

Small Fires Unit / Limited Access Appliance

Report of the Chief Fire Officer

For further information about this report please contact Alan Taylor, Chief Fire Officer, on 01743 260201 or Dave Bishton, District Support Officer, on 01952 580648.

1 Purpose of Report

This report summarises the review of the requirement for a Small Fires Unit (SFU) in the South Telford area, arising from the Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) project. It also considers the difficult access issues in areas of Ironbridge and Broseley and the feasibility of combining the SFU with a Limited Access Appliance (LAA) and Landrover pump (L4P).

2 Recommendations

The Fire Authority is asked to:

- a) Agree not to proceed with the purchase of a Limited Access Appliance;
- b) Agree not to proceed with the purchase of a dedicated Small Fires Unit;
- c) Agree to review the capability of the Landrover pump based at Tweeddale Fire Station to ensure its continued suitability as a Small Fires Unit; and
- d) Agree to bring the second Landrover pump up to the same specification as the current Tweeddale unit.

3 Background

The 2006/07 IRMP process highlighted the need for a vehicle capable of attending small and nuisance fires, particularly in the South Telford area. As a result and following extensive consultation a pilot scheme was introduced at Tweeddale Fire Station using the existing Landrover pump, the L4P. This was to be used as a first strike vehicle for reported small fires and commenced operations in April 2007.

Following various difficulties regarding the mobilisation of the SFU, coupled with the introduction of a Station Manager at Tweedale Fire Station, the project was reinitiated in June 2008. This incorporated the additional remit of assessing the need / viability of a LAA in the areas stated and the possibility of combining the vehicles into a hybrid.

The main premise for the introduction of the SFU was to free major appliance crews to remain available to attend larger, potentially life threatening incidents. It would also allow crews to remain uninterrupted whilst carrying out Community Fire Safety (CFS) activities. For the majority of the pilot the SFU was only staffed between 1400 and 2100 hours. The reason being, that this is when the majority of Watch based CFS activities take place as well as it being the busiest time for 'nuisance fires'. This was changed in July 2008 with the SFU being made available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

4 The case for a Small Fires Unit

The SFU is mobilised to 'nuisance fires' in the South Telford area. The term 'nuisance fire' refers to small fires in the open air. Fire control personnel attempt to obtain sufficient information regarding the incident to ensure the correct and appropriate mobilisation. If they are unsure, a major appliance will always be mobilised rather than the SFU.

The SFU is staffed by a crew of two and therefore consideration is also given by Fire Control to the health and safety of the personnel. This also limits the location and type of incident that it is mobilised to. The provision of additional staffing, if the SFU is combined with the LAA, could result in additional incidents that the Unit could be utilised for. These would include mobilisation to small fires on major roads within the South Telford area as well consideration for its attendance at car fires.

The number of incidents the SFU has been mobilised to since the pilot began in April 2007 up to, and including, 15 September 2008 is **124**.

The 124 mobilisations totalled approximately 90 hours. This equates to 450 hours of CFS time being available for crews without interruption. However, not all of these incidents occurred at times that would have been suitable for such activities to be carried out.

5 of the mobilisations allowed major appliances to respond to other incidents that occurred at or around the same time. These incidents comprised 4 secondary fires and 1 automatic fire alarm.

Whilst the statistical information does not provide sufficient justification to support the purchase of a dedicated SFU, the pilot has confirmed the feasibility of using the L4P to carry out this function when required.

During 'spate' conditions the use of both L4Ps based in the county should be considered for use as a SFU and, if required, relocated during such periods to the areas of highest activity with regard to small fires. Previous examination of such data has shown this to be Telford and Shrewsbury. Staffing would be carried out by Retained Duty System (RDS) staff from Tweedale and Market Drayton or by utilising wholetime personnel if available.

5 Limited Access Solutions

Due to the historic nature of Ironbridge and parts of Broseley there are a number of access problems for major appliances attending incidents in these areas due to their size. However, contingency plans are in place, which has resulted in the adoption of 'dual approach' to incidents in these areas. The net result is a maximum distance, from an appliance to the entrance to the property, of 100 metres for those worst affected. In addition the L4P is added to the predetermined attendance to provide additional assistance to crews attending.

Since 2003 there have been **11** incidents in the area identified as being of limited access in Ironbridge and **2** incidents in the area identified in Broseley. (Maps and photographs indicating the areas identified will be presented at the meeting).

The information recorded for these incidents does not include any issues encountered regarding problems with access so no conclusions can be made in this regard. It should also be borne in mind that if the vehicle is purchased it could be committed as an SFU when an incident occurs in the identified limited access areas; which may result in a delayed response.

The areas that have been identified have been subject to CFS activities with advice and detection being provided as appropriate. Station personnel also liaise regularly with partner agencies in these areas to provide reassurance, guidance and assistance following any concerns of access highlighted by residents.

6 Specification and Types of Vehicle Considered

The specification for the vehicle, as detailed below, centred on the roles it was to carry out:

- 4-wheel drive, this was considered necessary even if the role of L4P was not part of the final remit
- The width of the vehicle was ideally not to exceed 2 metres
- Capable of carrying a crew of 4/5
- The Rosenbauer pump was deemed the best choice for the appliance powered via a power take off from the vehicle engine, not a stand alone engine as currently used in the Land rover L4P
- Minimum 500 Litre water tank
- Automatic transmission would be the ideal choice if available but this is not essential

A list of required equipment is attached at the appendix to the report.

The following vehicles have been considered and have either been discounted for the reasons stated or remain an option for use as an SFU / LAA.

6 Wheeled Land Rover – Due to this being a Carmichael conversion and not supported by Land Rover with regard to warranty, this option was discounted.

Pinzgauer – The manufacturing and support base for this type of vehicle has now been returned to South Africa. European support is being sourced but no confirmation of this was available. This, coupled with the fact that the vehicle is now being manufactured primarily for the military with all models being armour plated, again led to this vehicle being discounted.

Iveco 4X4 Daily – Iveco are launching a new 4-wheel drive version of the Daily model. Currently this vehicle is not available and will remain so until early 2009. The specification appears to meet the requirements for use as SFU / LAA / L4P but this can not be confirmed until the vehicle is in full production and available in this country.

Due to the requirements of an L4P and the compromises that would be required, and as the above vehicles are not available, it is not considered viable to have one vehicle carry out the role of SFU, LAA and L4P. Therefore, for the following vehicles to be considered the current L4P should be retained.

Mercedes Sprinter 515 medium length Van – This vehicle is being used by neighbouring Brigades for specific roles; both as a SFU in Staffordshire and LAA in Hereford and Worcestershire. This is a tried and tested vehicle and would meet the requirements with regard to size and specification for the SFU / LAA.

This vehicle can be built/supplied to our specification by both Angloco Limited and John Dennis Coachbuilders.

Renault Mascot 160.65 – This vehicle is in use with various Brigades with the conversion being carried out by Emergency One.

7 Advantages/Disadvantages of the Solutions Discussed

There are a number of advantages and disadvantages to be gained from the purchase and implementation of a permanent SFU / LAA.

Advantages

- Maintain the availability of major appliances for life threatening incidents

- Allow wholetime crews to carry out CFS / Operational Training activities uninterrupted. (Current District targets for such activities are being met by Station personnel)
- Provide an improved response to the limited access areas identified
- Provide additional opportunities for Tweedale RDS to attend incidents. This has been greatly reduced following the introduction of a wholetime appliance at the station

Disadvantages

- The cost of purchase, in the region of £100,000, may be better spent on dedicated Community Safety activities, as a need has not been clearly demonstrated to justify purchase
- Even when crews are attending incidents classed as ‘nuisance fires’ they are still gaining experience and helping to ensure competences are maintained. Therefore limiting this response may lead to competences not being maintained
- As stated, due to contingency plans being in place for the limited access areas identified, the cost of a dedicated appliance may be considered excessive
- The addition of a further appliance at Tweedale Fire Station places an increased burden on the management team to ensure all appliances are staffed and available when required
- Increased pressure on Fire Control personnel to ensure sufficient interrogation of callers is made to allow the correct mobilisation with regard to small fires

8 Financial Implications

The current capital budget plans include £100,000 in each of the three years for a Small Fires Unit. It was envisaged that these capital amounts would be found from the capital reserve. £14,000 a year would be found for the eventual replacement of these units from the revenue budget.

If the recommendations in the report are accepted, then resources will be freed up in the capital reserve, and the revenue account savings will be:-

	2008/09		2009/10		2010/11	
	£000		£000		£000	
Reduced replacement provision for the Units	14	-	28	-	42	-
Ongoing costs of £20,000 at Market Drayton	3		3		3	
Net revenue savings	11	-	25	-	39	-

9 Legal Comment

There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

10 Equality Impact Assessment

An Initial Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached to this report.

11 Appendix

Small Fires Unit Equipment List

12 Background Papers

Shropshire and Wrekin Fire Authority

20 December 2006, Report 13, Integrated Risk Management Plan Consultation results

30 April 2007, Report 15, Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group Update

18 July 2007, Report 16, Integrated Risk Management Planning Members' Working Group Update

Implications of all of the following have been considered and, where they are significant (i.e. marked with an asterisk), the implications are detailed within the report itself.

Balanced Score Card		Integrated Risk Management Planning	*
Business Continuity Planning		Legal	*
Capacity	*	Member Involvement	*
Civil Contingencies Act		National Framework	
Comprehensive Performance Assessment		Operational Assurance	*
Efficiency Savings	*	Retained	*
Environmental		Risk and Insurance	
Financial	*	Staff	*
Fire Control/Fire Link	*	Strategic Planning	*
Information Communications and Technology		West Midlands Regional Management Board	
Freedom of Information / Data Protection / Environmental Information		Equality Impact Assessment	*



Directorate		Department/ Section	
Name of officers completing (minimum of 2)	Jon Wagstaff Dave Bishton	Job title	Head of District Performance DSO/TW
Name of Policy/Service/Activity to be assessed		Date of assessment	
New or existing policy	New		

1) Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/service/activity (referred to as policy in document) and also consider the following:

- What are the key performance indicators?
- Who is intended to benefit or be affected by it? (is this positive or negative)
- What outcomes do you want to achieve from this policy?

Local performance indicators for Community Safety and Operational Training activities.
Response times if major appliances remain available.

1 a) Who implements this policy?

Deputy Chief Fire Officer

2) How does your current policy meet the needs around age, disability, race, religion/belief, gender, sexual orientation and caring responsibilities?	None – Existing CFS targets continue to be met.
Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? E.g. physical or other.	No
2a) Where do you think improvements could be made?	N/A
2b) Have issues of equality been identified in this area of service	No

delivery by SFRS?							
3) Have we had any specific feedback or complaints on this area? Is there evidence that this has come from any of these specific groups: race, gender, disability, religion/belief, age, sexual orientation, caring responsibilities?	No						
3a) Do we have any feedback from managers or frontline staff on this policy?	Monitoring forms were completed by staff regarding initial issues relating to the use and equipment used on the Unit. Issues relating to limited access were raised and these were addressed with contingency planning and the project.						
3b) Is there any feedback from voluntary/community organisations?	No						
3c) Is there any research / models of practice that may inform SFRS view?	Other Brigades.						
4) Detail the Actions / Improvement areas you have identified, or the need for further research. (These must be put onto the Action and Improvements Form FB 367 for consideration by Steering Group) If you have found considerable actions or research this will require you to proceed to a full assessment.	No						
5) Should the policy now proceed to a full impact assessment?	<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Y</td> <td>N</td> <td>Please detail</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td>√</td> <td></td> </tr> </table>	Y	N	Please detail		√	
Y	N	Please detail					
	√						

**I am satisfied that this policy has been successfully impact assessed.
I understand the Impact Assessment of this policy is a statutory obligation and that, as owners of this policy, we take responsibility for the completion and quality of this process.**

Line Manager		Date	
Please note that this impact assessment will be scrutinised by the Equality and Diversity Officer.			

Appendix D

Equality Impact Assessment Actions and Improvements Form

When you have completed the Equality Impact Assessment a number of actions or improvement areas will have been identified, it is important that these are captured and put into normal work activities. In some cases there maybe a few small actions required in other cases you will need to process to a full impact assessment, you will need to complete this form for both of these situations when you identify actions that need completing, or have identified that future investigation will require specific resources that need to be put into the business planning process.

This form is to allow you to record the outcome from your impact assessments so that the actions or improvements can be carried out by your Department and monitored and in some cases approved by the Equality and Diversity Steering Group. Please ensure that this form is given to your line manager for discussion at your team or one to one meetings for incorporation into individual work plans.

Directorate:	Department:
Brigade Order/activity that has identified need, issue/objective:	EQIA No:

Action	Comments inc. Details of Consultations required/carried out	Resources / Finances allocated to this objective/target	How will this be monitored to ensure it is effective	Responsible for this action	Due Date	Progress

Head of Department		Date completed	
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This form must be sent to Management Support when completed for monitoring and/or consideration by the Equality & Diversity Steering Group

Small Fires Unit Equipment List

Suggested Location	Quantity	Item	
Cab	2	BA Sets	
	2	2 Spare BA Cylinders	
	1	BA Rapid Deployment Board	
	1	Nominal Role Board	
	2	Adalit L1000 Rechargeable Torches	
	2	Dragon Hand Lamps	
	3	Hand Held Radios	
	1	First Aid Pouch	
	1	Resuscitator	
	1	Spare Oxygen Cylinder	
	1	Box Of Surgical Gloves	
	4	Reflective Surcoats	
	1	Incident Command Surcoat	
	1	1 Dry Powder Extinguisher	
	5	Ordnance Survey Maps	
	1	Telford Street Map	
	1	Phillips Shropshire Map	
	1	Fire Ground Feeding Box	
	1	SIPs & SOPs Folder	
	1	OIC Hand-Held Spot Light	
	4	Goggles	
	4	Dust Masks	
	1	Thermal Imaging Camera	
	Lockers	1	Double Headed Stand Pipe
		1	Hydrant Key & Bar
		1	False Spindle
8		Lengths 45mm Hose	
(5 minimum)			
2		Lengths 70mm Hose	
2		Delta Automatic Attack 500 Mainline Branch	
3		Lengths Of Small Diameter Hard Suction Hose	
1	DP Extinguisher 6 Kg		
Lockers	4	Life Jackets	
	1	Floating Line	
	1	30m Line	
	6	Blue Lights	
	6	Traffic Cones	
	2	Warning Triangle	
	2	Portable Rechargeable Scene Lights	

Suggested Location	Quantity	Item
Lockers	1	Large Axe
	2	Fire-Fighters Axe
	1	Sledge Hammer
	1	Hooligan Bar
	1	Mulit Purpose Saw
	1	Electric Saw Battery Operated
	1	Electric Saw Blade Pack
	1	Set Of Bolt Cutters
	1	Bow Saw
	1	Shovel
	1	Spade
	1	Tool Bag
	4	Beaters
	2	Knapsack Sprayers
	2	Strops For Winch
	Roof	1