



Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (MFRA) are responsible for providing fire and rescue services for Merseyside's 1.4 million people. This currently includes delivering fire and rescue services from three community stations in Knowsley located at Kirkby, Huyton and Whiston.

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 million 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. 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.

## **Mergers**

To save £6.3 million 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 would be in Liverpool but hasn't been identified yet.

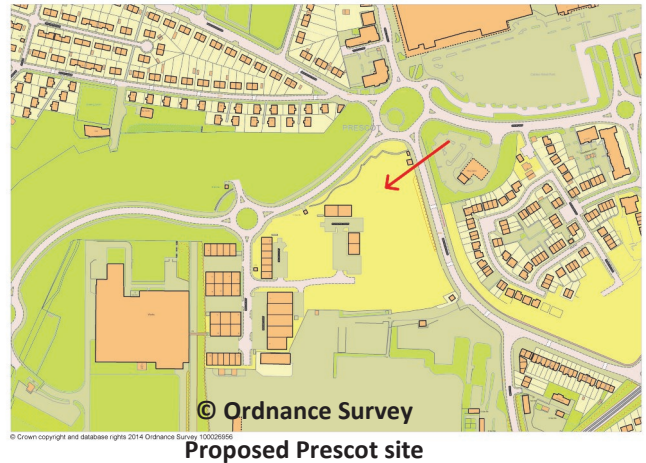
In Knowsley, the proposal is to close Huyton and Whiston fire stations and build a new station at a site on Manchester Road, Prescot.

Over the last ten years, incidents across Merseyside have been reduced by 55% (18,428 incidents). Huyton has seen a fall of 76.7% (from 1,764 incidents attended during 2004/05 to 411 during 2013/14) and Whiston a reduction of 55.9% (from 891 incidents attended during 2004/05 to 393 during 2013/14).

Prescot would have two fire appliances, one crewed by wholetime firefighters (24) and the second by wholetime retained. 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.

The new station would have training facilities, rooms which local community groups can use and may also provide facilities for Merseyside Police.

The cost of building a new station is estimated at £2.8 million, £1.77 million of which would come from a Government capital grant and the rest from Authority Reserves. If we move to one new station and close two old stations there will be £863,000 saved every year by the reduction in 22 firefighter posts. The reduction will be achieved through not replacing retiring firefighters.



MFRA has already carried out engagement with the public in Knowsley. Public meetings were held in Huyton and Whiston and a forum of Knowsley residents also considered alternative ways of making the cuts necessary to meet our grant reduction.



**Existing Station design similar to proposed Prescot Site**

The forum considered the options of station mergers, station closures, crewing stations only during the daytime or using people from local communities to be trained as community retained firefighters. The overwhelming preference, as staying the same was not an option,

was for station mergers.

If the merger takes place, the average response time from Prescot would be five minutes nine seconds compared to five minutes 25 seconds currently for incidents occurring within the Huyton area and five minutes two seconds currently for incidents occurring within the Whiston area.

The Authority is interested in how reasonable the public and other stakeholders think our plans for Knowsley are given the major cuts we continue to face. We are now embarking on an extensive consultation programme in Knowsley before any final decisions are made. This will involve public meetings at Rainhill High School, Prescot, 7:30pm, 10th June; The Lord Derby Academy, Huyton, 6:00pm, 12th June; St Edmund Arrowsmith, Whiston 6:00pm, 17th June; focus groups, a stakeholders' meeting and an on-line survey on [www.merseyfire.gov.uk/surveys/knowsleymerger.htm](http://www.merseyfire.gov.uk/surveys/knowsleymerger.htm). The public meetings in June will be publicised on our website and in the local media. Or write to Peter Rushton, Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, Bridle Road, Bootle, L30 4Yd or phone me on 0151-296-4557.