

Addressed to:

The Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority
The Chief Executive of the County Council
The Clerk to the Fire and Rescue Authority
The London Commissioner
The Chief Fire Officer

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Publication of the Community Right to Buy and Community Right to Challenge consultation documents

1. Background

1.1 As part of the provisions in the Localism Bill, two consultation documents were published on 4 February 2011 in respect of two proposed Rights, the Community Right to Buy and the Community Right to Challenge. Neil O'Connor Director of Fire Resilience and Emergencies Directorate subsequently has written to Chief Fire Officers and Chairs of Fire and Rescue Authorities on the 8 February 2011, to make them aware of this.

2. Implications for Fire and rescue Authorities

2.1 On 4 February the Government published two consultation documents to assist the Department for Communities and Local Government in the development of the detail of the regulations in respect of two Rights which are included in the Localism Bill provisions.

- **Community Right to Buy:**
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/righttobuyconsultation> - This consultation is about the provisions designed to make it easier for community groups to take over buildings and land. These facilities could include their village shop or the last remaining pub in the village, their community centre, children's centre or library building. It is important to note that the Community Right to Buy only relates to assets not services
- **Community Right to Challenge:**
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/localgovernment/righttochallengeconsultation> - This consultation is about how voluntary and community groups, parish councils and relevant authority staff will be able to challenge to deliver local public services on behalf of the authority. It is important to note that the Community Right to Challenge applies only to services e.g. back office processes, but not to functions e.g. Regulatory Reform Order enforcement. We would draw your attention in particular to Sections 2 & 3 of the document and the questions.

2.2 The closing date for both consultations is **5pm Tuesday 3 May 2011**.

2.3 Throughout the consultation period Department for Communities and Local Government are speaking to a wide range of interested parties about the Community Right to Buy and Community Right to Challenge. The Department will be holding the following consultation events:

- 9 March in Manchester
- 22 March in Bristol
- 31 March in Birmingham
- 13 April in London.

2.4 More details about the events are available on the Department's website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/corporate/>.

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Publication of the Community Right to Buy and Community Right to Challenge consultation documents

2.5 If you would be interested in attending a consultation event to discuss both or either Right, please email crtchallenge@communities.gsi.gov.uk or crtbuy@communities.gsi.gov.uk or write to:

Community Rights Consultation Team
Department for Communities and Local Government
5/A3 Eland House
Bressenden Place
London
SW1E 5DU

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For further information please contact:

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Business Continuity Management

1. Background

1.1 The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser has written to all Chief Fire Officers on 3 February 2011 requesting an update on Fire and Rescue Authorities' developments in Business Continuity Management arrangements subsequent to the Audit Commission's survey last year. Responses are requested by Friday 18 March 2011.

2. Business Continuity Management Issues

2.1 The Audit Commission published its report 'Business Continuity Management in the Fire and Rescue Service', in September 2010. The report found all Fire and Rescue Authorities had 'satisfactory' Business Continuity plans in place. The report did however highlight a number of areas where further work was needed. The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser has been asked by the Department for Communities Fire and Rescue Minister to follow this up with Fire and Rescue Authorities to ensure progress is maintained in this vitally important area.

2.2 Fire and Rescue Authorities have been requested to provide a brief description of developments in their Business Continuity Management arrangements since the Audit Commission's original survey which was conducted last year. In addition information has also been requested as to the extent to which Fire and Rescue Authorities have entered into reinforcement schemes under section 13 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

2.3 The Audit Commission Report is available at: <http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/SiteCollectionDocuments/AuditCommissionReports/NationalStudies/20100915businesscontinuity.pdf>.

For further information please contact:

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Products and legacy assets from the FiReControl project

1. Background

- 1.1 The current consultation - *The future of fire and rescue control services in England* - identifies a number of legacy assets from the FiReControl project with significant value to Fire and Rescue Services in future. This item summarises progress on some of these and gives information on where and how the guidance can be accessed.

2. Airwave Service Code of Connection

- 2.1 Fire and Rescue Services that want to connect their control room directly into the Airwave infrastructure, or connect mobile data terminals (or other peripheral devices) to Firelink radios, will need to obtain a connection certificate from the Airwave Accreditation Panel. A set of documents on the code of connection will be placed on the Chief Fire Officers' Association website.

3. Ways of Working

- 3.1 Operational staff from many Fire and Rescue Services contributed a great deal of time and expertise in working with the national FiReControl team and main contractor to develop these common ways of working. The outcome of this work was a suite of documents. Although the documents were developed for FiReControl and in places reflect the characteristics of the national system that FiReControl sought to introduce, they provide examples of standardised policies and procedures that could be used by Fire and Rescue Services seeking to pool their control arrangements with others.
- 3.2 These set out the common processes associated with the following control room and supporting activities:
- Call management, incident management and mobilisation
 - Mobile data terminal applications, outlining common data procedures
 - Fire and rescue service data exchange, including the basis for common support applications
 - Organisation of data to be used by a common system.
- 3.3 These documents will be placed on the Chief Fire Officers' Association's website.

4. Middleware

- 4.1 Middleware comprises a package of technology developed specifically for the Fire and Rescue Services following a programme of work undertaken by a number of Fire and Rescue Services.
- 4.2 The technology could be used to support closer collaboration, shared services and other business improvements. For example, it provides an interface for data exchange between two separate systems and can manage resources on the ground more efficiently.
- 4.3 Following a 'proof of concept' exercise in Tyne & Wear Fire and Rescue Service and evaluation of responses to the invitation to quote, the Partnership, Process and Systems Improvement Project team, under Chair Graham Stagg – Chief Fire Officer of Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service - is considering the business case further.
- 4.4 The aim is appoint a preferred supplier and make available an Office of Government Commerce model contract with supporting Middleware documentation for any Fire and Rescue Authority wishing to use this technology.

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Products and legacy assets from the FiReControl project

5. Data Sets

5.1 The national data sets listed below have been divided by individual Fire and Rescue Service boundaries and placed on the Data Custodians' area of Unicorn so they can be downloaded. Guidance on how the data can be used and updated is included where necessary.

5.2 Fire and Rescue Service Data Custodians were advised of this on 3 February (Unicorn notification) and warned that the Department would not be maintaining the FiReControl sites on Unicorn from April 2011. They were urged to download all information needed soon.

5.3 The data sets are:

- British Waterway's assets on rivers and canals
- Location and identification of BT phone boxes
- Information about fire hydrants from water companies
- Highways Agency data on various aspects of motorways and major trunk roads
- Information on side streets
- Petrochemical pipelines
- National Grid network assets
- Office for National Statistics index of place names.

6. For further information contact:

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Firefighters' pension scheme valuation 2011

1. Background

1.1 This item is to remind Fire and Rescue Authorities of the firefighters' pension scheme valuation which is due to commence on the 31 March 2011.

2. Firefighters' pension scheme valuation 2011

2.1 As authorities will be aware, the Government Actuary's Department will carry out a valuation of the two firefighters' pension schemes as at 31 March 2011. The main purpose of the valuation is to assist the Department for Communities and Local Government, in making a determination on the required level of employer contributions under each scheme.

2.2 The last valuation assessed the schemes as at 31 March 2007. In line with the previous valuation, this valuation should, in particular, seek to:

- review the demographic experience of the scheme
- assess the cost of benefits accruing to firefighters in the future, and
- place a value on the benefits accrued by firefighters in respect of services up to the valuation date.

2.3 The Government Actuary's Department has written a specification for the valuation and which was provided to Fire and Rescue Authorities on 18 February 2011 for onward transmission to their individual systems administrator. The aim is for Fire and Rescue Authorities to be able to start downloading data on 31 March.

2.4 The intention is for authorities to complete this exercise, including running data checks, within two months for onward transmission to the Government Actuary's Department and the Department for Communities and Local Government.

2.5 This timescale will enable the Government Actuary's Department to have completed the valuation by February 2012. It is important that authorities adhere to the timetable for return of data as the data and the outcome of the valuation is expected to be an important component in any development of pension arrangements following the outcome of the Hutton Commission's review of public service pensions.

For further information please contact:

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Firefighters' Pension Team	Email	andrew.cornelius@communities.gsi.gov.uk

Firebuy closure update

1. Background

1.1 On 14 October 2010 it was announced that Firebuy was closing following the review of Arms Length Bodies across government with a managed handover to ensure continuity during the transition. See Fire and Rescue Service Monthly Bulletin Number 4 issued 1 November 2010 <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/fire/fsb42010>.

2. Procurement framework contracts and arrangements for Firebuy's functions

2.1 Neil O'Connor, Director of Fire Resilience and Emergencies Directorate wrote to all Fire and Rescue Authority Chairs and Chief Fire Officers on Monday 28 February 2011 updating them on progress with securing alternative arrangements for Firebuy's functions.

2.2 He explained that following a competitive process, The Consortium for Purchasing and Distribution Limited has been selected as the preferred bidder to manage the framework contracts currently held by Firebuy. It is Firebuy's intention to formally novate these contracts to The Consortium subject to due diligence process. Fire and Rescue Authorities are encouraged to continue using these contracts and thereby support them so that continuity and benefits to the Fire and Rescue Service can be maintained long term.

2.3 The letter also referred to other functions, the management of the New Dimension contract will come into the Department for Communities and Local Government from April 2011, pending further consideration of longer term arrangements. The management of the Integrated Clothing Project, Technical Services and Enprotex will also transfer to the Department for Communities and Local Government from April 2011.

For further information please contact:

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Update on publication process for Department for Communities and Local Government

1. Background

- 1.1 Over the forthcoming months the Department for Communities and Local Government will continue to publish a series of research reports that were commissioned under the previous administration on our website at: <http://www.communities.gov.uk/archived/general-content/corporate/researcharchive/>.
- 1.2 For transparency, all completed work is being published regardless of format or robustness, unless there are issues such as national security which prevent publication. The Department for Communities and Local Government takes no responsibility for any content of the reports or any actions based on the information they contain.

2. Publication Process

- 2.1 Over the next few months the Department will be publishing reports from across the full range of its business, which will be grouped into themed on a particular topic. Two or three of these publication groups will focus on Fire. Those that are already available on the website are as follows:
- A survey of Retained Duty System personnel, former Retained Duty System staff and Fire and Rescue Service Managers – Fire Research Report 4/2011
 - The economic cost of fire: estimates for 2006 – Fire Research Report 2/2011
 - The economic cost of fire: estimates for 2008 – Fire Research Report 3/2011
 - Fire Service Emergency Cover Toolkit major incident risk assessment module background research – Fire Research Report 6/2011.
- 2.2 We will be adding additional fire-related reports over the coming months. Where reports were commissioned under the previous administration the findings are not necessarily a reflection of the current Government's policies and priorities and the Department for Communities and Local Government is publishing these in the interests of transparency.

For further information please contact:

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