

MERSEYSIDE FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY			
MEETING OF THE:	BUDGET AUTHORITY		
DATE:	27 FEBRUARY 2025	REPORT NO:	CFO/89/25
PRESENTING OFFICER	DEPUTY CHIEF FIRE OFFICER, NICK SEARLE		
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER:	AREA MANAGER, PAUL MURPHY	REPORT AUTHOR:	STATION MANAGER, PETER MARNICK
OFFICERS CONSULTED:	STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP TEAM, HYWYN PRITCHARD, PAUL HITCHEN, GM MARK BALDWIN, USAR CAPABILITY OFFICERS,		
TITLE OF REPORT:	PARATECH RESCUE SYSTEMS (ND2)		

APPENDICES:	NONE
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Purpose of Report

1. The purpose of this report is to update Members on the National Resilience asset refresh and proposal to award a contract for the procurement of an enhancement to the USAR Paratech rescue system.

Recommendation

2. It is recommended that Members:
 - a) approve an exemption under the Contract Standing Orders for the direct award as a sole supplier of the Paratech equipment detailed within the report that must be interoperable with the existing USAR paratech equipment; and
 - b) approve the award of the contract to Vimpex Limited, (the only agent in the UK to supply Paratech equipment), for the procurement of Paratech rescue systems for a value of £2,108,740. plus freight.

Introduction and Background

- c) As the Lead Authority for National Resilience (NR), officers from the Authority are working closely with the Home Office to support the refresh, long term capability management and enhancement of the National Resilience capabilities. The current NR fleet which as we know is distributed across the UK Fire and Rescue Services was delivered in 2004 with an anticipated 20-year asset refresh.
- d) The refresh of the equipment and vehicles has commenced and is being delivered under the Government led project called New Dimensions 2 (ND2). The ND2 project

is fully funded by Home Office however as Lead Authority, the Service is responsible for the procurement, refresh, and enhancement of NR kit and equipment.

- e) The National Resilience capabilities although split across all of the UKFRS are identical to ensure all operational staff can utilise the equipment regardless of where the responding assets are from. Currently the Paratech Rescue System is held within each of the 20 urban search and rescue (USAR) teams across the UK.
- f) The USAR Capability has been using this product for over 20 years, and with extensive research, NR is now set to expand the Paratech Rescue System.
- g) The expansion of the Paratech Rescue System includes adding:

Paratech Flying Raker.

Paratech Absolute Raker.

Paratech High Strength Structural Kit.

Paratech Rescue Guardian Kit.

- h) The Paratech Absolute Raker System and Flying Raker are specialised tools developed by Paratech, a leading manufacturer of rescue and technical equipment. These systems are designed for use in high-stress emergency situations, specifically in structural collapse and confined space rescue operations. They provide a stable and reliable means of supporting and stabilising collapsed structures or elements, allowing first responders and rescue teams to operate safely and effectively in hazardous environments, see picture below:



- i) The High Strength Structural Kit (HSSK) supports immense loads with the kit using 3 Long Shore Struts laced together. The HSSK can be used to shore damaged columns in buildings, see picture below:



- j) Paratech Rescue Guardian kit is a new addition to the Paratech Rescue System. This is rescue monitoring technology for use with Paratech rescue equipment. It is particularly versatile, and able to be attached to virtually any surface. It is designed to be used as a stand-alone or connected load and stability monitoring device, see picture below.



- k) The Guardian kit will identify if a building which is being supported by Paratech equipment is moving and potentially starting to fall. The kit is also fitted with an alarm to notify responders of an unsafe condition.

- l) It is vital to ensure interoperability, consistency and compatibility with the existing equipment on the National Resilience Urban Search and Rescue vehicles. To ensure and maintain compatibility with the Paratech equipment already held on the existing National Resilience Urban Search and Rescue vehicles. Officers explored the options available. It was confirmed Paratech does not recognise any other manufacturers' equipment as being compatible with its existing products. Failure to comply with this, would void all warranties and existing load testing of the Paratech equipment. This would also increase the health and safety risks should the interoperability be compromised.
- m) VimpeX Ltd is the only authorised UK supplier for the Paratech Rescue System. As the sole authorised distributor, VimpeX Limited guarantees that customers receive expert advice, dedicated customer support, and timely delivery, ensuring a seamless experience.
- n) The original Paratech cache of equipment on the current fleet was purchased in 2004. The new equipment is consistent with all of the existing cache, and only differs in cosmetic appearance such as labelling etc, therefore ensuring full compatibility.
- o) The equipment required cost for the provision of the Paratech Rescue systems detailed above which if agreed will support the Urban Search and Rescue teams.
- p) Due to the value, the contract as detailed in paragraphs 23 and 24 of this report must be approved by Members. If Members approve the award of the contract to VimpeX Ltd the supplier has confirmed the delivery of the Paratech Systems can be met within the Services required timescales.

Equality and Diversity Implications

- q) There are no identified equality or diversity implications related to the procurement of Paratech.

Staff Implications

- r) There are no staff implications as the proposed contract would provide service continuity.

Legal Implications

- s) As the requirement for interoperability is paramount and there is only one sole supplier of the paratech equipment, a direct award is to be actioned as an exemption under the relevant regulations and contract standing orders.

Financial Implications & Value for Money

- t) The contract is for new equipment to refresh and enhance the current cache held by every NR USAR asset. If NR were to replace the existing USAR shoring equipment cache the would cost approximately £20m.

- u) Onward costs associated with re-training, stowage and rewriting national operating procedures and standards would also need to be factored in.
- v) All current NR USAR operatives have been trained to use the Paratech equipment and all the SOPs are based around its capacity and safe working practices. The Capability is actively working to increase this Rescue System by adding to the existing equipment cache, enhancing the capability and the safety of USAR Technicians.
- w) There is no other equipment that will interface with the current Paratech cache of NR assets. The current cache has been in use since 2005/6 has one of the least failure/servicing/replacement costs of all NR equipment.
- x) The contract price is £2,108,740 + Freight.

y) Paratech Absolute Raker Shore & Flying Raker Shore (combined)

This paratech system consists of:

- 1*Absolute raker system **£49,050**
- 2*B23 longshore adjustable brace **£2,128**

Paratech HSSK Column Shoring System

This paratech system consists of:

- 6*Longshore 610 strut **£14,844**
- 4*4 foot (4" x 4") Turtle plastics header/footer **£1,200**
- 4*6 foot (4" x 4") Turtle plastics header/footer **£1,400**
- 2*B57 longshore adjustable brace **£2,608**
- 4*Clamp and clevis **£3,116**
- 8*Channel base (US) 4" x 4" **£1,752**
- 2*High strength structural kit **£6,882**

Paratech Rescue Guardian

This paratech system consists of:

- 2*Rescue Guardians **£22,457**

Totals

Total per USAR team is **£105,437**

Total for 19*USAR Teams and 1*Training Cache = **£2,108,740**

- z) Funding for the Paratech Rescue Systems is provided by Home Office as part of the ND2 USAR project.

Risk Management and Health & Implications

- aa) Paratech shoring equipment is designed to support collapsed or partially collapsed structures allowing responders to enter the risk area and carry out rescues of trapped casualties.
- bb) Paratech systems have been utilised to great affect by the FRS since 2004 and all necessary risk assessments are in place.
- cc) As part of this agreement, training will be provided by Vimpex to NR based staff. Under the Lead Authority agreement Home Office provide funding for training on all National Resilience equipment. Training on new equipment such as referred to in this report will be conducted prior to the equipment being made available for operational response.

Environmental Implications

- dd) The procurement of Paratech Rescue System aligns with sustainability goals by maintaining existing equipment specifications, thereby reducing the environmental impact associated with introducing new Rescue Systems that are not compatible with the existing rescue systems.
- ee) Continuing with the current Paratech Rescue System avoids additional manufacturing demands, this system is a woodless system that can be used over and over, minimises waste from discontinued equipment, and promotes a responsible environmental practice within the procurement process.

Contribution to Our Vision:	<i>To be the best Fire & Rescue Service in the UK.</i>
Our Purpose:	<i>Here to serve, Here to protect, Here to keep you safe.</i>

- ff) This proposal contributes to Merseyside Fire & Rescue Service's vision of being the best in the UK by:
 - (a) Ensuring readiness: Securing reliable, compliant Paratech equipment enables swift, effective responses to USAR incidents, directly enhancing public safety.
 - (b) Fostering collaboration: Maintaining interoperability with the USAR teams that supports a unified, large-scale emergency response, showcasing leadership in National Resilience.
 - (c) Demonstrating accountability:, Ensuring resource efficiency and reinforcing public trust in the Service's commitment to protection and financial responsibility.
 - (d) This approach embodies the Service's commitment to serve, protect, and keep the community safe.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NONE

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

MFRA **M**erseyside **F**ire and **R**escue **A**uthority

MFRS **M**erseyside **F**ire and **R**escue **S**ervice

ND2 **N**ew **D**imensions **2**

USAR **U**rban **S**earch and **R**escue