

COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2020-2021



Welcome to the Annual Report for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, a chance for us to share the fantastic work of our staff over the past year. And what a year it has been! There have been highs and lows but through it all our staff have continued to work tirelessly to keep your community safe.

OUR COVID COMMUNITY RESPONSE

Covid-19 has had a major impact on us all and life here at CDDFRS was no exception. The Service was quick to meet this challenge head on, keeping our essential emergency response in place and ensuring that our prevention and protection work continued, albeit with some adaptations. Staff took on tasks such as delivering PPE to care homes, getting food to people who were shielding, and helping at testing centres, as well as providing administration assistance at



vaccination sites and training as vaccinators.

CDDFRS also introduced a range of different support measures to adapt its fire safety advice when Covid stopped face to face visits. The Business Fire Safety Officers prioritised the health and care sector, ensuring they were offered advice on any fire safety issues they may have.

The Service also adapted the way in which it carries out prevention work with Firefighters and CDDFRS' Community Safety Team delivering fire safety advice over the telephone to homes across our Service area, offering support and guidance, ensuring the most vulnerable in the community were prioritised and offered a visit.

The service also posted free smoke alarms to residents if they felt they could fit

them themselves.

The overall response was praised in an independent review by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS).

Their report highlighted how CDDFRS was quick to adapt, allowing the Service to respond to the pandemic effectively and making sure that resources were well managed while protecting the Service's financial position.

CDDFRS welcomed the report which identified a small number of areas where the Service can learn and continually improve, and work is already underway to build this learning into its future plans.

CDDFRS Chief Fire Officer Stuart Errington said: "I am extremely proud of the Service and really pleased with our



Covid-19 inspection report from HMICFRS. The report paints a positive picture about some of the fantastic work that we have undertaken and the way that we have protected our communities during a very challenging time.

"I'm exceptionally proud of the way our staff have stepped up to the mark to support the people in County Durham and Darlington and I'm sure they will continue to do so whenever we are needed."



KEY INVESTMENTS FROM THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY



NEW DARLINGTON STATION OPENS

Back in February 2021 we saw our firefighters move into a brand-new fire station which is located in the heart of Darlington town centre.

The new station is also home to the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS), ensuring an effective and efficient emergency response for the local community.

The decision to replace the existing station was taken in early 2018 and in August 2018, Darlington based architects, Corstorphine +

Wright were appointed with the work being carried out by Tolent.

The existing station was built in 1972 and was partly refurbished in 2009 but needed more permanent, extensive repairs which were ultimately very expensive and problematic. The building was not fit for purpose, so a decision was made in 2018 by our Combined Fire Authority to fund a demolition and a complete rebuild of the station.

The new Station is fully equipped with all the operational equipment, accommodation and welfare facilities deserving of a modern, efficient, and innovative Service. It also houses a training facility. Particular attention has been paid to future-proofing the station, using the latest building methods and technologies to achieve a long, durable, and resilient life whilst reducing utilities consumption and running costs.

SEDFIELD STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Work will also be starting on our Sedgfield Community Fire Station to improve the facilities within the building, which sits in the heart of the village. NEAS will also be our partner at this station which will have an extended training area and new entrance.



NEW WASHING FACILITY FOR FIREFIGHTERS' BREATHING APPARATUS EQUIPMENT

The Service implemented a new state-of-the-art decontamination facility, designed to clean and disinfect Breathing Apparatus Equipment kit, to protect firefighters from harmful substances. The new cleaning regime will also help to prolong the working life of vital safety equipment.

The new decontamination facility is housed at our Training Centre and provides additional showering and changing areas for firefighters as well as distinct areas for washing, drying, and servicing equipment. New ways of cleaning have been introduced to minimise cross contamination and reduce firefighters' exposure to potentially harmful materials. The Service looked at a range of options and worked with the manufacturer Dräger company to install the new facility.



IT'S NOT ONE BUT THREE FOR THE ROAD



It was out with the old and in with the new as the Service replaced some of its fleet this year.

One such vehicle was the Toyota Hilux, a direct replacement for High Handenhold Station's L4V Land Rover Defender which after 15 years has reached the end of its fire service life.

The Toyota Hilux is a 2.4litre 4x4 pickup with a good reputation. As a station support vehicle it is comfortable dealing with a wide variety of road, terrain and weather conditions. It was picked to serve CDDFRS against others in its class because of its list of safety systems as standard, has a wading depth as good as a fire appliance which is great for assisting in flood conditions, and has a low environmental impact.

Our Technical Services staff help to keep our fleet on the road for as long as possible but there comes a time when vehicles reach the end of their working life and the safety of our crews and the public is always paramount. The Service has an ongoing programme to replace vehicles as needed and this year we were able to procure 5 new fire engines to be brought into use.

WHO IS IN THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY?

Elected Members — Durham County Councillors



Cllr John Robinson

Chair - Labour Council
Ward: Sedgefield



Cllr Audrey Laing

Vice Chair - Labour Council
Ward: Peterlee East



Cllr Brian Avery

Independent
Council Ward: Ferryhill



Cllr Alison Batey

Labour
Council Ward: Pelton



Cllr David Bell

Labour
Council Ward: Deerness



Cllr Jennifer Bell

Labour
Council Ward: Deneside



Cllr Richard Bell

Conservative
Council Ward: Barnard
Castle West



Cllr Colin Carr

Labour
Council Ward: Pelton



Cllr David Freeman

Liberal Democrat
Council Ward: Elvet and
Gilesgate



Cllr Derek Hicks

Independent
Council Ward: Consett South



Cllr Liz Maddison

Independent
Council Ward: Spennymoor



Cllr Joyce Maitland

Labour
Council Ward: Murton



Cllr Richard Manchester

Labour
Council Ward: Tow Law



Cllr Linda Marshall

Vice Chair - Labour Council
Ward: Peterlee East



Cllr Christine Potts

Labour
Council Ward: Chilton



Cllr George Richardson

Conservative
Council Ward: Barnard
Castle East



Cllr Elizabeth Scott

Liberal Democrat
Council Ward: Neville's
Cross



Cllr John Shuttleworth

Independent
Council Ward: Weardale



Cllr David Stoker

Liberal Democrat
Council Ward: Durham
South



Cllr Fraser Tinsley

Labour
Council Ward: Willington
and Hunwick



Cllr John Turnbull

Labour
Council Ward: Brandon

Elected Members — Darlington Borough Councillors



Cllr Helen Crumie

Labour
Council Ward: Bank Top
and Lascelles



Cllr Brian Jones

Conservative
Council Ward: Sadberge
and Middleton St George



Cllr Gerald Lee

Conservative
Council Ward: Heighington
and Coniscliffe



Cllr Andrew Scott

Labour
Council Ward: Haughton and
Springfield

COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY APPROVES LATEST COMMUNITY RISK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Every year we review how we make sure you are getting the best service we can provide using the resources we have in place. In uncertain financial times this can be a challenge but Members of our Combined Fire Authority are on hand to scrutinise our plans and we carry out a public consultation to check our communities approve of what we intend to do in the coming years. This year we put the plans out to the public in February and March, and the final version will be approved by the CFA in June.

Before we develop our plans we carry out a detailed assessment of all the risks we face in County Durham and Darlington. As well as fires in homes and businesses these risks can range from infrastructure such as the A1 where road traffic accidents occur, to High Force where our water rescue team might be needed, and protecting historic buildings like Durham Cathedral. We use all the information we gather about risks to inform the CRMP.

In our latest plan we decided to:

In 2021/22, the following options will be considered:

Continue to invest and prioritise Building Fire Safety activities to ensure the built environment within County Durham and Darlington remains safe for occupants and visitors.

Trial the use and various crewing arrangements of TRVs.

Identify opportunities for collaboration with local FRS and other key partners.

In 2022/23, the following options will be considered:

Implement and evaluate the way we deliver SWV.

Implement the outcome following the review of the Service's attendance standards.

Evaluate the benefits of our continued investment in Fire Safety within the built environment.

Implementing the outcomes of the review of the crewing arrangements of TRVs if the trials prove successful.

Implement any changes suggested through collaboration projects undertaken with local FRS and key partners.

In 2023/24 the following options will be considered:

Monitor and review the Service's attendance standards.

Continue to review our approach to Fire Safety within the built environment.

Evaluate the staffing arrangements and application of TRVs.

Evaluate the changes through collaboration projects with local FRS and key partners.

FIRE AUTHORITY GO LIVE

The Covid-19 pandemic and lockdown meant a lot of changes to the way in which the Service had to work and everyone adapted really well. One of the big changes saw the Combined Fire Authority meetings move online and Members embraced the technology to meet virtually and broadcast the meetings while they were taking place.

We saw more interest from the public in the meetings which proved to be a great opportunity to show how we are governed and how decisions are made. We look forward to the outcome of the government's review on live online meetings in the hope of bringing them back.



REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2020/21

County Durham and Darlington Combined Fire and Rescue Authority remains committed to protecting front line services to the public. The COVID-19 pandemic presented particular challenges during 2020/21 including, the management of increased staff sickness, fluctuations in demand for our services and an increase in unexpected expenditure such as the purchase of additional personal protective equipment and the implementation of measures to ensure a COVID secure workplace. Whilst additional funding was received from government to help deal with the increased costs in 2020/21, COVID-19 is likely to impact on the Service for some considerable time and the ongoing financial impact is uncertain at this stage. The Authority will continue to review the impact of COVID-19 and the changes this has presented in demand and realign service delivery through an application of lessons learnt to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the service.

The Authority's spending is planned and controlled by a rigorous budget and financial management process. The

Authority received resources direct from the Government in the form of Revenue Support Grant and Non-Domestic Rates, with the balance of funding coming from precepts on billing authorities for amounts chargeable to local taxpayers. During 2020/21, the Authority's net revenue expenditure, which was met from the above sources, was £29.173m, while spending on capital projects totalled £5.426m.

The Authority's general reserve balance, which represents the sum set aside to meet unforeseen future circumstances, was £1.459m at 31 March 2021. This equates to 5% of the 2021/22 net expenditure budget and is in line with the Authority's policy on reserves.

Financial performance against the approved budget is reported to elected members on a quarterly basis throughout the year. Further information on the Authority's financial performance is available on our website: www.ddfire.gov.uk.

REVENUE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2020/21

The estimated net revenue expenditure for 2020/21, to be met from Government Funding and local taxpayers, was approved at £29.173m. The following table summarises the actual revenue financial position for the year:

	£000
EXPENDITURE	
Employees	25,065
Premises	2,680
Transport	510
Supplies & Services	4,565
Contingencies	-
Capital Financing	1,202
Provisions & write-offs	-34
Transfers to Reserves	1,858
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	35,846
INCOME	
Government Grants	-5,709
Other Income	-869
Transfers from Reserves	-95
TOTAL INCOME	-6,673
NET EXPENDITURE	29,173
Financed by:	
Government Funding	-9,171
Local Business Rates	-1,503
Council Tax	-18,466
Surplus on Collection Fund	-0.033
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	-29,173

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2020/21

The Authority's accounts show how it uses its resources to deliver a fire and rescue service across County Durham and Darlington. The summary accounts provide an overview of where the funds come from, how they are used and the financial position at 31 March 2021. The 2020/21 Statement of Accounts are available on the Authority's website.

SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET 2020/21

This shows the financial position of the Authority at the year end. The net assets of the Authority (assets less liabilities) are matched by the Reserves held.

Long Term Assets	40,268	
Current Assets	8,236	
Long Term Liabilities	-443,871	
Current Liabilities	-5,675	
TOTAL ASSETS		
LESS TOTAL LIABILITIES	£000	-401,042
Financed by:		
Unusable Reserves	-408,737	
Usable Reserves	7,695	
TOTAL NET WORTH		-401,042



TALK TEACH TIME

Dangers Consequences For Action



PREVENTION

Durham's east coast area has seen a sharp increase of incidents of arson over the past few years, with deliberate fires that damage people's properties, as well as grass and rubbish fires.

The Talk Teach Time campaign was introduced to push arson reduction messages on social media platforms in a bid to reduce the number of incidents, and to educate rather than simply punish offenders.

The main aim is to raise the awareness of the importance of 'Talk, Teach, Time.'

Talk, do you know where your children are?

Teach, do your children know the dangers deliberate fires can have on not only the community but also the fact they could be putting themselves in harm's way.

Finally, time. Time for action.

Lee Aspery, Arson Reduction Manager knows just how much impact arson can have and commented:

"Arson damages communities, it damages property but, above all, it puts people's lives at risk. Our communities shouldn't have to put up with that, which is why we are doing everything we can to deal with the problem and keep people safe."

"We would appeal to residents and businesses: it's time for action, and everyone can help prevent arson by ensuring waste is disposed of correctly and that wheelie bins are not left in public places longer than is necessary. We want to harness the strong community spirit in these areas and let residents know we are here to work with them to tackle these issues."

CDDFRS is part of the Firestoppers scheme which is completely anonymous to anyone that rings in with information about deliberate fires. The number is 0800 169 5558, or visit www.firestoppersreport.co.uk

RUNBELIEVABLE WORK BY SPENNYMOOR WHITES!



Firefighters from Spennymoor White Watch were out and about in Jubilee Park in July for the Community Park Run event.

Our crews had a great opportunity to mix with a wide variety of people that they may not have engaged with before so it was great for them to carry out a new style of community engagement!

Not only did the park run give crews the chance to celebrate health and wellbeing, the event also allowed our crews to offer our safe & wellbeing visits and talk about the importance of the anonymous hotline Fire Stoppers for anyone who has information about deliberate fires in their area.



PROTECTION

The principal aim of the Business Fire Safety Team is to make County Durham and Darlington a safer place by reducing as far as possible the risks and social and economic costs of fires, without imposing unnecessary burden. This is usually done by giving advice to premises on fire safety measures. However on occasion formal enforcement action is required. When we take formal action we often see common failings such as sleeping accommodation above commercial premises where there are insufficient fire safety features to ensure a safe escape route for the occupants. In these cases we issue a Prohibition Notice which prohibits the use of all or a specific part of the premises for the use we specify. In addition to Prohibition Notices we can use an Enforcement Notice where we can require changes to a premises in a set time scale otherwise we can prosecute the responsible person for not complying.

In 20/21 we issued 3 Enforcement Notices and 4 Prohibition Notices.

The Central Business Fire Safety Team have been studying hard and have all attained a Level 4 Diploma in Fire Safety, this qualifies them all to undertake the role of a Fire Safety Inspector and issue formal enforcement action in accordance with the Competency Framework for Fire Safety Regulators.

We also ran events for businesses, including a live virtual event to raise awareness of our role and covering fire safety knowledge.

Examples of issues the team have worked on this year included a Care Home which had major deficiencies with regard to compartmentation, management procedures and staff training. By issuing enforcement action and working with the owners, the premises are now safe, and the staff training improved dramatically. A block of flats was also found to have serious issues with fire compartments which could have allowed smoke and fire to spread throughout the premises. Enforcement action and working in partnership with the people responsible for the premises to implement a more stringent evacuation policy until improvements were completed again ensured the premises were safer for all of the occupants now and for the future.



APPRENTICES



In 2017, CDDFRS joined forces with New College Durham to offer a business fire safety and firefighter apprenticeships. The programme aims to prepare apprentices to be firefighters. As the first cohort completed their training we were proud to say that Fire service apprentice Connor Moir finished his apprenticeship with distinctions in every area, which placed him in the top 2 per cent of fire service apprentices in the UK.

The first cohort are now working as firefighters across Durham and Darlington.

In November 2020, the scheme won The Recruitment Excellence award at the North East Regional Apprenticeship Awards and a National Apprenticeship Award for Recruitment Excellence. In early 2021 we welcomed our fourth Cohort of apprentices into the Service to begin their training, and we will continue this innovative method of recruiting and training in future years.



FIRE CADETS



Our Fire Cadets scheme is run by CDDFRS staff and volunteers with young people offered the opportunity to make new friends, have fun, and develop their confidence and skills. They also complete the National Fire Cadet Award Level 1 as part of the

scheme. In 2020-2021 cadets were able to participate in First Aid training and regional athletics events.

Covid had a major impact on how we were able to run our Fire Cadets in 2020-2021 as restrictions meant we could not run the weekly

sessions at stations for some of the time. However, staff maintained contact with the Cadets through online groups, events and learning resources. There was also the opportunity to review working practices such as risk assessments.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Age

Disability

Gender
re-assignment

Marriage
& Civil
Partnership

Pregnancy &
Maternity

Ethnic
Origin

Religion or
Belief

Gender

Sexual
Orientation

The Service has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group which meets regularly to review the ongoing work which supports ED&I. We have representative champions covering 9 strands such as race, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

Covid may have stopped many of us meeting in person but that didn't mean the Service's ED&I work stopped. Representatives from our ED&I group attended an online BAME conference and Zoom calls about the Black Lives Matter movement, we participated in a Pride video to be shared in place of our usual attendance at events, and appointed champions on Autism who helped to develop awareness and training.

We are looking forward to the year ahead where we can attend events such as Pride again.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

The number of calls we received last year was 15,420

There were 219 accidental dwelling fires

We had 956 special services incidents which included attending road traffic collisions

2,605 Deliberate fires were started



We inspected 4872 Fire Hydrants



We completed 4,839 Safe and Well-being visits*

*impacted by Covid-19

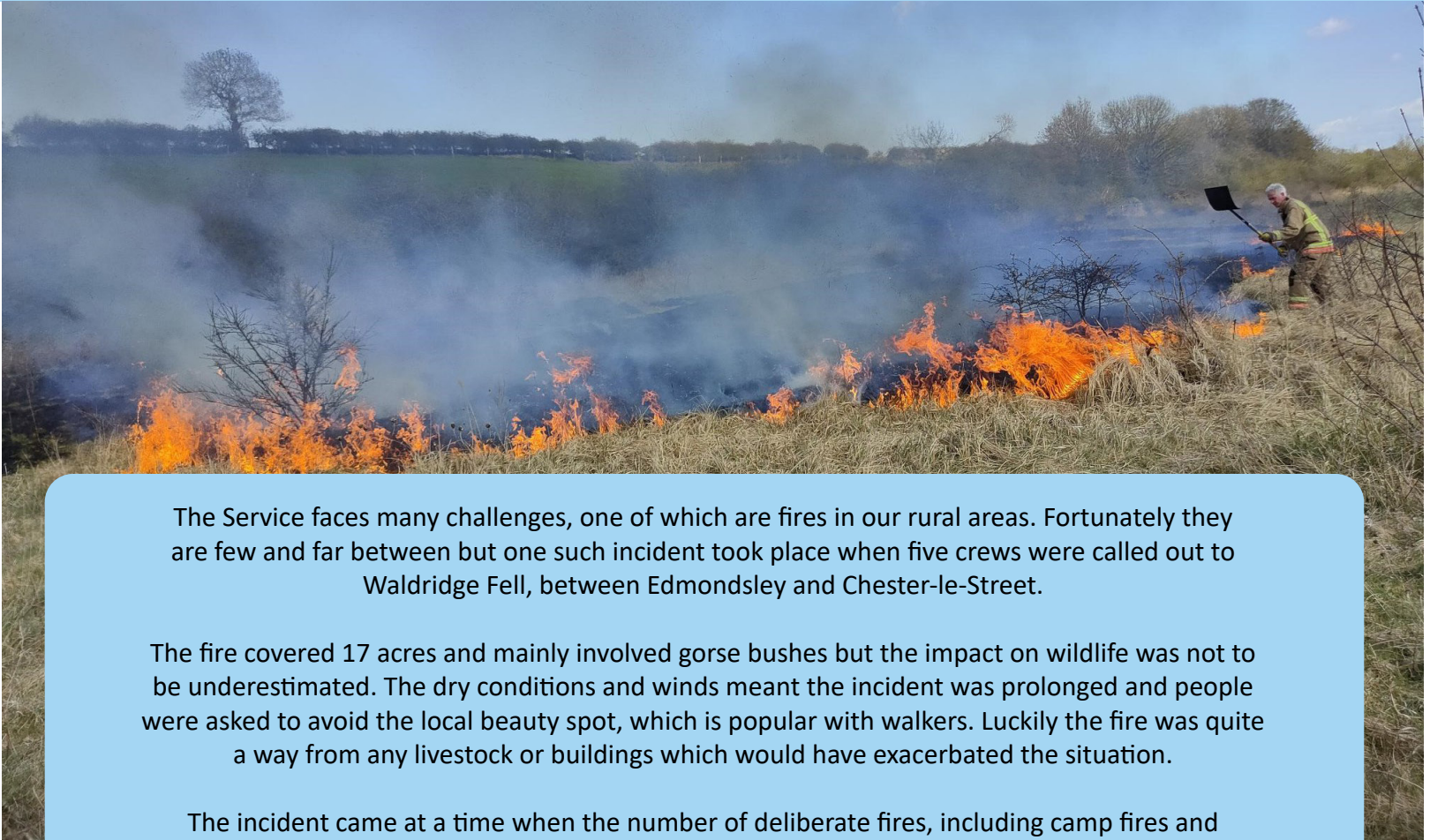


The total number of injuries from accidental house fires was 15

We completed 984 Business Fire Safety Audits*

*impacted by Covid-19

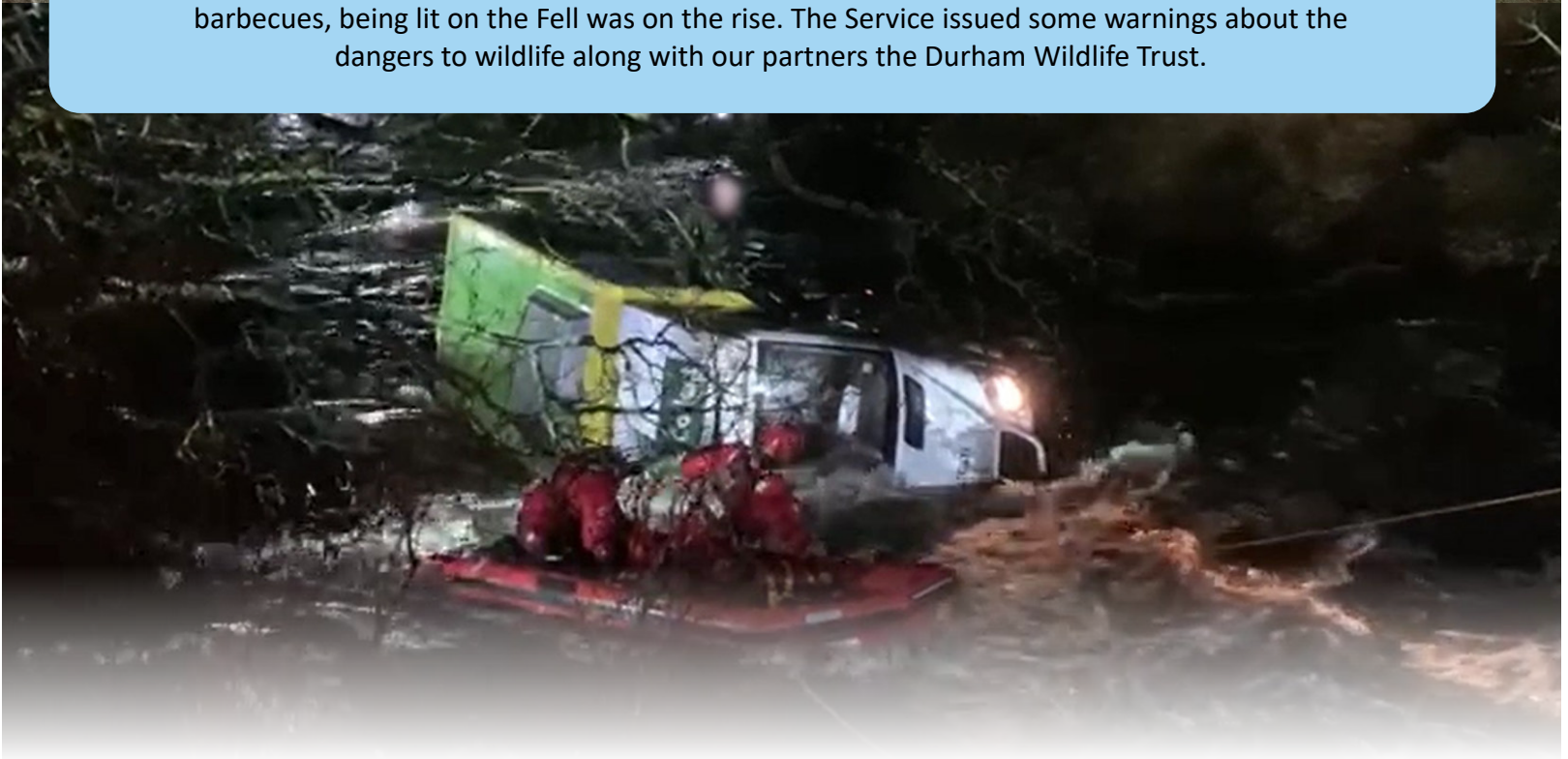
INCIDENTS



The Service faces many challenges, one of which are fires in our rural areas. Fortunately they are few and far between but one such incident took place when five crews were called out to Waldrige Fell, between Edmondsley and Chester-le-Street.

The fire covered 17 acres and mainly involved gorse bushes but the impact on wildlife was not to be underestimated. The dry conditions and winds meant the incident was prolonged and people were asked to avoid the local beauty spot, which is popular with walkers. Luckily the fire was quite a way from any livestock or buildings which would have exacerbated the situation.

The incident came at a time when the number of deliberate fires, including camp fires and barbecues, being lit on the Fell was on the rise. The Service issued some warnings about the dangers to wildlife along with our partners the Durham Wildlife Trust.



We were immensely proud of our Swift Water Rescue Team and our crews from Bishop Auckland, Durham, Stanhope, and Middleton in Teesdale, who rescued the driver of a van from the River Wear in Westgate in January 2021. On arrival at the scene our crews took immediate action, using water rescue equipment, in what were very challenging conditions, to ensure the driver of van was safely rescued.

CHARITY WORK



Firefighter Paul Bainbridge spent the whole of last year raising money for charities If U Care Share, which aims to prevent suicide and raises awareness about mental health issues, and the Firefighters' Charity. Paul ran 3 miles a day, every day for the year starting in April 2020, overcoming the challenge of lockdown, not to mention anything the weather had to throw at him! We are really proud of him and he raised over £8,000, what an achievement!



The
Fire Fighters
Charity

As with many other charities, the Firefighters' Charity found that its events were curtailed by the Covid 19 pandemic. In spite of this stations and staff still managed to organise Covid safe car washes, raffles and even a head shaving event! In 2020-2021 the Durham and Darlington Firefighters' Charity raised the fantastic sum of over £52,000.

WE'RE HONOURED



Our Chief Fire Officer, Stuart Errington, was awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal in the New Year's Honours in recognition of his service since 1993, including 5 years as Chief. As the first person in the service's history to progress internally from firefighter to Chief Fire Officer, it is a huge privilege for Stuart's contribution to be recognised in this way.

Also honoured with British Empire Medals were Mark Henderson for his work raising awareness of dementia and Harry Binyon for his work raising money for the Firefighters' Charity.

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S COMMENDATIONS



Watch Manager Giles Mercy and Firefighters Daniel Farnell, Nick Meek, and Angela Dixon of Green Watch, Darlington received a commendation for their quick thinking and outstanding actions in rescuing an elderly man trapped by fire in an upstairs bedroom.



Crew Manager Gary Lawson and Firefighters Adam Holmes, Stephen Collinson, Craig Docherty and Ryan Meeson, On Call (Retained) crew at Middleton in Teesdale were recognized for their professionalism and decision making in rescuing an elderly woman from a house fire.



Crew Manager Graham Liddle of Blue Watch Durham and Fire Fighter Simon Davison of Blue Watch Bishop Auckland received their commendation for a rescue of a man and his dog who had been trapped in a vehicle by rising water at Witton Gilbert ford. Local resident John Holmes was also commended for his valuable part in the incident.

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THANKS FOR READING!

An accessible version of this document, and in other languages, is available on request