-operational since the early years of the Service. This will deliver a capital receipt for reinvestment, associated recurring resource savings on reduced operating costs, and progress the Service's journey to Net Zero carbon.

The Cambuslang Asset Resource Centre (ARC) was completed and became operational in Summer 2023. This will enable the Service to dispose of the surplus properties at Glasgow Workshops and Hamilton stores, generating capital receipts that can be reinvested. The new ARC is more environmentally friendly with a far superior energy rating than the previous facilities; and has office accommodation for staff.



We do, however, still have substantial work to do to bring our estate up to standard. We have a substantial capital backlog investment requirement (£389 million in 2017), particularly within our property estate. For example, around 50% of the estate has been assessed as being in poor or worse condition, over 60% assessed as poor or worse for suitability and 60% of the estate has been identified as being more than 30 years old.

To fully realise our aspiration to provide the facilities our people deserve, significant investment is required across the estate. Such investment would help address the lack of changing facilities, shower facilities and address contaminant control after incidents.

## HEALTH, WELLBEING AND SAFETY

The health, wellbeing and safety on our staff will always be a priority. During 2023/24, the following work has been undertaken to safeguard physical and mental health:

- **Health and Wellbeing System** – the new Wellbeing system was integrated with our existing systems resulting in more accurate data recording. Integration has led to more efficient processes, together with improved performance management capabilities and a greater ability to track and monitor wellbeing trends and patterns. The next phase will see manager self-service functionality introduced on a pilot basis, further streamlining the process and improving access to real-time information.
- **SFRS Fitness Policy** – development of the policy continues to introduce role-based cardiorespiratory fitness and strength assessments to meet validated occupationally relevant physical employment standards for the UK Fire and Rescue Services.
- **Physiotherapy Service** – a pilot of this in-house service was undertaken, and two physiotherapists were appointed in April 2023. This will enable better support for staff suffering from musculoskeletal injuries, one of our leading causes of absence, and allow occupational health and fitness practitioners to work collaboratively to provide effective care. This service will be evaluated in 2024/25 to inform the future approach.
- **Asbestos** – firefighters are licensed asbestos workers. Following an earlier risk-based approach to asbestos, a full implementation plan has been approved that will see all operational staff across the Service receiving asbestos screening on a rolling three yearly basis. SFRS continues to be informed by research, Health and Safety Executive guidance and National Fire Chief Council opinion that may further impact our surveillance programme.
- **Supporting Retirees** – a short life working group has been established to progress recommendations that support employees transitioning to retirement and beyond.
- **Mental Health and Wellbeing Provisions Review** – a thematic review of mental wellbeing support at SFRS was undertaken by HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland. The associated action plan and has been agreed and work has begun to align the current SFRS wellbeing action plan to the HMFSI action plan.
- **Wellbeing and Inclusion Campaigns** – these continue to be delivered in line with an agreed annual calendar of events to strengthen the resources available to staff to improve their health and wellbeing. An evaluation to assess the impact of the campaigns, at



organisational and individual level, was completed to inform the content of the 2024 calendar. To increase engagement and awareness of wellbeing support, a series of roadshows and engagement events are planned across the country.

- **Wellbeing Survey** – this was carried out to consider the views and experience of colleagues about the wellbeing support available to them. An interactive report was distributed to Service managers to help them better understand responses and themes within their individual area of responsibility.
- **Safety Culture Survey** – we carried out the first Safety Culture Survey (SCS) within SFRS. The SCS focused on five themes: Leadership, Safety Culture, Health and Safety Arrangements, Health and Safety Events, and Training and Competency. The SCS consultation ran between August and September 2023 and generated 1,095 returns, equivalent to a 14% staff response rate. This is a positive response rate for SFRS. Positively, many of the concerns raised within the SCS are already known and are being progressed or scheduled for possible progression in existing structures or within health and safety improvement plans. The largest topic of the SCS was financial constraints, underinvestment in our asset management property, fleet infrastructure, and modernisation of equipment.
- **Safety Culture Framework** – as a result of the safety culture survey, development work has begun on a Safety Culture Framework which will promote a vision, mission and key objectives to enhance our positive safety culture moving forward. Implementation of the Framework is expected to result in continual improvements for all areas of service delivery in conjunction with our Safety and Assurance Strategy and Health and Safety Policy.

- **Management of Contaminants** – research has found that toxic contaminants in fires are a risk to firefighter health. In response, the Service has progressed several projects during 2023/24, including the development of a Decontamination Standard Operating Procedure (due to be published in 2024/25); a training module scheduled for delivery in Quarter 2 2024/25; enhanced software system to record exposure to contaminants; a reviewed standard station design document for future new build stations; and the introduction of a decontamination arrangement on carbonaceous training courses.

To continue improving the management of fire contaminants, the Strategic Leadership Team approved £3,226,500m funding for 2024/25. This comprises of capital expenditure of £2,898,200, a one-off resource cost of £80,600 and a partial ongoing resource cost of £247,700. Thereafter, it is anticipated there will be an annual recurring resource cost of £495,500 each year. The financial resource assists with achieving organisational priority of ensuring firefighter safety and exercises due diligence in managing fire contaminants following research findings. The Standard Operating Procedure and control measures identified are proportionate to the known risks of exposure to the toxic products of combustion and will be implemented throughout Scotland. Further to these actions, SFRS continues to research best practice, engage with Fire Brigades Union, the National Fire Chiefs Council, and the Health and Safety Executive.

## LEARNING

We look to ensure that our staff have the required skills, knowledge and capability required to meet the organisational needs now and in the future. During 2023/24, the Service developed a refreshed Management Capability Framework to support line managers build their capability and confidence. The new sessions were piloted early in 2024 and will be further implemented in 2024/25.

There has also been a continued focus on enhancing our governance and practices to Modern Apprenticeships and SVQs, ensuring that key relationships are maintained effectively so that our Modern Apprenticeship aligns with regulatory, audit and organisational requirements. The Service currently has 720 Modern Apprentice Firefighters, with 141 having completed their apprenticeship during 2023/24. 91 new employees commenced their Modern Apprenticeship in Firefighting and 5 in Mechanical Engineering during this time. The MA programmes have been enhanced by engagement sessions for line managers, assessors and verifiers and development sessions for trainees.



# OUTCOME SEVEN:

## COMMUNITY SAFETY AND WELLBEING IMPROVES AS WE WORK EFFECTIVELY WITH OUR PARTNERS

DELIVERING AGAINST THE FIRE AND RESCUE FRAMEWORK FOR SCOTLAND PRIORITY 1, 2, 3, 5, 6 & 7

**T**eamwork is one of our core values and we acknowledge the wide-ranging benefits partnership working can bring.

Throughout this report there are examples of how partnership and collaborative working allows us to deliver more for the people of Scotland. We also publish 'SFRS Working in Partnership', an annual publication dedicated to recognising the great work we carry out alongside partners to deliver more for the people of Scotland.

During 2023/24 we developed the third 'SFRS Working in Partnership' document. Due to be published in the summer 2024, this document features some of the wide-ranging partnership and collaborative activities that have taken place throughout 2023/24 and highlights opportunities to share innovation and best practice throughout the SFRS. The report provides examples of over 60 active partnerships, a selection of some of the initiatives in this report are below:

### INTERNATIONAL JOINT TRAINING FACILITY

In July 2023, a joint Scottish Fire Investigation Training and Research Facility opened in Porthlethen to support forensic scene investigation techniques used by firefighters, police and forensic services staff.

The Service worked with the Scottish Police Authority Forensic Services, Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science at the University of Dundee and Danish Police Special Crimes Unit to deliver the facility.

On site, two purpose-built containers replicate domestic rooms before being set alight and extinguished by firefighters. The resulting burn scene can then be examined by SFRS and Forensic Services as part of a training and development programme. The project provides materials for research into new and emerging technology, including the implementation of Virtual Reality as a way of viewing fire scenes, and forms part of the National Crime Scene Management training course.

Simulating a fire scene allows us to better understand how fires start, take hold, and develop. By understanding more about how things burn, and getting experience in a simulated fire scene, our teams will be able to identify important tell-tale signs following a fire to help us determine the most likely origin and cause.

The fire will be photographed in such a way as to enable it to be rendered into Virtual Reality by experts at the Leverhulme Research Centre for Forensic Science, allowing us and Forensic Services to retain a bank of scenes which can be used in a virtual environment for training purposes.

This new joint co-located training facility will enhance our fire investigation processes and allows for research into new





technologies and emerging risks. Data from scenes collected at Portlethen are shared with Danish Police colleagues while they, in turn, will share their own.

This facility represents a significant step forward and enables realistic training to enable Fire Investigators to keep up their high-level skills in one of the most complicated areas of Forensic work. Additionally, it can be utilised to support the development of our operational crews and in particular incident commanders.

The Scottish Fire Investigation Training and Research facility has been awarded the Greatest Contribution to Forensic Science Services Excellence Awards in recognition of the impact the facility will have on fire investigation, both within Scotland and internationally in the future.

## CROSS JUSTICE GROUP ON RACE AND WORKFORCE

We aspire to be a world leading Fire and Rescue Service and to do this, we know that equality and diversity must be embedded in everything we do.

Our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team represent SFRS on the Cross Justice Group on Race and Workforce. The group was set up by Scottish Government's Justice Committee to explore issues around race inequality and employment within the justice sector and brings together justice partners, academics and third sector race advocacy groups.

The group has established several research strands with the intention of building towards agreed standards for justice sector employers in their approach to attracting and maintaining a diverse workforce representative of Scotland's communities.

Each of the employers within the justice sector have improvements to make in order that their workforce reflects Scotland's communities, and in this regard, the group undertook research with existing employees and externally to understand the barriers, real and perceived, to gaining employment within the justice sector. The Group is evaluating these results and planning how best to implement the findings.

Collating and using data about the profile of their workforce is a challenge across all justice sector partners. The group has agreed a common data set for recording race, nationality, and ethnicity to allow for better benchmarking between organisations.

While the group is focused specifically on matters of race equality and inequality, the lessons learned and recommended ways of working are expected to have application across other community groups.



## BREW WITH THE CREW

Blairgowrie Community Fire Station collaborated with partner organisations, including Police Scotland; The HEAT Project; Trading Standards; the Blairgowrie, Rattray and District Local History Trust; and the local health and wellbeing partnership to ensure a comprehensive approach to community wellbeing.

Our crews delivered The Fire Fighters Charity initiative, 'Brew with the Crew', to help tackle the cost-of-living crisis, fuel poverty, social isolation, and to provide support to young families, deliver safety advice and reduce anti-social behaviour. By providing a comfortable place for the local community to enjoy warm refreshments and open discussions, the initiative helps foster a sense of belonging and community cohesion and provides increased access to vital support services. With numbers of attendees increasing weekly, crews secured free travel to and from the station for anyone who would normally struggle to get there.

The success of 'Brew with the Crew' has resonated throughout Scotland, inspiring Community Fire Stations in Dunblane, Kirriemuir, Aberdeenshire, the Western Isles and beyond to replicate the concept, adapting it to their unique community needs.

In addition to 'Brew with the Crew,' firefighters from Blairgowrie extended their warm welcome to the local international café with the same objectives. This initiative aimed to further integrate the group into the community, which consists of individuals from 14 different nationalities. The international café welcomes people from diverse backgrounds and cultures to forge new friendships. The crew treated the group to hot beverages and homemade treats, followed by discussions on fire safety and an insightful tour of the Community Fire Station.

This collaborative initiative serves as a valuable platform for fostering community engagement, improving access to support services, enhancing community resilience, and aligning with local priorities, thus benefiting the community and us.



## MISSING PERSONS JOINT TRAINING ON BENBECULA AND NORTH UIST

SFRS worked in partnership with HM Coastguard by undertaking a Lost and Missing Persons Search Technician training course in remote locations on Benbecula and North Uist in the Western Isles.

The training exercise involved crews learning and understanding search techniques adopted by our HM Coastguard partners when dealing with and searching for lost and missing persons on the land. This enables us to work closely together during search operations and maximise our efforts to find the missing person as quickly as possible while survival is at its most likely and life can be saved.

Our partnership work with HM Coastguard is ongoing and follows several incidents where colleagues have provided invaluable assistance to a search effort, where the HM Coastguard had primacy as the lead search agency. Our crews have benefited from skills and equipment from HM Coastguard in a variety of incidents, including wildfires. In remote rural locations, working in partnership to understand the risks and sharing of techniques and equipment is invaluable.

## SFRS CHANGING YOUNG LIVES IN PARTNERSHIP

City of Glasgow Community Action Team (CAT) worked in collaboration with the Scottish Prison Service (SPS) HMP Barlinnie and Police Scotland's Campus Police Officers to tackle anti-social behaviour, reduce re-offending rates, and strive to create a safer and more positive environment for young people.

The Early Intervention Programme was implemented as a pilot project in collaboration with Govan High School, with the support of the Campus Police Officer and our CAT, to provide timely intervention and support to students in need. The aim is to divert young people from criminality and anti-social behaviour using the Life Skills Group from SPS Barlinnie and their Peer Mentors.

These activities were delivered to Second and Third Year pupils to help educate them to understand the consequences of their actions within the community and how it affects others. This successful model has allowed us to work in partnership with Community Justice Glasgow and in contributing to achieving their key objectives in targeting and reducing anti-social behaviour and re-offending.

As a result of this pilot, our CAT has forged a strong relationship with important partners which will build and become stronger year on year. This will help to promote inter-agency working, with the creation of learning resources which can be utilised by future individuals and developed research based on the findings of the initiatives and activities carried out.



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