



DEVON & SOMERSET FIRE & RESCUE AUTHORITY

REPORT REFERENCE NO.	CSCPC/11/3
MEETING	COMMUNITY SAFETY AND CORPORATE PLANNING COMMITTEE
DATE OF MEETING	7 JULY 2011
SUBJECT OF REPORT	SPECIALIST RESCUE - UPDATE
LEAD OFFICER	ACFO TREVOR STRATFORD
RECOMMENDATIONS	<i>That the report be noted.</i>
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>This is a progress report on the specialist rescue implementation project, and the involvement of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) in the development of local and national flood response arrangements. The report sets out, amongst other things, the progress made against the five year plan, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • four Specialist Rescue Teams (SRTs) are now live for water rescue; two SRTs fully live for rope rescue, two partial status; animal rescue training underway; level two water rescue training for all operational firefighters now complete; • four new SRT vehicles now on the run; • DSFRS now chairing CFOA Inland Water Technical Group; • DSFRS works closely with the Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) to produce final draft of national flood rescue concept of ops; • Four DSFRS boat teams and two SRAs on national assets register.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	None
EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	None
APPENDICES	None
LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technical Rescue Report (Ref CSCPC/07/7) - 1 November 2007 • Technical Rescue Strategy Document April 2007

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to update the Committee on the progress of the specialist rescue implementation project, and the involvement of Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) in the development of local and national flood response arrangements.

2. PROGRESS OF SPECIALIST RESCUE WITHIN DSFRS

- 2.1 The project is progressing well and is expected to be completed within the original five-year timescaleⁱ.
- 2.2 All four Specialist Rescue Teams (SRTs) are now on the run with water rescue level three, and have been categorised as Department for Food, Environment and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) 'team type C' (i.e., with non-powered boat capability). Two teams, located at Camels Head and Special Operations, are also now live with rope rescue level three. The remaining two stations, Bridgwater and Barnstaple who, having completed their rope rescue training, are partially on the run and will be fully live as soon as Specialist Rescue Supervisor training has been completed in October 2011.
- 2.3 The Specialist Rescue Supervisor Course is a bespoke course, designed in-house, with the purpose of equipping junior officers with the skills and knowledge needed to safely supervise an SRT. This includes the requirement to work within a Local Resilience Forum or national response framework. It is anticipated that supervisor training will be completed by October of this year with the remaining two teams going fully on the run soon after. It is also hoped that this course may have a commercial potential.
- 2.4 All four teams are currently undergoing a two-part large animal rescue course that will enable the Service to comply with recently published Chief Fire Officer Association (CFOA) guidance on the safe and effective rescue of animals. This will be complete by the end of July 2011. The Service is working with Bicton Agricultural College to provide this training and early indications are that the Service will have jointly produced a high quality, well received course again with commercial potential.
- 2.5 The four specialist rescue vehicles are now in Service and on the run. Driver training is now complete. New boat trailers are to be built that will work specifically with the Specialist Rescue Vehicles. They will be designed to carry inflatable mud mats, fuel, and ancillary equipment for the boat, as well as being adaptable for any future requirements that may be placed on the trailer to enhance the Service's capability.
- 2.6 The three year project to up-skill all operational staff to water rescue level two (wading rescue capability) has now been completed. Level two is now the base line standard for all firefighters within DSFRS and all new joiners will be trained to this standard. It is likely that DSFRS is one of the first (if not the first) Fire and Rescue Services (FRSs) to achieve this level as a minimum standard. Refresher training is being identified and developed to support this standard.
- 2.7 The final phase (powered rescue boat training) is currently being planned and a project team has been established. This phase is on track to be completed by the end of 2012.

- 2.8 The Service now has 23 Specialist Rescue Advisors (SRAs) who are trained to provide advice and support at specialist rescue and adverse weather incidents. The SRAs provide a range of functions including: daily weather monitoring and RA, technical flood response advice to bronze, silver and gold commands, search management at water incidents, inter agency working at specialist rescue incidents, and a working knowledge of relevant LRF emergency plans. Two of the SRAs are also on the DEFRA national assets register as strategic flood advisors. The results of having this provision of SRAs within service is still showing to be highly beneficial in incidents, from the feedback received from public, crews and other agencies.

3. CFOA INLAND WATER TECHNICAL/STRATEGY GROUP

- 3.1 DSFRS is actively contributing to the formation of a national flood response framework through its involvement with the CFOA Inland Water Technical Group. The group is chaired by AM Alex Hanson and the secretary is GM Laurie Adams. The Inland Water Technical/Strategy Group (IWTG) has been working closely with DEFRA (the statutory lead for flood rescue) on the national flood rescue framework for some time.
- 3.2 In 2010, DEFRA formed the Flood Rescue National Enhancement Project Team (FRNE) to produce the first draft of the FRNE Concept of Operations. This is now a live document and has recently been put to the test during Exercise Watermark (see paragraph 7 below).
- 3.3 The IWTG worked closely with the DEFRA FRNE project team to produce elements of the first draft, and AM Hanson and GM Adams have since been working with DEFRA to produce the final draft.
- 3.4 The IWTG have also produced a new FRS water rescue manual which will be published when the FRNE Concept of Operations has been completed.

4. DEVELOPMENT OF SPECIALIST OFFICERS

- 4.1 AM Hanson and GM Adams are currently working with DEFRA, CFOA and CFRA to align the FRNE Flood Rescue Concept of Operations with the National Coordination Advisory Framework (NCAF) for national resilience. This work includes the establishment and development of Subject Matter Advisors (SMAs) and a National Resilience Assurance Team (NRAT) specifically for flooding incidents.

5. NATIONAL ASSETS REGISTER

- 5.1 DEFRA has now established a national assets register for flood rescue resources and specialist advice, and this includes resources from both the FRS and the voluntary sector; again this was put to the test during Exercise Watermark.
- 5.2 DSFRS has four specialist teams currently on the register available for national deployment. These teams are currently registered as 'team type C' (i.e., water rescue team with non-powered boat), but this will be upgraded to 'team type B' (team with powered rescue boat) on completion of the rescue boat training. There is currently a project running to ensure that the Service has suitable policies and procedures in place for managing the deployment, support and welfare of any team that is mobilised out of the Service area.
- 5.3 DSFRS also has two officers who are on the national assets register as strategic flood advisors and who are available for national response in that role.

6. POWERED RESCUE BOAT CAPABILITY AND THE DEFRA GRANT SCHEME

- 6.1 At the beginning of 2011, DSFRS successfully applied to DEFRA for a grant of £75,000 to meet the cost of training the Service's four water rescue teams to Powered Rescue Boat Operator level. This training will begin in the Autumn of this year. The teams already have the boats and trailers, which they are currently using in a non-powered capacity. New trailers are being sourced as identified in section 2.5 of this report due to compatibility issues with the specialist rescue vehicle. The engines for the boats have also been purchased and are currently being commissioned, this will be complete by the end of the summer.
- 6.2 The grant will cover the full cost of training all 100 boat operators. The training will involve two modules: Royal Yacht Association (RYA) Level Two Operator and Powered Rescue Boat Operator. All boat operators must also be Water Rescue Level Three qualified, which has already been completed. The first module, commencing in September will be conducted at the service's RYA training centre in Plymouth, the second commencing in November at the Menai Straights in North Wales, one of only two locations in the UK where the training can be carried out, with realistic representation of flood conditions.
- 6.3 Additionally, the SRT crews will receive marine band vhf radio training to support interagency communication.
- 6.4 Once the training is complete, and the boats have been commissioned, DSFRS will have four inland water/flood rescue boats available; one of the best provisions in the country.

7. EXERCISE WATERMARK

- 7.1 In March 2011, DSFRS took part in the national flood response exercise: Exercise Watermark. This exercise was commissioned by DEFRA as part of the requirements of the Pitt Review. The exercise preparation was led by Environment Agency with DSFRS contributing to the exercise planning process over several months.
- 7.2 This was the largest exercise of its kind to be undertaken in the UK, spanning a seven day period with many rescue agencies, emergency planners, the utilities, the Met Office and Environment Agency taking part; right up to CLG and COBRA level. The Devon and Cornwall Local Resilience Forum were one of the main players on the first day, and members of the Service played at all levels including: Gold, Silver, Bronze, Search and Rescue (SAR) Cell, Scientific and Technical Advice Cell (STAC), Fire Control and the Operations Support Team.
- 7.3 It was also a chance to put Local Resilience Forum (LRF) emergency plans and the Service's own Adverse Weather plan to the test, and many valuable lessons were learnt and some further work identified.
- 7.4 DSFRS continued to play a strategic advisory role to the national exercise throughout the week.

8. LOCAL RESILIENCE FORUM PLANNING

- 8.1 The Service continues to be instrumental in the establishment of LRF Emergency Plans for Flooding and Search and Rescue. The LRF Search and Rescue Forum in particular has become a focus for statutory and volunteer rescue resources, and the establishment of a set of minimum standards of competence and equipment for all rescue teams. This offers an assurance mechanism for issues such as validation, liability and insurance for multiagency working. The model developed in the Devon & Cornwall LRF is currently being adopted by neighbouring LRFs.

TREVOR STRATFORD
ACFO - Director of Service Delivery

ⁱ Technical Rescue Strategy Document, April 2007