

Criminal Justice Committee
Wednesday 3 December 2025
33rd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service - Service Delivery Review 2027

Fire Brigades Union (Scotland)

Note by the Clerk

Introduction

1. The Committee has agreed to consider the implications of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's Service Delivery Review (SDR) and the implications for the provision of fire and rescue services across Scotland.
2. Before any final decisions are made by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Board on the outcomes of its Review, the Fire Brigades Union has been invited to give evidence to the Committee on its views and concerns.
3. At this evidence session the Committee will hear:
 - **Colin Brown**, Executive Council Member for Scotland, Fire Brigades Union and
 - **John McKenzie**, Scottish Regional Secretary, Fire Brigades Union.

FBU concerns

4. For several years the FBU Scotland has been expressing concern at the state of the fire and rescue service in Scotland, based on what it sees as a lack of adequate resources being provided by the Scottish Government, and a failure to anticipate the rate and scale of change facing the service.
5. In October 2023, the FBU published its [Firestorm Report](#) to inform MSPs and the public of the challenges faced from issues like climate change, changes to employment and working patterns, problems with recruitment and retention of firefighters, firefighter safety and wellbeing on issues such as decontamination facilities, and backlogs in maintenance and the SFRS's fleet and estate development.
6. The following submissions are attached in **Annex A** to this paper:
 - The FBU submissions to the SFRS's public consultation on the Service Delivery Review (Pages 5 – 21);
 - The SFRS submission to the Committee's call for views on our pre-budget scrutiny for 2026/27 (Pages 22 – 33).

7. The following submission is attached in **Annex B** to this paper:

- Extract from SFRS consultation document on the SDR setting out possible options for change to various fire stations, staff and appliances (Pages 34 – 63).

8. Other relevant written submissions received by the Committee that may be of interest include:

- [SFRS Pre-Budget Scrutiny submission](#),
- [His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland \(HMFSI\) Pre-Budget Scrutiny submission](#).

SFRS Service Delivery Review and public consultation

9. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) was established on 1 April 2013 by Part 2 of the [Police and Fire Reform \(Scotland\) Act 2012](#). It succeeded the eight regional fire and rescue services which continued on after the abolition of local government regions in 1996 and the introduction of 32 unitary local authorities.

10. Section 41 of the 2012 Act requires the Board of the SFRS to draw up multi-year delivery and service plans, amongst others, and keep these under review.

11. The current SFRS Service Delivery Plan covers the period from FY 2021/22 to FY 2026/27. The Board of the SFRS has been considering options for the reshaping of the way in which the SFRS delivers its services throughout Scotland owing to new and increasing demands on the service.

12. These are also set against the backdrop of a flat cash settlement for the SFRS from the Scottish Government over the period since 2021/22 coupled with decreasing numbers of wholetime, part-time and retained firefighters.

13. The SFRS identified several key challenges which it needs to meet in order to continue to deliver a high-quality fire and rescue service to the Scottish public. These are-

- **Changing community risk:** the need to ensure that SFRS fire stations, appliances and staff are located in the most appropriate locations to meet current and future community needs;
- **Backlog of repairs, fleet and buildings:** the SFRS currently has 356 fire stations based across Scotland, and many of these structures are decades old. SFRS estimates it will cost more than £800 million to bring all SFRS buildings and equipment up to acceptable 2025 standards;

- **RAAC concrete¹:** The SFRS has identified 14 fire stations² with RCCA construction elements in their structures which urgent repair to maintain their safety and structural integrity;
 - **Availability of on-call firefighters:** On call staff are usually required to live within five minutes of the fire station and a fire appliance must have a minimum of four firefighters available to crew the vehicle before it can be mobilised. The SFRS has experienced difficulty in providing enough on-call availability during daytime hours for a variety of reasons, such as unplanned absences, leave, and other commitments, which reflects the flexible working arrangements of part-time staff. The terms and conditions for on call firefighters have been enhanced and SFRS is now looking to provide more flexibility in terms of the contracts it can offer on-call staff to enable a better work-life balance.
14. On 1 July 2024, the SFRS launched a public consultation entitled [Shaping the Future: Having you say](#) to seek public and stakeholder views on how the SFRS to deliver services in the future. This resulted in 6,400 responses from communities across Scotland.
15. Based on this, the SFRS developed a series of 23 possible options for change and in June 2025 they [launched](#) a further 12-week [public consultation on this options](#) as part of its Service Delivery Review (SDR).
16. The SDR set out 23 possible options for change involving more than 30 fire stations across Scotland. Once agreed, a draft Service Delivery Plan would be developed and submitted to Scottish Ministers for approval and to seek resource support for its delivery. It is expected the new Delivery Plan would start to be implemented starting in April 2027 from the start of 2027/28 financial year.
17. The consultation period on the 23 Options ended in September 2025 and the initial timeframe for the SFRS Board to make final decisions on proposals for change was due in mid-December 2025.
18. However, on 11 November, the SFRS [announced](#) that the consultation had received more than 3,700 responses from the public, staff and stakeholders across Scotland. Owing to the need to properly analyse the responses the SFRS Board stated that it had extended its decision-making period beyond December and into the New Year in 2026.

¹ Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC) across the public sector in Scotland (Scottish Government 9 Sept 2022): <https://www.gov.scot/publications/raac-in-the-public-sector/>

² SFRS fire stations affected by RAAC concrete - Aberdeenshire Council area #1: (Huntley); Argyll and Bute Council area #1: (Helensburgh); City of Edinburgh Council area #3: (Crewe Toll, Liberton and Marionville); East Ayrshire Council area #1: (Stewarton); East Dunbartonshire Council area #1: (Milngavie); East Lothian Council area #1: (Tranent); Highland council area #1: (Portree); Midlothian Council area #1: (Dalkeith); North Lanarkshire area #1: (Cumbernauld); Scottish Borders Council area #2: (Galashiels and Hawick) and West Lothian Council area #1: (Livingston).

Action

19. Members are invited to discuss the SFRS Service Delivery Review with the FBU witnesses at today's meeting.
20. Members may wish to note that it would be the intention of the Convener to return to this issue again in the New Year, including with the SFRS itself.

**Clerks to the Committee
November 2025**

SUBMISSION FROM THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION TO THE SFRS PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON ITS DELIVERY REVIEW

Introduction

This is the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) submission to the **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) ‘*Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say*’ consultation** launched on 30 April 2024.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within Fire and Rescue Services across Scotland and the UK. The union represents the vast majority of wholetime (full-time), retained (part-time) and volunteer firefighters and fire control staff in the UK.

In October 2023, the FBU released ‘Firestorm’ report in recognition of the longstanding and deepening issues faced by SFRS through inheriting an aging estate when the eight legacy Scottish fire and rescue services were amalgamated into one single service in 2013, and chronic under investment in both resource and capital budgets by successive UK and Scottish Governments.

Since 2010 SFRS uniformed operational headcount has reduced by more than 1,400 firefighters across all duty systems, amounting to almost one in five firefighter posts being cut. The FBU’s report identified longstanding recruitment and retention issues with the retained that provides primary emergency fire and rescue cover for approximately 80% of Scotland’s landmass, despite as of October 2023 a vacancy rate of around 30% and an annual attrition rate of 10%. These two factors alone combine to produce a significant financial drain on the SFRS and create a significantly increased risk over large areas of Scotland.

The consistent and recurring need to recruit and train retained firefighters creates a perpetual cycle of limited operational experience, negative impacts on appliance availability and lack of stability within retained and does not constitute a meaningful return on the investment made. The vacancy and attrition rates regularly result in large areas of Scotland not having adequate emergency fire and rescue cover, in turn resulting in available resources being spread thinly to attempt to meet SFRS statutory obligations.

The FBU has been clear that the current trajectory of cuts and erosion of the fire and rescue service cannot continue. The FBU welcomes the SFRS consultation and review of service, which in large part overlaps with many of the findings of the FBU Firestorm report. However, any proposals brought forward must be evidence based and seek to improve emergency fire and rescue cover across Scotland while protecting and improving the health, safety, wellbeing and working conditions of Scotland’s firefighters. These outcomes cannot be achieved with further and deeper cuts to an already lean emergency service. The FBU believes the SFRS to achieve these outcomes needs significant investment if it is to be fit for the future.

Consultation questions

Question 1: About you How would you best describe yourself? (Tick the one that best applies)

Trade Union/Representative Body

The FBU is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within fire and rescue services across Scotland and the UK. The union represents the vast majority of wholetime (full-time), retained (part-time) and volunteer operational firefighters and operational fire control staff in the UK

Question 2: Our People To ensure the highest possible levels of community and firefighter safety, SFRS needs to have firefighter duty systems with the right staffing levels available to attend incidents at the time of day when there is most risk. Do you:

Agree strongly

SFRS have undertaken significant modelling work to assess the various risks across Scotland through their Community Risk Index Model (CRIM). This modelling has assessed historic incidents against population density and other metrics in an effort to understand where historic risks existed.

The FBU agree that emergency cover should be provided in areas where there is clearly identified risk. However, the FBU would caution that societal changes that cannot be easily predicted can create significant changes to risk factors. Historically the impacts and change to risk from the deindustrialisation of Scotland were not fully predicted. Equally the recent societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in temporarily reduced risks across the transport network, and fire risks in commercial settings, due to an increase in members of the public working from home, but also an increased risk of incidents in domestic and rural settings, was not foreseen.

Additionally, the increasing use of lithium-ion batteries has resulted in increased risks in domestic and commercial (including transport system) settings when damaged or overheated batteries enter thermal runaway. Predicting future risks and the resultant demand on emergency services, is dependent upon the data and knowledge available at the time and cannot reasonably be expected to identify new risks emerging.

As our shared understanding of risks from climate change develop, it is inevitable that they will impact on both the type and scale of incidents the SFRS respond to. Such incidents are very challenging to assess and predict where, or at what time of day or night, they may occur. The increasing incidences of large-scale wildfires and flooding incidents, that have impacted so many local communities across Scotland over the last decade, alone demonstrate this point.

The known issues of recruitment and retention in the retained duty system, highlighted in the introduction to this consultation response, show that societal changes in how

communities live, and work can develop over time, which can subsequently impact operational duty systems and SFRS ability to respond to operational incidents.

When faced with an emergency, the public expect to be able to dial 999 and receive an emergency response without delay and without consideration of what time of day or night they call.

Over the last decade average response times to incidents have continued to increase. Any proposed changes, developed as part of this consultation, or the wider public consultation, must not negatively impact on firefighters' ability to provide a timely emergency response, or on the vital community engagement work undertaken by SFRS.

Question 3: Service priorities

The ‘Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say’ document (Section 3) outlines the need for SFRS to change. From the list below, please select UP TO FOUR issues that you feel should be priorities for SFRS. Please RANK THESE IN ORDER with 1 being the most important

Rank	Issues
	Crews should be based in areas where there is more risk and demand
	SFRS should have the right resources (i.e. fire appliances) in the right place – based on analysis of risk
	SFRS should work alongside communities to build resilience and better prepare for significant events, including flooding and wildfire.
	Fire stations should have dignified changing facilities for firefighters
	Reassurance that any changes won't make me or my family less safe
	There should be a visible SFRS presence near where I live.
	SFRS should undertake prevention work to protect the most vulnerable in communities
	SFRS needs to demonstrate best value for public money.
	SFRS should strive to reduce its carbon footprint wherever possible

Not ranked – see below

The FBU has a number of concerns with the above question, asking stakeholders to poll which risk or cost they are willing to accept, or less likely to object to, is likely to illicit substantially different responses based on individual or collective experience of both SFRS, and the organisation or body on whose behalf they are responding, geography and geographical location, and other socioeconomic demographics.

For example, asking stakeholders to rank whether they believe firefighters should have dignified facilities against whether SFRS should have the right resources in the right

place appears perverse when SFRS have statutory, legislative and moral obligations that intersect both statements.

For these reasons it is the FBU's view that this question is inappropriate and unlikely to illicit statistically significant or reliable responses when seeking to set priorities for the future of SFRS.

With specific reference (in order) to the issues within the table

- It is sensible in terms of risk, emergency response, community engagement, and financial accountability that SFRS crews should be based in areas where there is more risk and demand. This statement is obvious and fully supported by the FBU.
- The FBU fully support the statement that SFRS should have the right resources (i.e. fire appliances) in the right place – based on analysis of risk. Recognition that risk is dynamic in 4 both the short and long-term based on multiple factors such as short-term population movement into city centres during traditional working hours, through to pandemics and impacts from climate change is vital in ensuring that risks to communities is not inadvertently increased by any proposed changes to how SFRS provide emergency cover or prevention activities across Scotland.
- The FBU is broadly supportive of the statement that SFRS should work alongside communities to build resilience and better prepare for significant events, including flooding and wildfire. However, the FBU would caution that attempting to back fill gaps in service provision with community partners and the voluntary sector has the potential to pose significantly increased risk to communities, to community responders and to firefighters. The FBU supports increasing community resilience and preparedness through education, signposting, and identifying individuals or groups who could need additional support or assistance during flooding or wildfires. The FBU does not support replacing highly skilled, highly trained professional firefighters with community responders whose training, skill and knowledge level, or understanding of fire and rescue service incident management and command and control, cannot be assessed or guaranteed.
- As identified in the FBU Firestorm report, fire stations should have dignified changing facilities for firefighters. This should be a priority for SFRS under their legislative obligations and their commitment to a diverse workforce and inclusive culture. The FBU fully support this being a priority for SFRS, however firefighters do not support the inclusion of this issue as part of a poll on future service priorities within this consultation. It should not be open for question or debate that SFRS should be providing dignified facilities for their employees.
- SFRS should go further than providing reassurance that any changes won't make me or my family less safe. SFRS should regard increasing public safety as their primary objective in any change proposals and should guarantee that safety will

not be undermined. The FBU do not believe that this should be a choice for stakeholders or members of the public to poll against other SFRS priorities.

- Seeking views on whether there should be a visible SFRS presence near where I live is likely to give a false impression of the current reality. The FBU is aware that there are numerous rural and remote areas of Scotland where SFRS currently have a visible presence in the form of local community fire stations. However, the inability to recruit and retain operational firefighters in many of these locations (in part due to factors out with SFRS control) means that there is limited or no scope to provide an emergency response from these stations. The FBU make the point that it is less important to have a visible presence, and more important to have firefighters physically present to respond to emergencies, provide fire safety advice and education, and community engagement.
- The FBU has been at the forefront of making the case for increased prevention work and support the statement that SFRS should undertake prevention work to protect the most vulnerable in communities. However, the inclusion of this statement within the poll suggests that dependant on the responses, preventative work may no longer be a priority for SFRS, which would impact SFRS obligations under the Fire Scotland Act 2005 (as amended). The FBU do not believe that any individual or organisation would attempt to make the case that SFRS should withdraw or refrain from this vital area of work and have concerns that this has been included as part of this consultation when seeking to rate one priority over another.
- The FBU views the inclusion of the statement that SFRS needs to demonstrate best value for public money within this consultation as unnecessary and of no benefit or value to setting SFRS future priorities. It is incumbent on all public sector and taxpayer funded organisations to provide best value.
- The FBU is fully supportive of the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions. However, the FBU does not believe the inclusion of the statement SFRS should strive to reduce its carbon footprint wherever possible within this poll provides any value or merit when setting future service priorities. SFRS, like all Scottish public bodies, have had a statutory obligation, and therefore legal requirement, to reduce their carbon footprint and emissions since 2011. This is set out in the Scottish Governments statutory strategic delivery plan for meeting emissions reduction targets, the Scottish Government Climate Change Plan and the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

Question 4: Investing in change

Section 4 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document outlines the need for SFRS make better use of our resources. One way we can do this is to work in partnership with other public bodies (e.g., Police Scotland and others) to explore how we can provide better value for the public. Do you:

Agree

The FBU agrees that public bodies should seek to collaborate where appropriate. However, the driver for closer collaboration should mean improved outcomes for the people of Scotland, not on savings by reducing headcount.

The focus on best value across multiple sectors, including fire and rescue, has historically been used across the UK to justify cost cutting which has led to attacks on members terms and conditions and firefighter safety through the loss of jobs, resilience, reduced ridership factors and removal of pumps and stations. This has resulted in increased response times and increased risk to the public and firefighters. The FBU argue that the resultant societal cost of these historic cuts does not offer genuine best value. Since 2010 SFRS uniformed operational headcount has reduced by more than 1,400 firefighters across all duty systems, amounting to almost one in five firefighter posts being cut. This damaging trend cannot continue.

The FBU has sought to progress meaningful partnership working that is outcome led through our National Joint Council (NJC) facilitated negotiated principal agreement with SFRS to develop the role of Scotland's' firefighters. It is our view that closer collaboration with other services such as NHS Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service through co-response to appropriate emergency 6 medical incidents, expanded home safety visits and community engagement with vulnerable groups will deliver best value by delivering better outcomes for society.

Opportunities to share buildings and training venues are one area that the FBU broadly support however, the lack of dignified facilities and DECON procedures, including zoning, across much of the SFRS estate would need to be rectified before serious consideration could be given to such ventures.

Projects and reviews based principally on reducing costs for support functions such as payroll are likely to see fewer employees undertaking increased workloads and negatively impact output from these departments. The experience of the FBU in Scotland and across the UK, is that where support functions are streamlined as a cost saving measure, the service provided becomes poorer.

It is important to assess and understand that the trust placed in firefighters by the public is likely to be damaged if there is a shift, perceived or otherwise, away from being a humanitarian service due to closer collaboration with police or law enforcement. While the SFRS and the Scottish Government have no stated intention to alter their governance model, it should be noted that the FBU is firmly opposed to a move away from distinct governance arrangements for fire including the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) model used in parts of England. It has created significant issues for services and damaged public confidence.

Question 5:

Our appliances Section 5.2 of the ‘Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say’ document (Changing Where our Stations and Appliances are Based) outlines why we need to review where our appliances are located. For communities to be safe, we need to have the right resources in the right place.

Agree strongly

The Community Risk Index Model (CRIM) carried out by SFRS provides important and valuable analysis of historical incident data and societal demographics including population shifts, age, and socioeconomic/deprivation indexing for all of Scotland.

This data is broadly useful in understanding where historic risk existed and identifying trends. Much of this data appears to confirm what was already known; where you have higher density of human activity, in domestic, commercial and industrial settings, or via transport networks, predominantly the road network, there will be higher levels of demand on the fire and rescue service. Where there are higher levels of deprivation and poverty, there will be higher demand on the fire and rescue service for both emergency response and community engagement.

The CRIM data does seek to identify changing risks and therefore demands from an aging population and climate change, it is impossible to fully predict events that have societal impacts. The necessity to work from home during the COVID 19 pandemic saw significant reductions in road use and population shifts into city and town centres during normal working hours. The impacts of climate change are constantly being modelled, it is impossible to fully predict where and when wildfires and large scale flooding events will occur. This has been evidenced in the wildfires that swept across London in July 2022 destroying homes, the wildfire at Cannich in 2023, Storm Arwen in 2021 which devastated large areas across the east coast of Scotland and Storm Babet that resulted in a number of deaths across the UK in 2023. 7

The FBU entered and committed to develop the role of Scotland's firefighters in 2022. The Scottish Government continue to state their support for the realisation of an agreement but to date have not provided the necessary funding to allow SFRS to progress the relevant areas of work

It is vital that any proposals brought forward by SFRS are not developed purely on a cost saving basis. Understanding historic, anticipated shifts in human activity and accompanying risk alongside anticipated risks from external factors such as climate change, anticipated increases in demand from new roles and work will be vital in ensuring that proposals do not increase risks to communities. The FBU does not want to see risk increased through reduced firefighter numbers and increased response times, or reduced resilience across SFRS due to changes in appliance location, crewing models or resources being diverted or delayed via the proposed new areas of work, should the developed role be realised.

Question 6a: Where we're located

Section 5.2 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document (Changing Where our Stations and Appliances are Based) outlines why we need to review where our fire stations are located. To do this, we must consider how the communities we serve have changed and are continuing to change

Agree strongly

As stated in response to question 5, the FBU recognise the need for SFRS to assess and plan according to known and anticipated risks, societal and environmental changes. It is vital that when developing proposals, SFRS fully assess anticipated impacts from emerging risks and the impact of any proposed new work under the proposed developed role for Scottish firefighters. The location of SFRS stations and resources should take full consideration of the impact of largescale flooding events that have previously cut off whole communities from traditional emergency response due to the road network becoming impassable for fire and rescue vehicles due to flooding and landslides.

The FBU recognise that changing population trends in some remote and rural communities has resulted in local recruitment and retention difficulties. SFRS have a legislative and humanitarian responsibility to ensure that adequate emergency cover is provided to all communities in Scotland. Any proposals in relation to station closures and/or relocation must ensure that response times are not further increased and that steps are taken to reduce risks in communities where known or anticipated recruitment and retention issues exist in order to protect and improve future service provision. Consideration must also be given to how any change proposals may impact other sectors or industries

Question 6b: Shared premises

SFRS should consider sharing premises with partners (e.g., Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland and local authorities) to provide a better service for our communities. Do you:

Agree in part.

Shared facilities should bring organisational, financial and societal benefits and opportunity. However, the FBU believes it is vital that any proposals to share facilities with other organisations are based on more than potential savings. Robust assessment of community and societal benefits or impacts should be fundamental in developing any plans for shared facilities. Equality impact assessments should be conducted as a matter of course to consider all impacts from any proposed changes.

As has been noted in the FBU *Firestorm report* and by SFRS, much of the current SFRS estate is ageing and does not offer dignified or DECON compliant facilities for firefighters and existing premises users. It is vital that other workers are not exposed to these working conditions or the recognised risks of cross contamination from fire effluents transferred by firefighters into their surroundings. If SFRS are to develop proposals for increased sharing of facilities then this must be done alongside

significant investment and modernisation of their estate to provide safe, fit for purpose workplaces for all staff groups and visitors.

The SFRS also needs to fully consider the full impact of which partner organisations are most appropriate to share facilities with. Firefighters and fire and rescue services have had widely recognised success in accessing many communities where other partners, for example Police Scotland, have experienced greater challenges. Consideration must be given to ensuring that recognised shared premises does not unintentionally undermine those successes and therefore we oppose the sharing of premises with police and/or other law enforcement agencies.

Question 7a: Our role in local communities

Our prevention, preparedness and protection work can help reduce the risk of fires and other potentially life-threatening situations. It can also help us better plan for events such as flooding and wildfires.

Agree strongly

The FBU supports a joint approach to risk reduction through community engagement and education. It is recognised that firefighters are on the front line of climate related emergencies and as such, SFRS should be a primary contributor to developing preparedness for such events. Ensuring that community resilience and action plans are evidence based, well founded and rehearsed is key to reducing risks and harm from these events.

While the FBU support closer partnership working to reduce such risks, the FBU does so with a note of caution, as it is firefighters that remain best placed to carry out emergency response to such incidents. While community responders play a key role, it is vital that professional, highly trained firefighters, who fully understand SFRS command and control and incident management procedures provide the emergency response. Due to their knowledge and experience of responding to such incidents, firefighters also remain key to developing and delivering community engagement in relation to large scale environmental incidents.

Question 7b: Our role in local communities

SFRS should contribute towards Net Zero by, for example, reducing our own carbon emissions. Do you:

Agree Strongly

As previously covered in response to question 3, SFRS have legislative obligations to contribute to Net Zero. The FBU fully support the Scottish Government's intent to deliver on their climate targets and the need for all public sector bodies to contribute to the aim of Net Zero by 2045. The size of SFRS as a Scotland wide organisation, and scale of the issues faced in relation to reducing their carbon footprint poses significant challenges, but also offers significant opportunity to the organisation.

If the SFRS are to meaningfully reduce their carbon emissions, this will require significant investment in their estate and fleet as new technology is developed, which will subsequently require ongoing, long-term financial support from Scottish Government. This cannot be achieved through cuts to other areas of the service or changes that negatively impact operational response or community safety.

Question 8: Consulting with our communities

SFRS may wish to hold a future public consultation on some of the issues detailed below. Please tell us to what extent you think the public should be consulted on each issue.

Change Proposal	The public should be fully consulted	The public don't need to be consulted, but should be informed	The public don't need to be consulted	Unsure
Changes to firefighter role (e.g., to include emergency first aid responder)			Changes to firefighter roles are negotiated through recognised collective bargaining mechanisms – the NJC. Public consultation may be beneficial to assess the public desire for such changes but should not undermine this structure or the contractual or legal rights of firefighters.	
Modernisation / upgrade of a fire station(s)		The FBU do not believe there is a need for public consultation to deliver improvements to existing SFRS buildings. Building users/firefighters should be consulted on these improvements to ensure their ideas are considered. A positive example of this has been the upgrade to Inverness community fire station that involved watch based firefighters in design and implementation ensuring DECON factors were considered.		
Closure of a fire station	The closure of fire stations in local communities has the			

<u>Change Proposal</u>	<u>The public should be fully consulted</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted, but should be informed</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
	potential to negatively impact community safety. Communities should be fully involved in any decisions that could see risks increase.			
Moving a fire station to a new location	Moving fire stations to new locations has the potential to negatively impact community safety in one area while improving cover in others. Communities should be fully involved in any decisions that could see risks increase.			
Permanent removal or relocation of a fire appliance(s)	The permanent removal or relocation of fire appliances has the potential to negatively impact			

<u>Change Proposal</u>	<u>The public should be fully consulted</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted, but should be informed</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
	community safety in one area while improving cover in others. Communities should be fully involved in any decisions that could see risks increase.			
Changes to firefighter duty systems			Changes to firefighter duty systems are negotiated through recognised collective bargaining mechanisms - NJC. Public consultation may be beneficial to assess the public desire for such changes but should not undermine this structure and the contractual or legal rights of firefighters to negotiate and agree duty systems in line with the scheme of conditions of service.	
Sharing locations with other partners (e.g., Police, Ambulance, local authorities.)		The FBU believe there is a need to consult with current building users and prospective building users to ensure their expectations of shared buildings and locations are considered and that the service provided is not negatively impacted. There is a possibility that		

<u>Change Proposal</u>	<u>The public should be fully consulted</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted, but should be informed</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
		changes such as these may be viewed negatively by some members of the public therefore, the public should be involved in the decision making process to ensure their expectations are considered ahead of making any changes		
Building a new fire station	Beyond the need for normal consultation as part of the planning process, the public should be consulted to ensure their views and the needs of the local community are fully considered prior to building new fire stations. End users/firefighters, through the FBU should be fully involved in each stage of any new design and build of fire stations to ensure their ideas and needs are fully			

<u>Change Proposal</u>	<u>The public should be fully consulted</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted, but should be informed</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
	considered, (see previous comment regarding upgrade of Inverness fire station).			

Question 9: Any other comments

Please give us any other comments that SFRS should take into account when considering the future of the Service.

The FBU *Firestorm* report highlighted many of the issues that SFRS recognise in the documentation accompanying this consultation. The FBU welcomes SFRS undertaking a review of current service provision with the intent to develop change options to improve the service provided to communities of Scotland and to the working life of our members.

It is vital that changes of this potential scale, which are likely to have multi-generational impacts are well thought out, well planned and based on a desire to improve service provision, not based solely on savings. The FBU has been explicit in our statements, that this review cannot be used as a smokescreen for cuts, and welcome SFRS early commitment that this is a view shared by the SFRS senior leadership team. FBU's priorities are listed below:

- **The FBU will not accept further reductions to firefighter numbers as part of this change process – more firefighters are needed not less.**

In the last 14 years SFRS have cut over 1,400 firefighter posts through 'natural wastage'. This has seen increases to response times and will have undoubtedly negatively impacted the level and quality of community engagement. There are also concerns regarding current resilience levels and the ability to implement relief strategies at large scale incidents to allow firefighters who become exposed to fire contaminants to properly decontaminate.

- **The FBU will not accept reductions to the agreed safe crewing model.**

The agreed safe crewing model ensures that the initial response to an incident of a primary appliance allows a full crew of five firefighters to effect immediate rescue of casualties while maintaining minimum safety levels. The appliance reductions imposed in 2023 resulted in an increased number of single pump stations, increasing the likelihood of single crews being the sole attendance at incidents for protracted periods. Any proposals to reduce safe crewing levels on appliances undermines the safety of both the public and firefighters and will not be accepted by the FBU.

- **The FBU has significant concerns regarding any proposals to reduce fire cover at night.**

It is our view that reductions to fire cover overnight pose an increased risk to communities and to the health safety and wellbeing of firefighters. It is likely that any such proposals would negatively impact on the contractual conditions and work life balance of our members. The FBU support the SFRS commitment to being an employer of choice, while this is not specifically referenced within the Shaping Our Future documents, it is accepted and welcomed that this is a long standing position held by the organisation. This review offers opportunities for SFRS to further this aim by increasing their commitment to implement best practice in relation to fire contaminants, cancers and diseases through both station design and crew availability ensuring relief strategies can be implemented to allow firefighters to decontaminate quickly following exposure to fire effluents

- **The FBU demands support for pregnant firefighters**

The FBU campaign Fight for 52 focussed on the need for firefighters to have 52 weeks maternity leave on full pay. SFRS should take the opportunity through this review to improve the working conditions of their staff. The FBU believe this will have positive outcomes in relation to diversifying the workforce while minimising secondary exposure risks to newborn children and demonstrating that SFRS are a family friendly employer.

- **The FBU calls for SFRS to acknowledge the vital role control firefighters play**

The Shaping Our Future documentation makes no detailed reference to the vital role carried out by our firefighters that work in control. This staff group has undergone the most significant changes since the inception of the single service with the reduction from eight to three control rooms, changes to shift patterns, changes to mobilising protocols and systems with further changes imminent when a new mobilising system is implemented in coming months/years. Control firefighters have seen the scope of their role change and the level of knowledge and understanding required in relation to incident types significantly increase. Control firefighters will be impacted by most or all changes brought forward following this review – the SFRS need to recognise and properly support the role our control members play in the service.

- **The FBU is committed to a welcoming, hospitable work culture**

The current work by the SFRS Cultural Development Group will require a commitment to training and development in soft skills and leadership, the current structures in training departments are unlikely to be able to deliver the required development, delivery or volume of training. This review provides opportunity to bolster training departments to enable increased levels of formalised training and development in all disciplines. Should SFRS identify frontline resources that are no longer protecting known risks (due to changes such as deindustrialisation) consideration should be given to moving the spare capacity into training roles to better equip remaining operational crews.

- **The FBU supports fair pensions for firefighters**

The SFRS, like all fire and rescue service employers, will be impacted by the changes to nominal pension age and will likely see increases to the number of operational staff working to sixty years old. Existing research identifies that maintaining operational fitness to this age will increasingly become a challenge for increasing numbers of staff. As part of this review, SFRS should consider opportunities and mechanisms to be able to move staff that are unable to maintain operational fitness into non-operational roles within departments such as community safety or training, ensuring that individuals can work to their normal pension age and SFRS can maximise benefits from the operational experience gained by such individuals.

The FBU believes SFRS needs significant investment if it is to be fit for the future.

FIRE BRIGADES UNION SUBMISSION TO THE COMMITTEE ON PRE-BUDGET SCRUTINY 2026- 2027

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within fire and rescue services across Scotland and the UK. The union represents the vast majority of wholetime (full-time), retained (part-time / on-call), volunteer operational firefighters and operational control firefighters in the UK.

Over recent years the FBU have made the following submissions relevant to the Scottish Criminal Justice Committee pre budget scrutiny-

- Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) *Draft Strategic Plan 2019-22*
- SFRS - *Fire and Rescue Framework: Consultation* (November 2021)
- SFRS - *Draft Strategic Plan 2022-25*
- SFRS - *Draft SFRS Strategy 2025-28*
- *Scottish Finance and Public Administration Committee - Pre-Budget Scrutiny Consultation* (August 2022)
- *Scottish Criminal Justice Committee - Pre-Budget Scrutiny Consultation* (September 2023)
- *Scottish Criminal Justice Committee - Pre-Budget Scrutiny Consultation* (August 2024)
- *SFRS Shaping our Future Service Stakeholder Consultation* (June 2024)
- Ongoing engagement in *SFRS Service Delivery Review (SDR)* public consultation.

Additionally, in October 2023 the FBU published our Firestorm report, provided to the Scottish Criminal Justice Committee (SCJC) as part of the FBU submission to the committees pre budget scrutiny ahead of the 2025/26 budget. Firestorm provides a critical review of the first decade of the SFRS from the operational firefighters and firefighters control that serve the communities of Scotland. The report remains an essential contribution to the debate over what is required for the SFRS to deliver a fit for the future, leading, emergency service that the people and communities of Scotland expect and deserve.

At every juncture the FBU have highlighted that over a decade of under investment in the SFRS has led to the estate, including the current 356 fire stations, becoming increasingly degraded and therefore in an unfit condition for habitation as modern workplaces, cuts to firefighter numbers (1239 as of 31 March 2025³) cuts to the number of fire appliances, and hundreds of fire appliances left uncrewed across Scotland every day. **All of which has resulted in increased call handling times, increased emergency response times and increased risk to communities and firefighters across Scotland.**

This submission will continue to build on previous FBU submissions and verbal evidence provided to the SCJC in recent years.

The Committee have asked for views and comment on the following:

³ Source: *SFRS Fire Safety and Organisational Statistics, 2024-2025, Tables and Charts*

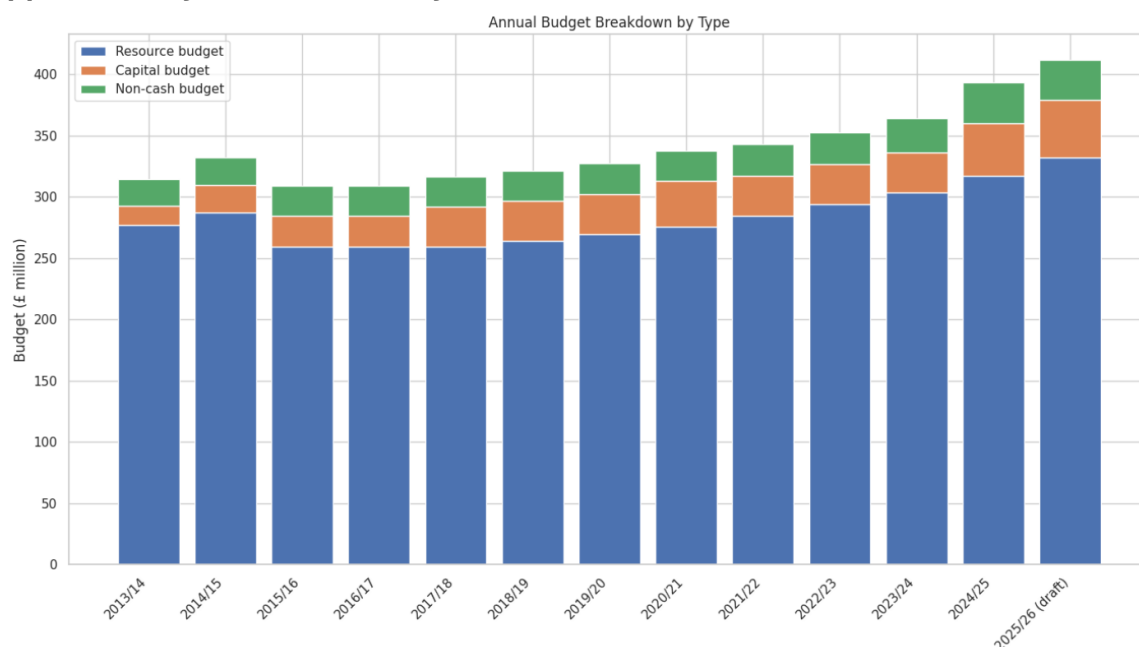
1. What are the main financial pressures facing organisations in the criminal justice sector

The FBU will restrict our observations and comment to matters specifically relating to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the impact financial pressures faced by the SFRS has on community and firefighter safety and the inability to swiftly progress meaningful work to resolve the well documented issues with their ageing property and fleet, and progress improvements in areas broadly described as “cultural” within the wider fire and rescue service.

As of February 2025, the SFRS total budget allocation for 2025/26 was £412.2 million, (£332.1 million resource, £47.0 million capital, £33.0 million non-cashable). On paper, all three budget lines show increases over the 12 years of the existence of the SFRS.

However, information obtained from the Scottish Parliament Information Centre (SPICe) shows that against inflation, the year-on-year **SFRS resource budget for 2025/26 has been cut in real terms by £58 million** (17.5% of the current £332.1 million resource budget) since the SFRS was formed in April 2013.

Projected accumulative total savings against inflation from the SFRS total budget were presented by the SFRS in evidence to the committee in their 2024-25 pre budget scrutiny submission where they state; We forecast that, since the reform of the Service, **the cumulative total of all savings achieved by SFRS is projected to be approximately £908.5 million by 2027/28.**

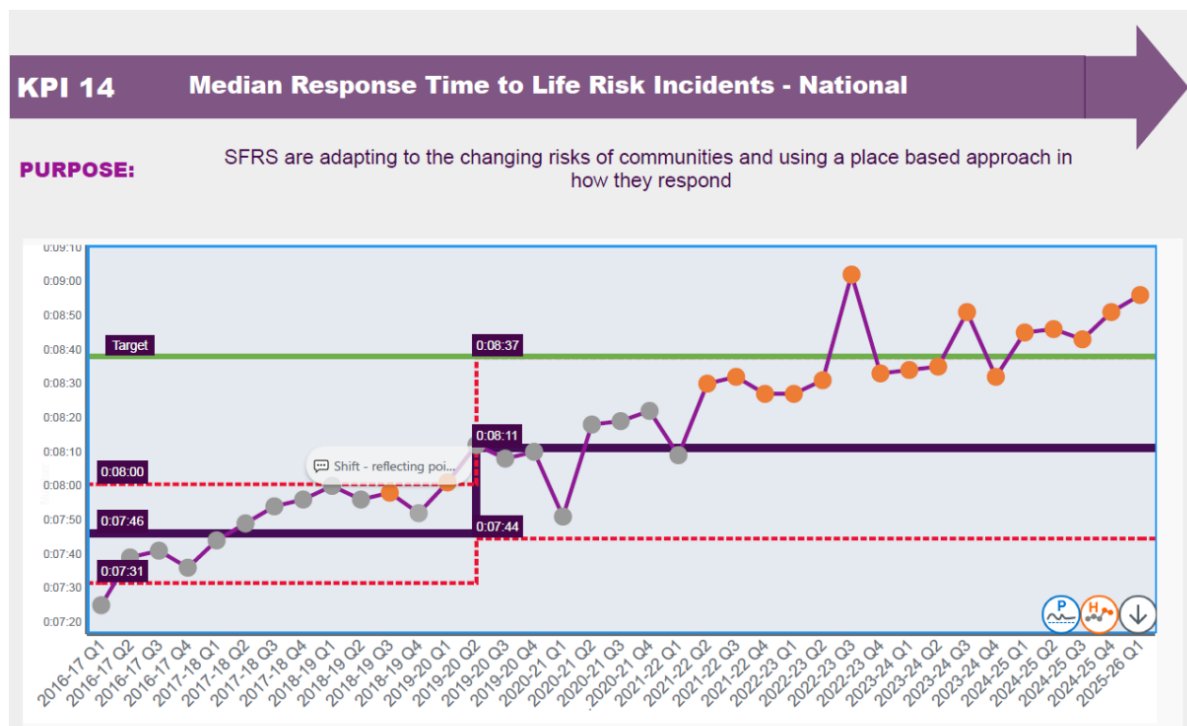


Source: Figures taken from Scottish Government annual budget

Impact of inadequate resource budget on firefighter numbers and response times

The impact of such significant real terms resource budget cuts has decimated the number of firefighters employed in Scotland, with 721 wholetime (17.4%), 371 retained (12.1%) 63 control (26.9%) and 144 volunteer (34.5%) jobs lost in that time. The direct correlation between these budget cuts, the subsequent cuts to the number of

firefighters employed, and spiralling increases to emergency call handling and incident responses times are directly aligned.



Source: SFRS Published Board Papers 28 August 2025

The FBU, again, repeat our legitimate and long-standing concerns regarding the chronic underfunding of the SFRS.

The SCJC were informed in 2024 that sustained underfunding forced the SFRS to “temporarily withdraw” 10 frontline fire appliances and reduce operational headcount by 166 firefighter posts in September 2023. The temporary nature of these withdrawals has been repeated by the SFRS, and additionally by the Minister for Victims and Community Safety on numerous occasions in Parliament.

The SFRS are now engaged in a public consultation covering 23 change options as part of their Service Delivery Review (SDR). These 23 change options include the closure of fire stations, reductions to fire cover, reduction of weekend and overnight emergency response, reductions in firefighter numbers, and “permanent solutions” to the reportedly temporary reduction of 10 appliances and 166 firefighter posts imposed in 2023.

The SFRS SDR consultation documents state that these options will further increase emergency response times.

The FBU have repeatedly raised concerns that neither the SFRS or the Scottish Government had set out a road map to reverse the “temporary removal” of these appliances or the cuts to 166 firefighter posts. The inclusion of “permanent solutions” to the cuts imposed in 2023 is evidence that the FBU concerns were well founded.

Recent large fires in Perth, Dundee, Banchory, Elgin, Fife, Edinburgh and Glasgow, to cite but a few, and the increasing number and severity of large protracted wildfires across parts of Scotland over recent years (reports suggesting that the number of

wildfires in Scotland has tripled in just one year) support the FBU contention that chronic underfunding of the SFRS has led to reduced operational headcount (1239 posts since 2013), reduced fire and rescue service resilience, increased response times, and ultimately, increased risk to communities and firefighters.

Data published by the SFRS demonstrates that every staff group (with the exception of the Retained Full-Time role created in 2018 to mitigate gaps in the Retained Duty System (RDS)) has faced savage cuts over the past 13 years. The direct correlation between cuts to operational headcount and increased response times cannot be overstated.

Staff Headcount

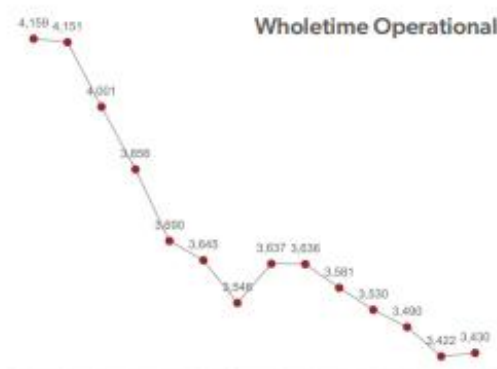


Figure 3.1: Headcount by Wholetime Operational staff, 2011-2025.

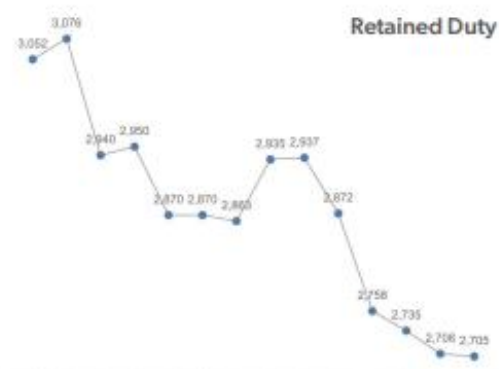


Figure 3.2: Headcount by Retained Duty staff, 2011-2025.



Figure 3.3: Headcount by Volunteer staff, 2011-2025.

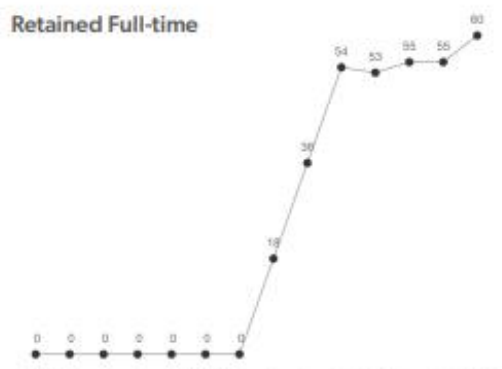


Figure 3.4: Headcount by Retained Full-time staff, 2011-2025.

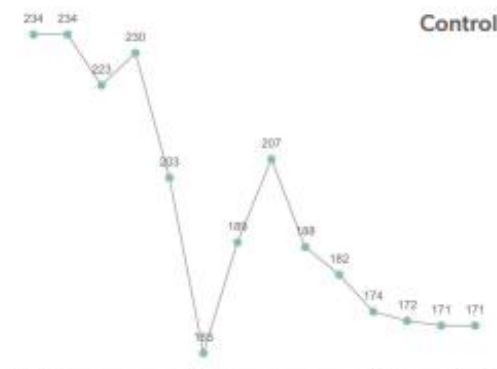


Figure 3.5: Headcount by Control staff, 2011-2025.

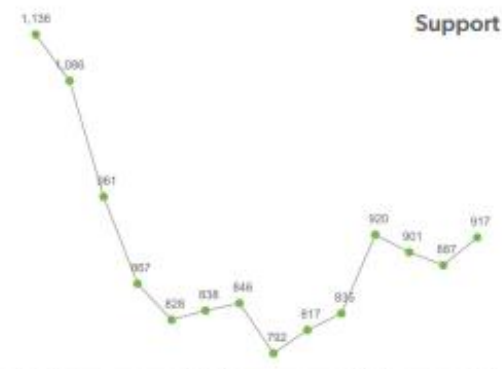


Figure 3.6: Headcount by Support staff, 2011-2025.

Source: SFRS FSOS 2024-2025 Statistics

Impact of inadequate capital budget on SFRS estate and fleet

Against CPIH inflation, the SFRS capital budget has fared better, however this must be measured against the entirely inadequate initial capital budget allocation of £15.3 million in 2013, meaning that minor increases provided over the subsequent 12 years of the single service can initially appear significant in percentage terms but in reality deliver minimal real terms spending for the SFRS to progress capital projects. The SCJC have previously taken evidence from Audit Scotland, the SFRS, and the FBU that the SFRS continue to run a capital deficit exceeding £800 million and require a sustained period of at least £80 million capital allocation per annum over at least a decade to make meaningful progress in providing safe workplaces for their staff.

The SFRS SDR options include proposed reductions to wholetime cover in some stations creating an increased reliance on firefighters working on the retained duty system (RDS), whose primary employment is not with the SFRS but who are on call and respond to pagers when mobilised. If agreed, these proposals will result in a downgrading of fire cover at overnight and at weekends, and in some instances at all times of day in some communities across Scotland.

Throughout the SDR pre consultation process, the SFRS have repeatedly drawn attention to the significant cost of upgrading or replacing stations that include overnight accommodation, pointing to significant financial savings if station upgrades and replacements did not require the inclusion of overnight accommodation. This demonstrates that financial pressure is a primary driver for the SFRS considering increased use of a Day Shift Duty System (DSDS) that will reduce fire cover overnight and at weekends, increase response times, and reduce both public and firefighter safety.

Beyond financial savings, the effect of these proposed changes will be the removal of station based 24-hour fire cover and an increased reliance on RDS firefighters to provide cover overnight and at weekends. The SCJC have previously taken evidence that societal and demographic changes have impacted recruitment and retention across the RDS model resulting in up to 200 of the 311 RDS crewed appliances being unavailable across Scotland on any given day. The SFRS SDR consultation includes options to close eight “long term dormant” stations. All eight are volunteer and/or retained stations that have been unable to recruit or retain sufficient firefighters to form a crew, some since at least 2015.

Financially driven proposals that increase reliance on a duty system that is already facing such sustained recruitment and retention issues across Scotland should be a significant concern to members of the SCJC.

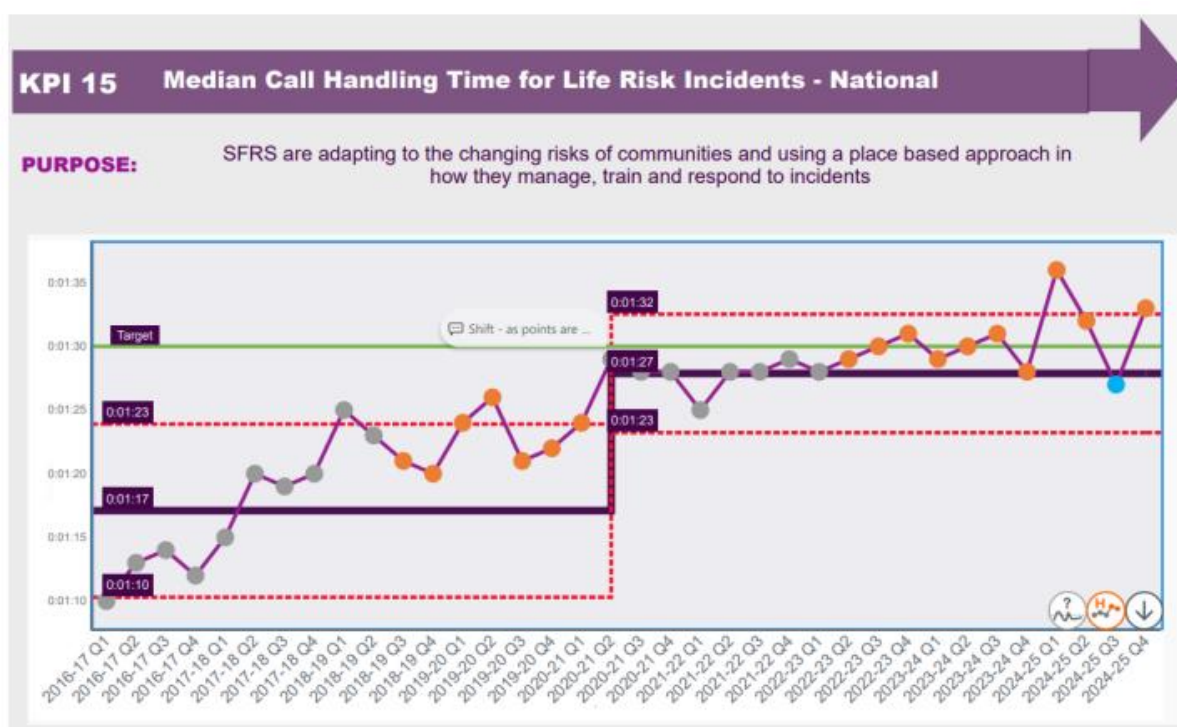
2. What should be the main priorities for 2026/27 in terms of spending in the criminal justice sector?

It is increasingly apparent to firefighters across Scotland that Scottish Government do not see fire and rescue as a priority area for investment. Due to sustained underinvestment the SFRS are fast approaching a situation where everything is a priority. Recruitment, retention, ageing estate, investment in new technology, training,

ageing fleet, over reliance on overtime, insufficient coverage from the retained duty system, improving terms and conditions to improve culture, improving pay structures, implementing a developed role for firefighters including a response to Marauding Terrorism Attacks (MTA), mass casualty events and Emergency Medical Response (EMR) as part of a co-responding model with the Scottish Ambulance Service are all areas where the SFRS need significant investment to allow prioritisation of spending but continue to have extremely limited capacity to divert required funding within their extremely restrictive budget to anything other than reacting to the pressures created through ever dwindling investment.

Continued cuts to firefighter numbers, increased response times, and minimal progress on improving the condition and suitability of their estate all point to a Service attempting to manage financially driven decline, unable to invest in areas that genuinely improve, or in many cases merely maintain, the service provided to the people of Scotland.

Priority must be given to providing the SFRS with adequate investment to reverse over a decade of cuts to firefighter numbers that is ever increasingly impacting call handling times, response times to emergency incidents and community safety.



Source: SFRS Published Board Papers 28 August 2025

The case for investment to allow SFRS to improve culture

The SFRS, as part of the UK wide National Joint Council (NJC), implemented improved maternity provision for firefighters in line with the 2024 pay settlement. Maternity provision now sits at 26 weeks fully paid leave, half of what the FBU believe should be provided. The FBU have campaigned vigorously via the “Fight for 52” campaign, with a number of UK fire and rescue services subsequently choosing to implement maternity leave provision above the minimum contractual requirement of 26 weeks. The SFRS

report a desire to increase maternity provision to 52 weeks for all staff but that they have “zero budget headroom” to afford this.

There is justified, significant attention being focused on culture within the sector following damning reports in a number of FRS’s. The SFRS and the FBU agree that improved maternity provision is a relatively inexpensive, but important, lever to improve representation of women in the SFRS and demonstrate their commitment to improving the diversity and culture within the organisation. The fact that financial constraints are preventing the SFRS from making relatively inexpensive improvements should be of concern to members of the SFRS Board, the SCJC, and the Scottish Government. Organisational statistics released by the SFRS on 28 August 2025 show a decrease of 0.9% women in Wholetime, and a 2.4% reduction within RDS operational firefighting roles.

As it stands, new mothers and potential new mothers, are often choosing whether to have a child, or add to their family due to financial concerns and a legitimate, evidence based fear that they may have to cease breastfeeding earlier than NHS Scotland guidelines due to having to return to work in workplaces that may expose them to potentially toxic and carcinogenic contaminants that can be passed to their child through breastmilk.

Maternity provision is just one area of “culture” the SFRS need to focus on, training of managers and staff, and incorporation of court rulings into policy and the subsequent legislative requirement for dignified facilities all require levels of investment that the SFRS currently report not having the “budget headroom” to invest in. This is trapping the SFRS into situations that could see them face litigation for failures to adhere to legal rulings and health and safety law.

The SFRS aspire to be an employer of choice, the failure of Government to adequately invest in the SFRS is preventing them from achieving this aspiration.

3. In particular, what are the pressures on capital spend and what should be prioritised?

It is clear from previous submissions from organisations across the Justice portfolio that decades of underinvestment have left near insurmountable backlogs in capital spending across the entire Justice estate.

It is notable that the replacement of Barlinnie Prison is now estimated to cost almost £1 billion, double initial expected costs. As previously set out, the SFRS estimate a need for around £800 million to bring the 356 fire stations and their fleet, serving every community of Scotland up to a modern, safe standard. This point has been made in representations to the Cabinet Secretary for Finance who cited increased construction costs and inflationary pressures as the reason for project costs for HMP Glasgow increasing so significantly. With an increasingly aged estate, the SFRS face the same increased construction costs and inflationary pressures. The false economy of forcing organisations such as the SFRS to maintain crumbling buildings is an increasing drain on the SFRS budgets.

Without significant investment, the FBU fear the SFRS will be forced to consider further cuts to firefighter numbers and station closures in the future leading to further increased response times and increased risk to the public and firefighters.

Much of the SFRS SDR consultation is focused on the ongoing reality that adequate funding for capital projects to resolve the multiple issues with their estate including the 14 stations built using Reinforced Autoclaved Aerated Concrete (RAAC), implementation of best practice for firefighter decontamination, and for the SFRS to keep pace with technological advances in the sector is not being provided by Government so will have to be found from existing budgets. Without the required real terms investment, the reality is the SFRS will continue to cut firefighter numbers, remove pumps and specialist resources, and close stations in their attempts to reduce operating costs and reduce their capital backlog.

As stated in response to question 1 above, the SFRS have repeatedly highlighted that the level of capital expenditure required to replace or upgrade stations that include overnight accommodation is significant. This is a primary driver for the inclusion of proposals to downgrade fire cover from the 24/7 emergency cover provided through the current wholetime duty system to a Day Shift Duty System (DSDS) with RDS cover overnight and at weekends within the 23 SDR options under public consultation.

The need for the SFRS to provide safe, dignified and legally compliant workplaces for firefighters is well known and was the focus of questioning during the SCJC evidence session on 4 September 2024.

Overwhelmingly the pressures on capital spend faced by the SFRS remain the same as previous years. Lack of real terms capital investment is preventing the SFRS moving with pace to resolve the well documented crisis they face with their property portfolio and ageing fleet. The SFRS continue to miss carbon reduction targets due to an inability to fund carbon management projects across property and fleet due to sustained underfunding of the Service. 47% of the SFRS heavy fleet remains overdue for replacement, resulting in increased maintenance costs for ageing fleet and a subsequent negative impact on carbon emission targets as the SFRS are not utilising modern low carbon vehicles.

In previous submissions to the SCJC the SFRS have stated that 'Ageing assets often incur additional costs due to increased maintenance and repair needs. As these assets age, they are more likely to experience wear and tear, leading to frequent breakdowns and the need for replacement parts. This not only results in higher direct costs for repairs but also increases downtime, which can affect productivity and operational efficiency. Additionally, the energy efficiency of ageing assets typically declines over time, leading to higher operational costs.' All of which further impact already stretched capital and resource budgets.

The SCJC have taken evidence in previous years setting out the immediate concerns regarding firefighter exposure to toxic and carcinogenic chemicals in the line of their work and the inability to meaningfully and urgently decontaminate following exposure. The SFRS have sought to implement best practice options that are immediately available to them through policy direction and encouraging firefighters to change

behaviours in relation to exposure. Financial constraints have limited the SFRS ability to implement service wide improvements to their estate to allow station zoning to prevent cross contamination.

Rapidly resolving this issue must become a priority for the sector.

This will require the capital investment that the FBU and the SFRS have been demanding for many years, it shall also require a change in attitude and increased resource budget to reverse over a decade of cuts to firefighter numbers across Scotland. The savage reductions to firefighter numbers are increasingly impacting the SFRS ability to relieve exposed firefighters from incident grounds in a timeframe that minimises dermal and respiratory absorption of contaminants.

The long-term health impacts from prolonged, accumulative exposure are becoming increasingly understood. Without a change in thinking regarding ways to reduce and limit exposure including the length of time between exposure and full decontamination, fire and rescue services and politicians who have been aware of these risks but continued policies of budget driven decline will increasingly be seen as negligent in their responsibilities towards the health, safety and wellbeing of their employees.

RAAC

The committee have previously taken evidence regarding the SFRS inheriting 14 stations that were built using Reinforced Aeriated Autoclave Concrete (RAAC). Issues with RAAC construction are well documented, the SFRS have required to implement costly monitoring and temporary remediation work whilst permanent solutions are found for these stations. The FBU, supported by the STUC, have previously called for specific ring-fenced funding from Scottish Government to allow public sector organisations such as the SFRS to resolve the RAAC issues they face. To date this has not been provided resulting in the SFRS having to fund temporary and permanent remediation work from a capital budget that is wholly inadequate.

The SFRS have taken steps to begin to resolve, mitigate or remediate RAAC construction, prioritising this work for ongoing and planned capital expenditure with 6 new build station replacement projects at varying stages of development.

As of October 2023, the SFRS own assessment listed 75% of SFRS buildings as being of “bad” or “poor” suitability and around 45% in either “bad” or “poor” condition. Due to significant ongoing financial pressures including the continuation of single year budgets, the SFRS have made limited inroads to resolving the multiple issues that the SCJC have taken evidence on in previous years including a lack of dignified facilities and lack of ability for firefighters to safely decontaminate following exposure to toxic and carcinogenic smoke and chemicals at operational incidents.

The FBU have been informed by the SFRS that this year they have experienced material increase in costs to maintain fleet and property assets, even after accounting for inflation. This is clearly an unsustainable cost spiral the SFRS faces. Reducing budgets, when measured against inflation and other cost increases, increased need for maintenance and repair of ageing fleet and property leading to a cycle of further

increased costs and negative impact on the ability of the SFRS to deliver on replacement and modernisation of their fleet and property, further impacting the availability of frontline resources, will ultimately lead to the SFRS having to consider further cuts to firefighter numbers, fire appliances and station closures.

Both the SFRS and the Scottish Government have been aware of the serious health and legal implications of these issues for many years; unfortunately, Scottish Government have been either unable or unwilling to provide the SFRS with the necessary budget allocation to meaningfully resolve the increasing issues with maintaining an ageing fleet and modernising or replacing inappropriate property in a timely manner.

This led the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) to issue the SFRS with Notice of Contravention letters regarding material breaches of Health and Safety law and Improvement Notices for 3 stations in Shetland in February 2025. The SFRS have acted to implement the required temporary improvements and the HSE have now lifted the notices they served. It should be noted that this was caveated with a recommendation that solutions are found for all Scottish stations that lack the necessary facilities. **The FBU believe there are a substantial number of stations across Scotland where similar material breaches could be identified, and Improvement Notices issued by HSE and will work with the SFRS to resolve these issues as a matter of urgency.**

The health, safety and wellbeing of employees must be a primary concern for any organisation, however, the SFRS inherited an estate that was in large part unfit to accommodate a modern fire and rescue service. A lack of genuine investment in the SFRS has left the organisation unable to integrate changes in employment practices and legislation (dignified facilities and equalities) alongside far greater understanding of toxic contaminants within the fire and rescue service ([DECON](#), [UCLan research](#)) leaving SFRS employees exposed to unfit working environments on stations across Scotland and unacceptable workplace risks to their health, safety and wellbeing. As has repeatedly been stated to the SCJC and Scottish Government by both the FBU and the SFRS, without multiyear, significant real terms investment, the SFRS will likely continue to fail to meet their legal obligations to protect their staff and ensure compliance with equalities and health and safety legislation.

4 What opportunities are there for further efficiency savings and/or further investment on a ‘spend to save’ basis within the sector?

Strategic Priority 3 of The Scottish Government Fire and Rescue Framework 2022 details an expectation that the SFRS will continue to explore “Modernisation and Expansion of the Firefighter Role” As has been reported to the SCJC in previous years, the FBU and the SFRS reached an agreement in principle for a developed role for Scotland’s firefighters, which was delivered to the Scottish Government in November 2022. This proposal would see firefighters supporting the Scottish Ambulance Service with an emergency response to a limited categorisation of immediately life threatening emergency medical incidents on a co-responding basis, firefighters trained and equipped to respond to mass casualty events and work in the warm zone at Marauding Terrorist Attacks, and additionally work much more closely with other organisations providing assessment and support for vulnerable and at risk groups using the successful home fire safety model.

Scottish firefighters are increasingly frustrated that despite the Fire and Rescue Framework 2022 setting out an explicit expectation for the SFRS to progress this work, that three years later, and three budget cycles later, Scottish Government have failed to provide the SFRS with the required investment to realise the potential this agreement offered.

This ongoing delay and prevarication from Government, lack of real term investment, and the SFRS SDR proposals that would make permanent the cuts to firefighter numbers, close stations and reduce fire cover make it increasingly unlikely that FBU members (over 80% of Scotland's firefighters) would accept the developed role proposal at ballot.

The SFRS have previously informed the SCJC of their business case to Government for community resilience hubs, this proposal is in line with Strategic Priority 3 of the Scottish Government Fire and Rescue Framework 2022. The FBU are supportive of the principle of these hubs as the initial investment required on a “spend to save” basis would likely realise long term savings for the SFRS and the public purse.

Issues exist where other services, not necessarily within the Justice sector, do not have the same buy in or see this investment as a priority. The SFRS are currently piloting this model in Portree. The FBU are interested to see what other organisations commit to long term occupancy and sharing of this hub and the outcomes of capital monitoring of the build, and shared occupancy, and whether long term savings are realised. Overall, this investment in the SFRS estate will deliver benefits for FBU members who will operate from a purpose built, modern fire station that is compliant with current legislation and allows firefighters to manage contaminants effectively.

It is notable that during development of the Scottish Governments Scotland's Public Service Reform Strategy — Delivering for Scotland June 2025 engagement with the FBU was not sought. The final report makes no mention of the positive benefits that could be delivered by developing the role of Scotland's firefighters and there is no mention of the business case for community resilience hubs presented to Government by the SFRS. The 2025 - 26 Programme for Government makes only a single passing mention of fire and rescue on page 38 stating; *We are also supporting the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to modernise its service provision to meet the changing risks in communities by ensuring its resources are in the right place and are available at the right time.*

This is not the lived experience of Scotland's firefighters who have seen their Service consistently underfunded over the past twelve years, firefighter numbers decimated, hundreds of fire engines unavailable every day due to lack of available crews, who continue to work from unsuitable stations with the associated impact on their health and wellbeing, facing increased risks due to increased response times at operational incidents and now face potentially greater financially driven cuts to their service.

5 Any other views you have on the 2026/27 budget process which you wish to comment on?

This FBU submission to the SCJC highlights the FBU's multiple areas of concern at the long-term underfunding of the SFRS. In preparing this submission the previous submissions made by both the FBU and the SFRS to the SCJC and the predecessor Scottish Finance and Public Administration Committee were reviewed.

Year on year the same points have been made by both the FBU and the SFRS, the same warnings issued and whilst the SCJC has made the case for investment in the SFRS, these warnings and the positive case for real terms investment to support the SFRS to modernise their estate, their fleet, and support a developed role for firefighters has overwhelmingly been ignored by Government.

Prior to the creation of the single service, the FBU and Scotland's firefighters were given an assurance that merging Scotland's eight legacy fire and rescue services would protect the front line. Year on year this has been proven to have been misleading with budget cuts resulting in 1239 fewer firefighters protecting Scotland today than in 2013, call handling times increasing, response times to life risk emergencies increasing and community safety engagement decreasing. Continuation on this downwards trajectory will mean Scotland's fire and rescue service will, as the then CFO stated in his evidence to the SCJC in 2023 when discussing the potential magnitude of cuts the SFRS may have to implement "***not be able to keep communities as safe as they currently are***".

The stark reality is that the SFRS own published data proves the arguments the FBU have been making. Budget cuts have left Scotland's communities and Scotland's firefighters less safe than they were in 2013. Proposals for further modernisation, whether in recognition of incident trends or societal demographics, cannot be at the cost of further firefighter jobs, and the corresponding increased risk to communities. Scottish Government need to invest to reverse the decade of cuts to firefighter numbers now demonstrably impacting the SFRS ability to respond adequately to operational incidents.

EXTRACT FROM SFRS SERVICE DELIVERY REVIEW CONSULTATION DOCUMENT – JUNE 2025⁴

4.2 East Service Delivery Area

The East Service Delivery Area (SDA) covers City of Edinburgh, Falkirk, West Lothian, Clackmannanshire, Fife, Stirling, Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders.

There are four options for change in the East Service Delivery Area



4.2.1 EDINBURGH AND EAST Lothian

There is one option for Edinburgh and East Lothian that involves four fire stations.

- Marionville
- Musselburgh
- Newcraighall
- Tranent



Option

- Close Marionville which has one appliance that is crewed by wholtime firefighters. Move this appliance to Newcraighall and increase this station so that it will have two wholtime appliances; **AND**
- Close Musselburgh station which has one appliance that is crewed by wholtime firefighters. Move this appliance to a new-build station at Tranent and increase this station so that it will have two appliances, one crewed by wholtime firefighters and one crewed by on call firefighters.

⁴ SFRS Service Delivery review consultation document (June 2025):
<https://www.firescotland.gov.uk/publications/document/?id=8976>

Why we need to change:

Marionville and Tranent are both affected by RAAC and require urgent repair. Musselburgh is an expensive site deemed unfit for purpose.

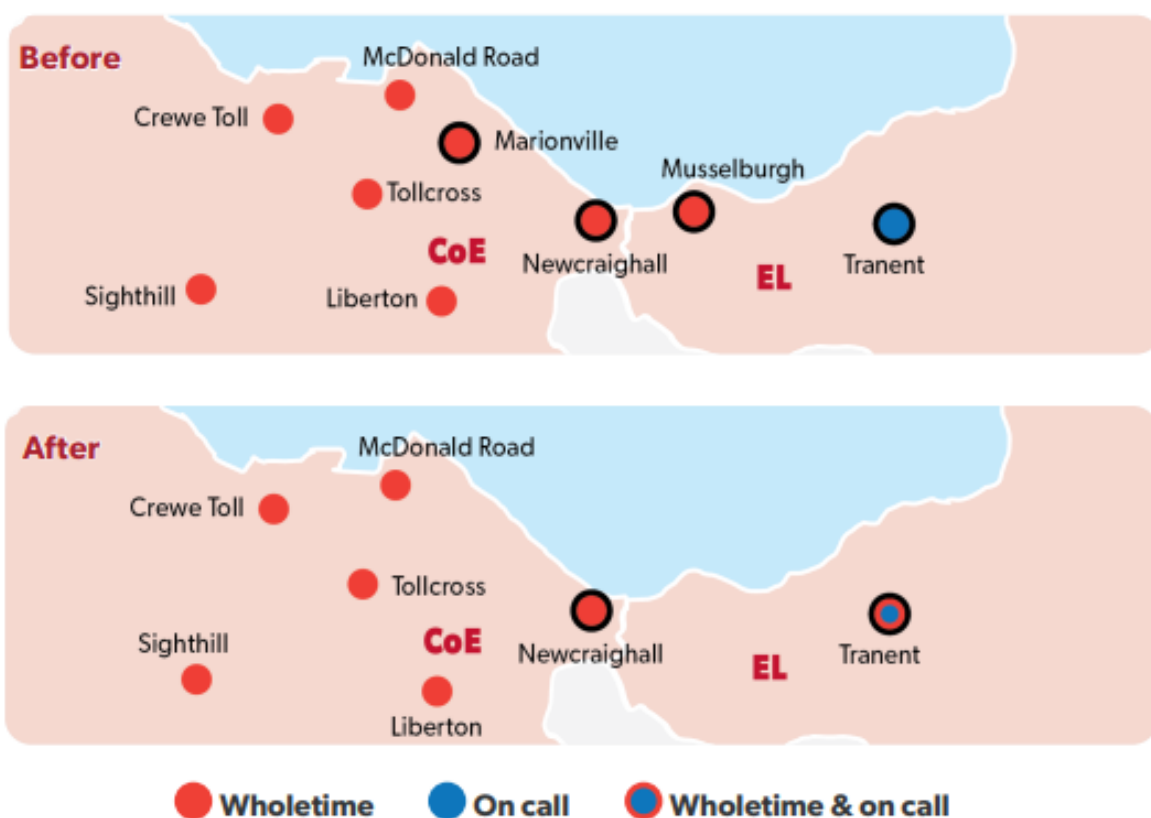
With Marionville located so close to McDonald Road, we could combine these four stations into two to create a more effective distribution of operational resources to meet risk and demand across the east of Edinburgh and East Lothian.









It would be very expensive to demolish and rebuild Marionville in its current location and the identified optimal location in Duddingston is not available and would be unaffordable.

Newcraighall has received a £2.6 million upgrade and can accommodate a second wholetime appliance from Marionville.

By adding another appliance into Newcraighall, there is little operational benefit in keeping Musselburgh on its current site, which is also deemed unfit for purpose.

We must rebuild Tranent and therefore could build a new station with an additional wholetime appliance.



Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Marionville	Wholetime crewed: one appliance. 		Redistribute two wholetime appliances Close two fire stations Rebuild an expanded fire station
Musselburgh	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 		
Newcraighall	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	Wholetime crewed: two appliances  	
Tranent	On call crewed: one appliance 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance  On call crewed: one appliance 	

Pros

- More effective distribution of resources across the east of Edinburgh and East Lothian.
- Newcraighall site can accommodate a second appliance and maximises the investment there.
- RAAC will be addressed at Tranent and Marionville.
- Musselburgh site is unsuitable and crew will be relocated to new station.
- An overall capital saving of around £24 million by not rebuilding or refurbishing Marionville and Musselburgh stations.
- The sale of three sites – Marionville, Musselburgh and Tranent - would provide around £1.1 million income to invest in other stations.
- A saving of around £229,000 in annual running costs would be redirected.
- Five staff could be transferred to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.

Cons

- There would be a moderate increase in first appliance response times within the immediate vicinity of Marionville and Musselburgh.
- The timing of the Musselburgh closure and the transfer of appliance is reliant on a new build at Tranent.
- £10 million investment required for a new build at Tranent.

4.2.2 FIFE

There are two options proposed for Fife that involve four fire stations.

- Dunfermline
- Lochgelly
- Glenrothes
- Methil



Option 1

- Replace the third appliance at Dunfermline which is a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) with a dedicated high reach appliance. The third appliance (CARP) was temporarily withdrawn and replaced with a high reach appliance in September 2023; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Lochgelly from two to one; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Methil from two to one. The second appliance was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023; **AND**
- Reinstate the second appliance that was temporarily removed in September 2023 at Glenrothes.

Option 2

- Replace the third appliance at Dunfermline which is a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) with a dedicated high reach appliance. The third appliance (CARP) was temporarily withdrawn and replaced with a high reach appliance in September 2023; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Lochgelly from two to one; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Glenrothes from two to one. The second appliance was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023; **AND**
- Reinstate the second appliance that was temporarily removed in September 2023 at Methil.

Why we need to change:

In September 2023, budgetary limitations required the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service to select ten of its wholetime appliances for temporary withdrawal. This included three in Fife and a permanent equivalent solution is now required.

Three fire stations in Fife - Lochgelly, Glenrothes and Methil - each had two wholetime appliances based there. But they were identified as having some of the least operational demand in Scotland and modelling identified that withdrawing second appliances from two of these stations had tolerable impacts on response times.

Three appliances were temporarily withdrawn within the Fife local authority area in September 2023.

This included the third combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) at Dunfermline, which was replaced by a dedicated high reach appliance.

Due to a lack of time to relocate Lochgelly's specialist rope rescue capability, the station was not selected as a location for temporary appliance withdrawal and the slightly busier stations at Glenrothes and Methil were selected instead.

We currently have a high concentration of resources based within Fife relative to the operational demand of these stations and compared to other similar geographical areas elsewhere in Scotland.

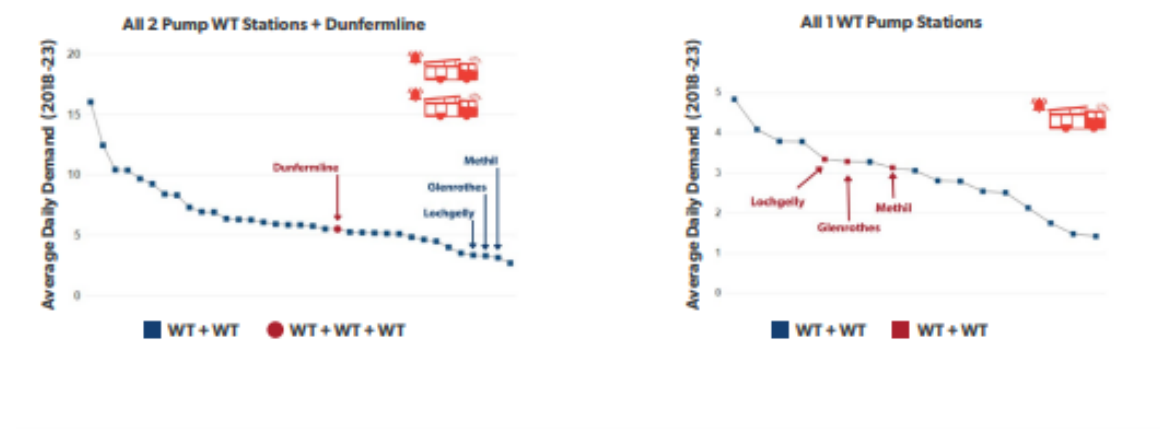
Dunfermline currently has three wholetime appliances. The third is a CARP. Operational demand for this appliance is very low, and we are replacing all CARPs across Scotland with specialist high reach appliances.

Operational demand at Lochgelly, Glenrothes and Methil is among the lowest of all wholetime stations in Scotland that have two whole time appliances; and is more aligned to stations with one appliance. Operational modelling shows that permanently changing two of these locations to having one appliance would be sufficient.







Since September 2023, the incident demand of Lochgelly station has slightly exceeded that of Glenrothes or Methil. This is because these stations have had fewer appliances to deploy resulting in the two Lochgelly appliances picking up a larger share of the operational activity.

The five-year implementation timescale of the Service Delivery Review has enabled SFRS to revisit the withdrawal of the second appliance from Lochgelly and consider it preferable to withdrawing from Glenrothes and Methil.

Withdrawing the second appliance from Lochgelly was identified as having the least impacts on response times.



Option 1

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Dunfermline	Wholetime crewed: two appliances, one combined aerial rescue pump Note: The third appliance, a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP), was temporarily withdrawn as a pumping appliance and crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance. 	Wholetime crewed: two appliances and a dedicated high reach vehicle 	Permanent withdrawal of two appliances and replace of a combined aerial rescue pump for a dedicated high reach appliance.
Lochgelly	Wholetime crewed: two appliances 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	
Methil	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second appliance has been temporarily withdrawn since 2023.) 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	













Pros

- Reinstatement of second appliance at Glenrothes.
- Reduction and redirection of around £2.4 million in annual running cost.

Cons

- Moderate increase in second and third appliance response times within local areas.

Option 2

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Dunfermline	Wholetime crewed: two appliances, one combined aerial rescue pump Note: The third appliance, a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP), was temporarily withdrawn as a pumping appliance and crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance.   	Wholetime crewed: two appliances and a dedicated high reach vehicle   	Permanent withdrawal of two appliances and exchange of a combined aerial rescue pump for a dedicated high reach appliance.
Glenrothes	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second appliance has been temporarily withdrawn since 2023.)  	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	
Lochgelly	Wholetime crewed: two appliances  	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	

Pros

- Reinstatement of second appliance at Methil.
- Reduction and redirection of around £2.4 million in annual running cost

Cons

- Moderate increase in second and third appliance response times within local areas.

4.2.3

SCOTTISH BORDERS

There is one option that involves two fire stations.

- Galashiels
- Hawick



Option

- Introduce a new duty system for the first appliance at Hawick, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm. They will be supported by on call firefighters outwith those times. The second appliance will continue to be crewed by on call firefighters; **AND**
- Introduce a nucleus crew of wholetime firefighters at Galashiels. They can be tactically deployed across the area during day-shift hours when on call availability is most challenging. This would supplement the existing two appliances, one crewed by wholetime firefighters and the other crewed by on call firefighters.

Why we need to change:

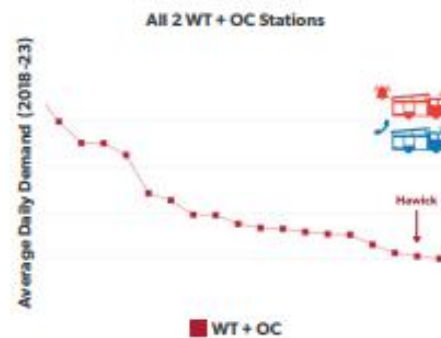
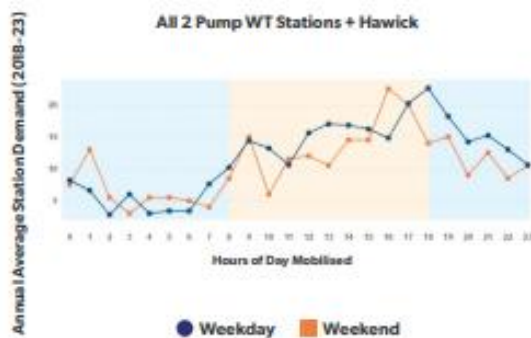
Hawick has the second lowest operational demand of all similar stations that have two appliances











Out of the two appliances at Hawick one is crewed by wholetime firefighters and the other crewed by on call firefighters. Operational demand is more aligned to the busiest on call stations elsewhere in Scotland.

Hawick's roof structure is affected by RAAC and urgent repairs are required. We are unable to begin repair work

until a decision is made on the station configuration and duty system.

Galashiels is in a prime location to support on call availability across the local area. The station has received a refurbishment costing approximately £3.6 million.



Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Galashiels	Wholetime crewed: one appliance  On call crewed: one appliance 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance On call crewed: one appliance   Additional resource: one pool of day shift wholetime firefighters, tactically deployed to on call stations across the area 	Upgrade fire station Change shift pattern Improved on call availability
Hawick	Wholetime crewed: one appliance  On call crewed: one appliance 	Wholetime crewed (day shift): one appliance (supported by on call firefighters outwith these hours)   On call crewed: one appliance 	Enhanced prevention delivery

Pros

- Data supports a change to a day-shift duty system for wholetime firefighters in Hawick, when they are most likely to be called to an emergency and when on call availability is challenging. This would match resources to operational risk and demand.
- RAAC roof will be repaired at Hawick and the station will be upgraded.
- A pool of wholetime staff at Galashiels would be deployed to on call stations in the area to maintain availability during the day and enhance prevention.
- Around 12 staff would be transferred into other roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.
- Around £478k reduction and redirection in resource costs.

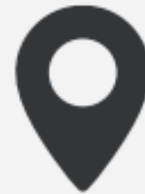
Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times outside of day shift hours in the Hawick area.

4.3 North Service Delivery Area

The North SDA covers Aberdeen City, Aberdeenshire, Moray, Dundee, Angus, Perth and Kinross, Western Isles, Orkney, Shetland Islands and Highland.

There are three options for change in the North Service Delivery Area.



4.3.1 DUNDEE CITY AND MONIFIETH

There are two options proposed for Dundee city and Monifieth that involve two fire stations.

- Balmossie
- Kingsway East



Option 1

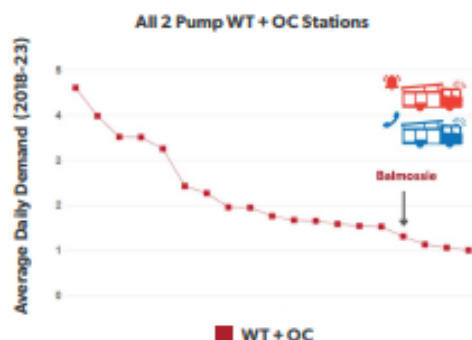
- Close Balmossie fire station which currently has one wholetime appliance and one on call appliance; **AND**
- Reinstate the second wholetime appliance at Kingsway East which was temporarily removed in September 2023.

Option 2

- Remove a wholetime appliance and maintain one on call appliance at Balmossie; **AND**
- Reinstate the second wholetime appliance at Kingsway East which was temporarily removed in September 2023.

Why we need to change:

The second wholetime appliance at nearby Kingsway East in Dundee was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023. A permanent equivalent solution is now required.



Balmossie was not in scope at the time of this temporary withdrawal. Our data shows that Balmossie is a more suitable alternative option for permanent withdrawal or closure, and the second wholetime appliance reinstated at Kingsway East would adequately serve the area.

Balmossie is poorly located on the road network which limits the operational areas which it typically covers.

Operational demand at Balmossie is the fourth lowest of all stations in Scotland with the same level of resources.

Option 1

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Balmossie	Wholetime crewed: one appliance On call crewed: one appliance	Staff to be relocated, retrained or transferred	Close fire station Wholetime second appliance reinstated at Kingsway East




Pros

- Appropriate resource level to match local demand.
- Reduction and redirection of £1.3 million in annual running costs.
- Potential £600,000 income from sale of Balmossie site.
- Option would see the reinstatement of a second appliance at Kingsway East, which was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023.
- Around five staff transferred to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.

Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times within the Balmossie area.
- Potential redundancy for on call staff unable to relocate.

Option 2

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Balmossie	Wholetime crewed: one appliance  On call crewed: one appliance 	On call crewed: one appliance 	Permanent withdrawal of one wholetime appliance. Staff to be relocated, retrained or transferred

Pros

- Appropriate resource level to match local demand across east of Dundee city.
- Reduction and redirection of around £1.1 million in annual running costs for Balmossie alone.
- Transfer or relocate around five staff to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.
- Reinstatement of a second appliance at Kingsway East, which was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023.

Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times within local area.
- Fire station is still poorly located on the road network and on call demand will remain low.

4.3.2

PERTH AND KINROSS

There is one option that involves one fire station.

- Perth

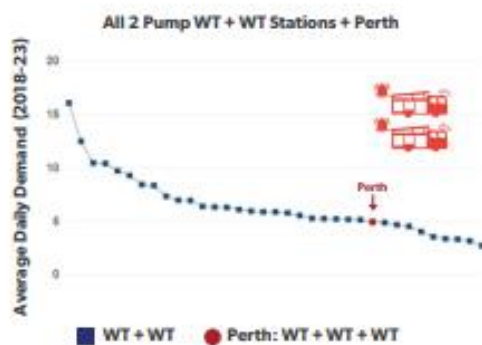


Option



- Replace the third appliance, which is a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) with a dedicated high reach appliance. The third appliance (CARP) was temporarily withdrawn and replaced with a high reach appliance in September 2023.

Why we need to change:

The operational demand of Perth, with three wholetime appliances, is lower than most fire stations with two wholetime appliances.



Modelling shows that two appliances would align with local risk and demand. The third vehicle is a combined aerial rescue pump, which are all being phased out and replaced with dedicated high reach appliances, based in selected locations across Scotland. The third appliance was temporarily crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance in September 2023 and a permanent solution is required.

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Perth	<p>Wholetime crewed: three appliances</p> <p>Note: The third appliance, a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP), was temporarily withdrawn as a pumping appliance and crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance.</p> 	<p>Wholetime crewed: two appliances and a dedicated high reach vehicle</p> 	<p>Replace a combined aerial rescue pump with a dedicated high reach appliance.</p>

Pros

- Matches operational resources with local risk and demand.
- Reduction and redirection of around £639,000 in annual running costs.

Cons

- Increase in third appliance response times in local area.

4.4 West Service Delivery Area

The West SDA covers City of Glasgow, East Ayrshire, North Ayrshire, South Ayrshire, Dumfries and Galloway, East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, East Dunbartonshire, West Dunbartonshire, Argyll & Bute and Lanarkshire.

There are eight options for change in the West Service Delivery Area



4.4.1 ARGYLL & BUTE

There is one option that involves one fire station.

- **Helensburgh**



Option

- Introduce a new duty system for the first appliance at Helensburgh, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and crewed by on call firefighters out with these hours. The second on call appliance would be unchanged.

Why we need to change:

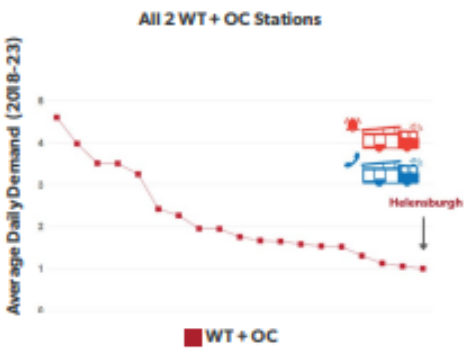
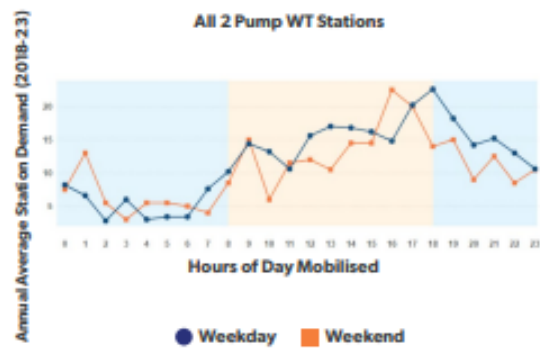
Helensburgh has the lowest operational demand of all similar stations that have two appliances.

Helensburgh has two appliances – one crewed by wholetime firefighters and the other crewed by on call firefighters. Operational demand is more aligned to the busiest on call stations with two appliances elsewhere in Scotland.

Helensburgh's roof structure is affected by RAAC and we are unable to begin repair work until a decision is made on

the station configuration and duty system. The station will be upgraded with dignified welfare facilities like single occupancy showers and toilets as well as contaminant control facilities.

A change in duty system will ensure operational response during the time of highest demand.



Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Helensburgh	<div>Wholetime crewed: one appliance</div> <div>On call crewed: one appliance</div>	<div>Wholetime crewed (day shift): one appliance (supported by on call firefighters outwith these hours)</div> <div>On call crewed:one appliance</div>	<div>Upgrade fire station</div> <div>Change crewing model for firefighters</div>

Pros

- Resources would be aligned with operational demand.
- Wholetime crew would be available during time of highest demand and deliver prevention activities during the day.
- Around 17 staff would be transferred to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.
- Reduction and redirection of around £694,000 annual running costs
- Repairs to the roof structure caused by RAAC will be repaired and the station will be upgraded.
- Additional on call employment opportunities within local area.

Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times outside of core day shift hours in the area.

4.4.2 EAST DUNBARTONSHIRE

There is one option that involves one fire station.

- Milngavie



Option

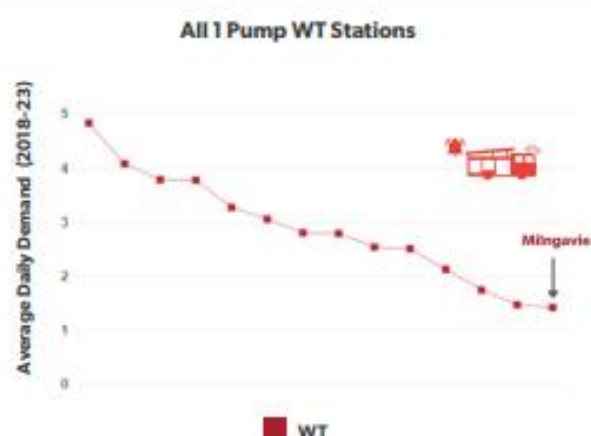
- Introduce a new duty system for the appliance at Milngavie, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see the appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and crewed by on call firefighters out with these hours.



Why we need to change:

Milngavie has the lowest operational demand of all stations in Scotland that have one wholetime appliance based there. Changing the crewing model will match resources to local risk.

Milngavie's roof structure is affected by RAAC and we are unable to begin repair work until a decision is made on the station configuration and duty system. The station will be upgraded with decontamination facilities and dignified welfare facilities like single occupancy showers and toilets.

A change in duty system will ensure operational response during the time of highest demand and maintain the delivery of prevention activities.



Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Milngavie	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	Wholetime crewed (day shift): one appliance (supported by on call firefighters outwith these hours) 	Upgrade fire station Change crewing model for firefighters

Pros

- Resources would be aligned with operational demand.
- Wholetime crew would be available during time of highest demand during the day and maintain the delivery of prevention activities.
- Around 17 staff would be transferred to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.
- Reduction and redirection of around £676,000 annual running costs
- Repairs to the roof structure caused by RAAC will be repaired and the station will be upgraded.
- Additional on call employment opportunities within local area.

Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times outside of core day shift hours in the area.

4.4.3

Glasgow

There are two options for Glasgow involving five fire stations.

- Maryhill
- Yorkhill
- Govan
- Springburn
- Cowcaddens



Option 1

- Rebuild Cowcaddens on Maitland Street site and maintain two wholetime appliances. Reinstatement of second appliance that was temporarily withdrawn September 2023; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Govan from two to one. The second appliance was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Springburn from two to one; **AND**
- Close Yorkhill which has one wholetime appliance based there; **AND**
- Reinstatement the second wholetime appliance at Maryhill that was temporarily removed in September 2023.



Option 2

- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Govan from two to one. The second appliance was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023; **AND**
- Close Cowcaddens which has two wholetime appliances based there. Maintain ownership of the neighbouring Maitland Street site for future development; **AND**
- Reinstatement the second wholetime appliance at Maryhill that was temporarily removed in September 2023.

Why we need to change:

The city of Glasgow and the wider area has a significantly high concentration of resources.

In particular, the concentration in and around the city centre represents the highest geographical density of stations and wholetime appliances anywhere in Scotland.

This includes five community fire stations and nine wholetime appliances, which represents an over-provision compared to other large urban areas of Scotland.








Three appliances were temporarily withdrawn within the Glasgow local authority area in September 2023. This included the second appliances at Govan, Cowcaddens and Maryhill. Single appliance stations such as Yorkhill

were not considered at that time. A permanent equivalent solution is now required.

Resources across Glasgow need to be rebalanced to meet demand, while meeting requirements to make three permanent appliance withdrawals.

Modelling shows that the response area of Cowcaddens could be effectively covered by Calton, Maryhill, Springburn and Yorkhill.

Option 1

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Cowcaddens	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second wholetime appliance temporarily withdrawn since 2023) 	Wholetime crewed: two appliances 	Rebuild fire station Withdraw three appliances Close fire station
Govan	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second wholetime appliance temporarily withdrawn since 2023) 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	
Springburn	Wholetime crewed: two appliances 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	
Yorkhill	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 		

Pros

- Rebalance of resources across Glasgow city.
- Second appliance at Maryhill and Cowcaddens reinstated after temporarily removal in September 2023.
- Springburn and Yorkhill staff to be relocated or transferred
- Transfer of a further five staff to other key roles in training, prevention and operational resilience - saving and redirection of £458,000.
- Potential of £2 million capital receipt from sale of Yorkhill site with around £5 million property investment avoided.

Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times in the Yorkhill area and increase in second appliance response times in Govan and Springburn areas.

Option 2

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Cowcaddens	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second wholetime appliance temporarily withdrawn since 2023) 	Retain neighbouring site for future rebuild	Withdraw three appliances
Govan	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second wholetime appliance temporarily withdrawn since 2023) 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	Close fire station

Pros

- Rebalance of resources across Glasgow city.
- Around £10 million property investment avoided for rebuild of Cowcaddens.
- Maintain ownership of the Maitland Street site in Cowcaddens for future development.
- Transfer of a further five staff to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience with a saving and redirection of around £458,000.
- Second appliance at Maryhill would be reinstated after being temporarily removed in September 2023 - possibly crewed by around 20 staff released from Cowcaddens.

Cons

- Increase in first appliance response times in the Cowcaddens area and increase in second appliance response times in Govan.

4.4.4

Inverclyde

There are two options for this area involving two fire stations.

- Greenock
- Port Glasgow



Option 1

- Replace the second wholetime appliance at Greenock, which is a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) with a dedicated high reach appliance. The second appliance (CARP) has been temporarily crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance since September 2023.

Option 2

- Replace the second wholetime appliance at Greenock, which is a combined aerial rescue pump (CARP) with a dedicated high reach appliance. The second appliance (CARP) has been temporarily crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance since September 2023 ; **AND**
- Introduce a new duty system for the third appliance at Greenock, which is currently crewed by on call firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and crewed by on call firefighters out with these hours. The first wholetime appliance would be unchanged; **AND**
- Introduce a new duty system for the first appliance at Port Glasgow, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and crewed by on call firefighters out with these hours. The second on call appliance would be unchanged.

Why we need to change:

We currently have an imbalance of resources across Inverclyde where operational demand does not match where our appliances are based.




Greenock currently has three appliances, two crewed by wholetime and one by on call. The second wholetime is a combined aerial rescue pump – known as a CARP.

Operational demand for this appliance is low, and we are replacing all CARPs across Scotland with specialist high reach appliances (HRA).

The CARP was temporarily withdrawn as a pumping appliance and crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance in September 2023. A permanent equivalent solution is now required.

Operational demand at Greenock is the second lowest of all fire stations with three appliances, and lower than most stations with two wholetime appliances.

Option 1

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Greenock	Three appliances (Two crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by on call firefighters. Second wholetime CARP withdrawn as a pumping appliance and crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance since 2023.) 	Two appliances (One crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by on call firefighters)  One dedicated high reach vehicle (Crewed by wholetime firefighters) 	Replace combined aerial rescue pump with dedicated high reach appliance.





Pros

- Matching resources to operational demand in the area.
- Reduction and redirection of around £426,000 in annual running costs.

Cons

- Moderate increase in second appliance response times in Greenock.

Option 2

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Greenock	<p>Three appliances (Two crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by on call firefighters. Second wholetime CARP withdrawn as a pumping appliance and crewed as a dedicated high reach appliance since 2023.)</p> 	<p>Two appliances (One crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by day shift firefighters, supported by on call outwith those hours)</p> <p>One dedicated high reach vehicle (wholetime)</p> 	<p>Replace combined aerial rescue pump with dedicated high reach appliance.</p> <p>On call appliance enhanced to wholetime during day shift hours.</p>
Port Glasgow	<p>Two appliances (One crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by on call firefighters)</p> 	<p>Two appliances (One crewed by day shift firefighters, supported by on call outwith those hours, and one crewed by on call firefighters)</p> 	

Pros

- This option rebalances resources across Inverclyde to ensure availability of wholetime firefighters during busiest day-shift hours, to support nearby Gourock, and provide better alignment with local risk and demand and national comparisons.
- Maintains wholetime crew during time of highest demand during day shift hours.
- Transfer of around 11 staff to other key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience.
- Reduction in around £815,000 in running costs.
- Enables Greenock to support Gourock with daytime incident responses and community safety work.

Cons

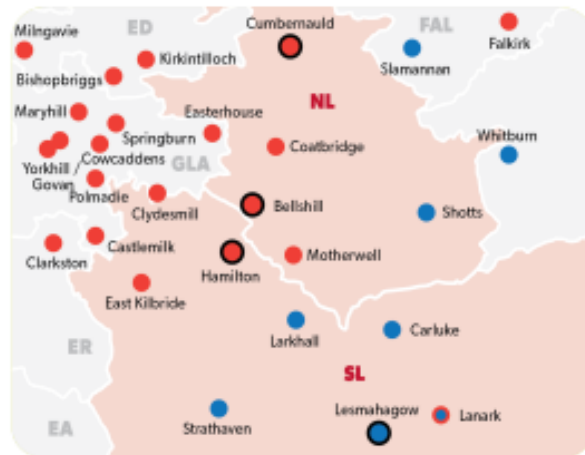
- Moderate increase in second appliance response times in Greenock.

4.4.5

LANARKSHIRE

There are two options for this area spanning North and South Lanarkshire involving four fire stations.

- **Cumbernauld**
- **Bellshill**
- **Hamilton**
- **Lesmahagow**



Option 1

- Introduce a new duty system for the second appliance at Cumbernauld, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and crewed by on call firefighters outwith these hours. The first wholetime appliance would be unchanged; **AND**
- Reduce the number of wholetime appliances based at Hamilton from two to one. The second appliance was temporarily withdrawn in September 2023.

Option 2

- Introduce a new duty system for the second appliance at Cumbernauld, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm and crewed by on call firefighters outwith these hours. The first wholetime appliance would be unchanged; **AND**
- Introduce a new duty system for the second appliance at Hamilton, which is currently crewed by wholetime firefighters. This would see that appliance crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm. The first wholetime appliance would be unchanged; **AND**

Option 2 cont.

- Add an additional wholetime appliance at Bellshill to increase the station to two appliances. The second appliance would be crewed by wholetime firefighters during day shift hours from Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm. The first wholetime appliance would be unchanged; **AND**
- Introduce a nucleus crew of wholetime firefighters at Lesmahagow. They can be tactically deployed across the area during day-shift hours when on call availability is most challenging. This would supplement the existing one appliance crewed by on call firefighters.

Why we need to change:

We currently have an imbalance of resources across Lanarkshire where operational demand does not match where our appliances are based.

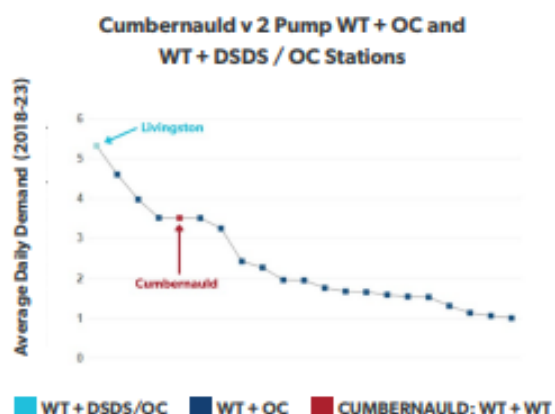
The second wholetime appliance was temporarily withdrawn from Hamilton in September 2023 and a permanent equivalent solution is now required.

Our fire station at Cumbernauld is also affected by RAAC and requires urgent action. It is not possible to repair the station with its current occupancy of two wholetime fire appliances. It is not currently possible to rebuild Cumbernauld station on an alternative site as no suitable site is available, or to demolish and rebuild the station on its current site.





In Cumbernauld, it's more complex because of the limited size of the site and building footprint. It's not feasible to repair the RAAC and maintain two wholetime crewed appliances. It would be operationally disruptive to demolish and rebuild as this would require the creation of a costly temporary station. If the crewing model for one of the appliances was changed to day shift then it would enable remediation work to start without having to move to a temporary site.

Operational demand at Cumbernauld aligns more with other stations across Scotland with fewer resources based there.

Changing one of the appliances at Cumbernauld to a day-shift system would ensure we continue to match resources to risk and demand, while enabling the repair of the RAAC roof.



Option 1

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Cumbernauld	Wholetime crewed: two appliances 	Two appliances (one crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by day shift firefighters supported by on call outwith those hours) 	Upgrade fire station Withdraw one appliance
Hamilton	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second appliance has been temporarily withdrawn since 2023.) 	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	Change crewing model for firefighters

This option makes permanent the temporary appliance withdrawal in Hamilton. It also introduces a new crewing model at Cumbernauld to meet risk and demand, while allowing for the repair of the station's RAAC roof.

Pros

- Matches resources to operational demand in the area during the busiest times whilst ensuring crewing and delivering prevention activity.
- Resolves RAAC issue at Cumbernauld; around £5 million property investment avoided.
- Reduction and redirection of around £1.3 million in annual running costs.
- Transfer of 14 wholetime staff into key roles across training, prevention and operational resilience
- Creates on call employment opportunities within Cumbernauld area.

Cons

- Increase in second appliances response times outside day-shift hours in Cumbernauld area.
- Increase in second appliance response times in Hamilton area.

Option 2

Fire Station(s)	Current Resources	Proposed Resources	Impact of change
Cumbernauld	Wholetime crewed: two appliances 	Two appliances (one crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by day shift firefighters supported by on call outwith those hours) 	Upgrade fire station Redistribute appliances Change crewing model for firefighters
Hamilton	Wholetime crewed: two appliances (Second appliance has been temporarily withdrawn since 2023.) 	Two appliances (one crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by day shift firefighters) 	
Bellshill	Wholetime crewed: one appliance 	Two appliances (one crewed by wholetime firefighters and one crewed by day shift firefighters) 	
Lesmahagow	On call crewed: one appliance 	One appliance crewed by on call firefighters (additional wholetime crew deployed during day shift hours to support the wider area) 	

This option offers an equivalent permanent solution to the temporary appliance withdrawal in Lanarkshire in September 2023. It matches a new duty-system at Cumbernauld to meet risk and demand, while allowing for the repair of the station's RAAC roof. Resources will be redistributed across Hamilton, Bellshill and Lesmahagow to improve availability on weekdays during the day when demand is highest.

Pros

- Matching resources to operational demand in the area during the busiest times and enhances prevention activities.
- Resolves RAAC issue at Cumbernauld.
- Reduction and redirection of around £503,000 in annual running costs.
- Improvement in on call resilience across South Lanarkshire.
- Creates on call employment opportunities within Cumbernauld area

Cons

- Increase in average response times of second appliances outside of day-shift hours in Cumbernauld and Hamilton areas.

5.1 Glossary

On call firefighters:

they work as and when required and are alerted via a pager system when they are available for duty. They often have other jobs within their communities and balance both roles.

Wholetime firefighters:

they work full time for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service on a shift pattern that is typically two days day duty, two days night duty and four days off. But proposals include a new duty system that will give firefighters in some areas the opportunity to work day-shift hours Monday to Friday between 8am and 6pm.

Nucleus crew:

a crew of employees with the operational skills and knowledge to enable them to be deployed dynamically to one or more on call stations to support appliance availability and deliver prevention activities.

Fire appliance:

this is commonly known as a fire engine, or pump, and responds to emergency incidents. The vehicle must be crewed by a minimum of four firefighters before it is mobilised to the scene on an incident. Carries ladders, water and enhanced rescue equipment.

High reach appliance:

dedicated aerial appliance which can reach up to 32m in height with a hydraulic arm. Can be used as a water tower for firefighting as well as access and rescue from height.

Combined aerial response pump:

equipped with a 28m hydraulic platform for rescues from height or used as a water tower. Also carries enhanced rescue equipment for road traffic collisions. These vehicles are being phased out and replaced with more modern and task specific technology.

5.2 Fire appliance icon guide

Wholetime crewed:



On call crewed:



Day shift crewed:



Day shift crewed:

Supported by on call



Day shift wholetime firefighters (nucleus crew):



Temporarily withdrawn:



Dedicated high reach appliance



Combined aerial rescue pump

