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The Clerks to the Joint Fire and Rescue Boards
The Chief Executive, Dumfries and Galloway Council
The Chief Executive, Fife Council
The Chief Officer

2 March 2010

Dear Sir/Madam

**SCOTTISH FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE CIRCULAR 4/2010: IN LIFE
MANAGEMENT OF THE FIRELINK RADIO SYSTEM IN SCOTLAND**

This circular explains how the Scottish Government will take forward in-life management of the Firelink radio system in Scotland - in partnership with Fire and Rescue Services and Airwave. The circular sets out guidelines on the roles which FRS should undertake and explains how the Scottish Government (SG) will manage Airwave throughout the in-life phase of the Firelink contract. Finally, for completeness, the circular sets out arrangements by which the SG will work with all users in Scotland to manage and steward the Airwave network to ensure that it remains an efficient and effective communication network. The circular has been developed following consultation with CFOA(S).

Background

Delivery of the firelink project will bring all Fire Services in the UK onto the same national radio system as their Police and ultimately Ambulance colleagues. With the numerous other emergency and public service users using the system, it is clear that this represents a major investment by Government in a highly resilient communication system for category 1 and 2 responders, especially the blue lights services. In light of this, it is important that all parties work together to secure the full benefits of this investment from the public purse.

Under Firelink, Airwave have been commissioned by the three governments of Scotland, England and Wales to provide a digital wide areas radio communications system for Fire and Rescue services, offering both voice and data communication capability. The managed service includes the provision of end to end voice and data capability between Control Rooms and mobile fire resources and provides a resilient bearer for mobilisation of both Fire Stations and mobile resources. Airwave is responsible for both the management and maintenance of this capability and the contract stipulates the quality of service and the coverage to be

provided and mandates a high degree of resilience for the system. Service credits apply if Airwave does not meet the set criteria during the system life.

Scottish Government Role

The Scottish Government is funding the full capital procurement costs and all revenue costs associated with the systems operation and use for the duration of the current spending review period (to 2010/11). Consideration will be given to the continuance of this arrangement throughout life of the contract as part of the next Spending Review. Under the terms of the existing contract, the Scottish Government is responsible for the provision of the system within Scotland and will undertake the formal contract management of Airwave, working in partnership with FRSs. A key element of the project management role will be to ensure that Airwave fulfils fully the terms of the contract into which they have entered. However, as part of this SG has a responsibility to ensure that the equipment is installed and used in the manner specified in the contract in order to ensure that no impediment is presented to Airwave in the discharge of its contractual obligations.

Effective operation of the Firelink contract is dependent on the establishment of good partnership working between Airwave, Fire and Rescue Services and the Scottish Government. In order to realise this and deliver effective management of the contract in Scotland, the Scottish Government will establish a **Firelink Project Board** to oversee the project. The Board will comprise the Firelink Scotland policy client, the project management team, Airwave and a senior user representative from CFOA(S). The Firelink Project Board will be supported by a Regional Forum involving appropriate representatives of each FRS with responsibility for the tactical management of the Firelink system within the FRS. An early task of these Groups will be to initiate discussion on the most appropriate mechanism to be used to define the guidelines for operating the contract in Scotland (e.g. a MOU between SG and FRAs). It is recognised that as all Scottish FRS are now working with Airwave, these discussions must be expedited.

Should any disputes arise out of the above arrangement, it is proposed that these would be referred to the Chief Fire and Rescue Service Advisor who would, following consultation with relevant parties, make appropriate recommendation(s) for resolution.

As a major resilient communication project, the Scottish Firelink Board will be expected to feed into the recently formed Resilient Telecoms Group of the Resilient Advisory Board for Scotland (RABS).

FRS roles

While the above structure will oversee the management of Firelink in Scotland, there are a number of elements of in-life management which are more appropriately handled by individual FRSs. As such it is envisaged that each FRS will appoint or nominate a suitable Firelink service life manager with responsibility for controlling all aspects of the in-life management to ensure FRS needs are identified and communicated to the SG, and to act as a first point of contact for the SG Firelink team. This nominee should also ensure that FRS affecting issues are correctly channelled within the FRS to minimise any risk to the FRS arising from service affecting issues. The FRS may also wish to consider whether the same person would act as the principle contact for initial consultations on the replacement of the Firelink system mentioned above. In practice, FRS may wish to distribute elements of Firelink management in accordance with corporate arrangements.

The following list of tasks, which is not exhaustive, has been identified as most appropriately carried out within FRS.

- Reporting of all Firelink related faults affecting the FRS by the agreed methods;
- Monitoring of the appropriate Airwave information provisions, e.g. Service Management Terminal (SMT) or other appropriate media for applicable Requests For Change (RFC's) and other issues which may affect the FRS, assessing the affects of such activities, and initiating appropriate action within the FRS;
- Auditing of Firelink assets / terminal management;
- Liaison with and escalation of issues as necessary to SG;
- Liaison with Airwave maintainers to facilitate access for remedial work;
- Compliance with FRS published security codes of connection;
- Procurement of additional Firelink services from the call-off contract e.g. additional coverage, de-installation and/or re-installation work, procurement of additional radio equipment and installation of such;
- Monitoring and managing effective use of the system in accordance with agreed protocols;
- Collaboration with SG in connection of development of the Firelink system and associated protocols and procedures;
- Collaboration with SG, other blue light services and other Airwave users as necessary, e.g. local authority emergency planners with regard to interoperability.
- Collaboration with SG in connection with the specification and procurement of the replacement radio system required at the end of the Firelink contract period;

It is suggested that each FRS will identify a Firelink Lifetime manager to co-ordinate and manage the wide range of Firelink activities. This may be a natural progression for the Firelink Project Manager or it may be a new role. The role would be to take full responsibility on behalf of the FRS with all issues to do with the Firelink system including continuation training and tactical advice on operational use of the Firelink system.

The equivalent role in Police forces is generally dedicated to this one task but each FRS will need to determine if the role requires a full time post and also assess the complexity of, and the appropriate grade for, this role.

Not all of the work within the FRS will be appropriately managed by one person and indeed one of the principle roles of the Firelink Manager is seen as that of a facilitator acting as a conduit for both Airwave and SG Firelink Management when dealing with an FRS directing ensuing communications to the most appropriate section of the FRS.

It is envisaged that some of the routine day to day activities detailed above will be most appropriately dealt with by staff in the FRS Control Room as a consequence of their 24 hour service arrangements, but there is a significant strategic element which will require a more senior manager with a wider remit to effectively deliver.

SG Tasks

While FRS will undertake a number of elements of in-life management, it is recognised that there are elements of project management which are more appropriately handled within a suitable Scottish Government structure. To fulfil this role, it is anticipated that a small team will be established within Scottish Resilience to manage SG contractual responsibilities for

Firelink during system life. The following key tasks are identified as to falling to this team to take forward:-

- Ensuring the effective use by the Scottish FRS of the Firelink system;
- Initiation and monitoring of Scotland wide or multi FRS affecting network faults;
- Monitoring and appropriate decision making for all Scotland wide or multi FRS Requests For Change including planned maintenance, site outages and management of the High Resilience network, in consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- Monitoring and appropriate decision making in conjunction with CLG/WAG for all Scotland affecting Change Controls raised for the Firelink system, in consultation with relevant stakeholders;
- Provision of best practice service management processes to assist the Scottish FRS to gain maximum benefit from the Firelink system;
- Acting as the escalation point for all FRS faults as necessary;
- Liaison with FireControl on future National resilience arrangements;
- Supporting liaison with the Police (NPIA) and Department of Health (DH) through appropriate Tri-Service arrangements;
- Liaison with Airwave to affect Continuous Service Improvement;
- Analysis of Service Management reporting data for trends and accuracy;
- Review of all Scottish FRS' Call Detail Records (CDRs) provided monthly by Airwave on CD to ensure good practice and VFM;
- Review of SM data to ensure appropriate Service Credits are received and correctly processed;
- Development of service charge, service credit and any relevant recharge processes;
- The provision of expert advice to FRSs on Firelink and other communications matters; and finally,
- Working under a broader tri service structure and with close liaison with CFOA(S), and FRSs, the development of the specification for, and the procurement of, a suitable replacement radio system for the Scottish Resilience community when the Airwave/Firelink contracts expire.

Scottish Tri -service Structure

The structure described above takes the existing contract delivery management model and formalises roles and responsibilities to support the operation and management of the Firelink contract in-life in Scotland. It is also envisaged that the structure will support closer Tri-Service ties within the Scottish resilient community. This will be undertaken through the establishment of a separate Scottish Airwave Tri Service User Group with representatives of all the 3 blue lights services and other Category 1 and 2 users of Airwave. The Group will be chaired by Scottish Government and will meet regularly to oversee the resolution and management of common shared issues concerning the proper functioning of the Airwave network in Scotland which are referred to it by the different user groups. This is a substantially different model from the currently existing one which is based upon linear links between individual emergency services with their counterparts in England and Wales. It is considered that this proposed structure will better serve the requirements of Scottish Resilience community. In addition, interfacing into the Tri-Service community in England and Wales from a common base, such a structure will provide a sound platform for leading discussions on a replacement system in Scotland, once the current contract expires. This structure will operate under the auspices of the newly constituted Resilient Telecoms Group of the Resilience Advisory Board for Scotland (RABS).

It is hoped that the above circular provides clarifies and formalises arrangements for the management the Firelink project in Scotland throughout its in life period. Should you require any queries about this circular or any questions about the operation of the Firelink contract in Scotland, please contact Paul Sharp on 0131 244 3328.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Fleming'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'A' and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

ANDREW FLEMING