



Three year strategic plan **2015/16 – 2017/18**





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Welcome to our three year strategic plan 2015/16 – 2017/18

Foreword

Welcome to our strategic plan which explains how we serve the people of County Durham and the Borough of Darlington, setting out the key risks and challenges we face along with our vision for the future of the Service.

Reductions in central government funding over the past four years have meant we have had to find more than £4.4m of savings from our budget since 2010. Achieving these savings has meant making significant changes to how we deliver our service. However, so far, we have been able to do this without increasing risk in local communities.

Looking ahead, the next four years are likely to be even more challenging as we will need to find a further £3.044m of savings to meet the expected reductions in government funding. The options we have available to balance the budget for the fire and rescue service will be increasingly difficult to implement meaning we need to think differently about how we deliver services across County Durham and the Borough of Darlington.

Delivering on our vision of Safest People, Safest Places remains the focus of our work and the Authority has produced this plan to enable local people to see how their fire and rescue service will work with them, and with partner organisations, to ensure that local communities are safe despite the ongoing financial pressures.

The outcome of the general election in May 2015 will greatly influence our future plans. We will update this document once the next government sets out its future policy direction for the fire and rescue service.



Cllr Michele Hodgson,
Chair, County Durham and
Darlington Fire and Rescue
Authority



Susan Johnson,
Chief Executive, County Durham
and Darlington Fire and Rescue
Service



Organisational profile

The Fire and Rescue Authority

The Combined Fire Authority of County Durham and Darlington (the Authority) is the public body responsible for providing an effective and efficient fire and rescue service that protects the communities and infrastructure of County Durham and Darlington.

Made up of 21 elected councillors from Durham County Council and 4 from Darlington Borough Council, the Authority is collectively responsible for the democratic oversight and the strategic direction of the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service. The Authority's broad role is to maintain a service that meets the needs of the local community, approve overall policy and strategy, scrutinise performance, monitor financial spending and ensure that work is carried out efficiently, effectively and economically.

The work of the Authority is carried out through meetings of the full Authority and committees responsible for Audit and Risk; Finance and General Purposes; Performance, Policy and Review.

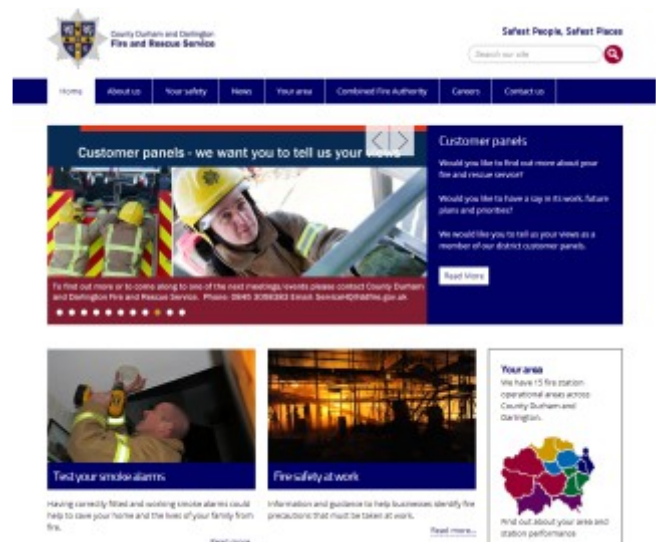
Meetings of the full Fire Authority are open to the public.

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service

The Chief Executive (CE), Susan Johnson, delivers her responsibilities through the Service Leadership Team (SLT) comprised of the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Assistant Chief Fire Officer and five Area Managers/Heads of Service who collectively shape and deliver our core strategy, aims and objectives. The Service is structured into the Community Protection and Corporate Resources directorates,

Supporting the SLT is the Service Management Team (SMT) that includes senior managers from departments within the two directorate teams. The SMT's role is to develop and implement the policy, procedures and strategy, oversee our programme of key improvement projects as well scrutinising the performance of the Service and ensuring plans are in place to address areas of under performance.

For more information on how we are organised, see our website www.ddfire.gov.uk





Statutory duties

The primary legislation associated with fire and rescue services in England and Wales is the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 which sets out the statutory responsibilities of the Authority for providing a fire and rescue service that has the people, equipment and training needed to carry out the following core functions:

- **Promoting fire safety** – the provision of information, advice and encouragement on the prevention of fires, restricting spread of fires in buildings and means of escape from fires.
- **Fire safety regulatory enforcement** – the enforcement of fire safety regulations in almost all premises except single private dwellings.
- **Emergency response and rescue** – Extinguishing fires, protecting life and property in the event of fires and rescuing people trapped or injured from road traffic collisions and other emergencies such as flooding or hazardous chemical release

What we do is guided by the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England 2012, which sets out the government's priorities and expectations, which include:

- identifying and assessing the full range of foreseeable fire and rescue related risks our area faces, making provision for prevention and protection activities and responding to incidents appropriately;
- working in partnership with our communities and a wide range of partners locally and nationally to deliver our service;
- being accountable to communities for the service we provide.

The National Framework requires us to publish an Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP), reflecting up to date risk information and covering at least a 3 year period, which has been developed in consultation with our community, our staff and our partners. The Authority's IRMP is incorporated within this strategic plan.

Our planning is also influenced by other legislation, including the Fire and Rescue Service (Emergencies) (England) Order 2007, which gives fire and rescue authorities mandatory functions in connection with chemical, biological, radiological or nuclear emergencies (CBRN emergencies) and emergencies requiring the freeing of people from collapsed structures or non-road transport incidents. The Authority is responsible for providing advice and guidance to businesses and enforcing fire safety regulations under the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The Civil Contingencies Act 2004 places a statutory duty on the Authority to plan and prepare for incidents where major disruption is likely that may affect the people of County Durham and Darlington. These situations might include:

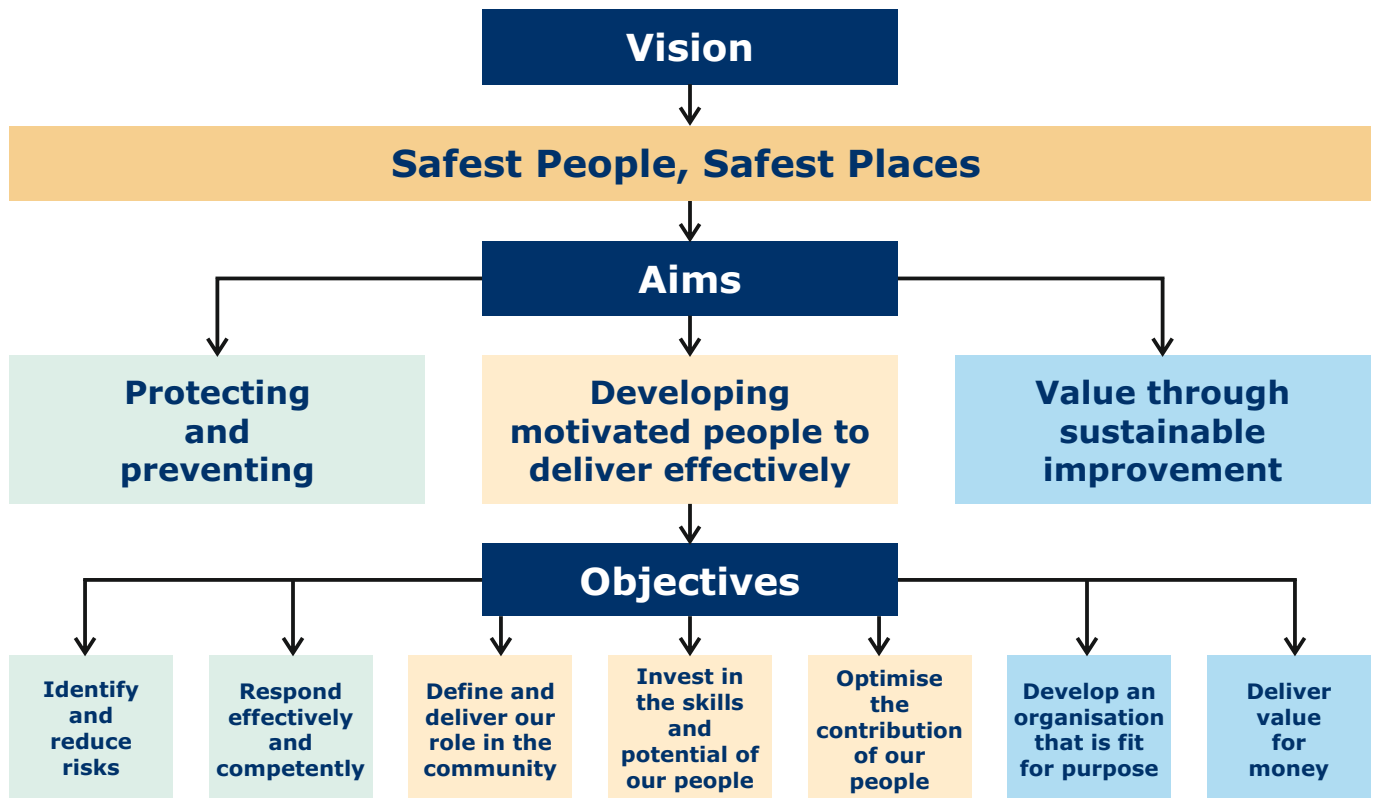
- severe weather events like flash flooding or prolonged and heavy periods of snow;
- network power losses;
- major incidents such as a chemical spill;
- public health issues such as a flu epidemic;
- animal health incidences such as foot and mouth disease.

In addition to the legislation described above, there are other statutory requirements the Authority is directly or indirectly responsible for, such as the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974 and other associated regulations and employment law.



Our vision, aims and objectives

Our vision of 'Safest People, Safest Places' is underpinned by three strategic aims and seven objectives:-



Our core values

Our values reflect what we believe in as an organisation. They represent our standards of corporate behaviour, and the individual behaviour of our staff.

<p>We value service to the Community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • working with all groups to reduce risk; • treating everyone fairly and with respect; • being answerable to those we serve; • striving for excellence in all we do. 	<p>We value all our people by practising and promoting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fairness and respect; • recognition of merit; • honesty, integrity and mutual trust • personal development; • co-operative and inclusive working.
<p>We value diversity in the Service and the community by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • treating everyone fairly and with respect; • providing varying solutions for different needs and expectations; • promoting equal opportunities in employment and progression within the Service; • challenging prejudice and discrimination. 	<p>We value improvement at all levels of the Service by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • accepting responsibility for our performance; • being open-minded; • considering criticism thoughtfully; • learning from our experience; • consulting others.



Keeping communities safe

We employ 607 staff consisting of: 506 operational firefighters (338 full-time and 168 part-time on-call) 26 control room staff, and 75 support staff.

We are located in 15 fire stations, a service headquarters, training centre and a technical services centre.

We work a range of duty systems to ensure we have the right number of skilled firefighters available at the right time and place to respond to emergencies.

- **2-2-4 shift** - immediate 24 hour response using full-time firefighters.
- **Day-crewed** - immediate daytime response using full-time firefighters Monday to Friday with an on-call response using part-time firefighters at night and weekends.
- **Day-crewing plus** - immediate daytime response with full-time firefighters on-call from accommodation next to the station at night.
- **Retained** - on-call part-time firefighters providing a response within five minutes.

Our fleet includes:

- 27 front-line fire engines
- 2 aerial ladder platforms
- 11 specialist vehicles
- 5 targeted response vehicles
- 9 four-wheel drive (4x4) vehicles.

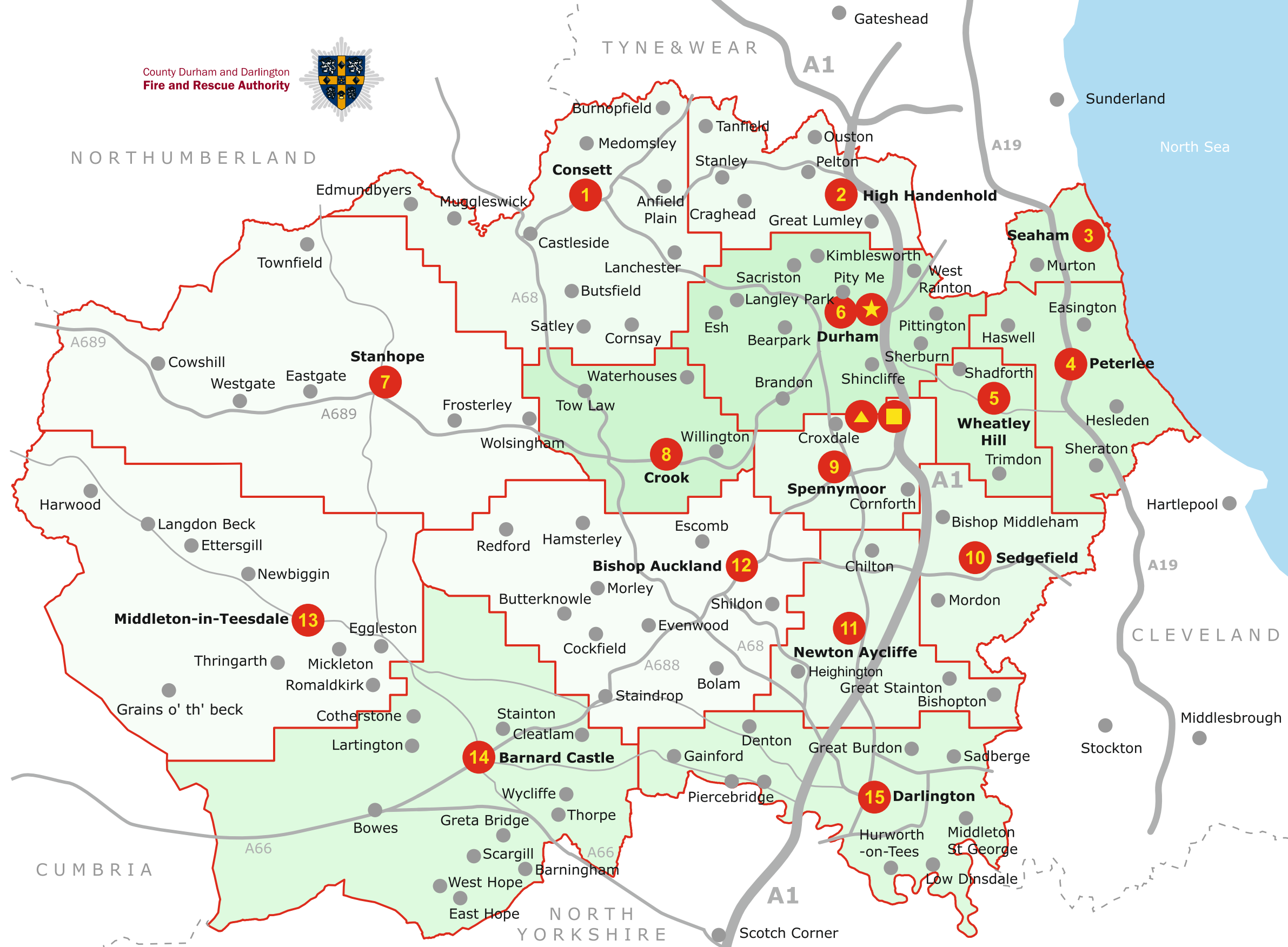
We work to **PREVENT** fires and other emergencies from occurring in the first place.

Our firefighters and other front-line staff undertake more than 18,000 home fire safety checks each year, carry out fire and road safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

We work to **PROTECT** people when emergencies do happen.

Our firefighters and fire safety officers undertake inspections of workplaces providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers, taking enforcement action where necessary.

We **RESPOND** to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies.



Our firefighters regularly train, maintain and test equipment to ensure they remain operationally ready to respond to emergencies at all times.

We also work closely with our partners such as Durham Constabulary, the North East Ambulance Service, local councils and our neighbouring fire and rescue services to ensure we can respond effectively and competently to any emergency.

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1 Consett Community Fire Station | 7 Stanhope Fire Station | 13 Middleton-in-Teesdale Fire Station |
| 2 High Handenhold Fire Station | 8 Crook Fire Station | 14 Barnard Castle Fire Station |
| 3 Seaham Fire Station | 9 Spennymoor Community Fire Station | 15 Darlington Community Fire Station |
| 4 Peterlee Fire Station | 10 Sedgefield Fire Station | ★ HQ |
| 5 Wheatley Hill Fire Station | 11 Newton Aycliffe Fire Station | ▲ Technical Services Centre |
| 6 Durham Fire Station | 12 Bishop Auckland Community Fire Station | ■ Training Centre (from 2015) |



Area profile

The County Durham and Darlington area

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service protect the administrative areas of Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council, which covers an area of approximately 2,432 square kilometres, with a population of 618,800. Within the area there are 288,325 households and 18,376 business premises.

Situated in the heart of the North East of England, the area is bordered to the north by Northumberland and Tyne and Wear, Cumbria to the west, Cleveland to the southeast and North Yorkshire to the south. The major centres in the area are Barnard Castle, Bishop Auckland, Chester-le-Street, Consett, Crook, Darlington, Durham City, Newton Aycliffe, Peterlee, Seaham, Spennymoor and Stanley.

Durham City and the larger industrial and commercial towns are situated in the east of the region; in contrast the west is predominantly rural consisting of open moorland and wooded river valleys and is sparsely populated. The area is one of enormous contrast and diversity with a rich history and heritage in coal and iron mining, farming and heavy railway industry. From the North Pennines in the west to the Durham Heritage Coastline in the east it contains landscapes, habitats and features of local, national and international importance.

The County Durham and Darlington area has poor health statistics and low life expectancies. Economic activity in the area is also low – almost 10% lower than the national average and, despite real improvements in recent years, educational attainment is also below the national average. Many parts of the area also have housing stock that is sub-standard, falling below accepted decency levels. Approximately 20% of housing in the County is in social sector ownership with the majority concentrated in South and East Durham. The current stock is predominantly made up of terraced and semi-detached houses, with the proportion of flats and detached houses in the County lower than the national average.

These factors contribute to the high levels of social deprivation observed in our area. When compared with the national average, 11.4% of County Durham and 16% of Darlington residents live in the top 10% of the most deprived areas nationally and 45.4% of County Durham and 39% of Darlington residents live in the top 30% most deprived areas nationally.

Tourism plays an integral part in the local economy. There are many heritage sites including Raby Castle and the Bowes Museum and the World Heritage Site of Durham Cathedral and Castle. Other key attractions include Beamish Museum, the North Pennines and the Durham County Cricket Ground at Chester-le-Street attracting thousands of visitors each year.

Durham has a world class University which has been a leading centre of scholarship for over 1000 years with the students and graduates making a significant contribution to the local area and its economy. There are also strong links to Teesside University with their recently opened Business School located in Darlington.

The area has strong transport links to the rest of the UK and beyond by rail utilising the East Coast Main Line, by air via Durham Tees Valley Airport located five miles southeast of Darlington and by road including the A1(M), A66 and A19.



District profiles

Our fire stations are grouped into six district areas, each with its own district management team. The following pages provide a profile of each district area and the risks within them.

Darlington district (Incorporating Darlington and Barnard Castle fire stations)

Darlington district covers the main towns of Darlington and Barnard Castle, bordering North Yorkshire to the south, Cumbria to the west and Cleveland to the east.

Darlington Community Fire Station area



The area covered by Darlington Community Fire Station includes the main conurbation of Darlington along with the surrounding villages of Middleton St George, Hurworth, Sadberge, Gainford, High and Low Coniscliffe. The station also provides mutual assistance into areas of North Yorkshire and Cleveland.

Darlington is a large market town with a population of approximately 105,600 people. It comprises large-scale industrial, commercial and residential areas. There is a large amount of terraced housing in and around the town centre area, incorporating a large number of houses in multiple occupation (HIMOs) with several large social housing estates on the outskirts of the town.

The A1(M) and A66 arterial routes pass through the area and the A68 and A167 roads provide connecting routes to larger towns within the county. The East Coast and Tees Valley railway lines pass through Darlington. Durham Tees Valley International Airport is located on the border between Darlington and Cleveland, which provides passenger and freight transport. The Tees and Skerne rivers meander through the district area and present a water risk due to its high recreational use and flood potential during spate conditions.

Barnard Castle Fire Station area

Barnard Castle is a market town within the Teesdale area and is the main centre of population in the station area with approximately 6,000 residents with the surrounding villages accounting for an additional population of approximately 2,600. Barnard Castle station covers a predominately rural area containing small and medium size residential areas and large areas of moorland and forest. Located with the town are a hospital, a young offender's prison and the Bowes Museum, a major heritage site housing many important works of art. Barnard Castle's largest single employer is a large scale pharmaceutical manufacturing facility.

The station covers industrial, agricultural and domestic risks, which include a number of multi occupancy type premises relating to the tourist industry. The busy Trans Pennine A66 route skirts the boundaries of the town and the A167 and A688 provide connecting routes to larger towns within the county. The River Tees meanders through the District area and presents a water risk due to its high recreational use and flood potential during spate conditions and there are also a number of reservoirs along with large areas of peat bogs. Rural moorland incorporating large areas of forest such as The Stang and Stainmore present the potential for wildfires.

Work on a new £3.78m quad-service station, believed to be the first in the country, is scheduled to commence during 2015, providing a base for the fire, police, ambulance and search & mountain rescue services.



Artist's impression of proposed quad-service station at Barnard Castle.



Derwentside district (incorporating Consett and High Handenhold Fire Stations)

Derwentside district covers the main towns of Consett and Stanley, bordering Tyne and Wear to the north and Northumberland to the northwest.

Consett Fire Station area



The Consett district is located to the north west of Durham with a population of approximately 63,500 people. There are large residential areas at Consett, Leadgate, and Annfield Plain. There are also many smaller villages in the surrounding areas, some of which have levels of social deprivation. The population in and around Consett has increased considerably over recent years due to a large increase in residential development. The main industrial risk located in Consett's station area is Thomas Swan which is located less than half a mile from the fire station. The main arterial routes around Consett are the A68, A691, A692, A693 and A694.

Consett covers a large geographical area which includes large areas of moorland around Edmunbyers Common and Muggleswick Common.

To the west of Consett lies Derwent Reservoir which is on the Durham/Northumberland border and as well as the home to numerous water sport activities, it is a key part of the water supply network in the North East.

High Handenhold Fire Station area



High Handenhold station area has approximately 71,000 residents covering from Oxhill (Stanley) in the west to Lumley and Fencehouses in the east. To the north it borders Tyne and Wear and to the south the station area extends to Chester Moor. The main towns covered by High Handenhold are Stanley and Chester-le-Street however, there are a number of surrounding villages such as Pelton, Grange Villa and Quaking Houses to name but a few.

The station covers mainly industrial and domestic risks with the A1(M) running north to south through the station area. The A167 and A693 also run through the station area providing links with other towns and villages both of which are major trunk roads through the county. The A693 runs east to west through the station area.

The East Coast main line runs north to south through the area with a station situated within Chester-le-Street. Tanfield Railway is a small visitor attraction that travels north from Tanfield towards Sunnyside in Tyne and Wear.



Durham district (incorporating Durham and Crook Community Fire Stations)

Durham and Chester-le-Street district covers the main towns of Durham City, Crook and Chester-le-Street and borders Tyne and Wear to the north. Our Service Headquarters, Technical Services Centre and the new Training Centre are all located within the Durham district area.

Durham Community Fire Station area

The area includes Durham City and Chester-le-Street along with the surrounding villages of Kimblesworth, Pitlington, Cassop, Sunderland Bridge, Esh Winning and Brandon.

Durham is a University City with a fluctuating population of approximately 95,700. The city contains a number of historical sites including Durham Cathedral and Durham Castle, both of which are World Heritage Sites attracting tourists to the area. The main town of Chester-le-Street is located to the north. There are also large residential areas on both sides of the city at Newton Hall, Gilesgate, Belmont and Carrville. There are also many smaller villages in the surrounding areas, some of which have levels of social deprivation.

Durham University has 14 colleges situated throughout the city with varying standards of accommodation for approximately 14,000 students living in halls of residence and within the local community. The University presents a high sleeping risk from resident and non-resident students aged 18 to 23 years old.

The A1M and River Wear run right through the station area, with the A167 and A690 providing the main connections to towns and villages within the area.



Crook Community Fire Station area



Crook station area has approximately 23,360 residents living mainly in Crook and Willington; however there are many smaller rural villages in the surrounding area.

To the north and west of the station are the ward areas of Tow Law and Stanley and the well-known picnic and beauty spot of East Hedleyhope. To the east of the station we have the Willington Central ward area and the town of Willington. Moving south from the station is the ward area of Hunwick and the village of North Bitchburn.

A new fire station was opened in May 2014, containing a high quality training facility and state-of-the-art community meeting facilities.

Crook station covers industrial and domestic risks as well as water risks from flooding. The A690 provides the main route through Crook with the A689 and A68 providing connecting routes to larger towns within County Durham.



Easington district (incorporating Seaham, Peterlee and Wheatley Hill Fire Stations)

Easington district covers the main towns of Seaham, Peterlee and Wheatley Hill bordering Tyne and Wear to the north and Cleveland to the south.

Seaham Fire Station area



The area includes the main town of Seaham along with the surrounding villages of Seaton, Murton and Hawthorn as well as providing mutual assistance into areas of Tyne and Wear.

The population in and around the Seaham area declined during the eighties and early nineties; however the numbers have increased again to approximately 21,500 with new housing developments and investment impacting on population.

Seaham has approximately three miles of coast most of which is designated as a "heritage coast". Seaham Harbour handles ships up to 8,000 tonnes and includes 27,000 square metres of warehousing.

The station covers industrial and domestic risks with Dalton Park shopping centre situated just off the A19 approximately three miles from Seaham. The A19 runs the length of the station area providing connecting routes to larger towns within the county.

Peterlee Fire Station area



Peterlee fire station covers the main town of Peterlee along with the surrounding villages of Easington, Shotton Colliery, Castle Eden and Blackhall as well as providing mutual assistance to Cleveland Fire Brigade.

Peterlee is a medium sized 'new town' built in 1948 with an approximate population of 30,000. It is surrounded by a number of former mining villages and is positioned close to the coast, approximately 10 miles east of Durham City, 10 miles south of Sunderland, and 8 miles north of Hartlepool.

The area also has a number of industrial estates containing medium to large factory facilities including one classified as a top tier site under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations.

The A19 runs the full length of the station area that also covers approximately five miles of coastline.

Wheatley Hill Fire Station area



Wheatley Hill covers the main village of Wheatley Hill and the surrounding villages of Thornley, Trimdon and Wingate. The station area consists mainly of former mining villages, with a number of small and medium sized industrial estates and other businesses.

The station is in close proximity to the A19, the A181 along with other B roads provide the main transport links to the remainder of County Durham.



Sedgefield district (incorporating Newton Aycliffe, Sedgefield and Spennymoor Fire Stations)

Sedgefield district covers the main towns of Sedgefield, Spennymoor and Newton Aycliffe, bordering Cleveland to the East.

Newton Aycliffe Fire Station area



Newton Aycliffe has a population of 29,000 people and is the largest town within the Sedgefield district. Within a 10 mile radius are several towns and villages including Darlington, Bishop Auckland, Shildon and Heighington. To the south of the town is Aycliffe Village which is near to the A1(M) junction with the A167. The sizeable industrial areas include two sites classified as top tier site under the Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations.

The town is also home to a new £82m factory for the production of high-speed trains, commuter trains and metro trains, and will be home to an on-site research & development facility and test track. The new facility is expected to create 730 jobs along with a further 200 construction jobs, a welcome boost the local economy.

Newton Aycliffe fire station is a joint facility shared with Durham Constabulary who have been re-housed from a decommissioned police station making them more accessible to the public within the town centre. Sharing facilities allows us to maximise the use of our buildings and to make best use of public money.

Sedgefield Fire Station area



Sedgefield is a small town with a population of approximately 4,500. It is home to the North East Technology (NET) Park which a growing science park that is home to several high-technology companies. Sections of the A689, A177, the B1278 and the The East Coast Main Line runs north/south through the station area which also covers sections of the A1(M), A689 and B1278 roads.

Spennymoor Community Fire Station area



Spennymoor Community Fire Station is located close to the Durham Gate development and provides operational cover to the main town of Spennymoor along with the surrounding villages of Croxdale, Kirk Merrington and Ferryhill town.

Spennymoor has a population of approximately 20,000, the East Coast mainline travels through the station area as does the main A1(M). The River Wear runs west to east presenting a water risk with an historic flood risk in the Sunderland Bridge area.



Wear and Tees district (incorporating Bishop Auckland, Stanhope and Middleton in Teesdale Fire Stations)

Wear and Tees district covers the main towns of Bishop Auckland, Stanhope and Middleton in Teesdale and borders Cumbria to the west.

Bishop Auckland Fire Station area



The area is one of the largest in the county covering the central areas of Bishop Auckland, West Auckland, Tindale Crossing and Etherley, across to Hamsterley Forest in the west, Hunwick and Witton le Wear in the north, parts of Shildon and Coundon in the east and Ingleton and Staindrop in the south.

The station covers industrial and domestic risks each with their own particular challenges due to issues of social deprivation. The district has a wide blend of industrial, commercial, residential and rural areas and this provides a wide range of potential risks for the fire and rescue service.

Bishop Auckland has an approximate population of 24,400 living in 10,336 dwellings. Of these dwellings, around 44% are terraced houses, 33% semi-detached houses and 17% detached houses. The age distribution of the population in Bishop Auckland is broadly in-line with that of County Durham and England and Wales, although there are a slightly smaller proportion of people between 20 and 24 years old.

Bishop Auckland has a number of rural risks which include farms, silos, quarries and Hamsterley Forest. The main arterial routes around Bishop Auckland are the A68, A688 and A6072.

Stanhope Fire Station area



Stanhope is a small market town in County Durham. It is situated on the River Wear between Eastgate and Frosterley on the north side of Weardale. The A689 Trans Pennine road meets the B6278 road from Barnard Castle to Shotley Bridge here. The civil parish of Stanhope is quite large, with a population of 4,519 (1633 living in Stanhope itself) and also includes Rookhope, Westgate, St John's Chapel, Ireshopeburn, Wearhead, Cowshill, Cornriggs, Eastgate, Frosterley all on the A689 road, along with Crawleyside, Hill End and White Kirkley.

Middleton-in-Teesdale Fire Station area



Middleton-in-Teesdale is a small market town with a population of 1,500 and is the main centre in the Upper Dale. It is situated on the north side of Teesdale between Eggleston and Newbiggin, a few miles to the north west of Barnard Castle. It is the furthest west of our fire stations and shares borders with Cumbria Fire and Rescue Service.

The Station area covers outlying villages of Harwood, Romalldkirk, Langdon Beck and Mickleton. The Pennines in the west are predominantly moorland which is used for tourism, agriculture and shooting during the season. These remote rural areas present a risk of wildfire, particularly during the summer months.

During the World Wars, the area was used for Gunnery Ranges and there are areas that still carry the warnings of unexploded ordnance.



Identifying and managing risk

How we identify and assess risks

The Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2012 requires the Service to identify, assess and mitigate the current and future risks to our communities so that we can ensure we are doing the right thing, in the right place, at the right time to keep our communities and staff safe.

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) was a process introduced by the Government to provide a modern, flexible and risk-based approach to the provision of fire and rescue services based upon locally identified needs. The assessment of risk is the initial stage of the IRMP process and requires quantitative and qualitative analysis of hazards and threats. The processes we have adopted use a combination of risk modelling software, historical data and professional judgement to make an assessment of impact and consequence with likelihood that an event will occur, ensuring that a thorough and complete analysis has been completed.

While risk to property, infrastructure, the environment and our heritage are of significant importance in the work we do – it is risk to life that is given our highest priority.

We play an active part in the County Durham and Darlington Local Resilience Forum (LRF), a multi-agency partnership formed to meet the requirements of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. The LRF compiles a Community Risk Register which identifies the wide range of risks and emergencies we could potentially face within County Durham. It draws on the outcomes from the National Risk Register which provides a national perspective of the risks and emergencies that could occur and would result in major impact on all, or significant parts of, the UK. The Community Risk Register is then used by the LRF to inform its priorities for planning, training and exercising in order to manage emergencies when they arise. The risks identified in the Community Risk Register are used to directly inform the work of the fire and rescue service.

Strategies to deal with risk

The work of County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service can be linked to one of the key activity areas of Prevention, Protection and Response.

We work to **PREVENT** fires and other emergencies from occurring in the first place. Our firefighters and other front-line staff undertake over 18,000 home fire safety checks each year, carry out fire and road safety talks in schools and work with partner agencies to inform our communities about fire and road safety.

We work to **PROTECT** people when emergencies do happen. Our firefighters and fire safety officers visit over 5,600 business premises each year, providing advice and guidance to owners and occupiers and taking enforcement action where necessary to ensure public and firefighter safety.

We **RESPOND** to emergencies including fires, road traffic collisions, air and rail crashes, water rescues and flooding, hazardous chemical incidents and many other types of emergencies.

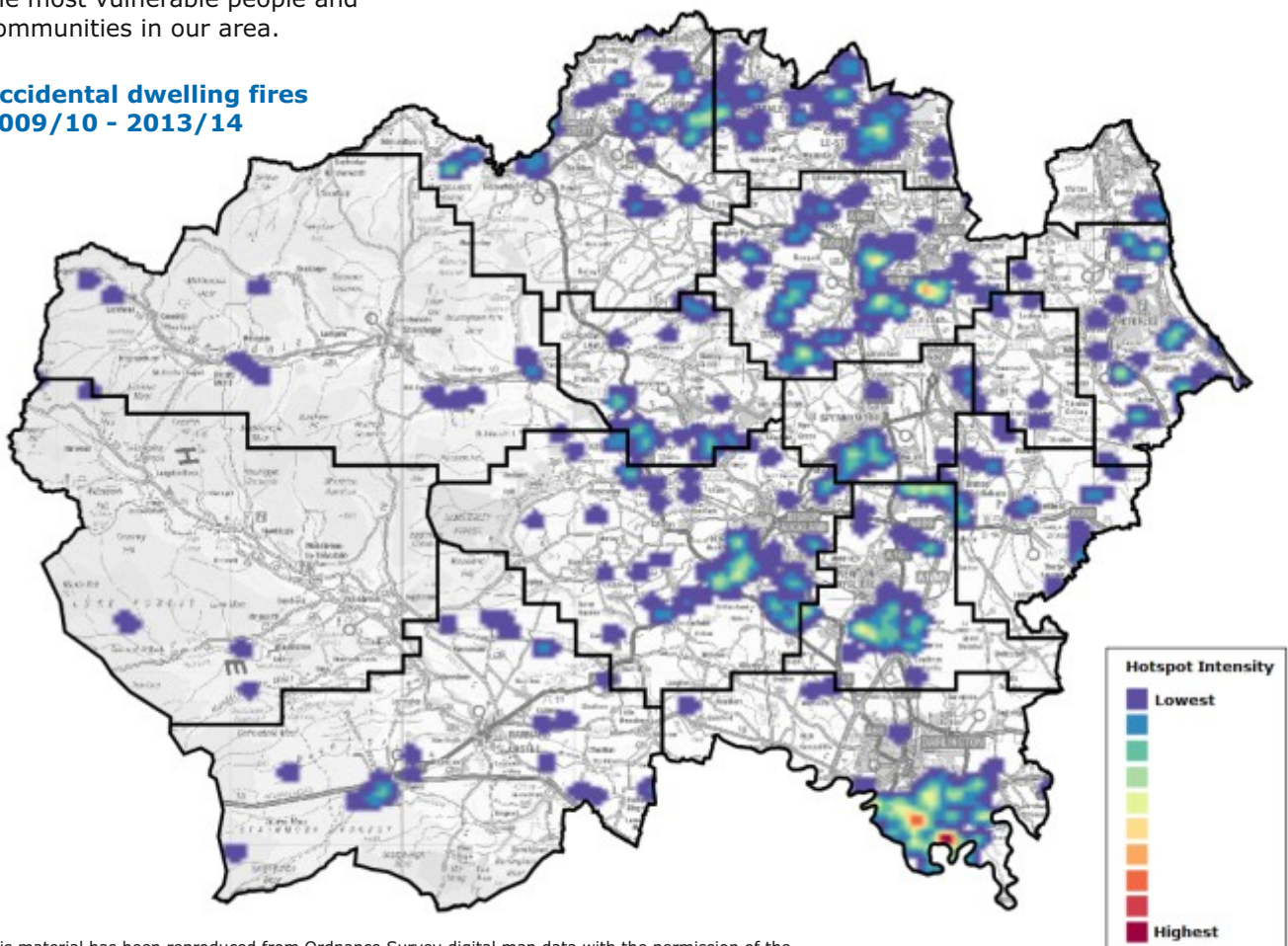
The following sections set out the key risks and priorities driving our activities in each of the key activity areas.



Prevention risks and priorities

This section provides a summary of the risk priorities that are driving our prevention activities. Our prevention work is focused on developing and delivering educational interventions, targeted towards the most vulnerable people, to reduce fire deaths and injuries within the home and in road traffic collisions. We use a range of information and data to identify the most vulnerable people and communities in our area.

Accidental dwelling fires 2009/10 - 2013/14



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Research shows that people are more at risk from fire if they:

- Are over 60 years of age;
- Live alone;
- Have mental health issues;
- Suffer mobility or hearing loss issues;
- Have alcohol or drug dependency;
- Smoke;
- Have a learning disability.

Reducing the risk of death and injury from fires in the home

Accidental house fires are lower than five years ago due to our increased prevention work focussing on home fire safety visits particularly targeting those most vulnerable and at risk.

However, they remain a priority area for us. The map below shows the hotspots where fires in the home have occurred over the past five years.



Although focusing on prevention has resulted in a long term reduction in the number of fire deaths that occur in our area, four people died in accidental house fires in 2013/14. Reducing the number of people who die in a house fire remains one of our top priorities but an increasingly ageing population provide greater challenges for us in terms of prevention.

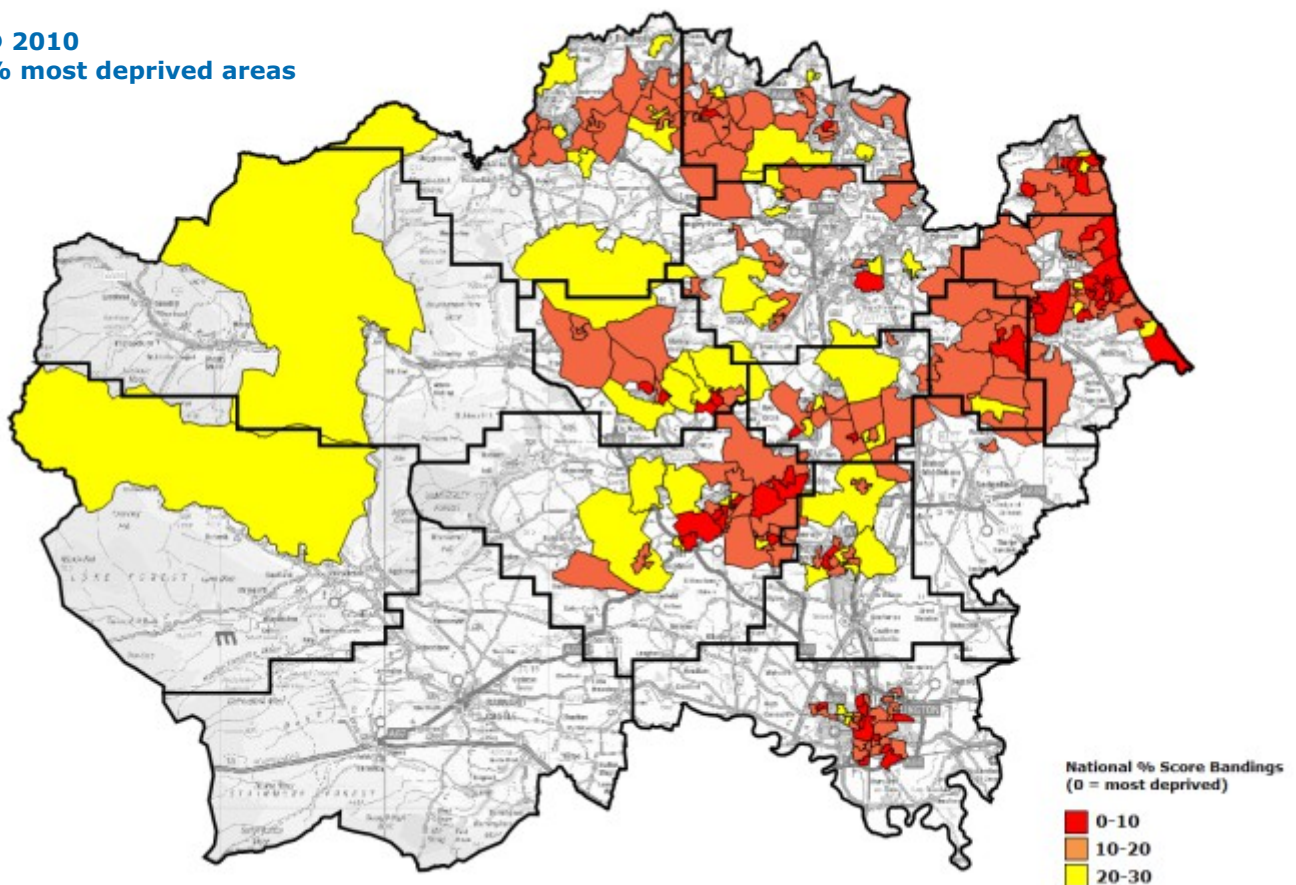
Key to improving our performance in this area is the Fire Fatalities Protocol that the Service has established with partner agencies such as local authorities, police, social care providers, drug and alcohol teams and housing providers. Through this arrangement we have provided fire awareness training to the staff of these agencies to assist us in identifying the most vulnerable in our communities. We have also introduced a process by which this data can be shared so that appropriate prevention measures can be implemented.

Whilst we have been able reduce the number of accidental house fires, the number of injuries to the public has remained generally static. We analyse the circumstances where injuries are occurring and we will continue to use this information to inform the prevention work that we undertake in future years to reduce injuries from fire in the home.

There is a recognised link between deprivation and the incidence of fire. We tend to find a greater risk of fire-related incidents in more deprived areas and an increased likelihood that they will result in deaths or injuries.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) is a widely used indicator that shows how all areas in England compare in terms of levels of deprivation. The levels of deprivation in our area are higher than the national average. The map below shows the areas where deprivation levels are highest.

IMD 2010
30% most deprived areas



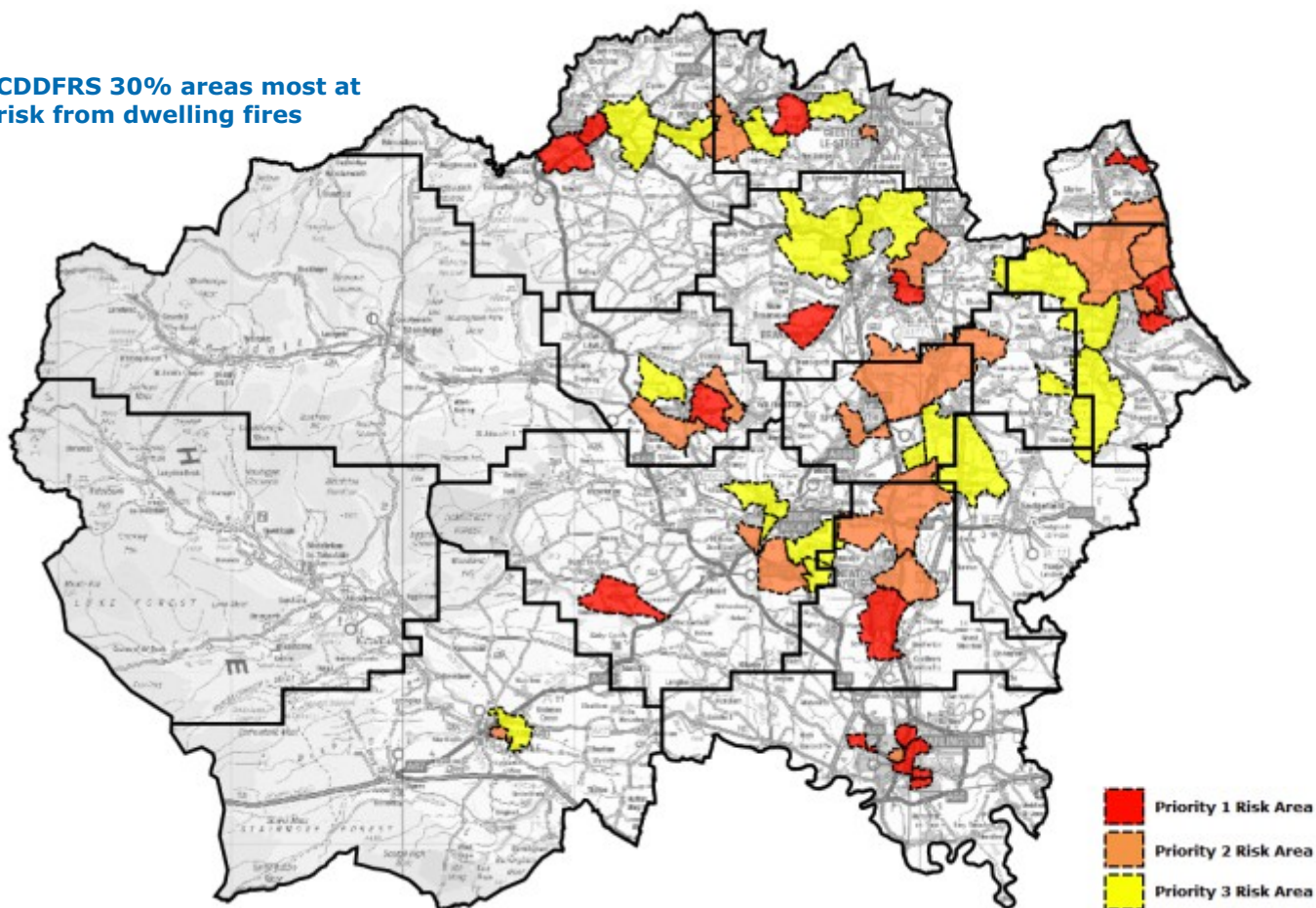
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By using this deprivation information, along with incident data and intelligence gathered at county/borough and district/station levels we predict where future fires are most likely to occur. For example, as well as using the Experian MOSAIC data analysis tool, which gives us household level data for all domestic premises across the Service area, we have developed our own Ward Based Risk Tool that produces district profiles to help crews target the most vulnerable people in our area who are most at risk from fire. The map below shows the geographic areas that are considered to be most at risk of a fire in the home:



CDDFRS 30% areas most at risk from dwelling fires



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18,000

home fire safety checks carried out



This year we will undertake approximately 18,000 home fire safety checks (HFSC) in households across County Durham and Darlington. We will deliver HFSCs and fit free smoke alarms to all households in our area but we actively target those people who are most at risk. We aim to deliver at least 70% of our visits to vulnerable people who are most at risk of fire.

We have increased the amount of time dedicated to prevention activities and significantly increased the number of HFSCs we undertake each year. However, it may become more difficult to sustain these levels should the reductions in government funding continue.

The delivery of HFSCs is quality assured via two methods: Fire Control staff undertake a telephone survey of a randomly selected sample of households who have received a HFSC and the central Community Safety team quality assure the database records to ensure resources are targeted at the most vulnerable, delivered to a high standard and accurately recorded, particularly in light of the increased targets for delivery.



Reducing the risk and impact of hoarding

In recent years the Service has seen a notable increase in the number of incidents involving hoarders including two separate dwelling fires involving fire fatalities. Hoarding can create significant risks to the individual, the community and firefighters because hoarding large quantities of materials, which may be combustible, increase the risk and severity of fire and make it harder to escape should a fire occur. It is also much more difficult for firefighters to locate people trapped in a fire and emergency responders risk being trapped by falling debris.

To address the increasing incidence of fires involving hoarders, we work closely with other public safety agencies and housing providers to raise awareness of the issues. We share information and intelligence to minimise the risk to the hoarders, their neighbours and firefighters. We have also raised awareness at a national level, influencing the creation of a national hoarder working group.



Reducing deliberate fires

Deliberate fires account for a large proportion of the emergency incidents we attend. The wet summer of 2012 led to an unusually low number of small fires that year. The following year saw the number return to expected levels although the five year trend is still downward. Whilst these types of fire, which include rubbish, bonfires, grass and gorse fires do not often pose a direct significant risk to the public, they divert our resources away from other key activities and therefore we will continue to work to achieve further reductions in this area.

The number of smaller fires that we attend is, to some extent, linked to the prevailing weather conditions. There is a recognised link between deliberately set small fires and other forms of antisocial behaviour. It has been estimated that young people start a large proportion of these fires therefore education and engagement with this group is key to reducing these incidents.

Our prevention strategy is focused on working with partners including the police, local authorities and other agencies to understand where the areas of greatest risk are and to work together to reduce the number of deliberate fires that occur. This approach allows us to share information, analyse data and investigate fire related crimes to ensure appropriate action is taken against offenders. We also deliver targeted educational activities to change the behaviours of those people who are likely to commit arson.



Reducing false alarms

False alarms are calls that do not need a fire and rescue service attendance. They are categorised as either 'automatic' where the false alarm is triggered by an automatic fire alarm (AFA) system, or 'malicious' where someone makes a hoax call.

Attending false alarm calls increase risk to life and property by delaying our attendance to genuine emergencies. They also impact by:

- increasing risk to firefighters and the public when driving to the 'emergency' under blue lights;
- interrupting training sessions being undertaken by firefighters;
- disrupting prevention activities such as home fire safety checks;
- wasting public money sending firefighters unnecessarily;
- increasing our carbon footprint by increasing vehicle movements both responding to the call and moving other fire engines to cover the area.

We actively seek ways to reduce the number of false alarms. For a number of years, the Service has targeted the worst offending and newly emerging problematic premises in relation to false alarms generated by an AFA system. Effective call challenge by Control staff has also helped to reduce the number of false and malicious calls attended by more than 60% since 2005/06.

60%
reduction in false
and malicious calls
attended



Reducing the risk of death or injury from road traffic collisions

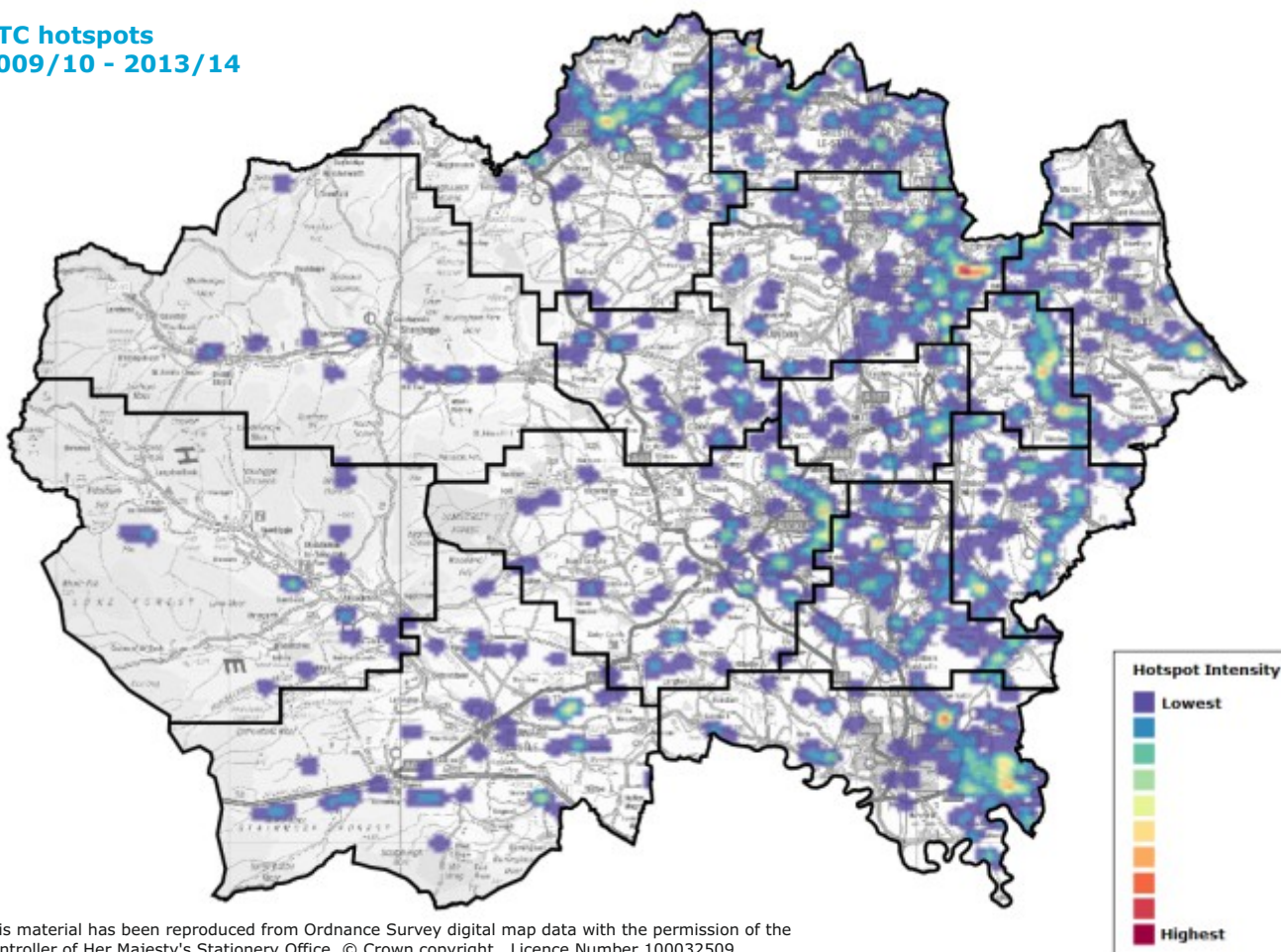
We have a number of major road networks running through our area and this presents a risk of road traffic collisions (RTC's) occurring. Collisions also frequently occur on the many rural roads that exist across County Durham and the Borough of Darlington. We need to ensure that we mitigate these risks through our prevention and response activities. Large scale transport related emergency incidents require an effective coordinated response; therefore, we have joint protocols in place with partner agencies such as the police, ambulance

service, Highways Agency and local authorities to deal with any foreseeable major transport incident.

We are an active partner on the County Durham Casualty Reduction Partnership, working with Durham Constabulary, Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council to reduce the incidence and impact of road traffic collisions.

Although the number of RTCs attended by County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service is decreasing, the number of people killed or seriously injured on our roads has been rising since 2010. The map below shows the hotspots where RTCs have occurred in the past 5 years:

RTC hotspots 2009/10 - 2013/14



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A third of all people killed or seriously injured on the roads are aged 17-24. This is our highest risk age group and our work focuses on targeting road safety education and intervention at these young people. We work with young people through local schools, colleges and universities as well as visiting workplaces to undertake our road safety education work. The extra capacity we created by changing the shift systems for our operational staff has ensured that we can increase the work we do in this important area.



Protecting young people

Our longer term prevention strategy is also focused on young people. The earlier we can begin educating young people in keeping themselves safe, the more chance there is of our community safety messages making a difference in the longer term. As positive role models, our professional firefighters and community safety staff can assist young people to make a positive contribution to society and improve their life skills.

We aim to visit every school in County Durham and Darlington each year to deliver a range of focused educational packages. These visits are designed to ensure young people are more aware of their own responsibilities and help them to take steps to reduce their risk of injury or harm. We will also continue to work with some of our most disadvantaged young people through specific educational programmes such as our Fire Break course.



Protection risks and priorities

This section provides a summary of the risk priorities that are driving our protection activities as we work with the owners and occupiers of business premises providing advice and guidance and taking enforcement action where necessary to ensure public and firefighter safety.

Reducing the risk of fires in industrial and commercial (non-domestic) buildings

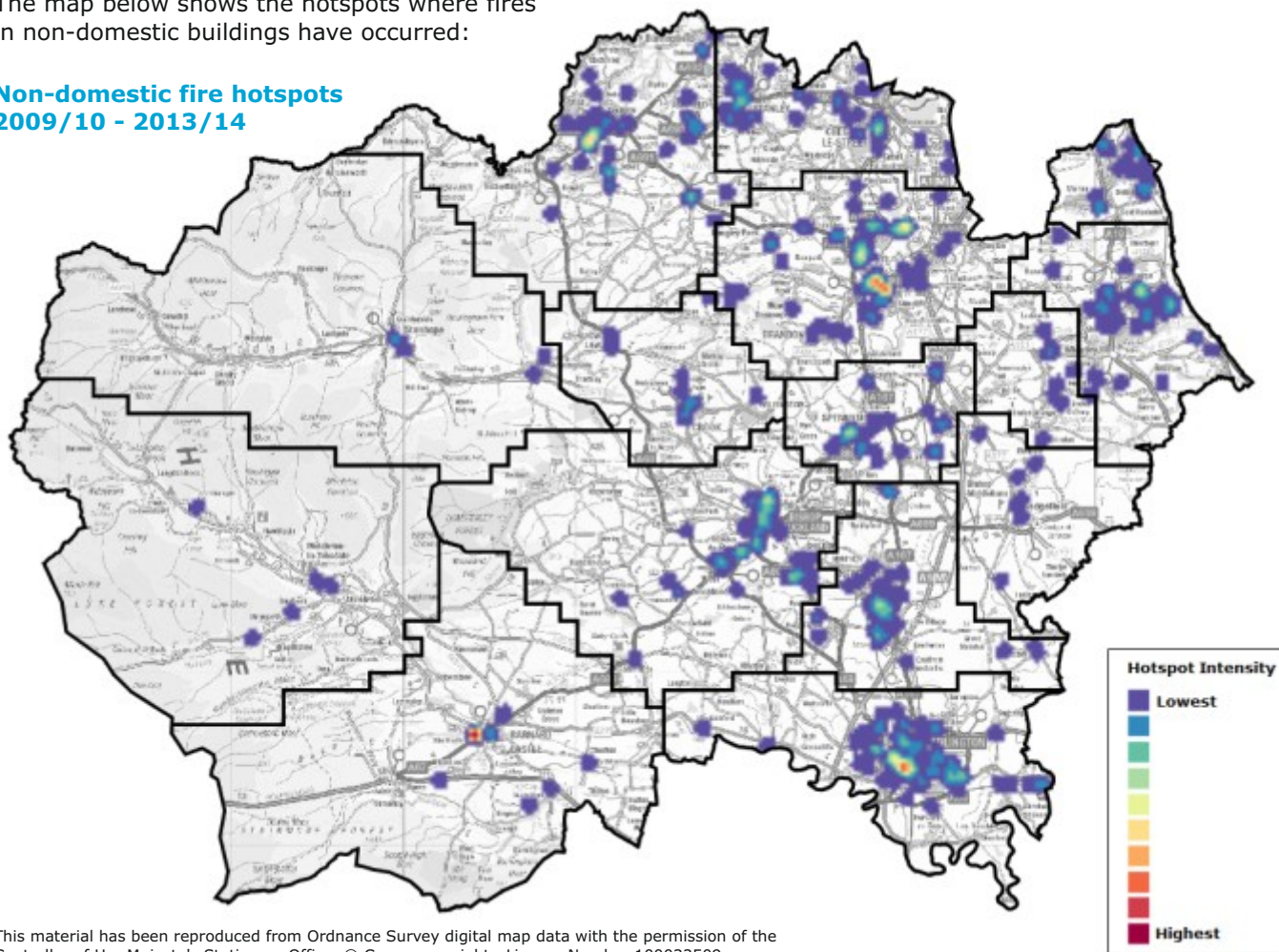
There are more than 14,000 commercial or non-domestic buildings in County Durham and Darlington. These include hospitals, care homes, hotels, offices, shops, night clubs and other locations such as chemical plants and factories.

Although fire in industrial and commercial buildings has also declined in recent years, we recognise the impact that a fire can have on the local economy if a business is disrupted by a fire. Figures published by the Association of British Insurers (ABI) suggest that fires in industrial and commercial buildings cost the UK economy £1.4 billion in 2011.



The map below shows the hotspots where fires in non-domestic buildings have occurred:

**Non-domestic fire hotspots
2009/10 - 2013/14**



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Risk-based programme of safety inspections for local businesses

The Authority is responsible for enforcement of the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005, which applies to all non-domestic premises.

A comprehensive profile of premises is kept in our Community Fire Risk Management Information System (CFRMIS). All of those premises have been categorised from very high risk to very low risk. Using the profiling information in our CFRMIS database, along with a combination of national guidance, statistical data (post-fire), local trends, national trends and local intelligence, our Fire Safety Officers target their risk based audit programme at the high risk buildings and where fire safety management is known or suspected to be poor.

The type of premises inspected and the frequency that visits are carried out is determined by the level of risk a business poses to the occupiers and the community.

Our risk based audit programme ensures that those premises most at risk of fire are prioritised by our protection activities.

To increase capacity, our specialist fire safety officers have trained our full-time firefighters to undertake audits of low and medium risk buildings. By introducing this new way of working, along with changes to our shift systems, have created additional capacity to carry out 5,600 audits per year despite a reduction in the number of centrally based fire safety staff.

Our dedicated fire safety officers focus on premises that are more complex and which represent a higher risk. This is the most appropriate use of the resources we have available and enables us to ensure we allocate resources according to risk.

Business engagement

We engage with local businesses through the established fire liaison groups and the North East Chamber of Commerce. We also work with enforcement agencies to share good practice to help reduce the burden of inspection on local businesses. This balanced approach allows us to meet our statutory responsibilities while helping local businesses ensure they do not face significant fire related risks. This means that businesses that seek to comply with fire safety law are inspected much less frequently and are fully supported with advice and guidance which is tailored to their needs.

Those businesses that do not comply with the law, and put their staff and visiting public at risk, can expect to be subject to appropriate enforcement and prosecution proceedings.

We are an active member of a range of key local, regional and national forums to ensure we are well informed and influencing standards. Reducing the burden of inspections has been a key priority for us and we are actively engaged in a number of partnerships to do this. For example we work closely with the Border Agency and undertake joint inspections with building control, licensing and the police.

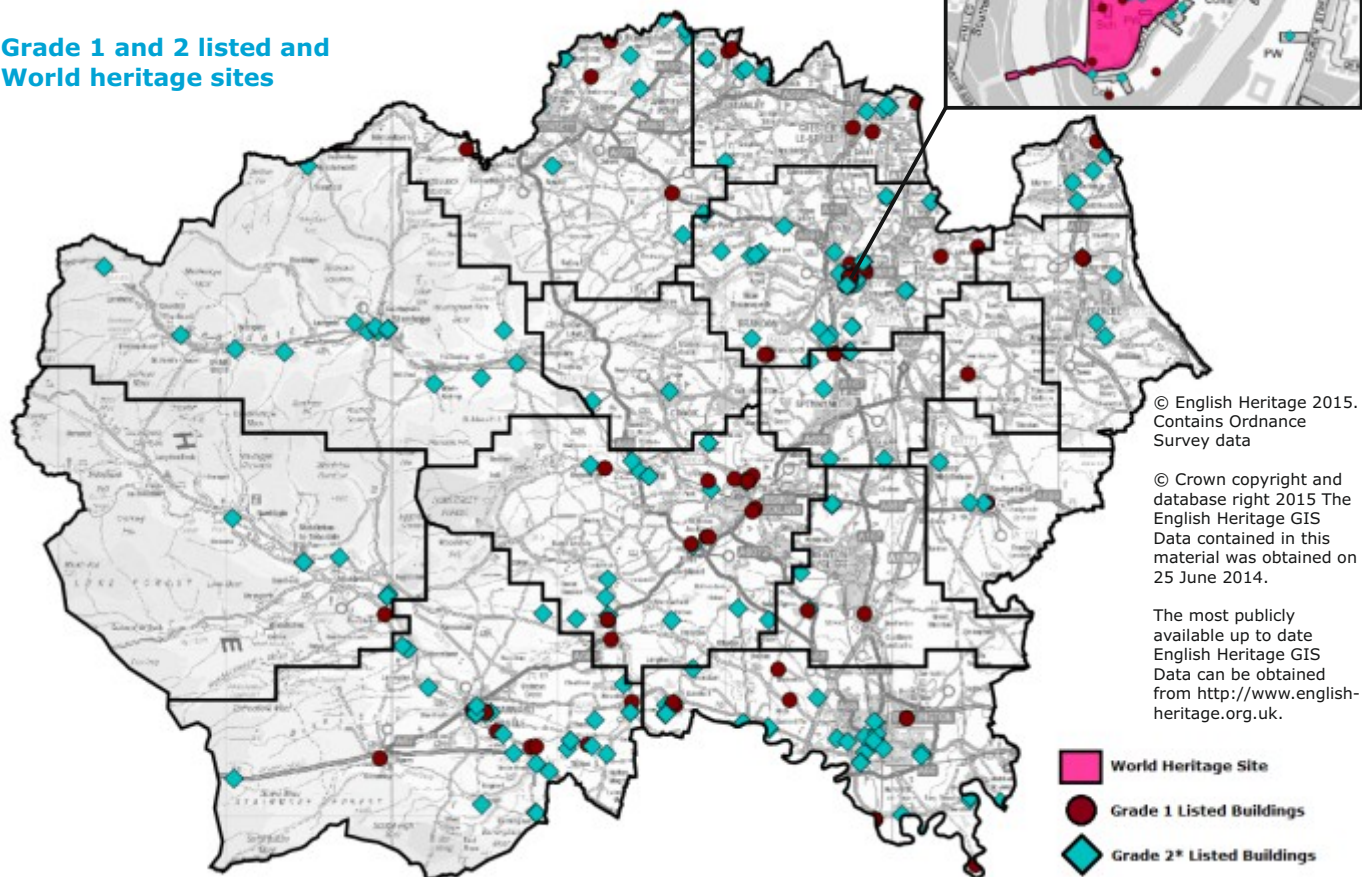
We are proactive in our liaison with key stakeholders to share intelligence, risk information and promote best practice. For example, our well-established Fire Liaison Panel facilitates dialogue between building control, licensing, housing, police, NHS trusts, and other key businesses.



Heritage risk

We also work hard to protect the heritage of County Durham and Darlington. There are 112 Grade I and 199 Grade II* listed buildings in our area. Heritage buildings were usually built in an era when fire safety was not a priority and as a result they can be more vulnerable to fire.

Grade 1 and 2 listed and World heritage sites



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Our fire safety officers work with the owner/operators of these sites to ensure they comply with fire safety legislation. Our operational firefighters gather intelligence to inform tactical plans that both aim to quickly extinguish any fires but also protect and preserve these important buildings and their valuable contents.



We provide an efficient and effective emergency response service



Response risks and priorities

We are fully committed to prevention and protection activities to keep our local communities safe and to ensure our local businesses provide safe working facilities for staff and customers.

Our response strategy is designed to provide a resilient emergency response if an incident does occur. We believe we do this in the most efficient and effective way possible and many of the proposals we consulted on last year were designed to help us to achieve this.

Our emergency response standards

Prior to 2004, targets for response times to fires and other emergencies were based on a prescriptive framework of national standards. Since then, we have established our local emergency response standards that set out how quickly we aim to respond to key emergencies within our area. The standards relate to the time it takes to get the first fire appliance to the scene from the time it is alerted by our Fire Control Centre.

Current response rates

Emergency response standard	2013/14 target	2013/14 actual
% of house fires attended within 8 minutes	70%	72.2%
% of house fires attended within 11 minutes	90%	90.6%
% of non-domestic property fires attended within 8 minutes	70%	77.7%
% of non-domestic property fires attended within 11 minutes	90%	92.6%
% of road traffic collisions attended within 11 minutes	75%	88.4%
% of road traffic collisions attended within 15 minutes	90%	95.6%

Achievement of our response standards helps us to maintain an excellent response service to our local communities. If the Service is to continue to meet these standards over the medium term we need to consider different ways of working given the anticipated on-going reductions in funding.



Our fire stations cover geographical areas twice the national average and the call volumes per appliance are also more than the national average.

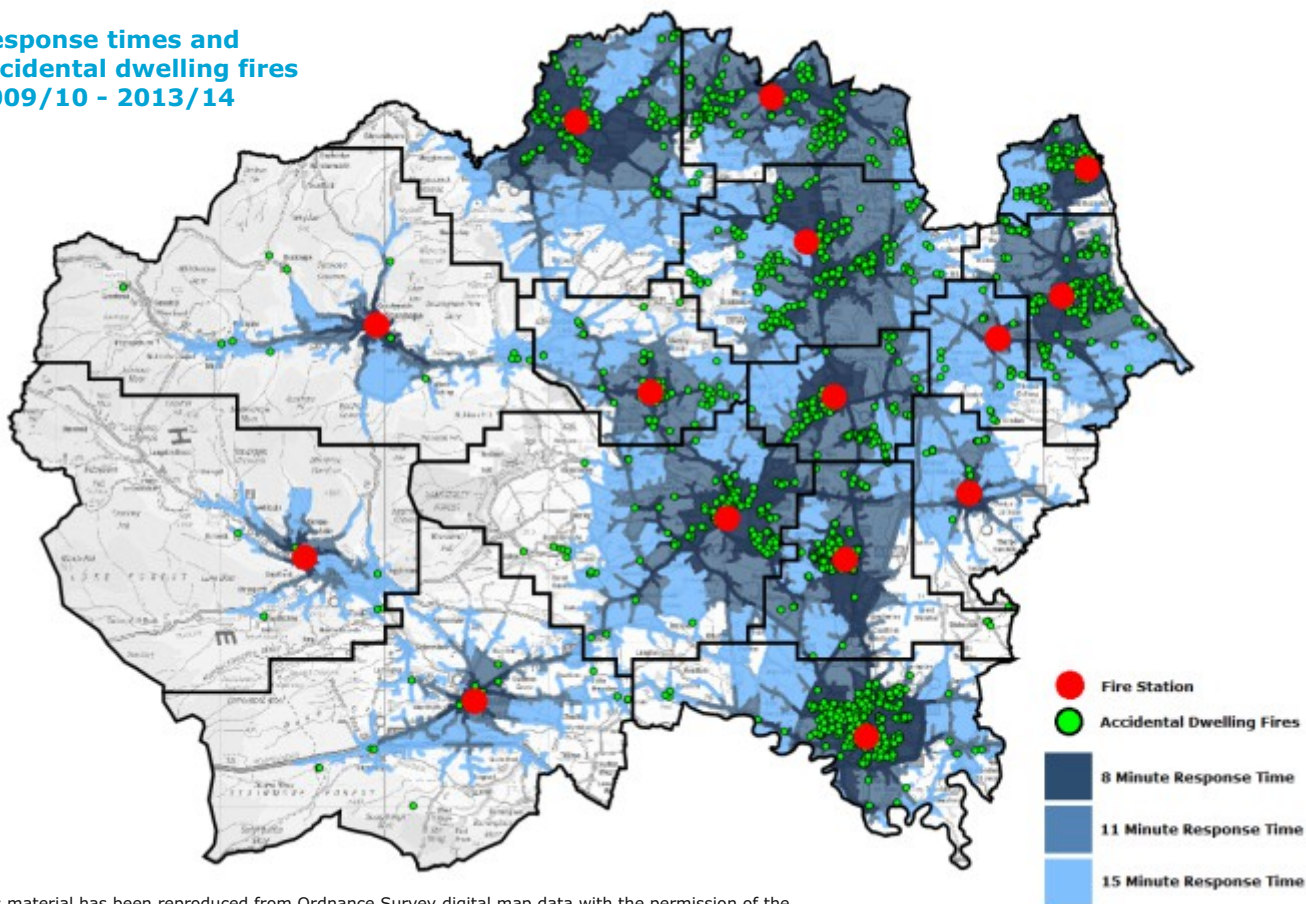
However, the rural nature of the west of the county presents real challenges for the Service in terms of providing a timely response to emergencies that occur in the geographically remote areas that our fire stations in Middleton-in-Teesdale, Stanhope and Barnard Castle cover.

These stations have relatively low call volumes but it is important to maintain these stations given the

extended travel times. For example, if an emergency occurs in Middleton-in-Teesdale, the next nearest appliance at Barnard Castle is 25 minutes away and the appliance at Stanhope is 39 minutes away.

The following map illustrates the predicted travel time coverage from our 15 fire station locations highlighted in red. It shows the areas that our fire appliances can reach within 8, 11 and 15 minutes from the time our crews are alerted.

Response times and accidental dwelling fires 2009/10 - 2013/14



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Overlaid on the above map (by green dots) are the locations where dwelling fires have occurred in the period 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2014 which reinforces our view that our fire stations are located in the areas of greatest risk and where the vast majority of incidents occur.



77%

of non-domestic property fires attended within eight minutes

Industrial risks

Some industrial sites operate on such a scale and use materials that create fire and toxic release hazards that could impact on the public should an emergency incident occur.

The Control of Major Accident Hazards (COMAH) Regulations, enforced by the Health and Safety Executive and the Environment Agency, ensure that these businesses take all necessary measures to prevent major accidents involving dangerous substances and to limit the consequences to people and the environment. There are three industrial sites which fall under the COMAH Regulations.

County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service shares information with our partner agencies on the LRF and liaises directly with the larger sites of industrial risk to prepare and test major incident plans.

Risk of extreme weather

An increasing risk relates to extreme weather; this includes the risk of death, injury or loss from flooding. In recent years the number of significant flooding events has increased. We have a number of areas within County Durham and Darlington that have been subject to severe localised flooding and in the past year we deployed some of our national resilience assets to deal with major flooding in the south of the country.

Risk of terrorist activity

Events over the last few years, both at home and abroad, have increased the risk of terrorist activity impacting on our society. The Fire and Rescue Service plays a major role in protecting the community in the event of such an incident and along with the other blue light services contributes significantly to the planning and training for such events.





Firefighter safety

Almost all of the emergency incidents we attend involve an element of risk to the safety of our firefighters. Ensuring the safety of our firefighters is a fundamental priority in everything we do and we do this in a number of ways.

Effective health, safety and welfare at emergency incidents can only be delivered by ensuring that our firefighters recognise the risks and understand how to mitigate them. It is essential that firefighters at all levels have the required skills, knowledge and understanding to operate safely in such hazardous environments as it is widely recognised that it is not possible to establish controls over all hazards and risks at emergency incidents. The concept of making the person safe to work in an inherently dangerous environment is known as the safe person concept. The safe person concept establishes the foundation for effective health, safety and welfare management at emergency incidents.

To ensure the safe person at emergency incidents, the Service has developed effective arrangements for the provision of:

- Structured and scripted training to maintain operational competence including incident command development;
- Response of suitable appliances, personnel and equipment to attend incidents;
- Accurate, easy to interpret and accessible operational risk information;
- Any necessary personal protective equipment, including respiratory protective equipment, for all foreseeable response activities;
- Detailed procedural guidance on how to establish a safe system of work.

As a consequence, our firefighters must spend a significant proportion of their time gathering and analysing risk intelligence, testing and maintaining their vehicles and equipment as well as training, exercising and studying to enable them to deal safely and effectively with the wide range of incidents they attend or may be called to attend.





999

Emergency calls will be answered within 6 seconds



Fire control centre

We provide a 24/7 emergency call handling and mobilising service which ensures we send the right vehicles, equipment and staff to emergencies promptly. We aim to answer all 999 calls within six seconds.

In 2014, we invested in a new command and control system to provide us with state of the art technology to ensure our control room service is as efficient and effective as possible. We are also trialling a new shift system for our control room staff, which will improve resilience and allow for additional work to be undertaken within the control room.

Our mobilising procedures ensure all incidents are appropriately supervised with specialist officers available 24/7. Specialist skills provision have been enhanced through development of new roles such as National Interagency Liaison Officers (NILO), Wildfire Specialists, Water Incident Managers (WIM), Hazmat Officers, Fire Investigation and Detection, Identification and Monitoring Officers (DIM's).

Crewing arrangements

We continually review our crewing arrangements and duty systems to ensure we are making best use of our staff.

New crewing arrangements were introduced at Newton Aycliffe and Seaham Fire Stations in 2013/14 as well as alterations to working patterns and routines at other full-time fire stations. These have been successful, made us more efficient, and helped us to deal with reduced funding without increasing response times and risk for communities.

Vehicles and equipment

The Authority has improved response arrangements to address specific risks by introducing new vehicles including a Flood Response Vehicle (FRV) which allows for flood Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to be delivered across a wide area and an additional three Tactical Response Vehicles (TRVs) with capability for dealing with wildfires to help mitigate the increasing risk of this type of fire occurring. These specialist vehicles are multi-functional so they can respond to smaller fires independently and be available to transport extra staff to larger incidents in rural areas.

The vehicles can also be used to support our prevention and protection activities which will help ensure fire engines are more readily available for more serious emergencies.

We are also investing in new equipment to increase the range of incidents that all appliances can respond to without needing to call on additional resources. For example, we have invested in additional hydraulic cutting equipment, light portable pumps, thermal imaging cameras, positive pressure ventilation fans and working at height equipment. We have also purchased specialist equipment for dealing with bariatric casualties and invested in additional protective clothing for flooding incidents, in response to local risks.



Mutual aid arrangements

Catastrophic and large-scale emergency incidents place significant demands on local fire and rescue services and have often required a national co-ordinated response from across the country. Such incidents may occur over a protracted period and require extensive resources, logistical support and specialist advice and guidance. To this end, County Durham and Darlington has signed up to the National Mutual Aid Protocol, this agreement establishes the terms under which an authority may expect to request assistance from or provide assistance to another authority in the event of a serious national incident.

Regional and national resources

National resources are strategically positioned within Fire Services throughout the UK, these are mobilised when needed to provide an emergency response at larger scale incidents and catastrophic disasters and are part of a national or regional pre-determined response.

Within County Durham and Darlington, we host the following national resources:

- a High Volume Pump (HVP) based at Peterlee which is used for widespread flooding incidents where greater pumping capacity is required;
- an Incident Response Unit (IRU) based at Darlington which is used for mass decontamination;
- a Mass Decontamination Disrobe (MDD) unit based at Wheatley Hill used to support the IRU.

In addition, our rescue boats and water rescue capability can be deployed to regional and national incidents.



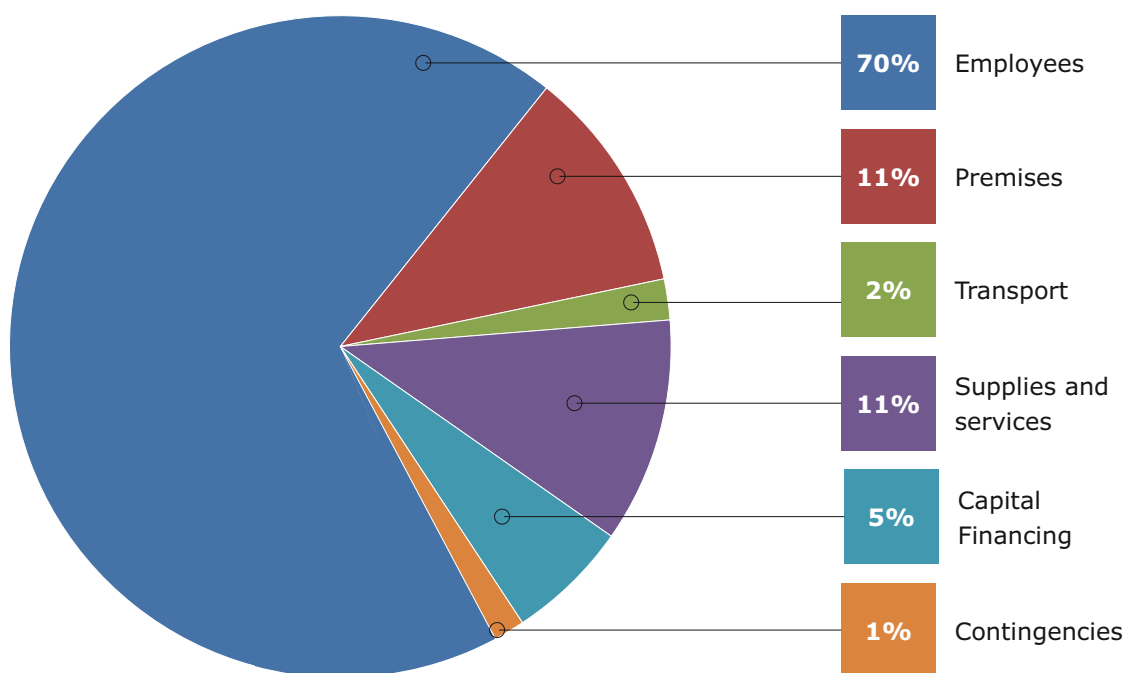


Our plans for 2015/16 – 2017/18

How the Fire Authority is funded

Funding for your local fire and rescue service is provided from two main sources: the government provides 42% of our funding by way of grant; the remaining 58% is received from local council tax payers and non-domestic ratepayers in County Durham and Darlington.

How the money is spent (2015/16)



Total NET spend £28.618m



Our crewing arrangements and shift systems are amongst the most efficient in the country.

The financial challenge

We are facing the most significant financial challenge in our history as a fire and rescue authority.

Cuts to our central government funding totalling 34% since 2010 have meant we have had to make over £4.4m of savings but the next four years will be more challenging still, as we seek to deliver a further £3.044m of savings.

So far, we have been able to reduce our costs by providing services in different ways without increasing risk in local communities.

We have implemented significant changes in the way we provide all of our services over a number of years. We have already implemented the vast majority of the cost savings measures identified as best practice demonstrating that our fire and rescue service is already lean and efficient.

Our crewing arrangements and shift systems are amongst the most efficient in the country despite having some of the busiest fire appliances nationally with some stations covering areas twice the national average. We also have a very lean support staff and management structure and we have worked hard to help staff understand the reasons behind changes and how they can make a contribution by changing working practices and taking on new work to improving efficiency.

We always strive to identify new ways of working that do not increase risk in local communities. However, this is becoming more and more difficult, particularly as the majority of our services are statutory and because our service model is already very efficient. The option of reducing frontline services would inevitably not only impact on emergency response but also significantly reduce the capacity of the organisation to deliver prevention and protection activities, which have been a major contributor to the reduction in emergency incidents we attend.

Examples of how we have achieved an extremely efficient service model include:

- Changes to shift systems to shorten night shifts and removing non-productive time;
- Reduced crewing on multi-appliance stations;
- Introducing new duty systems on lower call volume stations;
- Introducing annualised hours for all operational staff;
- Introducing self-rostering for day crewing stations;
- Responding to small fires using smaller fire appliances;
- Introducing a mixed crewing arrangement allowing full and part-time staff to work together more effectively.



Our medium term financial plan

At a time when the future is so uncertain, it is important that we have a medium term financial plan in place. This will allow us to work towards balancing the budget over the medium term taking account of our expectations of future central and local funding.

Our medium term financial plan for 2015/16 to 2018/19 is set out below. We have assumed that council tax increases by 1.9% each year.

The Authority currently maintains both earmarked and general reserves. General reserves of between 7.5% and 10% of the net spend are maintained to cover known financial risks and unforeseen costs. To provide a level of flexibility to fully consider its options for delivering the necessary savings in the medium term, the Authority has adopted a strategy which involves the prudent use of reserves to balance the budget and has established an earmarked reserve to assist with the implementation of savings options. This is considered a worst case scenario as the Authority aims to agree further savings options which, when implemented, will reduce the requirement for reserves to be used to balance the budget.

Revenue budget

	2015/16 £m	2016/17 £m	2017/18 £m	2018/19 £m
Total government funding	11.922	10.726	9.838	9.017
Local non-domestic rates income	1.459	1.488	1.518	1.548
Council tax income	15.237	15.549	15.896	16.198
Total funding	28.618	27.763	27.252	26.763
Total net spend	29.325	29.943	30.505	31.159
Less savings already identified	-0.707	-0.842	-1.352	-1.352
Revised total net spend	28.618	29.101	29.153	29.807
Funding gap	0	-1.338	-1.901	-3.044



Our priorities for the next three years

In 2014, we consulted on proposals to change the way we operate our fire and rescue service. The feedback from local people, our staff, partners and other stakeholders was broadly supportive so we are taking them forward as part of the priority areas set out in the following pages.

However, the outcome of the General Election in May 2015 will greatly influence our future plans. We will update this document and our future plans once the next government sets out its future policy direction for the fire and rescue service.

Priority one – explore opportunities to collaborate with partners

The Authority is committed to collaboration through innovation to improve services and performance. The emergency services have collaborated at an operational level for many years. However, with the increasing demand on public services, coupled with the current and expected restrictions on funding, collaboration provides opportunities to truly innovate and save money. We are actively exploring opportunities to form strategic alliances with key partners from not just other emergency services but also public and private sector bodies where there are clear mutual benefits.

For example, we have invested in new technology and systems for our fire control centre which is located in our highly resilient and secure new headquarters building in Durham City. The technology is state of the art and readily scalable to accommodate additional capacity whether it be hosting systems on behalf of others, taking on additional non-emergency call handling through to receiving and managing emergency calls on behalf of other services.



Priority two – maximise use of our buildings

One way of reducing costs whilst improving the services we provide is to share our buildings, something this Authority already does with both the police and ambulance services.

Despite the challenges of reductions in revenue budgets, prudent financial planning has enabled the Authority to invest in modernising fire stations, training facilities and providing a fit for purpose headquarters building. Several of the projects have already been delivered, with a number of others in the build phase.

We have shared our fire station in Darlington with the North East Ambulance Service for several years. From this year ambulance crews will also operate from our fire station in Middleton-in-Teesdale.

In 2013, we established the first joint fire/police station in Newton Aycliffe and in 2014 we were awarded government funding of £3.78m to build a unique joint emergency services station in Barnard Castle to house fire, police and ambulance services as well as the search and mountain rescue team. The existing fire station will be demolished to make way for the new building, which is due to be completed in the spring of 2016.

We are committed to building on the success of these projects and it is our intention to co-locate the police and/or the ambulance service at our fire stations where it is feasible and beneficial to do so. To do this, we have established a joint project with Durham Constabulary and North East Ambulance Service to identify opportunities for co-locating staff and resources into shared accommodation to help reduce costs and support our local communities in a more integrated way.



Priority three - expand the role of our firefighters and staff

Our staff are both highly skilled and committed to improving the safety and wellbeing of the people living and working in County Durham. We will continue to explore ways of expanding the roles that our staff undertake on the Authority's behalf.

For example, in recent years, we have successfully reduced the number of fires and other emergencies we are called to attend. However, the number of medical emergencies that the North East Ambulance Service (NEAS) attend each year has increased significantly placing greater demand on their emergency responders.

In partnership with NEAS we have undertaken a pilot project to establish co-responder units at our Barnard Castle, Middleton-in-Teesdale and Stanhope fire stations.

All of our firefighters have been trained in first aid and trauma care and they already work closely with our NEAS colleagues; we have also invested in equipping our fire appliances with quality medical equipment.

Our co-responders are given extra medical training to allow them to respond to specific medical emergencies. Firefighters are not expected to act as paramedics and will always be supported by a paramedic as quickly as possible. This pilot is expected to continue into 2015/16 with the learning from it used to inform our future plans.

Another example is the £0.5m funding secured to expand our Safer Homes Project developed in partnership with Durham Constabulary and Durham County Council that has led to the provision of fire and crime safety training to more than 900 front line professionals and community safety volunteers who have access to the most vulnerable people in County Durham. Expanding the role of our firefighters and community safety staff in this way is another example of how we are seeking to broaden the range of services we provide as a fire and rescue service. We are currently exploring how we can expand the role of fire control staff to take on additional non-emergency call handling work.





Priority four – review our staffing levels and arrangements for emergency response

We currently maintain a range of specialist vehicles based at stations across the Service area. These specialist vehicles provide our firefighters with specific capabilities such as our water rescue units at Bishop Auckland or the high reach Aerial Ladder Platforms (ALP) that are based at our fire stations in Durham City and Darlington.

These specialist vehicles are crewed using staff working different types of duty system. We are reviewing our arrangements to ensure these vehicles are located in the right place and crewed in the most efficient way.

Last year, we consulted on plans to change the way we crew the ALP based at Darlington. An ALP has the capability of reaching floors in buildings which are higher than the ladders carried on our fire appliances can reach. They are used either to provide a high platform from which firefighters can fight a fire, or to enable firefighters to gain access to high places. The ALP appliances are only sent out to emergency incidents when an incident commander at the scene decides the ALP is needed.

In 2015/16, we will consult on changes to the crewing model at Darlington to match that currently used at Durham station. This may involve establishing a dedicated team of on-call (retained duty system) firefighters who have the specialist skills needed to drive and operate the ALP.

The firefighters we employ to crew the fire appliances based at our fire stations deal with the majority of the day-to-day emergency incidents we are called to attend.

We also employ a number of emergency response fire officers who respond in cars equipped with blue lights and sirens to provide support to firefighters attending emergency incidents. They are all trained in advanced incident command so they can take charge of large scale or more complex incidents but are often also qualified to undertake specialist roles such as hazardous materials advisor or fire investigation officer. These officers work a flexible duty system to ensure we always maintain sufficient numbers to provide incident command and specialist support 24/7. When not responding to emergency incidents, these fire officers have day-to-day managerial responsibilities that include managing fire stations or working within the training centre or other specialist support functions based at our headquarters. We are reviewing the number of emergency response fire officers we employ to establish whether savings can be made whilst maintaining our ability to effectively support our incident command system.

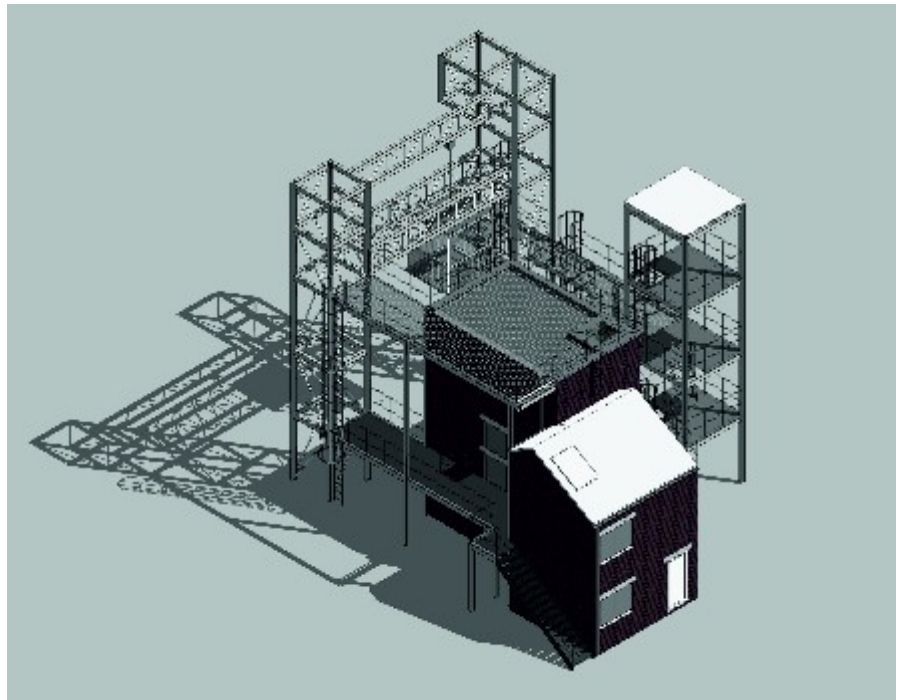


Priority five – explore opportunities for income generation

As well as constantly reviewing our approach to managing our budgets to ensure we are delivering our services as efficiently and economically as possible, we also intend to continue to rigorously pursue opportunities to secure funding from external sources.

Examples of recent successes in bidding for external funding include; £1.8m to upgrade our command and control systems in our Fire Control Centre; £0.6m to establish a shared command training facility with Durham Constabulary at our new training centre; £0.5m to support a joint initiative with Durham County Council, and Durham Constabulary that will transform the way in which isolated, vulnerable and elderly people receive crime and fire safety advice as well as protection. We also received £3.78m of government funding to establish a 'quad-service' station at Barnard Castle, believed to be the first of its kind in the country.

Last year the Authority established a new trading arm. The Community Interest Company (CIC) has been set up to offer quality training to individuals, businesses, schools, colleges and other groups throughout the region and beyond. This trading arm is a not for profit business governed by defined rules. Any revenue generated is used by the Authority for the benefit of the community; this means that the CIC may be a real solution to government budget reductions, which the service will continue to experience over the next few years.



Training centre under construction



Training and other business solutions are delivered by the CIC using the facilities, equipment, expertise and ethos of the fire service. The service has been delivering its own industrial training for more than 30 years and has an outstanding track record in this field. A full programme of courses, including working at height, confined spaces training, leadership and management and health and

safety is offered and there is also a heavy goods vehicle driving academy.

2015 will see the opening of our new, state of the art, training centre at Bowburn near Durham, which will substantially enhance the capacity to offer classroom-based leadership and management developments, as well as a wide range of practical business safety courses.



Performance and assurance

Managing performance

This strategic plan will be used to steer our service delivery over the next three years and informs the content of plans at team and individual levels.

A range of management forums exists to steer, manage and scrutinise operational performance within the Service supported by a suite of performance indicators that track organisational performance from the point of service delivery.

Regular reports are presented to senior leadership team and the Authority summarising performance for the period and highlighting exceptions.

An annual report will be published each year reporting on our performance and achievements for the previous year, and how we have delivered against the priorities we set out in our previous strategic plan.

The annual report will contain our suite of performance measures, which will help to monitor how well we are delivering our service. It will also incorporate our Annual Governance Statement and Statement of Assurance which covers operational, financial and governance matters.

Operational assurance

We have systems and standards in place that are designed to ensure that everything we do is in accordance with health and safety regulations. We have agreed ways of doing things and standard procedures so that we can address operational matters consistently and in accordance with recognised best practice.

Our operational staff are trained to exceptionally high standards to ensure that they can undertake their work to the standards that are required to keep themselves and the public safe. We have robust quality assurance systems in place to ensure the operational competence of our staff and our stations, vehicles and equipment are maintained a high state of operational readiness at all times.

Financial assurance

Our financial performance is considered on an annual basis by the external auditor who provides the Authority with a report on the financial statements. The latest approved accounts were signed off by the auditor in September 2014 and are available on our website. The auditor provided the Authority with an unqualified opinion on the accounts and confirmed that value for money was being achieved.

Governance assurance

Our decision making processes are transparent and we consult on our key projects and initiatives prior to the Authority making final decisions.

Our structures reflect the requirement to ensure we have good governance processes in place and we employ qualified professional staff whose role it is to ensure good governance is embedded throughout the organisation.

Transparency and access to information

We are committed to sharing the information we hold in relation to risks facing local communities and businesses so that we can learn from the experiences of people who live and work in our area.

We make our information available on our website so that local people and businesses can understand how we provide our services and spend public money. We also provide specific documents in other formats should they be requested.

Our Authority meeting information and reports are also available on-line and members of the public are welcome to attend Authority meetings as observers to see how we manage the Service.

All of our financial and performance information is available via the website www.ddfire.gov.uk

Consultation

Effective consultation helps us to deliver the right services taking account of local views. We always consult on our IRMP proposals and on any significant decisions. We are keen to ensure that our consultation methods are appropriate and provide local communities with the opportunity to have their say.



Find out more and contact us

Our website provides more information on the Fire Authority, your fire and rescue service, latest news and much more.

www.ddfire.gov.uk

Alternatively, you can contact us at:

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HQ opening times:

8.30am-5.00pm Monday -Thursday

8.30am-4.30pm Friday

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use the contact details above to let us know.