



To: Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities
Cc: Chief Fire Officers

Bob Neill MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State

**Department for Communities and Local
Government**
Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 020 7944 3430
Fax: 020 7944 3986
E-Mail: bob.neill@communities.gsi.gov.uk

www.communities.gov.uk

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Dear Colleague

Future Fire Control Services Scheme

Further to my letter of 13 June, I am now able to send you our formal response document and details of our next steps following the consultation. I am also sending the text of the Written Ministerial Statement laid in the House today.

In my previous letter I summarised some of the main areas of consensus emerging from the consultation responses and we have taken these on board in developing our approach and the guidance. As a result, I am making available £81m for improving the resilience, efficiency and technology in England's control services. As a guide, this will provide up to £1.8m for each Fire and Rescue Authority. Authorities may submit plans for more than this if exceptional resilience benefits would result. However the total funding cannot exceed £81m. We are requesting plans to be submitted by 4 November 2011.

This funding should be sufficient to meet local costs of securing the benefits of enhanced data capability, for example through Firelink. However, through collaboration, further enhancements could be delivered.

An additional £1.8m in total will be available to the sector as a whole – this could be groups or representative organisations – to develop initiatives of national benefit. The development of common technical and procedural standards would be an example.

As the guidance I am sending with this letter indicates, we are inviting Fire and Rescue Authorities to send us a brief summary of their plans for the funding. These will be assessed to ensure they provide value for money and resilience improvements.

I am very grateful to the Local Government Group and the Chief Fire Officers' Association for their co-operation in drawing up this proposal. They have further agreed to be part of

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APPENDIX B part 2.

the oversight process and we are intending, jointly, to organise a review conference in early 2012, to which you will be invited. This will be an opportunity to discuss experiences and progress, share good practice and identify national resilience benefits.

Our strategy is to develop national resilience through local rather than national solutions, building on the expertise of Fire and Rescue Services. I look forward to hearing about your plans and working with you in future.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bob Neill', with a large, stylized initial 'B' and a long, sweeping tail.

BOB NEILL MP
Minister for the Fire and Rescue Service

Guidance to Fire and Rescue Authorities seeking central support for improving the resilience and efficiency of their control service.

05 July 2011

1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide guidance to Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) intending to request funding (up to £1.8 million) to improve resilience, efficiency and security in their call handling and mobilisation service and increase collaboration between their service and others.

2. Context

The response to *the consultation on the Future of Fire and Rescue Control Services in England* published on 5th July 2011 announced the Department's intention to provide funding to support locally delivered improvements to the resilience, efficiency and security of fire and rescue control services in England. The Department expects that greater collaboration between Fire and Rescue Authorities and the enhancement of control room technology will deliver significant improvements in national resilience. In addition it announced that funding would be available to support sector-led, national initiatives that deliver resilience and efficiency benefits for Fire and Rescue Services across the country. This funding may support initiatives leading to the development of common standards and protocols which enhance interoperability through common technical and/or procedural standards or for other schemes offering significant national benefits for control service coordination and resilience. These two separate grants are referred to as the control service **Resilience and Efficiency Grant** and the **Interoperability Grant**. The key features of these grants are summarised below:

Resilience and Efficiency Grant

- The purpose of this grant funding stream is to support local enhancements to control services which deliver efficiency and resilience improvements, and lead to greater collaboration between Fire and Rescue Services in the delivery of their control and mobilisation service.
- Guidelines which are drawn from the consultation feedback and are intended to support FRAs in drawing up their plans are set out in Annex A.
- The indicative level of funding available for each FRA is £1.8m. Funding is expected to be paid in 2011/12 and 2012/13 and will contain a mixture of capital and revenue grant.
- In advance of funding being provided FRAs would be requested to provide bids of around 2 to 3 pages outlining their plans including the expected costs, and the expected resilience and efficiency benefits, with sufficient information to support an assessment of the value for money of the local plans
- Bids may exceed £1.8m where some additional level of support is considered to offer the opportunity for significantly improved benefits and deliver value for money. The total amount of funding available for all Fire and Rescue Authorities, however, cannot exceed £81 million. Any bids which exceed £1.8m cannot be considered until all other FRA bids have been reviewed.

- The Department expects to fund the plans outlined in FRAs' bids in full, subject to the value for money assessment and the overall affordability constraint.
- The Department may request that representatives from CFOA and LGA review the local plans. Their role will be to seek further clarification, offer additional technical support or expertise and help to ensure that FRA plans are aligned with wider resilience objectives.
- FRAs interested in receiving a grant are requested to provide bids by 4th November 2011¹
- In exceptional circumstances the Department may consider bids before the 4th November deadline but will not be able to provide any funding above the indicative maximum of £1.8m²
- It is expected that grant funding will be confirmed by 31 January 2012
- Bids should be submitted to Alan O' Loughlin
(alan.o'loughlin@communities.gsi.gov.uk, tel: 0303 444 2859)

Interoperability Grant

- The purpose of this funding is to support sector led development of technical and/or operational standards which support FRS interoperability – or to support other schemes that offer significant benefits for control service coordination and resilience across the country.
- The total amount of grant available is £1.8m.
- FRAs, consortia of FRAs, and sector organisations such as the Chief Fire Officers' Association and Local Government Group are eligible to submit applications for this funding.
- Funding will be available in 2011/12 and 2012/13. Requests for funding for both years should be made by 04th November 2011.
- Applications should be submitted to Alan O'Loughlin
(alan.o'loughlin@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

3. Resilience and Efficiency Grant - Information required

This process has been designed to keep to a minimum the administrative and management burden on Fire and Rescue Authorities and the sector whilst providing sufficient information to ensure that grant funding provided represents good value for money and contributes to national resilience improvements.

Annex B provides a simple template for Resilience and Efficiency Grant bids and in summary these should set out:

- An explanation of the local plans for improvements to control service arrangements.

¹ DCLG will take forward discussions with FRAs on proposals which involve use of the control centre buildings separately. This is for commercial reasons and to ensure discussions already underway can proceed without unnecessary delay. FRAs which fall into this category have the same level of financial support available (up to £1.8m per FRA) although there is expected to be further implementation and ongoing financial support available to meet net additional costs arising from the use of these assets.

² Any other fire and rescue authorities that, due to resilience reasons, require an earlier decision should contact Alan O'Loughlin (alan.o'loughlin@communities.gsi.gov.uk) to discuss whether it is possible to submit an earlier return. Bids which exceed £1.8m can not be reviewed until all other FRA bids have been received and reviewed.

- The expected costs, split by capital and revenue.
- The expected resilience and/or efficiency benefits (Annex A contains examples of expected outcomes arising from the investment)
- An assessment of any risks and dependencies that could impede successful delivery of the benefits

4. Interoperability Grant – information required

Whilst there is no set format for applications for this funding it is expected as a minimum that an application would include the following:

- A summary of the scheme/initiative
- The expected costs
- The expected benefits
- An assessment of any risks and dependencies that could impede successful delivery of the benefits

5. Resilience and efficiency grant Q&A

a) What is the maximum grant an individual FRA can receive?

The indicative maximum grant any single FRA is expected to receive is £1.8 million. Bids may exceed £1.8m where some additional level of support is considered to offer the opportunity for significantly improved benefits and value for money.

b) Who is eligible for funding?

Any FRA operating a control and mobilisation service in England is eligible to request funding, either as part of a consortium of FRA's or a standalone Authority.

c) We are intending to submit a return as part of a consortium, should we submit one summary together or cross reference our partner FRA(s) in our own separate return?

Consortia need only submit one bid.

d) How will distribution of funding be managed under a consortium arrangement?

DCLG's preference would be for consortium funding to be provided to one, locally nominated lead authority. If consortium members wish funding to be provided to individual authorities they should indicate the percentage split.

e) What if we underestimate the costs and require additional funding to complete the necessary improvements?

No commitment can be made at this stage that additional funding will be available. Fire and Rescue Authorities should attempt to ensure that their bids are based upon as comprehensive and accurate a breakdown of their expected costs as possible. It should be noted that the Department cannot provide funding for contingency.

f) What happens if operating costs increase (eg IT service fees) as a result of changes and improvements made to control services – would this be treated as a new burden?

No, this would not be a new burden. FRA's should consider any potential increases to operating costs arising as a result of any investment and plan to meet this from their own budgets.

g) How will funding be provided by the Department?

We anticipate that grant funding will be provided to FRAs as a lump sum in each of the relevant financial years (2011/12 and 2012/13).

h) Can we meet with DCLG to discuss a return in advance of submission?

Yes. Please contact Alan O'Loughlin to arrange this (alan.o'loughlin@communities.gsi.gov.uk)

Annex A

Resilience and Efficiency Outcomes

The following expected outcomes have been informed by responses to the consultation and are intended to support fire and rescue services in drawing up their plans. This list is not intended to be exhaustive nor prescriptive.

Efficiency

- 1) the financial efficiency of the control service is improved. *For example, the proposed change leads to a reduction in the overall cost per emergency call handled?*
- 2) improvements in the operational efficiency of the control service are achieved. *For example, the proposed change leads to a reduction in call handling and mobilisation times?*
- 3) local plans requiring investment in the control service represent value for money in the long term and have been considered in the light of broader FRA planning considerations. *For example, investment in improvements to a control room where future plans for collaboration are not yet clear, may not represent value for money.*

Resilience

- 4) data centric mobilisation benefits are secured and/or enhanced. *For example through upgrading of control room infrastructure to support data mobilisation and messaging.*
- 5) call handling capacity during sudden peaks in call volume improves. *For example through improved arrangements with a buddy FRS/organisation.*
- 6) remote (ie cross border) call handling and mobilisation arrangements are improved. *For example through improved interoperability and technology links with a buddy FRS*
- 7) remote incident management arrangements are improved. *For example through adoption of common ways of working/operating procedures with a buddy FRS/neighbouring FRS.*
- 8) improvements to physical and protective security are delivered. *For example through improvements to areas such as data security or to ensure accommodation remains operational and available during periods when mains services are unavailable.*
- 9) plans contribute to improvements in national resilience. *For example, through better co-ordination with a number of other fire and rescue services and/or other emergency services enabling an improved response to a major incident.*
- 10) plans contribute to improvements in local resilience. *For example through strengthening Section 13 and 16 arrangements, introducing more flexible staffing models and strengthening fallback arrangements*

Control Service Resilience and Efficiency Grant - Bid Template

Authority name(s):

Date:

1. Summary of local plans

Please outline local plans for improvements to control and mobilisation service.

2. Expected costs

Please identify capital and revenue costs separately.

3. Expected benefits

Please identify key resilience and efficiency benefits, where possible benefits should be quantified. Reference to the expected outcomes identified in Annex A to the guidance should be included.

4. Assessment of risks and dependencies

5. Contact name and details

**WRITTEN MINISTERIAL STATEMENT
(Tuesday 5 July 2011)**

Fire and rescue control services (England)

The Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (Robert Neill): Today the Government is publishing its response to the consultation on the future of fire and rescue control services in England announced in my statement to the House of 13 January 2011 [col 22WS]. This followed the closure of the FiReControl project in December 2010.

First I would like to thank all those who responded to the consultation – the Department received 61 responses, including from most Fire and Rescue Authorities and Services, by the closing date of 8 April. The great majority of those responding to the consultation believed that improved resilience and efficiency – and the enhanced technology needed to support these – were as important today as when FiReControl began in 2004. Most responding also agreed with the Government's preferred approach of achieving these objectives now through encouraging increased collaboration – in a locally-determined manner – with some Government support. This approach will deliver efficiency and resilience benefits for Fire and Rescue Authorities in the best way for their area, as well as build national resilience through local solutions.

I am announcing today that the Government is making available £81 million for Fire and Rescue Authorities in England to improve the resilience, efficiency and technology in their control services. As a guideline, this will provide up to £1.8 million for each Authority. Authorities will be invited to submit their plans by 4 November 2011. The plans will be assessed for value for taxpayers' money and resilience improvements.

In addition, a further £1.8 million will be made available to the fire and rescue sector for initiatives likely to deliver co-ordination and resilience improvements across the Fire and Rescue Services, such as the development of common technical and procedural standards.

I am very grateful to the Local Government Group and the Chief Fire Officers' Association for their co-operation in developing this proposal. They have agreed to be part of the oversight process. Today I will be circulating further guidance, together with a copy of the response document, to all Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities and Chief Fire Officers. A copy of the response document will be available on the Department for Communities and Local Government website. Copies have been placed in the Libraries of both Houses.