

COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2021-2022



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.

“Welcome to the Annual Report for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, a chance for us to share the excellent work of our staff over the past year.

Over the last year we have continued to face challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic with increased staff absences, additional activity undertaken to support key partners and the use of our facilities to support testing arrangements. It has also, however, been important that as we return to some form of normality that we continue



CHIEF'S WELCOME

to offer a first-class emergency service to the communities we serve.

Performance across a range of key indicators remains exceptionally high and the Service has been consistently praised for the productivity of our staff. The high number of Home Fire Safety Checks that we undertake, targeted towards those most vulnerable in society, are having a real impact in reducing accidental dwelling fires. We

attended the lowest number of accidental dwelling fires for decades in 2021/22 and have one of the lowest levels of any fire and rescue service in the country (per 100,000 dwellings). Keeping people safe in their homes is one of our key aims and staff deserve a great deal of credit for our achievements in this area.

It is also vital that businesses are safe and that they fully comply with the relevant fire safety legislation that we enforce. Our staff deliver more fire safety audits than any other fire and rescue service (per 100,000 business premises) and that helps ensure

that we continue to see reductions in fires in businesses in our area.

The rates of deliberate fires are higher in the North East of England than in any other area and that continues to be a challenge for us. Last year we worked closely with partners to develop a range of strategies to tackle this issue. Internally our Arson Reduction and Young People Team continue to deliver innovative programmes targeted to those areas where we see the highest rates of deliberate fires.

If we are to strive towards our ambition to be the best fire and rescue service in the country, we know we need to recruit great people, provide them with excellent development and motivate them to deliver the best service they can to the public. Over the last year we have seen significant benefits of this approach. We have continued to recruit fantastic staff into uniformed and corporate roles, operated successful



talent management schemes and involved staff in all key decisions made in the organisation.

2021/22 has been another really successful year for the Service and I'm proud to lead such a fantastic group of people who do amazing things, every day to help keep the people of County Durham and Darlington safe."

- Chief Fire Officer Stuart Errington QFSM



KEY INVESTMENTS FROM THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY



SEDFIELD STATION IMPROVEMENTS

In 2021-2022 work was completed on our Sedgefield Community Fire Station to improve the facilities within the building. The station dates back to 1967 so the decision was taken to modernise and add on extra training facilities as well as a new entrance. In a great example of collaboration we are proud that the North East Ambulance Service is our partner at this station. Our Estates Manager, John Hancock said "We appointed Ashbrook Construction Limited as the contractor for the refit and we are really pleased with the results – it's a much improved facility for our crews and for NEAS."



WHEATLEY HILL DUE FOR A MAKEOVER!



Looking ahead, the CFA has also made the decision to begin work on the On Call Station at Wheatley Hill. This key community resource will be upgraded so that our Firefighters there have access to a more modern working space, with top notch facilities.

NEW FIRE APPLIANCES

We manage our fleet very carefully as part of an ongoing programme and always makes sure that every vehicle is fully roadworthy and meets the standards we expect. Our technical services team work hard to make sure that vehicles are in the best state of repair and this helps to extend the working life of our appliances. This year we put 2 shiny new fire engines on the road, ready to keep you safe.



WHO IS IN THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY?

After the elections in May 2022 we welcomed new Members to our CFA
Elected Members — Durham County Councillors



Cllr John Shuttleworth

Chair - Independent
Ward: Weardale



Cllr Sam Zair

Vice Chair - Independent
Ward: Bishop Auckland Town



Cllr Jim Atkinson

Labour
Ward: Aycliffe East



Cllr Jan Blakey

Independent
Ward: Coxhoe



Cllr Alison Batey

Labour
Ward : Pelton



Cllr Richard Bell

Conservative
Ward: Barnard Castle West



Cllr Julie Cairns

Independent
Ward: Chilton



Cllr Terry Duffy

North East Party
Ward: Peterlee East



Cllr Carole Hampson

Labour
Ward: Craghead and South Moor



Cllr Neville Jones

Liberal Democrat
Ward: Aycliffe East



Cllr Bill Kellett

Labour
Ward: Sherburn



Cllr Leanne Kennedy

Labour
Ward: Dawdon



Cllr Richard Manchester

Labour
Council Ward: Tow Law



Cllr Carl Marshall

Labour
Ward: Stanley



Cllr Lesley Mavin

Liberal Democrat
Ward: Belmont



Cllr Mike McGaun

Conservative
Ward: Lanchester



Cllr Ian McLean

Labour
Ward: Horden



Cllr Joe Quinn

Conservative
Ward: Ferryhill



Cllr Shirley Quinn

Labour
Ward: Shildon and Dene Valley



Cllr George Richardson

Conservative
Ward: Barnard Castle East



Cllr Kathryn Rooney

Liberal Democrat
Ward: Consett North

Elected Members — Darlington Borough Councillors



Cllr Helen Crumbie

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 the current economic circumstances we are affected by price rises and uncertainty so this can be a challenge, however Members of our Combined Fire Authority provide us with scrutiny of our plans. We carry out a public consultation to check our communities approve of what we intend to do in the coming years. In the last year we put the plan out to the public from November to February, and the final version was approved in March 2022.

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 2022/23, the following options will be considered:

Implement and evaluate the way we deliver Home Fire Safety Checks.

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 Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs) if the trials prove successful.

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

Looking ahead 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.

In 2024/25 the following options will be considered:

Monitor our approach to Fire Safety within the built environment.

Monitor the staffing arrangements and application of TRVs.

Continue to explore opportunities and monitor the changes we have introduced through collaboration projects with local Fire and Rescue Service and key partners.

REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2021/22

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority remains committed to protecting front line services to the public. The COVID-19 pandemic continued to present challenges during 2021/22 particularly the management of increased staff sickness and fluctuations in demand for our services. In addition, the Service continues to face considerable financial pressures including a shortfall in council tax and business rates receipts due to the pandemic together with cost pressures arising from increasing inflation which has the potential to result in higher pay awards. The financial pressures faced by the Service are compounded by uncertainty surrounding the level of government funding from 2023/24 onwards.

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 the 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 2021/22, the Authority's net revenue expenditure, which was met from the above sources, was £29.459m, while spending on capital projects totalled £2.081m.

The Authority's general reserve balance, which represents the sum set aside to meet unforeseen future circumstances, was £1.510m on 31 March 2022. This equates to 5% of the 2021/22 net expenditure budget and is in line with the Authority's policy on reserves to maintain a general reserve of 5% of net expenditure.

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 total net revenue expenditure for 2021/22 was £29.459M which was £121,000 more than the original budget of £29.338M. When the original budget was set the actual amount of grant due in relation to the business rates retention scheme was not known. The actual sum received was £121,000 greater than the amount included in the original budget which offset the £121,000 increase in net expenditure. The following table summarises the actual revenue financial position for the year.

	£000
EXPENDITURE	
Employees	25,792
Premises	2,907
Transport	665
Supplies & Services	4,019
Contingencies	-
Capital Financing	3,528
Provisions & write-offs	53
Transfers to Reserves	233
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	37,197
INCOME	
Government Grants	-4,478
Other Income	-1,082
Transfers from Reserves	-2,178
TOTAL INCOME	-7,738
NET EXPENDITURE	29,459
Financed by:	
Government Funding	-9,311
Local Business Rates	-1,432
Council Tax	-18,832
Surplus on Collection Fund	0.116
TOTAL FINANCING	-29,459

SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2021/22

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 on 31 March 2022. The 2021/22 Statement of Accounts is available on the Authority's website.

SUMMARY BALANCE SHEET 2021/22

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.

	£000	£000
Long Term Assets	44,851	
Current Assets	6,423	
Long Term Liabilities	-449,935	
Current Liabilities	-5,054	
TOTAL ASSETS		
LESS TOTAL LIABILITIES		-403,715
Financed by:		
Unusable Reserves	-409,465	
Usable Reserves	5,750	
TOTAL NET WORTH		-403,715

PREVENTION - IT'S A WHEELY GOOD IDEA!



As well as the fantastic prevention work that is carried out every day by our Community Risk Officers and Crews, which includes going into homes to deliver support, advice and equipment to make people safer, our Service can often be seen engaging with members of the public about various safety issues.

This year saw a new Community Engagement Team working from Bishop Auckland Station – their role has been to travel to where incidents have happened and give prevention information, such as the risk of swimming in rivers and lakes, or the risks posed by setting fires. And they've done all this on mountain bikes which were kindly donated to the Service by Halfords.



JOINING FORCES TO COMBAT ARSON



Last year, the six Police Crime Scene Investigators collaborated on a training programme with CDDFRS to qualify to the Skills for Justice Awards in Fire Investigators standard. The CSI team underwent detailed instruction to learn the theory behind fire science, fire behaviour and, post-fire indicators recognition to be able to establish where, when and how a fire may have started. They also looked at methods commonly used by Arsonists to start fires.

The training and practical skills of forensic fire scene excavation took place at CDDFRS' state of the art Service Training Centre in Bowburn and looked at methods for the recovery of forensic evidence from a fire scene utilising a mix of CSI skills and fire investigation techniques.

CDDFRS Fire investigator and Arson Reduction and Young People Manager Lee Aspery, who was lead instructor on the course, commented, "I am immensely proud of each CSI who has put in the time and effort to become a qualified fire scene investigator. Not only will this help with the combat of arson, but it will also allow both emergency services to work closer than ever before."



PROTECTION - SUPPORTING OUR BUSINESSES

Our Business Fire Safety Team works towards making County Durham and Darlington a safer place by inspecting business premises, and responding to complaints or concerns about business premises.

Where a business doesn't comply with the law we can issue a Prohibition Notice which restricts the use of all or a specific part of the premises for the use we specify. This will remain in place until the issue has been addressed and is managed by the fire safety team on a risk-by-risk basis.

Enforcement notices can be served where we require fire safety features to be addressed that are of a 'less urgent nature' than a prohibition notice.

In 21/22 we issued 8 Enforcement Notices and 11 Prohibition Notices.

An example of non-compliance with the Fire Safety Order could be where sleeping accommodation above a commercial premises has insufficient fire safety features in place to ensure a safe escape route for those occupants.

We also take an active role in the consultations when buildings are going through the planning stages to make sure safety is paramount right from the start.

Our Central Business Fire Safety Team participate in detailed and in-depth study and regular Continual Professional Development (CPD) in order to attain and maintain a Level 4 Diploma in Fire Safety. Qualified at this level authorises them to undertake the role of a Fire Safety Inspector and attain 'Warranted Officer' status, which enables them to issue formal enforcement action.

Business Fire Safety Team Achievements

Last year the team held an online media event to raise awareness of our role and functions and also to identify the support available to the business sector. We also took the opportunity to deliver sessions on a number of key Fire Safety messages including the Fire Risk Assessment and evacuation identified by us as areas of non-compliance. We're going to make this a regular event from now on as a result of really positive feedback.



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

In 2021-22 we welcomed our fifth and sixth Cohorts of firefighter apprentices into the Service to begin their training, and we will continue this innovative method of recruiting and training in future years.

We are also able to offer apprenticeships to staff in a variety of role related qualifications and are proud to say that Firefighters Faith Patterson, Tim Graham and Will Craven all passed their courses with some of the best marks in the country.



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. Covid had a major

impact on how we were able to run our Fire Cadets in 2020-2021 but we were able to reintroduce the sessions again last year. In 2021-2022 cadets were able to participate in lots of Service activities including our open days, car washes, and Preston Park Vintage Car Rally. They have even supported

the police in multi-agency events by pretending to be casualties in training scenarios!

Our Fire Cadets provided a great deal of support to help cope with the aftermath of Storm Arwen by accompanying crews with welfare checks on vulnerable residents.

EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION



The Service has an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Group which meets regularly to review the ongoing work which supports this important agenda. We have representative champions covering 9 protected characteristic strands including race, gender, sexual orientation and disability.

In 2021-22 the Service introduced Menopause Guidance and Transitioning in the Workplace Guidance so that staff can be supported and to help provide support to colleagues. We also took part in online meetings about race issues at work, and attended Durham Pride and Darlington Pride.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

The number of calls we received last year was 18,007

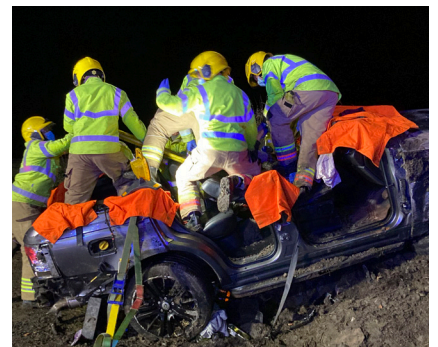
There were 208 accidental dwelling fires

We had 1,435 special services incidents which included attending road traffic collisions

3,374 Deliberate fires were started



We inspected 5,153 Fire Hydrants



We completed 18,842 Home Fire Safety Checks

The total number of injuries from accidental house fires was 14

We completed 1,833 Business Fire Safety Audits



INCIDENTS - STORM ARWEN



Storm Arwen was a major incident last year but our crews were on hand to help out in a fantastic example of working together. Neighbours, communities, the local authority, police, ambulance and health services, mountain rescue and other key organisations such as Northumbrian Water rallied round to support residents in County Durham following one of the worst storms in the last decade. The storm brought down power lines and up to 13,000 properties in County Durham were without power due to the scale of the damage caused.

We helped carry out welfare checks on residents whose electricity supply was affected by providing water, mobile phone charging and other essentials. We don't just do fires!



DERELICT BUILDINGS

Crews have attended fires in derelict buildings with increasing frequency around the area and this fire on Kingsway in Bishop Auckland took 6 fire appliances and an Aerial Ladder Platform to get it under control. We are working hard with partners to tackle this issue.

CHARITY WORK



ROWING THE ATLANTIC FOR MENTAL HEALTH

Firefighter Ryan Tipping, along with a small team of rowers, crossed the Atlantic from Gran Canaria to Barbados, a journey of 3000 miles! On his return Ryan said, "It definitely feels great being back on dry land. I have craved Krispy Kreme doughnuts for the whole trip and just bought 36 of them."

The aim of this challenge was to raise money for several worthwhile charities including The Fire Fighters Charity, RMA Royal Marines Charity, Not Forgotten Association, Veterans United Against Suicide and Go Again Mental Health Consultancy. Ryan also kept busy by completing the UK Coast to Coast run with his colleague from High Handenhold Station, Chris Tiffin.

Our Chief Fire Officer, Stuart Errington could also be spotted running around our area as he completed 500 miles in 50 days before his 50th Birthday.

As well as the many sporting challenges, our staff across the Service carried out car washes, raffles and tombolas at our Open Days. In 2021-2022 the Durham and Darlington Firefighters' Charity raised the fantastic sum of over £63,000.



WE'RE HONOURED



We were extremely proud this year as Retired Station Manager Alan Gibson was awarded the BEM in the Queen's New Year's Honours for his tireless work for the Fire Fighters Charity.

CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S COMMENDATIONS



Crew Manager Kieran Hughes and Firefighters Jamie Clarkson and Joshua Roberts were recognized for saving a woman's life after she was involved in a vehicle accident. All were off duty at the time but recognized the severity of her injuries and took action until the air ambulance could arrive.



Crew Managers Gary Sands, Gary Lawson, and Station Manager Craig Farrage were rewarded for saving the lives of two men who were trapped down a mine workings at High Skears. In an exceptionally difficult set of circumstances working underground, the crew's decision making meant the men could be rescued uninjured.



Firefighters Richard Pallister and David Clark were commended along with Inspector Fraser Wilson of Cleveland Police for rescuing an individual from the rooftop of James Cook Hospital. Providing support across the border, the Aerial Ladder Platform was used to assist in the rescue.

TRAINING



In a great example of working with our partners and neighbours the Service participated in a National Resilience Urban Search and Rescue training exercise at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service HQ in Washington. Crews were given a range of simulations in which to practice their skills, to including rescues from a collapsed building, investigating a confined space and rescuing people trapped in a train.

iESE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE OF THE YEAR



We were hugely proud to win Fire and Rescue Service of the Year at the iESE Public Sector Transformation Awards in March 2022. iESE is an organisation which works with local authorities to identify and support improvements and efficiencies in local government. This is the second time we have won this award.

Our Chief Fire Officer Stuart Errington said: "I am both delighted & proud that our service has been crowned fire & rescue service of the year. This would not have been possible without the hard work & dedication of every member of our service who work tirelessly to keep the public of County Durham & Darlington safe."

TRIBUTE



It was with an extremely heavy heart that this year we had to sadly announce the passing of retired Assistant Chief Fire Officer Dominic Brown.

Dominic was an outstanding officer, a very popular member of staff and a close friend to many in the Service. His dedication, commitment, and humour are greatly missed by all who worked with, and met him.

Dom joined the Service in 1993 and worked his way up through the ranks to become Assistant Chief in 2018. He also met his wife in the Service, Station Manager Becky Brown, who has worked for CDDFRS since 2004. Despite being diagnosed with brain cancer in 2020 he continued to fit work around his treatment showing his typical courage and determination. He retired in early 2021. We were incredibly proud of the way in which the Service came together to say a final goodbye at Dom's funeral, where he was transported on his final journey by a crewed Aerial Ladder Platform vehicle, and received a guard of honour. It was a true reflection of the unity, support, love and professionalism that is at the heart of the Service.

The Service held a memorial for him in September which was a chance to share memories and stories about Dom, and to celebrate his life and achievements. We continue to hold Becky, and his son and two daughters, and the rest of his family and many friends in our thoughts.

We miss you Dom.



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County Durham and Darlington
Fire and Rescue Service

www.ddfire.gov.uk

THANKS FOR READING!