

2021



LOCAL FIRE AND RESCUE PLAN

SCOTTISH BORDERS

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Introduction

Welcome to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Scottish Borders Local Fire and Rescue Plan. This Plan has been developed to support the delivery of agreed local outcomes for the people in the Scottish Borders in conjunction with the national priorities contained within the SFRS Strategic Plan 2019- 2022. Our ambition is to work in partnership to improve community safety and enhance the well-being of those living in the Scottish Borders whilst tackling issues of social inequality. This Plan will set out our priorities in order to support this ambition. A review of the previous plan has confirmed that the agreed priorities are fit for purpose and have been agreed through the Local Authority scrutiny arrangements.

Early in 2020 we faced an unprecedented challenge in the form of a global pandemic. In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, we dramatically changed how we worked so that we could continue to deliver an emergency service whilst keeping our staff and the public safe. The pandemic is expected to have a lasting effect on society and this will change the way in which we deliver services in the long-term. The full implications are not yet known and this makes it difficult to make any far-reaching plans with certainty. As such we will keep the priorities of this Plan under regular review to ensure it remains relevant and appropriate.

This Plan recognises what we have delivered in the past but looks forward to what we aim to achieve over the next three years and beyond. The safety of our communities is at the heart of everything we do, whether it is responding to emergencies or providing preventative advice and measures. The Plan will highlight our resources in the Scottish Borders, the changing risks to local communities, and how we aim to deliver our services to meet all the challenges we face.

As a public service and a statutory member of the Scottish Borders Community Planning Partnership, we recognise that to be effective and efficient, we must work closely with our partners in order to identify and provide for those most at risk. By working this way, we will look to reduce duplication, share resources and information and make improvements. We will actively contribute to the shared Intent, Vision and Themes set out in the [Scottish Borders Plan](#) and it is our intention that the Fire and Rescue Plan is viewed as an extension of this Plan.

As the SFRS resets and renews delivery of key services, whilst moving beyond the pandemic, we will continue to contribute wherever we can in the wider partnership agenda to ensure continued improvements for outcomes for the communities in the Scottish Borders.

Steve Gourlay

Local Senior Officer

Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders

National Context

Scottish Ministers set out their specific expectations for the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in the Fire and Rescue Framework for Scotland 2016. This provides the outline we should follow to ensure our resources and activities are aligned with the Scottish Government's Purpose and national outcomes.

Our [Strategic Plan 2019-22](#) has been designed to meet these national expectations. Set against a complex and evolving backdrop our Strategic Plan encapsulates our mission, values and our strategic outcomes and objectives.



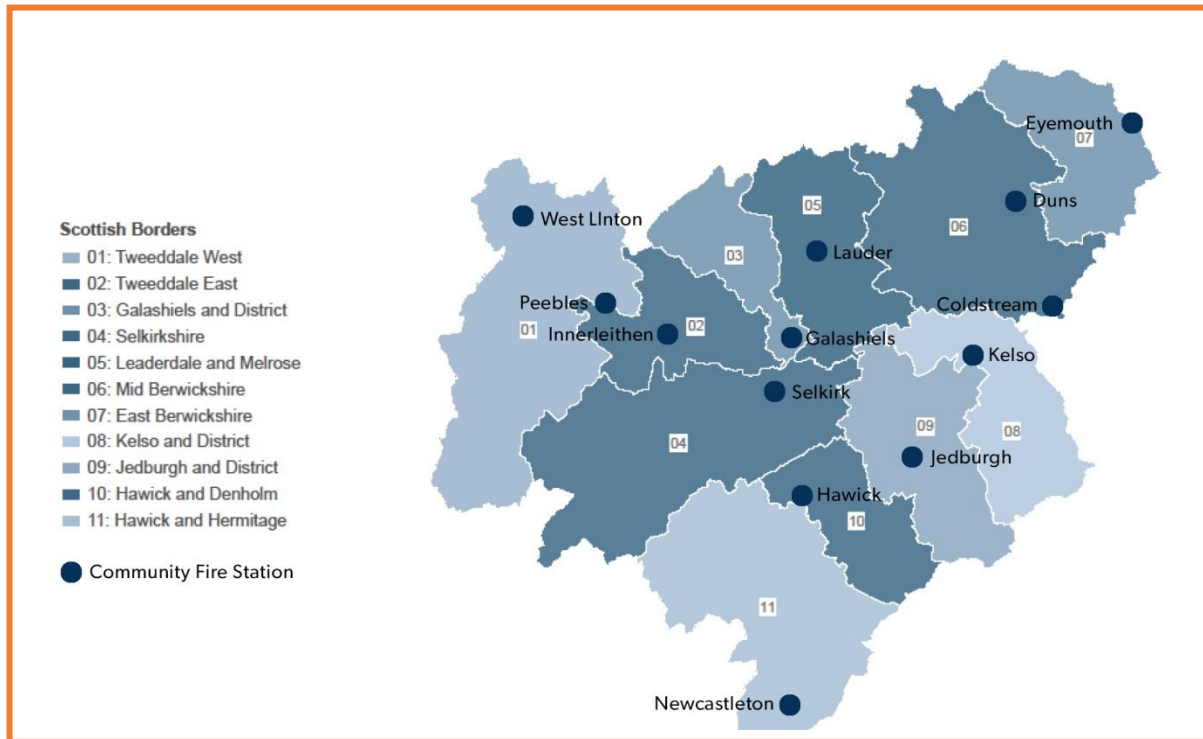
To ensure we can prevent the worst from happening and to be fully prepared to respond should we called, we need to be aware of any new changing risks which threaten the safety of communities or the workforce. When developing our most recent plan, cognisance was given to: our changing population and the forecasted rise in over 75s; doing what we can to balance social and economic inequality; climate change and the devastating impact the inclement weather can have on peoples' lives and livelihoods; and the threat of terrorism.

Our Strategic Plan is supported by a three-year Strategic Plan Programme which provides details on all the activities we intend to carry out to successfully achieve our ambitions. The Programme informs our Annual Operating Plan, which provides specific detail on the actions we carry out each year, and from which our performance is scrutinised.

This Plan is a statutory Local Fire and Rescue Plan. It sets local direction to meet the strategic outcomes and objectives outlined above. It also demonstrates how we will contribute to Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs).

Scottish Borders Local Context

The Scottish Borders has a population of just over 115,000 people who reside within an area including and ranging from major towns such as Galashiels and Hawick to single dwellings in remote rural locations. The diagram below outlines the electoral ward boundaries whilst highlighting the locations of our 13 Community Fire Stations.



The SFRS attends an average of 1500 emergency incidents a year in the Scottish Borders and reporting focuses on the agreed Key Performance Indicator table below. This details our operational response over the last five years by incident type and provides the Local Authority and partners with the required information to hold the SFRS to account.

Key performance indicator	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	YTD
Dwelling fires	109	91	100	104	103	●
All fire casualties (fatal & non-fatal (incl. p/c's))	18	27	18	21	31	◆
All deliberate fires excl. dwellings	101	97	150	137	128	●
Special Service - RTCs	108	99	93	87	99	◆
Special Service - Casualties	120	110	85	92	82	●
False Alarm - Equipment failure	570	629	614	654	655	▲

RAG rating - KEY		
◆	RED DIAMOND	10% higher than the previous YTD period, or local target not achieved.
▲	YELLOW TRIANGLE	Up to 9% higher than the previous YTD period, or local target not achieved.
●	GREEN CIRCLE	Equal to or improved upon the previous equivalent quarter (or YTD period), or local target achieved.

Reducing Dwelling Fires, Fire Casualties and Fatalities will continue to be at the heart of our prevention activities, over the last two decades, similar to the rest of the UK, we

have seen a gradual decrease in the amount of dwelling fires we attend. Dwelling Fires accounted for around 5.0% of our operational activity, whilst fire casualties have averaged around 23 over the last five years, sadly including five fire fatalities over that period. Prevention activity in the Scottish Borders will continue to focus on those at highest risk with defined vulnerabilities in partnership with those providing care and may be responsible for other risk reduction measures.

Deliberate fires (not including dwellings) are often, but not always, of a malicious nature. Deliberate fires accounted for approximately 8.5% of our operational activity over the last five years and typically involved refuse, grass, wood and scrubland. Increases in this type of incident activity are generally seasonal and often linked to anti-social behaviour. Deliberate fires of a malicious nature place an unnecessary demand on SFRS and partner resources and often affecting communities socially and economically.

Responding to Road Traffic Collisions (RTC's) as part of a multi-agency effort to minimise injury to those involved and reduce the impact on the transport infrastructure is an area of business that the SFRS invests heavily to ensure the appropriate response. 3.5% of incidents attended are RTCs although not a true reflection of the total number in the Scottish Borders, only the ones where SFRS were requested.

The term "Special Service" is used to describe non-fire related incidents and includes RTC's, Flooding, medical emergencies, Water Rescue and Hazardous Materials incidents amongst others. Throughout the last 15-20 years, Fire and Rescue Services across the UK have seen a significant increase in attendance at these types of incident whilst domestic property fires decrease. Special Service incidents account for approximately 19% of all emergency calls in the Scottish Borders.

Recent history demonstrates that severe wet weather and subsequent flooding is a risk for particular parts of the Scottish Borders and this will remain a focus of our emergency response capability, particularly for our Water Rescue and Flood Response teams. When required we will also work in partnership with Scottish Borders Council Emergency Planning and other service providers either as an emergency response or in a preventative capacity.

Due to the location and skills sets of our community-based resources, and the remote nature of much of the Scottish Borders, we have been able to provide assistance to partners, such as Police Scotland and the SAS, on an increasing basis and for a variety of reasons. Effecting entry for non-fire incidents now accounts for just over 3% of activity in the Scottish Borders.

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) have accounted for over 30% of our operational incidents in the Scottish Borders over the last five years. Similar to other operational activities, this type of incident demand is not unique to the Scottish Borders, with the UK as a whole facing challenges in relation to reducing UFAS. With disruption to local businesses, schools, healthcare facilities and others, these unwanted calls can have a significant impact across the Scottish Borders area. Following national policy and using local initiatives we will continue to prioritise the reduction of UFAS whilst engaging with key stakeholders, partners and those with responsibilities for the premises involved.

Our 13 Community Fire Stations include two Wholetime stations at Galashiels and Hawick with the remaining eleven being Retained Duty System (RDS) stations (as shown on map on page 4). Wholetime stations are permanently staffed 24/7 throughout the year whilst our RDS staff operate on an "on call" basis and are alerted by pager for emergency calls.

Frontline staff are supported by a team of local and national officers from the Training Function. The local training officers are based at Galashiels Community Fire Station and provide dedicated support to operational crews in terms of acquiring new skills, maintaining existing skills and ensuring role competency.

Prevention and Protection (P&P) officers are located at Galashiels, Duns and Hawick. They consist of Fire Safety Enforcement officers who deal with legislative matters including the auditing of relevant premises and officers who carry out a community engagement role through a diverse and wide-reaching range of prevention activities. In addition to this, a SFRS Local Area Liaison Officer acts as a coordinator for engagement activities whilst liaising with external partners and has a base in Newtown St Boswells.

Since agreeing the 2018 plan three newly established full-time posts for RDS watch commanders to support the thirteen RDS stations is proving a success and provides direct support for availability, training and community safety activities in the Scottish Borders.

An Area Commander (AC), or Local Senior Officer (LSO), has overall responsibility for discharging the functions of the SFRS within the Scottish Borders. Day to day management of resources is devolved to the Scottish Borders Group Commander (GC) and three Station Commanders (SCs) responsible for Service Delivery. The Senior Management team also consists of a further GC and two SC's who have responsibility for P&P and Training across the LSO area of Midlothian, East Lothian and the Scottish Borders.

This plan and its priorities reflect a partnership approach whilst sharing the vision and themes that will lead to improved outcomes for the communities of the Scottish Borders. The examples below highlight some of the ways in which we aim to contribute to the Scottish Borders Community Plan 2017. The list is not exhaustive and we will continually look for innovative ways to help improve outcomes.

Working in Partnership to achieve better outcomes for the people in the Scottish Borders

Scottish Borders Community Plan Theme

How we plan to contribute

<p><i>Our Economy, Skills and Learning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By consolidation and where possible, development of existing youth engagement initiatives such as the TD1 project in Galashiels. By participating in these programmes, younger people will acquire new skills, practical and theoretical, learn to work within a team and build self-confidence. The programme will promote better citizenship whilst potentially improving opportunities for employment. • By reducing the impact of unwanted fire alarm signals on local businesses and education establishments.
<p><i>Our Health, Care & Wellbeing</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We will provide a range of prevention advice and measures through holistic home safety visits with the aim of keeping people safe in their homes. • We will explore opportunities to work closer with our Health and Social care colleagues in order to reach those most vulnerable in our communities whilst contributing to longer term health outcomes.
<p><i>Our Quality of Life</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In partnership with Police and other CPP members, we will prioritise the reduction of anti-social related Deliberate Fire Setting (excluding Dwellings) through a range of prevention, intervention and diversionary activities. • We will continue to be an active member of the Scottish Borders Safer Communities team and carry out a range of preventative and intervention activities. This will include addressing social issues such as, reducing Domestic Abuse, identifying those at risk from Drugs and Alcohol, Frailty and Dementia. • In partnership, we will aim to reduce the amount of people killed or seriously injured on our roads

	<p>through active participation as a member of the Scottish Borders Road Safety Working Group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whilst also contributing to prevention initiatives such as the Drivewise initiative and continuing our “make it or break it” programme that highlights the consequences of RTC’s to new and potential young drivers.
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<i>Our Place</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By identifying those suffering from fuel poverty during home safety visits or attendance at operational incidents and offering assistance through partner referral and advice.
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Performance Scrutiny

The arrangements for local scrutiny of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service in the Scottish Borders sits with the Police, Fire and Rescue and Community Safety Board which meets on a quarterly basis. The SFRS Local Senior Officer is responsible for ensuring the committee are kept informed of all relevant service matters and provision of performance reporting for agreed priorities and associated indicators.

Scottish Borders Priorities

1. As part of a Community Partnership approach, we will make people safer in their homes.

Background:

As a key focus for the SFRS making people safer in their homes has long been a priority and will continue to be. From 2005 firefighters have visited Scottish Borders residents at home and provided home fire safety visits. The will of the SFRS is to continue to look for opportunities with partners to improve on this single subject visit and provide a more holistic approach.

This priority supports the *Scottish Borders Plan*.

We will achieve it by:

- *Providing a highly skilled, well trained and appropriate Firefighting response*
- *In partnership, proactively identifying those most at risk from Unintentional Harm in the home*
- *Explore conducting holistic Home Safety Visits that assess a range of risks within the home including fire, slips, trips and fall and other vulnerabilities*
- *Exchanging risk information with partners including referrals.*

Performance Indicators:

- *The primary performance measures will be the number of accidental dwelling fires and associated casualties.*
- *Quantity and quality of risk based home fire safety visits delivered.*
- *Partnership referrals for vulnerable at-risk individuals and dwellings.*

Expected Outcomes:

- *Support the independent living of vulnerable people within the Scottish Borders*
- *Reduce the social and economic cost of Unintentional Harm in the home including fires and slips, trips and falls.*

2. We will promote Community Resilience whilst contributing to improved outcomes for people involved in non-fire emergencies.

Background:

“Special Service” is the Fire and Rescue Service term given to non-fire related emergencies/incidents including, Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs), Rescue from Water, Flooding, Height, Confined Space, Structural Collapse, Hazardous Material incidents and medical emergencies supporting the Scottish Ambulance Service. Unfortunately, when incidents of this type occur they often involve casualties and sometimes fatalities.

The Scottish Borders has a diverse range of Special Service risks including busy A and B class roads that are used regularly by commuters and tourists, and many commercial businesses.

On average, 19% of all SFRS incidents each year in the Borders are Special Service calls. As the SFRS explore opportunities for assisting our partners through emergency intervention there is a potential for associated casualty figures to continue to rise as we attend more Special Service incidents.

We will look to improve existing preventative strategies with Community Partners whilst ensuring that should we need to provide emergency response, we can do, effectively and efficiently, in order to improve outcomes for all Special Service Casualties.

This priority also supports the Scottish Borders Plan.

We will achieve it by:

- *Being an integral component of the Scottish Borders Community Planning and championing an effective partnership approach to risk reduction*
- *Education and awareness aimed at high-risk groups within our communities*
- *Training our staff and locating our resources in order to provide an effective and efficient emergency response*
- *Building on our relationships with other emergency services and improving how we work together through prevention and intervention.*

Performance Indicators:

- *Reviewing and reporting on the number of Special Service Casualties including RTC, Water/ Flood Rescue, medical emergencies and effecting entry*
- *Monitoring and evaluating SFRS participation in community events and initiatives designed to enhance community resilience.*

Expected Outcomes:

- *Improved outcomes for persons involved in non-fire emergencies in the Scottish Borders*
- *Reduce the social and economic cost of Special Service Casualties*
- *Where capacity exists, reduce the demand on Community Partners through prevention and intervention activities.*

3. Together with our Community Partners, we will contribute to making the Scottish Borders roads safer.

Background:

Road traffic collisions (RTCs) continue to impact across the Scottish Borders with often tragic consequences. The SFRS has trained and equipped firefighters across the area prepared to deal with the incidents where, as part of a multi-agency response, we rescue and provide care for those affected.

As well as providing an emergency response to accidents on our roads, the SFRS have a key role to play in reducing RTC's through education and raising awareness in partnership with our Community Partners. By using experience and statistical evidence we will identify those most likely to be involved in a RTC in the Scottish Borders, with these groups being the focus of attention for prevention activities based on risk.

We will aim to build on existing local prevention initiatives and in partnership look to utilise our resources innovatively, efficiently and proactively with the aim of making the roads in the Scottish Borders safer.

This priority supports the *Scottish Borders Plan*.

We will achieve it by:

- *Working with our partners within the Scottish Borders to identify those groups most at risk*
- *Delivering the appropriate prevention activities to those most at risk whilst being proactive and innovative*
- *Continued support of the Community Planning Partnership (CPP) Road Safety Working Group*
- *Encouraging young drivers and other groups to be responsible road users through active engagement and education.*

Performance Indicators:

- *Reviewing and reporting on the number and type of road traffic collisions within the Scottish Borders*
- *Reporting and evaluating the effectiveness of our partnership prevention activities.*

Expected Outcomes:

- *SFRS to have contributed towards reducing the number of people killed or seriously injured on roads in the Scottish Borders*
- *SFRS to have contributed to the reduction of Road Traffic Collisions the Scottish Borders*
- *SFRS to have contributed to reducing the consequences and associated community impacts of RTC's.*

4. As part of a Community Partnership, we will challenge anti-social behaviour

Background:

Anti-social behaviour can manifest itself in many ways and often has a significant detrimental effect on communities for a number of reasons.

The SFRS generally experience anti-social behaviour through deliberate fire setting which can sometimes manifest into physical or verbal violence to our crews. Thankfully, the latter is a rare occurrence in the Borders, however, the figures relating to Deliberate Fire Setting are not so positive.

There is often a close link between deliberate fires and anti-social behaviour and predominately involves malicious ignition of refuse, grass, woodland. Incidents of this type accounted for approximately 8-9% of our operational activity over the last five years. The Scottish Borders has seen a welcome decrease over the last couple of years and working with partners we would seek to further reduce this.

Due to the sporadic and random nature of many deliberately started fires, prevention activities are often reactive.

As a Service, we recognise our responsibility in reducing anti-social behaviour and its impact, this extends to not only fire related instances but includes other social issues such a Domestic Abuse.

This priority supports the *Scottish Borders Plan*.

We will achieve it by:

- *In partnership identifying those parts of the Scottish Borders affected by deliberate fire setting, whilst delivering effective prevention activities*
- *Acting as role models to promote good citizenship, especially with those who have or are likely to become involved in deliberate fire setting*
- *Continued support of the Scottish Borders Safer Communities Team and the Multi Agency*

- Risk Assessment Conference (MARAC) in relation to Domestic Abuse*
- *Exploring opportunities to lead and participate in innovative projects.*

Performance Indicators:

- *Reviewing and reporting on the number and type of deliberate fire setting incidents within the Scottish Borders*
- *Evaluating and reporting on the effectiveness of our youth engagement/intervention programmes and monitoring our attendance at MARAC's.*

Expected Outcomes:

- *Support the promotion of "people and place" across the Scottish Borders*
- *Support our communities in feeling safe from crime, disorder and danger*
- *Reduce the number of attendances to fires of a deliberate nature, particularly secondary fires*
- *Reduce the adverse effects and negative impacts which deliberate fire setting has on people's lives within the Scottish Borders.*

5. In partnership, we will aim to reduce the occurrence and impact of Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals.

Background:

Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) are defined as incidents where an automated fire alarm system activates and results in the mobilisation of SFRS when there is no fire. With UFAS accounting for over 30% of our incident activity it's clear that this places a significant burden on SFRS in terms of resources, time and associated costs. The impact of UFAS in the wider community can be very significant in terms of business disruption, effects on health care premises, education establishments and any other non-domestic premises effected by this. The level of unnecessary blue light response journeys also increase road risks and hazards to firefighters and to the public and have a detrimental impact on the environment through additional carbon emissions. Active and positive engagement with occupiers to take responsibility in limiting the number of UFAS incidents within their premises is integral to reducing these impacts.

We will achieve it by:

- *Investigating the cause of each UFAS call and documenting the information gained*
- *Engaging with duty holders and those responsible for fire safety management of premises to examine causes of UFAS calls and provide advice to prevent reoccurrence*
- *Look to reduce the number of fire appliances mobilised using a risk based approach to responding to automated fire alarms*
- *Maintaining a dedicated UFAS champion within the Scottish Borders area to oversee performance and best practice approaches to UFAS reduction.*

Performance indicators:

- *Reviewing and reporting on the number of UFAS calls in the Scottish Borders*
- *Reviewing and reporting on risk based reductions in the SFRS weight of response to premises with automated fire alarm systems.*

Expected Outcomes:

- *Reduce the demand on the SFRS from UFAS*

- *Reduce the economic cost to commerce in the Scottish Borders from disruption from UFAS*
- *Reduce the impact on education premises and health care facilities from UFAS*
- *Reduced vehicle movements, increasing capacity for other activity, improved road safety and reduced carbon footprint.*

Review

To ensure this Local Fire and Rescue Plan remains flexible to emerging local or national priorities a review may be carried out at any time but will be reviewed at least once every three years. A review may also be carried out if the Scottish Minister directs it or if a new Strategic Plan is approved. This refresh of the 2018 plan will provide an interim direction as the SFRS and communities across Scotland move beyond the pandemic which has changed so many areas of our lives. Following any review, the Local Senior Officer may revise the Plan.

Contact Us

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