

# Merseyside Fire



# & Rescue Service

## Wirral Fire Station Consultation

Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) is responsible for providing fire and rescue services for Merseyside's 1.4 million people. This currently includes delivering fire and rescue services on Wirral from six stations: Birkenhead, Wallasey, Heswall, West Kirby, Upton and Bromborough.

Over the last four years MFRA has had to make savings of £20 million as a result of Government cuts. MFRA is required to make a further £6.3 savings in 2015/16. It is possible that future savings required as a result of ongoing Government cuts might reach £9.1 million in 2016/17 and up to £20 million in total by 2020. We now need to make more changes to meet this new financial challenge.

MFRA has already had to make significant reductions in its support services and back office staff and the number of firefighters it employs has reduced from 1,400 to 764, with fire appliances reducing from 42 to 28 across the county. All but two stations have only one appliance. What has not changed in more than 20 years is the number of community fire stations (26) and this cannot continue in the future.

### **Station Mergers**

To save £6.3 million in 2015/16 the Authority has assumed it will be able to deliver £2.9 million from support services such as Finance, Human Resources and Estates management as well as technical areas such as debt financing. The remaining £3.4 million will have to come from our emergency response and this will require at least four station mergers or outright closures.

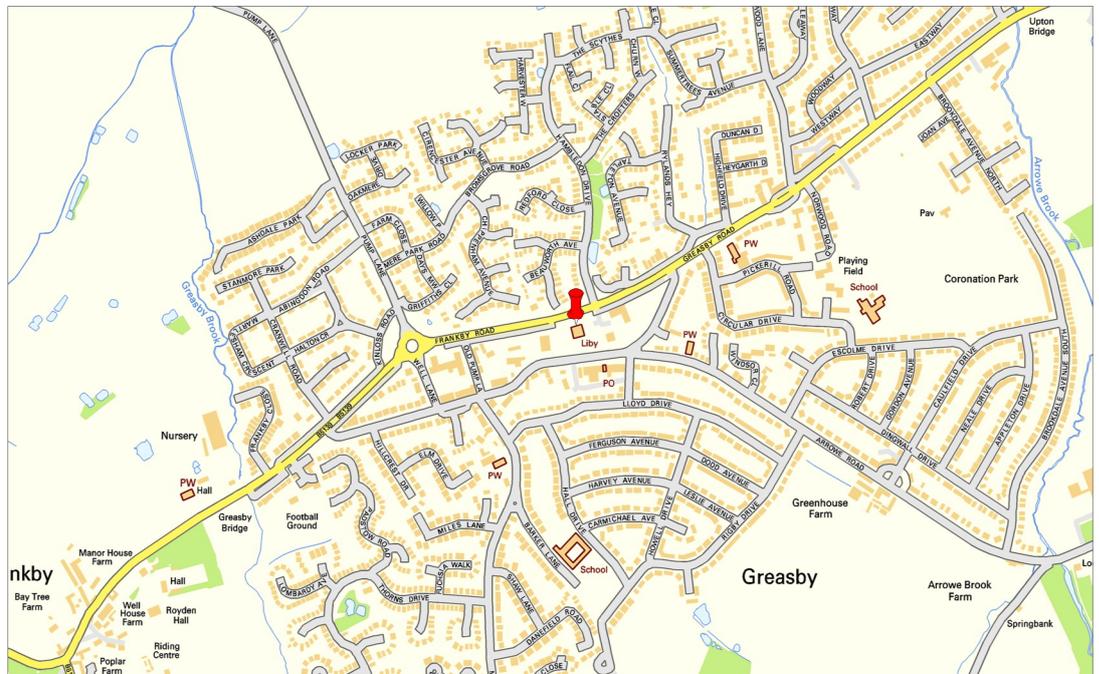
Three proposed mergers have been identified which offer an opportunity to replace old buildings with new facilities in locations which offer better incident coverage: 1. Huyton/Whiston at Prescot; 2. Upton/West Kirby at Greasby; 3. Eccleston/St Helens at St Helens Town Centre. The fourth merger or outright closure would be in Liverpool.

In Knowsley, following consultation, it has been agreed that Huyton and Whiston fire stations will be closed and a new station built on Manchester Road, Prescot.

In Liverpool, the proposal is the closure of Allerton Fire Station, subject to consultation.

Over the last ten years, incidents across Merseyside have been reduced by 55% (18,428 incidents). Upton has seen a fall of 47.5% (from 1,128 incidents in 2004/5 to 592 incidents in 2013/14) and West Kirby a reduction of 24.1% (from 290 incidents in 2004/5 to 220 incidents in 2013/14).

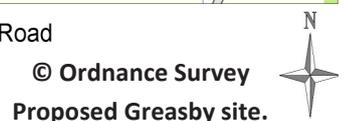
A new community fire station at Frankby Road (library site), Greasby, would have two fire appliances, one crewed by wholetime firefighters (24) and the second by wholetime retained firefighters. The station design would be based on the seven new stations built on Merseyside over the last two years through a Private Finance Initiative scheme.



Author: J Fielding  
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Location of Proposed Fire Station on Frankby Road

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The new station will be a shared services hub with fire and rescue service training facilities but also rooms which local community groups can use, including a new library and other services currently in the Wirral Council buildings.

The cost of building a new station is estimated at £2.8 million which would come from Authority Reserves and possibly Government grants. If we move to one new station and close two old stations there will be £864,000 saved every year by the reduction in 22 firefighter posts. The reduction will be achieved through not replacing retiring firefighters.

A forum of Wirral residents has already considered alternative ways of making the cuts necessary to meet our grant reduction. The forum considered the options of station mergers, station closures, crewing stations only during daytime or using local communities to be trained as community retained firefighters. The overwhelming preference, as staying the same was not an option, was station mergers.

If the merger takes place, the average response time from Greasby would be six minutes, 18 seconds compared to five minutes, 24 seconds currently for incidents occurring within the West Kirby area and four minutes, 34 seconds currently for incidents occurring within the Upton area. Although still well within our 10 minute response standard, this is clearly not an improvement and we would not be proposing this change if it wasn't necessary to make savings to meet the cuts we are facing.

The Authority is interested in how reasonable the public and other stakeholders think our plans for Wirral are given the major cuts we continue to face. We are now embarking on an extensive consultation programme in Wirral before any final decisions are made. This will involve public meetings, focus groups, a stakeholders' meeting and an on-line survey on [www.merseyfire.gov.uk](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk). The public meetings will be publicised on our website and in the local media. **Public meetings will be held at Greasby Methodist Church Hall, Greasby Road, Greasby, CH49 2PN, from 7.30pm to 8.30pm on the 27th of October; Woodchurch High School, Carr Bridge Road, CH49 7NG, from 7.00pm to 8.00pm on the 28th of October as well as a meeting at Hoylake Parade Community Centre, Hoyle Road, Hoylake, from 6pm to 7pm on October 30th. Each public meeting is open to anyone, whether they live near the current existing stations or not.**