

COUNTY DURHAM AND DARLINGTON FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE ANNUAL REPORT 2022-2023



Welcome to the Annual Report for County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service, a review of all our work from the past year.

CHIEF'S WELCOME

“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.

It has been a privilege to take

over from Chief Fire Officer Stuart Errington QFSM, from my previous position as Deputy Chief Fire Officer. I have been with CDDFRS since June 2020 and in my time here have enjoyed getting to know our staff and our local area as well as taking on the challenges the Service has faced.

Together we have achieved a huge

amount over the past year, from seeing the lowest number of accidental fires in the home in our history, to being named as Fire and Rescue Service of the Year at the iESE awards, achieving the status of Disability Confident Leader and welcoming another cohort of Firefighters onto our award winning apprenticeship scheme.

All this is coupled with a highly skilled, and highly motivated

workforce which is a credit to our Combined Fire Authority (CFA) and the communities they serve. I am extremely proud of our staff for the way in which they carry out their day to day duties with dedication, kindness and professionalism, and keep people, property and the environment safe.

A big thank you to them, and also to you, our communities and business owners who work with us to keep everyone safe.

Chief Fire Officer
Steve Helps



KEY INVESTMENTS BY THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

WHEATLEY HILL STATION IMPROVEMENTS

Last year the Combined Fire Authority (CFA) made the decision to upgrade the On Call Station at Wheatley Hill. Work began in November 2022 after extensively consulting with staff to make sure their operational needs were met. The modernised facilities will create an improved working environment for them with increased facilities for welfare and training.



KEY INVESTMENTS BY THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

CONTINUING INVESTMENTS...

Looking ahead to next year the CFA will be continuing its investments in fleet and equipment with investment planned for a replacement water rescue vehicle so the Service can respond quickly and efficiently to water incidents. We will also be deploying body worn cameras to improve safety and promote learning from incidents.



THERMAL IMAGING CAMERAS

The Service continues to invest in state-of-the-art equipment and last year bought new Thermal Imaging Cameras. The improved technology will help firefighters to locate fires quickly along with locating heat sources which may not be visible so that they can ensure fires are fully extinguished.



WHO IS IN THE COMBINED FIRE AUTHORITY

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
Council Ward: Pelton



Cllr Richard Bell

Conservative
Council 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
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

**Very sadly Cllr Kennedy passed away in September 2023. Our thoughts are with her friends and family at this difficult time.*

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 by using the resources we have in place to best effect. The plans we create are scrutinised by the CFA. As you will appreciate the current economic climate is having a significant impact on our budget with increases in the goods and services we buy, the financial impact on unfunded pay awards for our staff, and significantly high energy costs. As part of our governance cycle we carry out a public consultation with our communities and key stakeholders to seek their views and feedback on our plans and priorities for the forthcoming years. In the last year we put the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) out to public consultation from February 2023 for 12 weeks, and the final version was approved in June 2023.

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 the home and business premises, we plan to respond to road traffic collisions, incidents involving rescues from water or from a height such as at High Force, industrial accidents involving chemical, radioactive or biological substances and of course protecting our historic buildings like Durham Cathedral. We use all the information we gather about risks to inform the CRMP.

In 2023/24, the following options will be considered:

Review the proposal to crew all of our Wholetime fire engines with four firefighters.

Review the Risk Based Inspection Programme

Monitor and review the Service's response standards.

Evaluate the staffing arrangements and application of Targeted Response Vehicles (TRVs).

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

In 2024/25 the following options will be considered:

Monitor the crewing of Wholetime fire engines.

Implement the findings following the review of the Risk Based Inspection Programme.

Monitor the staffing arrangements and application of TRVs.

Continue to explore opportunities and monitor changes introduced through collaboration projects.

In 2025/26 the following options will be considered

Review the newly implemented Service Risk-Based Inspection Programme

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

REVIEW OF THE FINANCIAL YEAR 2022/23

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority remains committed to protecting front line services to the public. The Service continues to face significant cost pressures arising from increasing inflation which has resulted in higher pay awards to staff. The financial pressures faced by the Service are compounded by uncertainty surrounding the level of government funding from 2024/25 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, Services Grant, and Non-Domestic Rates, with the balance of funding coming from precepts on billing authorities for amounts chargeable to local taxpayers. During 2022/23,

the Authority's net revenue expenditure, which was met from the above sources, was £30.202m, while spending on capital projects totalled £0.956m.

The Authority's general reserve balance, which represents the sum set aside to meet unforeseen future circumstances, was £1.605m on 31 March 2023. This equates to 5% of the 2023/24 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.



SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS 2022/23

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 below provide an overview of where the funds come from, how they are used and the financial position on 31 March 2023. The 2022/23 Statement of Accounts is available on the Authority's website.



REVENUE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE 2022/23

The total net revenue expenditure for 2022/23 was £30.202m which was in line with the original budget for the year. The following table summarises the actual revenue outturn position for the year:

	£000
EXPENDITURE	
Employees	26,703
Premises	2,890
Transport	776
Supplies & Services	3,854
Contingencies	0
Provisions & write-offs	178
Capital Financing	2,339
Transfers to Reserves	95
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	36,835
INCOME	
Government Grants	4,991
Other Income	1,304
Transfers from Reserves	338
TOTAL INCOME	6,633
NET EXPENDITURE	30,202
Financed by:	
Government Funding	9,788
Local Business Rates	1,391
Council Tax	19,542
Deficit on Collection Fund	(519)
TOTAL FINANCING	30,202

PREVENTION - BE WATER AWARE



Our crews and Community Safety Officers carry out fantastic fire prevention work on a day to day basis but we also run campaigns throughout the year on other topics where we can make things safer.

In last year's Royal Life Saving Society UK Drowning Prevention Week we joined up with our partners in Durham Constabulary and Darlington Borough Council to raise awareness of the dangers of water.

It is often tempting to go into water on a hot day but when visiting places near rivers and lakes extra care is needed to avoid harm. The Service helped by giving out some simple rules to stay safe such as making sure you don't jump into cold water; not going alone, and if you fall in then don't panic but extend your arms and legs to float and shout for help.



FLAMIN NORA



Our resident safety campaigner Flamin Nora was out and about in force this year, attending lots of community events to raise awareness about issues such as kitchen fires, and overloading sockets.

POLICE AND FIRE FORENSICS WORKED TOGETHER TO MAXIMISE DELIBERATE FIRE CONVICTIONS

Last year we joined forces with the Durham Constabulary Forensic Investigation team under a new agreement and forensic science standard, to combat deliberate fire setting and arson across County Durham and Darlington.

Since 2002 the teams have worked closely as a joint Fire Investigation Team to recover physical trace evidence left over after a fire to support Police Investigators. However, the introduction of new forensic regulation legislation outlined the need for both services to gain accreditation to the stringent requirements of the International Standards Organisation known as ISO:17020 as well as the Forensic Regulator Statutory Codes of Practice and Conduct.

Arson and the effects of deliberate fire setting impact communities, destroying property and the natural resources and ecology of the local area. This new agreement between the Chief Constable, Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chief Fire Officer saw the Joint Fire Investigation Team members working to a standard that will demonstrate to the Court and wider public that the technical processes, specialist equipment and vehicles of Police Crime Scene Investigators and Fire Service Investigators, conform to the evidential standard requirement for serious crime scene investigations in support of the Criminal Justice System.



PROTECTION - SUPPORTING OUR BUSINESSES

Our Business Fire Safety Team is committed to ensuring business premises are the safest places for those who work in them or visit. Using what we call a Risk Based Inspection Programme, we systematically audit business premises based on their risk profile to ensure they comply with Fire Safety legislation.

If a business does not meet the required compliance standards, we will work with business owners to bring them up to standard. However occasionally the fire management or condition of a premises can be of such concern that we will use the Enforcement Actions available to us in our role as the enforcing authority of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

Some examples of these are:
Prohibition Notice: this is put in place to restrict the use of all or a specific part of the premises where immediate risk to life is observed. In 2022-2023 we served 8 prohibition notices.

Enforcement Notice: used where

we require fire safety features to be addressed that are of a 'less urgent nature' than a prohibition notice. In 2022-2023 we served 6 enforcement notices.

Businesses have a statutory duty to consult with us on Building and Licensing applications in relation to commercial premises, which covers both new builds or changes to current buildings. These consultations are critical to ensure a building is safe from the time of its design and through its full life cycle.

Our Fire Safety Achievements

Adopted a Competency Framework to align with national best practice which requires the Fire Safety Team to be qualified with a Level 4 Diploma and 25 hours Continual Professional Development per year.



APPRENTICES

In 2017, CDDFRS joined forces with New College Durham to offer firefighter apprenticeships, an award winning scheme which has proved to be hugely successful over the years. The first two cohorts are now working as firefighters across Durham and Darlington and our third cohort are about to complete the final element of their apprenticeship to become competent firefighters.

In 2022-23 our sixth Cohort of firefighter apprentices successfully completed their risk critical training, concluding with their passing out ceremony, which would allow them to move onto the station rotation element of their development where they are placed on various watches across the Service. We will continue this innovative method of recruiting and training in future years.

We also have existing staff enrolled onto a variety of apprenticeship standards across the Service, for example; Fire Control Operators, Heavy Goods Technician, Accountancy, Human Resources, Management and Business Administration.

In June last year we were proud to be named in the top 100 Apprenticeship Employers in the national league table.



FIRE CADETS



Fire Cadets is a national uniformed youth organisation run by CDDFRS staff and volunteers. Fire Cadets provides fun, challenging and inclusive opportunities for young people to reach their full potential contributing to safer, stronger, and healthier

communities. Cadets are supported, empowered, and provided with opportunities to gain positive life skills and focus on wellbeing, develop their personal safety and general safety knowledge, improve their communication and leadership skills, and increase their self-esteem.

In 2022-23 our Fire Cadets were able to participate in a variety of activities including our open days, car washes, Remembrance Services, and the Lord Lieutenant's Celebration of Youth at Durham Cathedral.

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 strategy. We have representative champions from across the Service covering the 9 protected characteristic strands of race, gender, sexual orientation, age, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, religion or belief and disability.

In 2022-23 we supported campaigns to raise awareness of such events as SANDS - Baby Loss Week, White Ribbon Day, International Women's Day, and Holocaust Memorial Day. We also received training on neurodiversity, attended the AFSA Conference and were proud to become a Leader at Level 3 of the Disability Confident scheme.

We regularly support the Durham, Darlington and Northern Pride events. In the year ahead we will be reinvigorating our Service Women's Group, providing Menopause training and reviewing how we can support staff on station.



OUR YEAR IN NUMBERS

The number of calls we received last year was 19365

There were 199 accidental dwelling fires

We had 1180 special services incidents which included attending road traffic collisions

3870 Deliberate fires were started



We inspected 6245 Fire Hydrants



We completed 18382 Home Fire Safety Visits

The total number of injuries from accidental house fires was 9

We completed 1927 Business Fire Safety Audits

CHARITY WORK



Last year our Chief Fire Officer Steve Helps cycled across Scotland to raise money for the FireFighters' Charity. He cycled from Inverkeithing in Fife to Mull, a massive 350 mile round trip with support on the way provided by our friends at Fire Scotland.

FireFighter Paul Bainbridge (we call him Bam Bam!) completed a gruelling 10k run in full fire kit to raise money for the IF U Care Share Foundation, a charity that supports people affected by suicide. He was joined by Firefighters Jack Helps and Hollie Codling and cheered on by his support team and the Durham Fire Cadets, raising £1250 in the process!

On Call Firefighter Colin Wooster from Newton Aycliffe, took part in a 216km row on a rowing machine, dressed in full fire kit. He was joined by Red Watch from Gateshead Victor at Tyne and Wear Fire and Rescue Service where he is also a wholtime firefighter. The row – which is the same distance as the river Tyne and the river Wear – was to raise money for Oliver's Fight Against Neuroblastoma, The Firefighters Charity and Mind. Oliver was diagnosed with stage 4 high risk Neuroblastoma and undergoing frontline treatment at the Royal Victoria infirmary in Newcastle. His family are aiming to raise £260,000 for a vaccine only available abroad, which is designed to reduce the chances of Oliver's cancer returning.

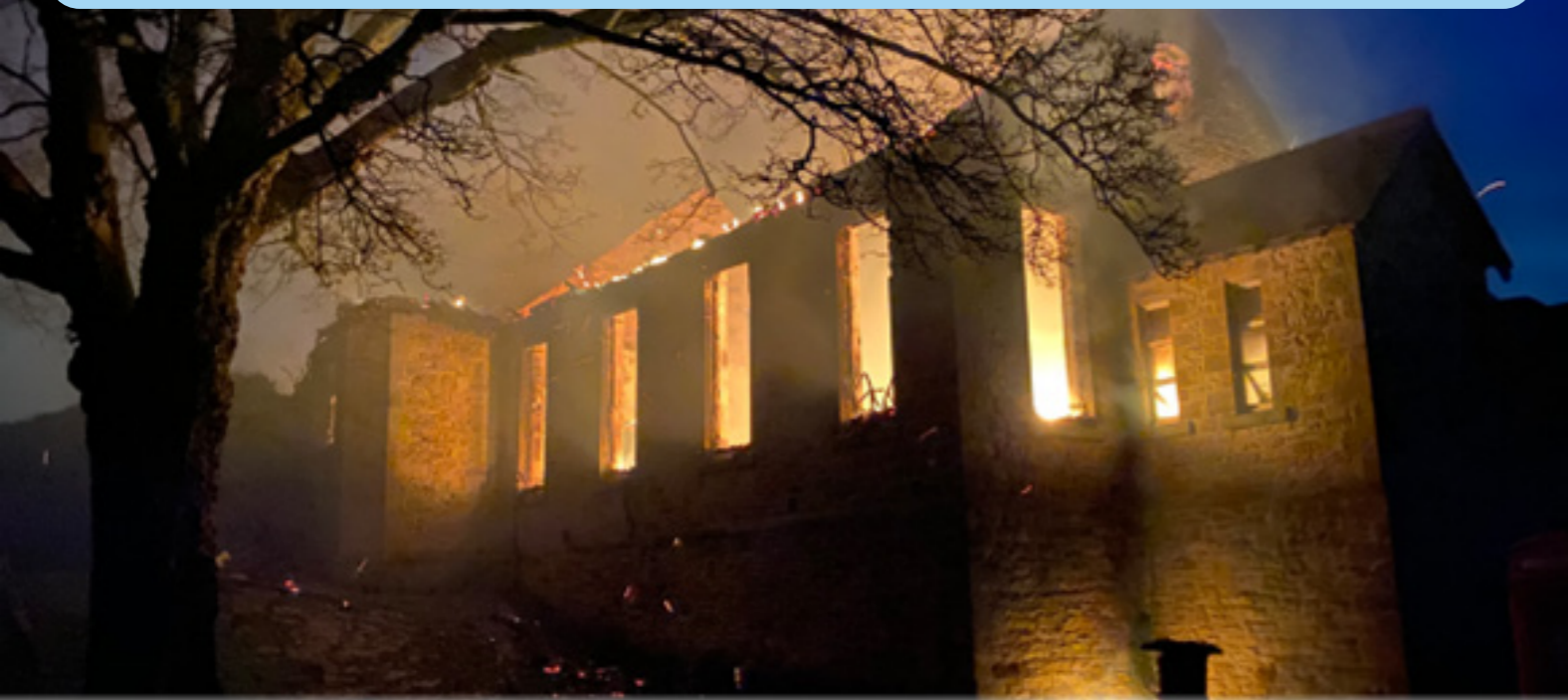
As well as the many sporting challenges they undertake our staff and cadets across the Service carried out car washes, bucket collections, raffles and tombolas at our Open Days. In 2022-2023 the Durham and Darlington Firefighters' Charity raised the fantastic sum of over £57,000.



INCIDENTS - FORD RESCUE & TANFIELD MANOR



Crews undertook a dramatic rescue last year at Westgate Ford after a driver became stuck in the rising waters. Thanks to the swift actions of our crews, some working at height equipment and a lot of holding your nerve, the occupant of the car was rescued without sustaining any major injuries. In a predominantly rural area such as ours, winter driving can be treacherous, so our response is vital, as are the safety campaigns that go hand in hand with this.



Firefighters worked tirelessly throughout the day to bring a large fire under control close to Tanfield Manor in Stanley.

Initial reports of a large fire near Tanfield Manor came into Service Control in December last year. Five fire crews from High Handenhold, Consett, Durham and Spennymoor responded along with the Bulk Water Carrier, Welfare Unit and the Incident Command Unit from Cleveland Fire Brigade. The fire was in an outbuilding and crews worked tirelessly alongside partners and colleagues to bring the fire under control and limit the impact on local communities.

Thankfully, the efforts of everyone involved meant that the fire did not spread to the Manor House and surrounding buildings.

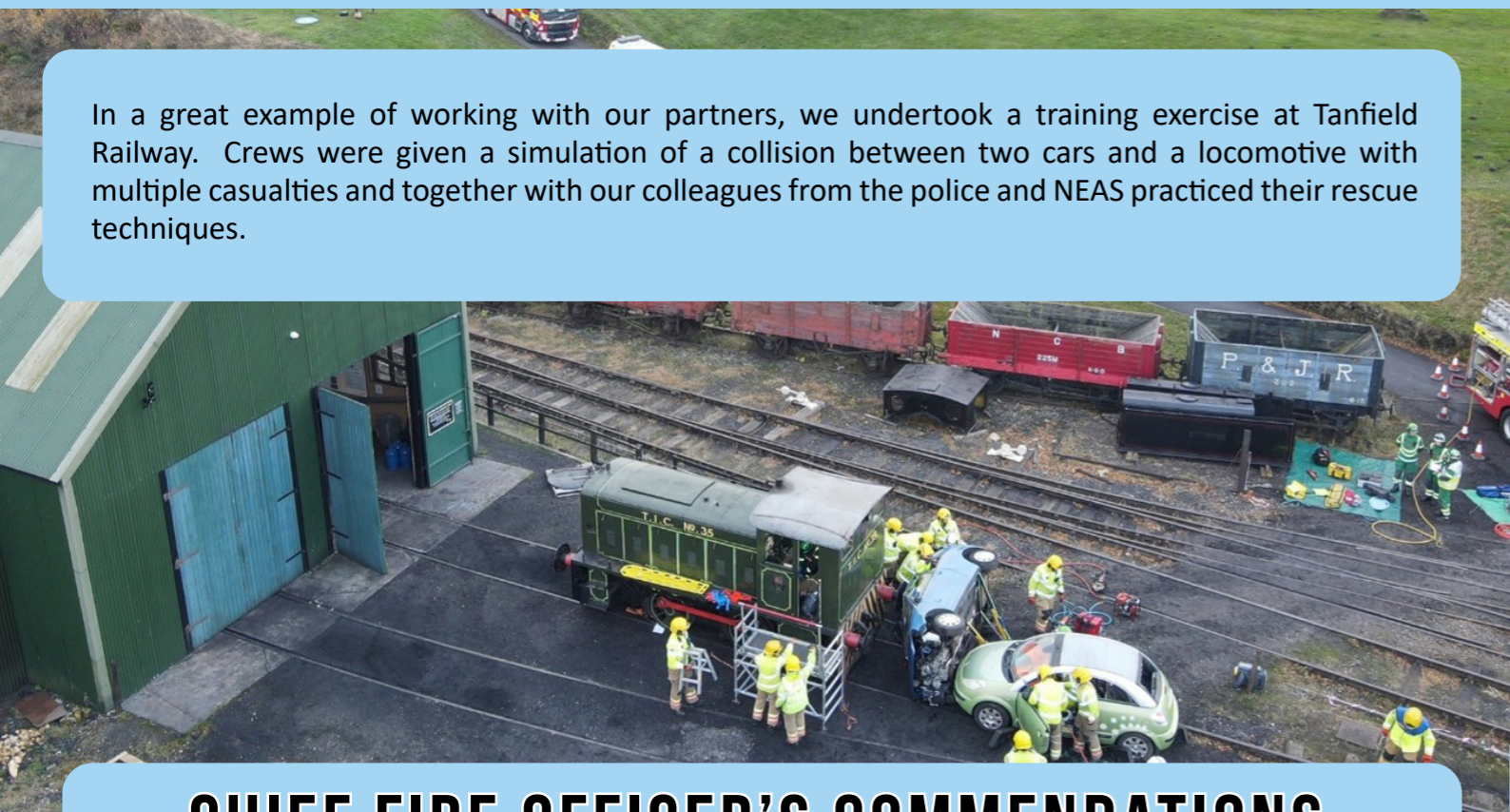
HEATWAVES

The unprecedented temperatures in the summer of 2022 meant that the ground was very dry and this led to an increase in the number of outdoor fires that we attended. Wildfires can be started by a stray cigarette, a barbecue that hasn't gone out, lighting a campfire, litter that has been left behind and sadly, as we found on a number of occasions, deliberately. The damage caused can be significant both to property and wildlife, and it puts lives at risk too.



TRAINING - PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

In a great example of working with our partners, we undertook a training exercise at Tanfield Railway. Crews were given a simulation of a collision between two cars and a locomotive with multiple casualties and together with our colleagues from the police and NEAS practiced their rescue techniques.



CHIEF FIRE OFFICER'S COMMENDATIONS

A Chief Fire Officer's Commendation was awarded to Watch Manager Graeme Hall, Crew Manager Ali Hetherington and Firefighters Scott Walters, Ian Harris, Dave Cullen and Stephen Hall for their fantastic professional rescue of a distressed man.

Back in December Green Watch Durham arrived on scene at the address given by a concerned caller. On arrival it was clear to the crews that more information was needed to locate the man.

Following an extensive search of the streets and more information from our Control room, the man was quickly located and rescued from a first floor window and given medical assistance and support from our crews and police.

Watch Manager Hall said: "What I have seen that night, makes me proud and humbled by the swift actions of these firefighters and the professionalism and dignity they have showed to a member of our community. I believe these actions should be highlighted and recognised as a fantastic rescue and praised for the co-operation between Fire service Control, Fire Crews, Police and Ambulance".



ACHIEVEMENTS

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 2023 for the second year running. iESE is an organisation which works with local authorities to identify and support improvements and efficiencies in local government. This is the third time we have won this award and we were proud to attend the ceremony in London.

The Service were commended for their ability to put communities at the heart of everything they do and striving to 'be the best,' taking their values of being professional, innovative, and effective to become a leading example of best practice.

The Service also picked up a bronze award in the People, Value, and Culture category for their 'talking heads debrief learning videos' that the Operational Assurance Team created.

The award complemented the findings of the inspection of CDDFRS, by His Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services which in January 2023 recognised the Service as being good across the three inspection pillars which cover Efficiency, Effectiveness and People.



ACHIEVEMENTS

STRONGER COMMUNITIES AWARDS

Darlington based Watch Manager Jonathan Holmes was given a special recognition award at the 2022 Stronger Communities Awards, hosted by Darlington Borough Council.

Jonathan was recognised for his commitment and drive to make Darlington a safer place to live, going the extra mile by attending collaboration meetings in and outside of work to tackle antisocial behaviour. Jonathan has established himself within Darlington multiagency meetings as a partner of choice, who is passionate about his job and serving his local community.



FIRE AND EMERGENCY AWARDS

Our Operational Assurance Section won the Resilience & Learning from Major Incidents award at the Excellence in Fire and Emergency Awards 2022.



COUNTY DURHAM TOGETHER AWARDS

We were proud to win the Public Service Award at the Northern Echo County Durham Together Awards. The award was a testament to every member of staff who works hard for everyone who lives and works in County Durham and Darlington. Here is Director of Emergency Response, Sarah Nattrass, receiving the award.



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THANKS FOR READING!