Fire and Resilience Programme Highlights – November 2008

This continues the series of monthly ‘highlights’ notes to inform Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and senior staff in the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) of progress with the Programme.

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1.0  **FiReControl**

**REVISED SCHEDULE**

1.1  On 26 November Fire Minister Sadiq Khan made an announcement about the progress of the FiReControl project. The text of his statement to the House of Commons can be found on Communities and Local Government website at [http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/1075274](http://www.communities.gov.uk/statements/corporate/1075274)

1.2  Over the coming month, the Department will work closely with each of the fire and rescue authorities to explain the new schedule and refine it in the light of the authorities’ own organisational plans. This will enable the Department to firm up the schedule and add more detail than is currently available.

1.3  All regions remain in the same order as previously, apart from London which has been brought forward in the regional order.

**BUSINESS CASE**

1.4  Part II of the FiReControl Business Case (the national case) was published on the same day and can be found at [http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/resilienceresponse/firecontrol/businesscase/](http://www.communities.gov.uk/fire/resilienceresponse/firecontrol/businesscase/)

1.5  Part II provides the costs and savings for the Department at national level and includes figures based on the revised schedule.

1.6  It follows publication in July of Part I (the regional case), which set out the operational benefits, costs and savings for every English region of the move to the FiReControl network, answering the question “What does FiReControl mean for each region?”

1.7  At that time, there were outstanding issues for the National Business Case regarding technology, which needed to be worked through in greater detail. We have now developed the way forward and are publishing Part II now, for consultation, in order to share this information as quickly as possible.

1.8  In the light of responses to the consultations on Parts I and II, we will issue a consolidated Business Case in 2009.

2.0  **Firelink**

**ROLLOUT UPDATE**

2.1  **Phase A (Network Build):** Phase A is now complete in the early regions in England and the remaining regions are expected to reach completion over the next few months. All existing control rooms and some 300 pilot vehicles are now connected to the Airwave network.
2.2 **Phase B (Operational Fleet Rollout):** Operational rollout began in the South West region on Monday 24 November. Rollout to subsequent regions will commence at roughly fortnightly intervals, starting with the North East and East Midlands on 1 December, and West Midlands on 12 January 2009.

2.3 **Phase C (Regional Controls):** Installation has already started for the communications interface in the first FiReControl Regional Control Centre (RCC), in the South West. Now that the FiReControl revised schedule has been announced, dates will be fixed for installation work in the remaining RCCs.

**USER GUIDE**

2.4 A new FRS User Guide for Firelink is now available. It provides a clear and concise summary of each key topic area related to delivery of the Firelink project. Each topic summary contains references and links to more detailed information. The Guide will initially be available in PDF format. Those delivering the project will be able to request access to a secure online version that will be updated in line with project delivery.

2.5 You can request a PDF of the User Guide by contacting Rebekah Ford, Firelink Communications Manager on 01273 365213 or by email Rebekah.ford@mottmac.com

3.0 **New Dimension**

3.1 A Public Accounts Committee (PAC) hearing was held on 10 November to consider the National Audit Office's (NAO's) value for money report on the New Dimension Programme (reported in last month's "Highlights"). CLG officials giving evidence to the PAC were Peter Housden, the Permanent Secretary, Sir Ken Knight, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and Mike Reed, Deputy Director and former policy lead for the New Dimension Programme.

3.2 The questioning covered all the main areas of the NAO report including: project, procurement and financial management; use of consultants; command and control; training and oversight of the Fire Service College; and the overall timescales for the programme. The Committee's report and recommendations are expected to be published later this year or early in 2009.

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