



YOUR SERVICES, YOUR CHOICES

**PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON THE LEVEL OF
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES
PROVIDED IN NORTH WALES
IN 2015-16 AND BEYOND**

Autumn 2014

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INTRODUCTION

This is an important public consultation about the fire and rescue services that are provided in North Wales. We would like as many people as possible to participate by telling us what they would like to see happen to fire and rescue services in the area over the next few years.

The financial pressures on public services mean that their leaders are having to make difficult decisions about how to continue to meet demand for services but with dwindling budgets.

The fire and rescue service has very successfully reduced the demand for its blue light emergency response by focussing on prevention. This reduction in demand has led some people to question whether there is still the need for as many fire stations, fire engines and personnel. The alternative view is that every emergency incident ought to get the same level of response in as short a time as possible, so rather than count the number of incidents attended the focus should be on the amount of emergency cover available in an area in anticipation of an emergency.

The running costs of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service are met by the six county councils in the area – Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham – which are also having to make difficult decisions about their own services. This therefore raises questions about whether the Fire and Rescue Authority should continue to reduce its own running costs and if so whether those reductions should be by the same proportion as the local councils. Given the difference in scale between a county council and a fire and rescue authority, the impact of any reductions will be felt very differently.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has already cut its running costs by a significant amount, but in ways that the public did not notice because the cuts did not fundamentally change the services that they received.

This year, 2014-15, the county council contributions to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority were £320,000 lower than they were in 2010-11. However, with rising costs this approach of making 'invisible' cuts will not reduce the running costs by enough, so the Fire and Rescue Authority is having to decide what to do over the remaining years of this decade – reduce costs and cut front line services, or increase the budget enough to avoid cutting them.

North Wales Fire and Rescue is committed to making North Wales a safer place to live, work and visit.

Your views about the future of North Wales Fire and Rescue will help us to plan the sort of services that the public expects.

This consultation presents three options – which would you support? Alternatively, you may have a better suggestion for providing affordable fire and rescue services in North Wales?

We have provided financial and other information to help you to come to a conclusion – please consider that information, and send us your response by 9th January 2015. Contact details are provided on page 30.

VERY BRIEFLY....

What services does North Wales Fire and Rescue provide?

- Fire prevention and community safety education
- “Blue light” response to fires and non-fire emergencies
- Enforcement of fire safety in non-domestic premises
- Planning and response to large scale and serious emergency situations

[More on page 5 →](#)

Who pays for North Wales Fire and Rescue and how much does it cost?

The six county councils in North Wales all contribute towards a central fund that is used to provide fire and rescue services. It costs around £32million per year to run - the equivalent of £46 for every North Wales resident.

[More on page12 →](#)

What is this Public Consultation about?

Whether or not to reduce the amount of fire and rescue cover in North Wales. The Authority could reduce the size of the Service, which would avoid increasing the county councils’ financial contributions, but it would mean reducing the number of fire stations, fire engines and fire and rescue service staff in the area.

[More on page 18 →](#)

What do I need to do about this Public Consultation?

Think about what impact the three options presented would have, and let us know your views BEFORE 9th January 2015.

[More on page 30 →](#)

NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority is one of three fire and rescue authorities in Wales. It was established in 1996 to provide fire and rescue services in Anglesey, Gwynedd, Conwy, Denbighshire, Flintshire and Wrexham.

The Fire and Rescue Authority is made up of 28 elected county councillors who are nominated by their own county council to serve as members of the Authority. In this capacity Members are expected to act in the best interests of the whole of North Wales, not just their own county area.

The Authority makes decisions about the level of fire and rescue services that will be provided in North Wales, and sets its annual budget to match that level of service.

North Wales has:

- **a land area of 2,375 square miles;**
- **5,790 miles of roads;**
- **a resident population of 691,986 people;**
- **321,061 dwellings; and**
- **28,334 non-domestic premises.**

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES - HOW MUCH IS "ENOUGH"?

Most of *what* a fire and rescue authority must do is set out in laws and regulations, but there is flexibility in terms of *how much* the Authority provides.

For example, the Authority must: *"secure the provision of the personnel, services and equipment necessary efficiently to meet all normal requirements"* for extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in those fires.

It also has a duty to rescue people from road traffic accidents and protect them from serious harm *"to the extent that it considers it reasonable to do so"*.

It is for the Authority to determine the level of personnel, services and equipment that it considers would be necessary in the area, depending on, for example, its assessment of risk, its ambition for continuous improvement and what it considers to be affordable.

However, when fire and rescue authorities make decisions about the services in their area, they are required to consider the Government's aspirations for public safety, the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of fire and rescue authorities and those things that affect them. Under certain circumstances the Government has powers to intervene and compel those authorities to act in accordance with its wishes.

THE SERVICES THAT WE PROVIDE

We provide Fire Prevention services

By law, the Authority must make sure that fire safety is promoted in North Wales, but actually this emphasis on preventing fires is also just common sense – we are all much safer if fires are prevented. Furthermore, fewer fires and fire casualties mean lower costs in other parts of the public sector.

How is this done? North Wales Fire and Rescue Service has staff working daily across North Wales to raise awareness and educate people about keeping safe. For example, we:

- go to people's homes to give advice on fire safety and what people should do if there is a fire;
- go to all the schools in North Wales to teach the children there about keeping safe;
- meet people with particular safety concerns (e.g. farmers, factory owners and hoteliers) to give advice on fire safety;
- send out key messages in the media about specific fire safety risks (e.g. bonfire night, camping safety, cooking safety);
- work with partner agencies (e.g. housing associations, drug and alcohol agencies and the voluntary sector) on specific issues that are best tackled jointly;
- work with the Police to prevent arson and deliberate fire-setting, targeting our efforts in particular localities for short periods if necessary;
- attend public events (e.g. local shows and eisteddfodau) to spread our safety messages and answer people's questions about fire safety;
- work with specific groups of people (e.g. teenagers and young adults, frail elderly people, people with particular disabilities) to provide them with specialised support tailored to their needs.

THE SERVICES THAT WE PROVIDE

We provide Emergency Response – “blue light” - services

Day and night we have specially trained staff working in the Joint Police and Fire Communications Centre answering 999 calls and handling our response. They use sophisticated mapping and mobilising technology to alert and send the most appropriate response to the emergency, staying in contact throughout the course of the incident.

Our highly trained and equipped fire crews deal with a wide range of emergency incidents, e.g. fires in buildings, outdoor fires, road traffic collisions, flooding, rescues of people, rescues of livestock, chemical incidents and where hazardous materials are involved.

We provide Fire Safety Enforcement services

People should be confident that they are safe from fire in places such as public buildings, places of work, sports venues, hotels, blocks of flats, cinemas, schools and shops.

By law the Authority must enforce fire safety in non-domestic premises, so we have specially trained staff who check premises to make sure that the fire safety arrangements are satisfactory. If they find that they are not up to standard we work with whoever is responsible for fire safety on those premises to improve matters. In extreme cases we can close down premises and even take people to court for breaching fire safety regulations.

We provide Planning and Response to Civil Emergencies

We train and equip firefighters to deal with rare but serious events such as those that might require mass decontamination of people after chemical, biological or radio-active incidents, and for rescuing people from trains, aircraft and collapsed buildings. By law we must also be prepared to assist with large-scale emergencies elsewhere in the UK.

As ‘Category 1’ responders under the Civil Contingencies Act we also have duties relating to large scale events that threaten serious damage to the welfare of people, wildlife, the environment and primary supply chains.

BEHIND THE SCENES

Not all parts of the Service are as obvious to members of the public, but they provide vital support 'behind the scenes'.

For example, staff are employed to: service and maintain fire engines and special appliances; ensure that telephone and computer systems can receive 999 calls and mobilise fire crews; maintain fire station buildings; maintain supplies of uniforms, equipment, stocks and supplies; purchase, test and maintain vital firefighting equipment; check and maintain fire hydrants; train our staff, maintain training records and qualifications; keep detailed records of incidents attended; undertake fire investigations to determine what caused them; produce regular performance reports; translate documents into Welsh or English; organise recruitment and people management processes; provide specialist advice to officers; pay the bills and prepare the accounts; deal with press enquiries and provide safety messages on social media.

In North Wales, the Authority employs specialist staff to undertake prevention activities in the community and to audit and inspect business premises. These members of staff, although they are delivering 'front line' services are included in the total numbers of 'support staff'.

THE RESOURCES THAT WE PROVIDE

Fire Stations and Fire Engines

The Authority provides 44 fire stations and 54 fire engines to protect North Wales. There are:

Three “24-hour shift” fire stations –

Wholetime stations that are continuously crewed. These are located in Rhyl, Deeside (Queensferry) and Wrexham.

Five “day crewed” fire stations –

Stations that are crewed as wholetime stations between midday and 10:00p.m. and as retained stations outside those hours. These are located in Holyhead, Caernarfon, Bangor, Llandudno and Colwyn Bay.

Thirty-six “retained” fire stations –

These are not usually staffed, but have crews that respond to an alerter signal calling them into the station from home, work or elsewhere near the fire station. These are located in towns and villages in every county.

Anglesey

1 day crewed station
6 retained stations
8 fire engines

Conwy

2 day crewed stations
6 retained stations
10 fire engines

Flintshire

1 24-hour shift station
4 retained stations
6 fire engines

Gwynedd

2 day crewed stations
12 retained stations
17 fire engines

Denbighshire

1 24-hour shift station
6 retained stations
8 fire engines

Wrexham

1 24-hour shift station
2 retained stations
5 fire engines

See **Appendix 1** for comparative information about the numbers of fire stations and fire engines in other parts of England and Wales.

THE RESOURCES THAT WE PROVIDE

Staff

The Authority employs around 900 people to deliver fire and rescue services in North Wales.

Fire and rescue service staff are employed under nationally recognised terms and conditions of service so their pay and pensions are negotiated through National Joint Councils rather than by the Authority.

Wholetime operational staff and Control staff are paid a salary based on an average of 42 hours per week including meal breaks.

Retained operational staff are paid an annual retaining fee and additional fees for attending emergency incidents, a weekly “drill night” and training sessions.

Support and prevention staff are paid a salary based on a 37 hour week.

As at 31 March 2014, North Wales Fire and Rescue employed:

	Full time equivalent posts	Full time equivalent strength	Headcount of individual staff**
Wholetime operational	242	240	240
Retained operational*	557	398	458
Support and prevention	144	144	152
Control	28	28	31
Totals	971	810	881

*Because of the ‘on call’ nature of these posts, they are calculated as ‘24-hour units of cover’ instead of full-time equivalents. **Two individual members of staff may, for example, work part time to fill one full time post.

See **Appendix 2** for comparative information about fire and rescue staffing in other parts of England and Wales.

FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY FUNDING

The Fire and Rescue Authority must by law decide on the level of fire and rescue services it will provide, and notify the county councils in the area how much money they will be expected to contribute to the Authority's funds to cover the cost of those services in the next financial year plus any contingencies. The Authority has only been permitted to hold financial reserves since 2010 after the law was changed to allow this.

Fire and rescue service funding is an integral part of county councils' budget-setting process. Before 1996 fire and rescue services in North Wales were organised around two county councils – Gwynedd and Clwyd. However, when the county councils were reorganised it was decided that amalgamating these services under a single combined fire and rescue authority covering North Wales would be better.

The Fire and Rescue Authority has to ensure that its services are provided as efficiently and effectively as possible. However, if it discovers that it needs to change the amount levied on the county councils during the financial year, it has the right to do so. In reality, requests for in-year additional payments happen very rarely because fire and rescue authorities should have included a contingency element to avoid something that could potentially disrupt the county councils' own spending plans for the year.

Every December the Authority gives an estimate to the county councils of its budget requirement for the forthcoming financial year (April to March), and confirms this by the following 15 February. How much each county council contributes is calculated on the basis of its population, so councils with lower population figures pay less than those with higher ones.

From time to time the Welsh Government may decide to fund specific work or large projects through grants, but these are limited and not part of the annual revenue funding.

RECENT FUNDING OF NORTH WALES FIRE AND RESCUE

The amount that each county council in North Wales contributed to fire and rescue services has not risen in recent years because the Authority has been able to reduce its running costs to cover increases such as inflation and rising fuel costs.

£	Contribution 2010/11	Cost per head of population	Contribution 2011/12	Cost per head of population	Contribution 2012/13	Cost per head of population	Contribution 2013/14	Cost per head of population	Contribution 2014/15	Cost per head of population
Anglesey	3,253,187	47	3,236,545	47	3,219,270	46	3,216,231	46	3,198,669	46
Gwynedd	5,572,851	47	5,588,685	47	5,525,827	46	5,507,985	46	5,588,255	46
Conwy	5,280,536	47	5,240,568	47	5,206,959	46	5,198,570	46	5,283,704	46
Denbighshire	4,601,610	47	4,549,039	47	4,569,316	46	4,593,630	46	4,342,155	46
Flintshire	7,119,294	47	7,051,716	47	6,981,590	46	6,955,089	46	7,018,721	46
Wrexham	6,265,922	47	6,266,101	47	6,269,049	46	6,300,506	46	6,340,507	46
TOTAL	32,093,400	47	31,932,654	47	31,772,011	46	31,772,011	46	31,772,011	46

The costs per head of population in this table are based on published population projections. Using mid-year population estimates instead, Welsh Government figures on budgeted expenditure show that between 2006-07 and 2014-15 the cost per head of population for fire and rescue services in North Wales increased by just £3. By comparison, the cost per head of population for county council services in North Wales increased by between £257 and £493.

See **Appendix 3** for more information about the comparative costs of services within North Wales.

COULD THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE COSTS BE LOWER?

In short, yes the costs could be lower, but that would mean shrinking the level of front line services. Significant savings have been made already in areas that the public would not notice, but any further large savings would inevitably affect the service in ways that the public would notice.

This is what North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has to decide – should it freeze or cut its annual budget and cut services, or should it increase its annual budget and protect services?

Over the next five years, North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority could either:

- 1. Freeze its annual budget and cut services to pay for unavoidable inflation, OR**
- 2. Cut its annual budget by an amount that reflects the reductions in local authority budgets and cut services even more, OR**
- 3. Increase its annual budget gradually and protect services.**

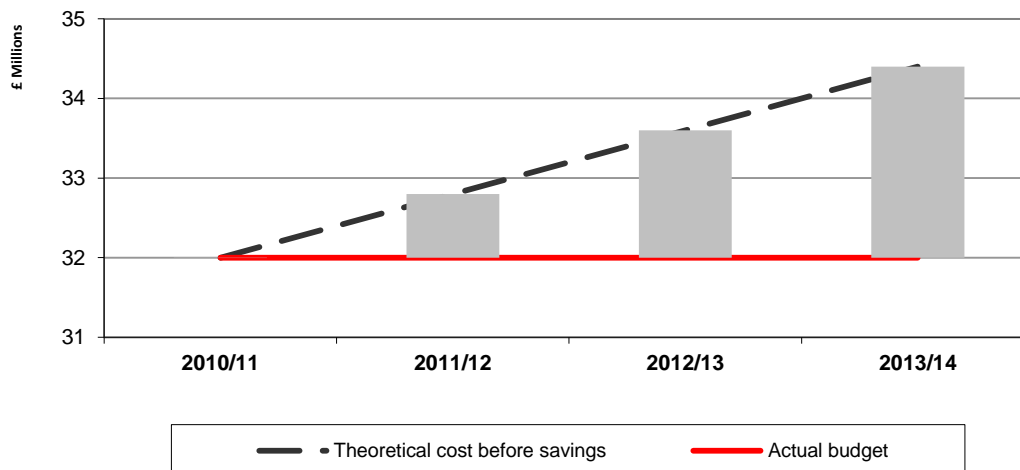
See **Appendix 4** for comparative information about fire and rescue costs in other areas of England and Wales.

SAVINGS IN THE FIRST 3-YEAR BUDGET PLAN

This is not the first time that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has decided to reduce its budget – it has been keeping costs down for a number of years.

The first 3-year budget plan – 2011/12 to 2013/14

Recognising the gloomy financial predictions for public service funding, the Authority first decided to freeze its annual budget in 2010. So in the years 2011/12, 2012/13 and 2013/14 the budget did not grow to cover cost increases.



What this meant was that cost increases during those years (e.g. due to inflation or rises in fuel costs) had to be paid for from within the existing budget. Every year around £800,000 had to be taken away from some parts of the Service in order to pay for unavoidable cost increases.

In total, by the end of the third year (2013/14), annual savings of £2.45million had been achieved. The cost per head of population had been reduced from £47 to £46, and five out of the six county councils contributed less for fire and rescue services in 2013/14 than they had contributed three years earlier in 2010/11.

SAVINGS BETWEEN 2011/12 AND 2013/14

In summary, savings were applied across the whole service, but in such a way that the public would not notice much change in the services that they received.

In 2011/12 (Year 1)

- £200,000 cut from **individual budget lines**, discontinuing some completely or scaling them down.
- £50,000 cut from the **Community Fire Safety** budget.
- £90,000 cut from the **Support Staff** budget.
- £460,000 cut from the **Operational Management** budget by reducing the number of officers.
- £30,000 cut from the **Control** budget by restructuring its staffing arrangements.

In 2012/13 (Year 2)

- **Individual budget lines** were again cut or scaled down, releasing a further £150,000.
- Another £50,000 cut from the **Community Fire Safety** budget.
- Another £90,000 cut from the **Support Staff** budget.
- £500,000 released from the **Operational Firefighters'** budget by changing the way their shifts were rostered, so reducing the number of wholetime firefighters required by 10%.

In 2013/14 (Year 3)

- **Individual budget lines** were cut or scaled down for a third time, releasing a further £70,000.
- Another £50,000 cut from the **Community Fire Safety** budget.
- Another £180,000 cut from the **Support Staff** budget.
- A further £500,000 released from the **Operational Firefighters'** budget, by changing the way their shifts were rostered (as above).

INTENDED SAVINGS IN THE SECOND 3-YEAR BUDGET PLAN

The second (intended) 3-year budget plan – 2014/15 to 2016/17

Approaching the end of its first three-year budget plan, the Authority had to decide what to do for the next three years. It knew that having already reduced running costs the only way to achieve more savings would inevitably mean making cuts that the public would notice.

The Authority launched a public consultation in September 2013 that warned of the impact of a second three-year budget freeze. It explained that it would mean making significant changes to fire and rescue services because freezing the budget until 2016/17 would mean cutting £3.3million out of the budget on top of the £2.45million that had already been taken out over the period of the first 3-year budget plan.

The Authority was not minded at that time to embark on a programme of cuts, but it was acutely aware of the pressure on all public services to limit their spending, and that fire and rescue authorities were not immune to the effects of the harsh financial climate. The Authority was therefore prepared to give an undertaking that to help safeguard the county councils' budgets it would limit any increases in their financial contributions to a maximum equivalent of an additional £1 per year per head of population.

Towards the end of 2013, the Authority decided to maintain the current level of service provision. However, given the impact of the local government financial settlement (how much the county councils could expect to receive from central Welsh Government funds) and the reduction in the county councils' funding, the Authority chose an alternative strategy which was to freeze the budget for a fourth year and to use its financial reserves to cover any shortfall and so avoid introducing the large-scale cuts that would otherwise have been necessary.

However, this option would only be sustainable for one year and for subsequent years a full consultation would have to be undertaken to consider the balance between budget pressures, service provision and the public risk.

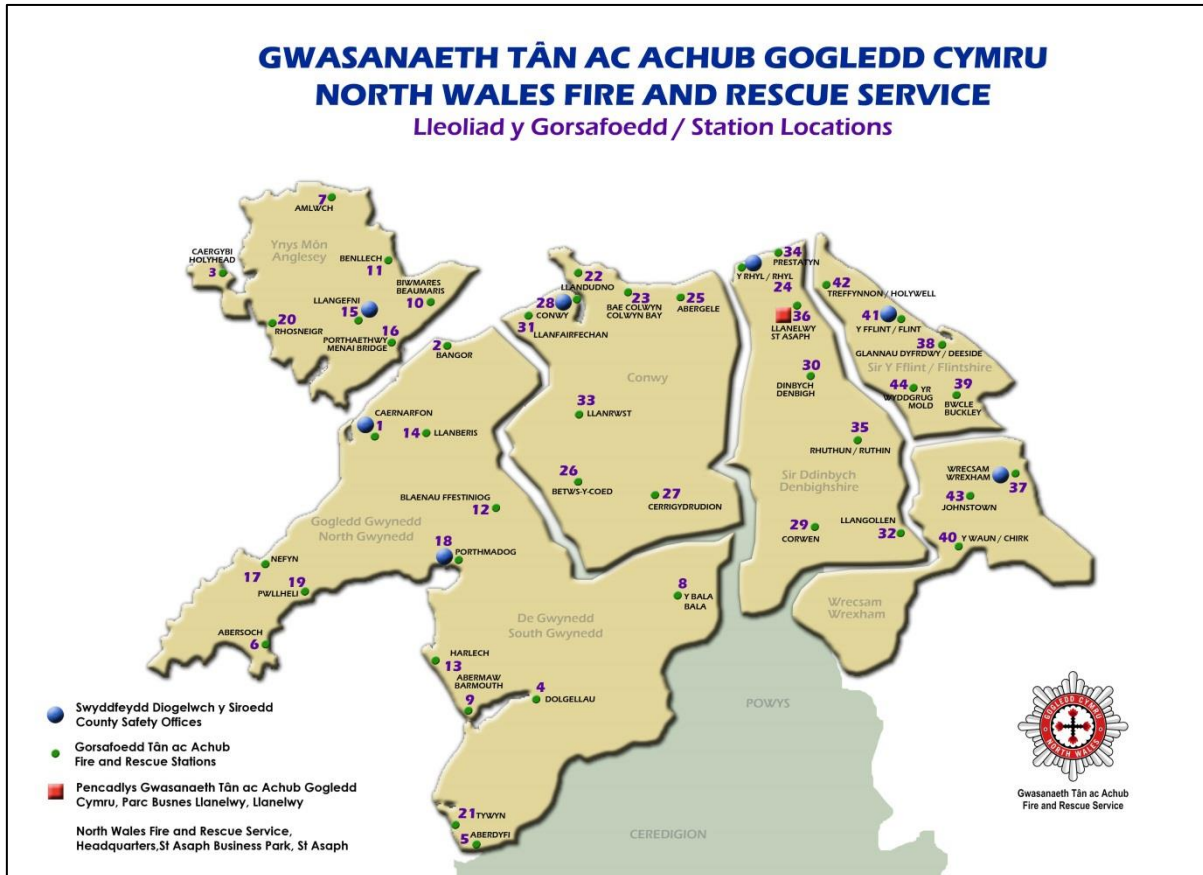
YOUR SERVICES, YOUR CHOICES

Fundamentally, there are three funding options for North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, although this public consultation may produce some different alternatives:

- 1.** To continue to freeze the annual budget until 2019/20 and make £3.3million of cuts (10%) to fire and rescue services in North Wales.
- 2.** To follow the Welsh Government's advice and cut the annual budget by at least the same percentage as will be cut from the central funding (the "local government settlement") that local authorities receive from Welsh Government. We only know the extent of the cuts proposed for 2015/16, which average 3.7% for the North Wales counties. The amount of central funding after next year is unknown, but is anticipated to be lower again. This would be the harshest option, probably requiring more than a 10% cut in fire and rescue services in North Wales.
- 3.** To increase the Authority's annual budget by an average of 2% each year until 2019/20 and avoid making the £3.3million of cuts (10%) to fire and rescue services in North Wales.

These options and the implications are analysed in more detail on the following pages.

THE STARTING POSITION - 2014/15



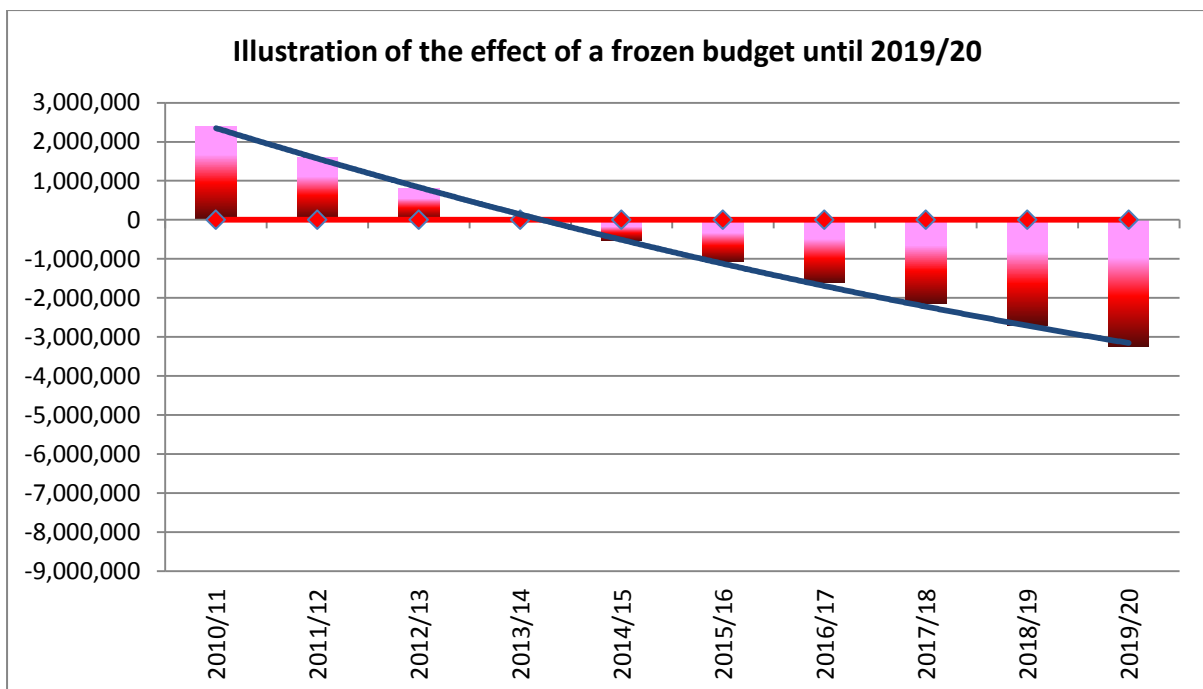
NORTH WALES	2014/15
Fire stations	44
Fire engines	54
Operational firefighter posts (full time equivalents, including managerial posts)	799
Revenue budget	£31,772,011
The budget calculated as the equivalent cost for every North Wales resident (the cost per head of population)	£46

**OPTION 1 - TO FREEZE THE BUDGET UNTIL 2019/20
AND MAKE £3.3MILLION OF CUTS TO FIRE AND
RESCUE SERVICES**

The Authority's revenue budget has been frozen at the same amount since 2010/11 so all the unavoidable cost increases have had to be paid for from within the annual budget. In total, £2.45 million of cuts have been made to the annual running costs of the Service since 2011/12. That represents a cut of 7.5%.

The Authority could keep on freezing the budget so that the North Wales county councils' financial contributions did not have to increase or decrease.

From the Fire and Rescue Authority's perspective, freezing its budget until 2019/20 would mean that a further £3.3 million of cuts would have to be made to the annual running costs of the Service to avoid a shortfall between those costs and the budget available. That would represent a further cut of 10%.



With a frozen budget until 2019/20, services would have to be cut in order to pay for unavoidable cost increases e.g. inflation, fuel costs, and pay settlements.

What would £3.3 million of cuts (10%) mean to fire and rescue services in North Wales?

To make savings of that magnitude would require making big changes that the public would notice because it would mean closing 16% of the fire stations in North Wales, losing 28% of the fire engines and 29% of the operational firefighter posts.

In other words, it could mean making ALL the following changes:

- Closing at least seven retained fire stations, possibly more, and removing the fire engines and firefighter posts from those stations.
- Removing one of the two wholetime fire engines that are currently based in Wrexham (this is the only fire station in North Wales that has two wholetime fire engines).
- Removing the retained fire engines from seven wholetime fire stations, leaving just one fire engine at each location.

This would mean large scale redundancies to remove 228 firefighter posts from the current staffing level. Also, with fewer fire stations and fire engines it would take longer to reach emergency incidents in some parts of North Wales.

See **Appendix 5** for more information about incident numbers and attendance time statistics.

How the service might look in 2019/20 if the budget remained frozen at 2010/11 levels until then

NORTH WALES	2014/15	2019/20
Fire stations	44	37
Fire engines	54	39
Operational firefighter posts (full time equivalents, including managerial posts)	799	571
Revenue budget	£31,772,011	£31,772,011
The budget calculated as the equivalent cost for every North Wales resident (the cost per head of population)	£46	£44.82

If this was the strategy adopted, detailed work would have to be undertaken to determine the best overall cover with the remaining resources. However, to illustrate the extent of the cuts, resources might be configured as:

Anglesey

1 day crewed station
5 retained stations
6 fire engines

Conwy

2 day crewed stations
5 retained stations
7 fire engines

Flintshire

1 24-hour shift station
3 retained stations
4 fire engines

Gwynedd

2 day crewed stations
10 retained stations
13 fire engines

Denbighshire

1 24-hour shift station
5 retained stations
6 fire engines

Wrexham

1 24-hour shift station
1 retained station
3 fire engines

OPTION 2 - MIRROR THE CHANGES TO THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT FROM YEAR TO YEAR

The Welsh Government has indicated that in view of the gloomy financial outlook and the expectation that public finances in Wales will not return to 2011 levels in real terms until around 2025, county councils can expect cuts of between 1.5% and 4.5% in the amount of money they receive from central funds.

Option 2 is for the Fire and Rescue Authority to aim to match or exceed the percentage reductions in funding that the county councils will have to face until 2019/20.

“Local Authorities [...] have been asked to plan on the basis of 1.5% to 4.5% cuts in cash terms from 2015/16 onwards. Fire and rescue authorities must expect to bear at least a proportionate share of such cuts and – given that demand for many local authority services is rising markedly while the incidence of fire is generally falling – probably more.”

[From a Welsh Government Project Charter authorising a Fire and Rescue Services National Framework Project. September 2014.]

The Welsh Government's draft budget 2015-16 published at the beginning of October 2014 indicated a potential average 3.7% reduction in local government budgets in North Wales. If North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority had to exceed this reduction, then the budget may have to be reduced by 4.1% in a single year.

Reducing the Authority's budget by 4.1% in 2015-16 (i.e. in one year) would mean that £1.3 million of cuts would have to be made to the annual running costs of the Service during that same year. More annual reductions and cuts would follow, but precisely how much would not be known until shortly before the start of each financial year.

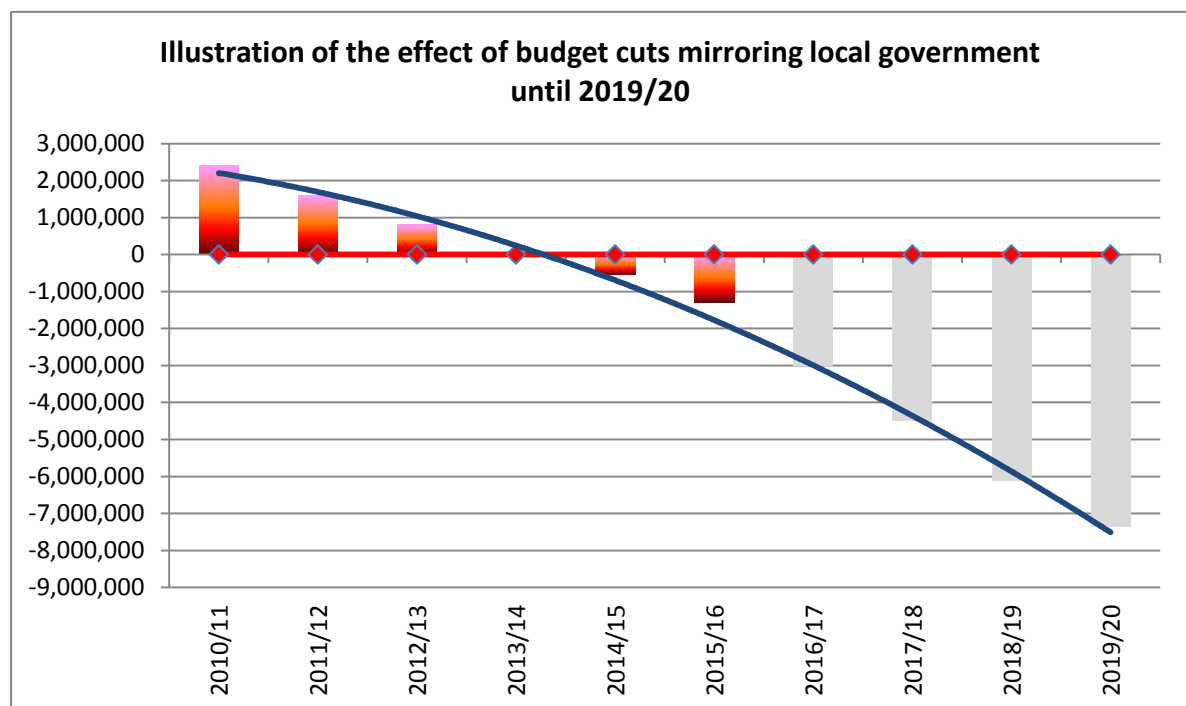
Plans for future years would be drawn up on the basis of future settlements notified in draft budgets each September and adjusted on the basis of the finalised local government budget each December.

What would £1.3 million of cuts in 2015/16 mean to fire and rescue services in North Wales?

To make savings of that magnitude would mean:

- Closing at least three retained fire stations, possibly more, and removing the fire engines from those stations.
- Removing one of the two wholetime fire engines that are currently based in Wrexham (this is the only fire station in North Wales that has two wholetime fire engines).
- Removing around 60 firefighter posts, which would mean redundancies.

This would be for one year only and it seems likely that the cuts over the next five years would exceed those illustrated in Option 1 by the end of 2019/20.



Although the size of the local government settlement after 2015/16 is unknown, the illustration above is based on a possible scenario of a 13% shortfall between the running costs and the budget available by 2019/20.

How the service might look by April 2016 if the budget was cut by 4.1% in 2015/16

Assuming that the 4.1% reduction was confirmed in December 2014, the Authority would be faced with a very challenging timetable for reducing its running costs in 2015/16 - the year to which the reductions applied.

Normally, the Service would have time to plan ahead and introduce changes in a carefully managed way. Staff redundancies, station closures and fleet changes take time and the Service would have to ensure that fire cover was correctly reconfigured to the remaining fire stations with the remaining fire appliances and staff.

Assuming that these changes could be achieved in time to make the savings within the same financial year (an unrealistic prospect), the service profile could be:

NORTH WALES	2014/15	2015/16
Fire stations	44	41
Fire engines	54	50
Operational firefighter posts (full time equivalents, including managerial posts)	799	737
Revenue budget	£31,772,011	£30,469,359
The budget calculated as the equivalent cost for every North Wales resident (the cost per head of population)	£46	£44

How the service might look by 2019/20 if the Authority's budget mirrored the changes in local authorities' financial settlements until then

Because the Welsh Government does not publish its draft budget and provisional local government settlement information until the December before the relevant financial year, there would be insufficient time for the Fire and Rescue Authority to draft its plans and consult on them before needing to notify the county councils of its budget requirements.

Medium-term financial planning would be replaced by short-term plans, so making accurate projections as far as 2019/20 is not possible.

Assuming a 13% reduction by 2019/20, the revenue budget and the cost per head is as shown below. However, it is not possible at this time to estimate how many fire stations, fire engines and operational firefighter posts would remain in North Wales.

NORTH WALES	2014/15	2019/20
Fire stations	44	?
Fire engines	54	?
Operational firefighter posts (full time equivalents, including managerial posts)	799	?
Revenue budget	£31,772,011	£27,641,650
The budget calculated as the equivalent cost for every North Wales resident (the cost per head of population)	£46	£39

OPTION 3 - MAINTAIN THE SERVICE UNTIL 2019/20

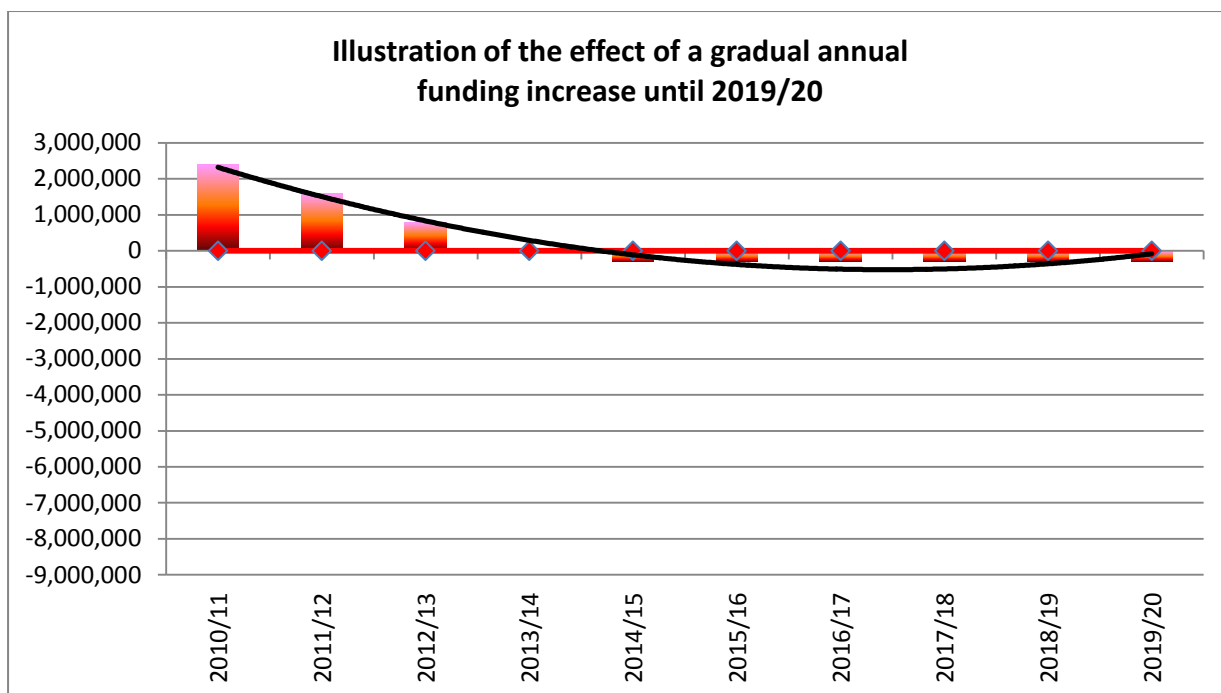
Option 3 is for the Authority not to freeze or cut the budget any more, but instead to look to the county councils to increase their financial contributions to the running costs of the Service.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has already indicated that increases in its levy on the county councils would not exceed the equivalent of £1 per head of population, so the impact would be limited.

The financial impact on each county council would vary according to its population, but the average increase per year would be between £83,000 and £125,000. More detailed calculations of the additional funding requirement for each county are provided in Appendix 6.

Taking this approach would mean additional funding of just under £3.3 million to the Fire and Rescue Authority, or an increase of around 10% over 5 years.

At most, the total annual revenue budget for providing fire and rescue services across North Wales would rise to £35,005,711 by 2019/20, or to the equivalent of £50 per year for every North Wales resident.



Increasing the budget to cover unavoidable cost increases such as inflation would protect the current level of fire and rescue services being delivered in North Wales. Assuming no change, the service profile could be:

NORTH WALES	2014/15	2019/20
Fire stations	44	44
Fire engines	54	54
Operational firefighter posts (full time equivalents, including managerial posts)	799	799
Revenue budget	£31,772,011	£35,005,711
The budget calculated as the equivalent cost for every North Wales resident (the cost per head of population)	£46	£50

See **Appendix 6** for the detailed allocation of cost to county councils for fire and rescue services in North Wales.

WHAT DO YOU THINK...?

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority will be submitting an estimate of its required level of funding for 2015-16 to the county councils in North Wales in December 2014, and confirming the final figure by the middle of February 2015.

What are your views? Should the Authority close fire stations and reduce its running costs, or should the Fire and Rescue Service be protected at additional cost to the county councils?

Please send your comments:

By post to:

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters
Ffordd Salesbury
St Asaph Business Park
St Asaph
Denbighshire, LL17 0JJ

By e-mail to:

futurefire@nwales-fireservice.org.uk

You can also visit

www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk

Twitter @northwalesfire

www.facebook.com/northwalesfireservice

By completing the questionnaire:

<http://goo.gl/6JGFzE>

APPENDICES

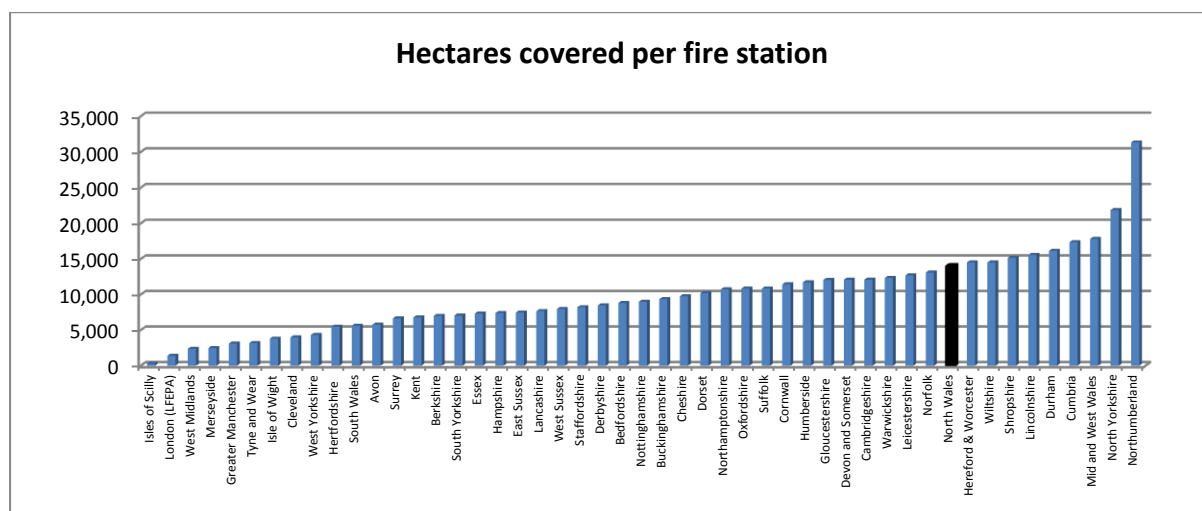
1	Comparing the numbers of fire stations and fire engines in North Wales with other parts of England and Wales
2	Comparing fire and rescue staffing in North Wales with other parts of England and Wales
3	Comparing the cost of services within North Wales
4	Comparing the cost of fire and rescue services in North Wales with other parts of England and Wales
5	Information about incident numbers and attendance time statistics
6	Detailed additional allocation of costs to county councils for fire and rescue services in North Wales for Option 3

NOTE: The Welsh Government commissioned the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) to collate information submitted by each Welsh fire and rescue authority in 2012-13, and to compare it against fire and rescue authorities in other parts of the United Kingdom.

A letter from the Welsh Government Minister for Public Services to the Welsh fire and rescue authorities at the beginning of October 2014 indicated his wish to see evidence of our having used this information in the development of our improvement objectives.

Information in the following pages uses information about fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales that was published in the CIPFA Fire and Rescue Service Statistics 2013 publication available from <http://www.cipfastats.net/>.

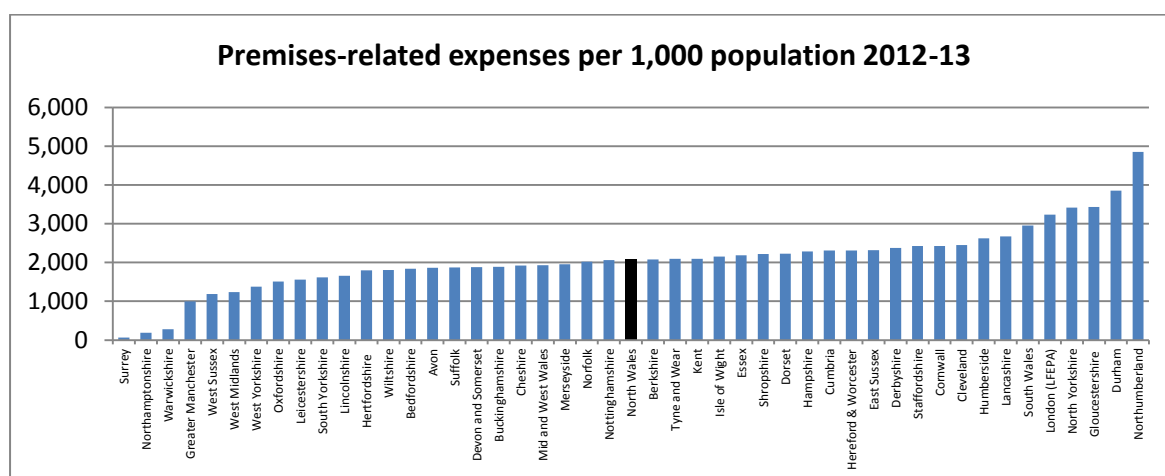
Appendix 1 – Fire Stations and Fire Engines

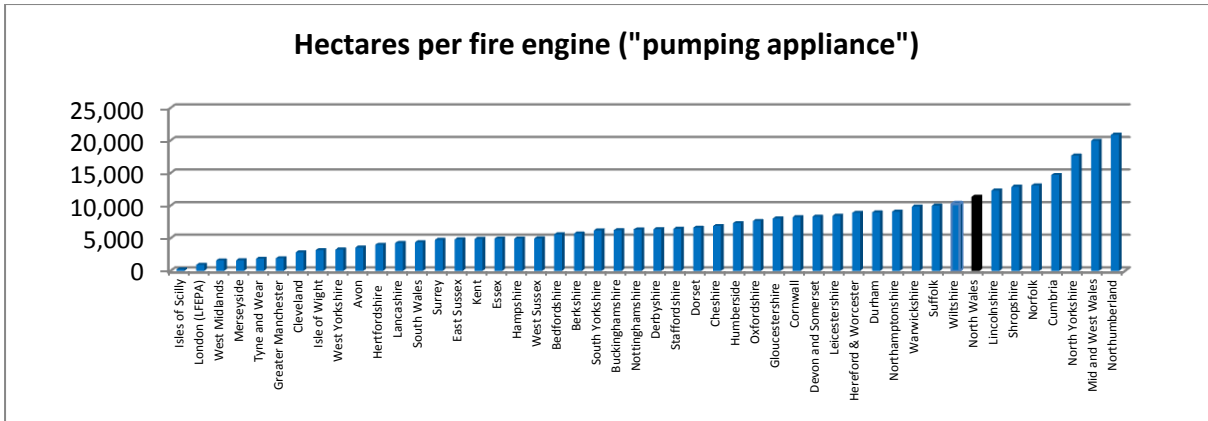


Each of the 44 fire stations in North Wales covers a larger area than the majority of other fire and rescue services in England and Wales.

Premises costs

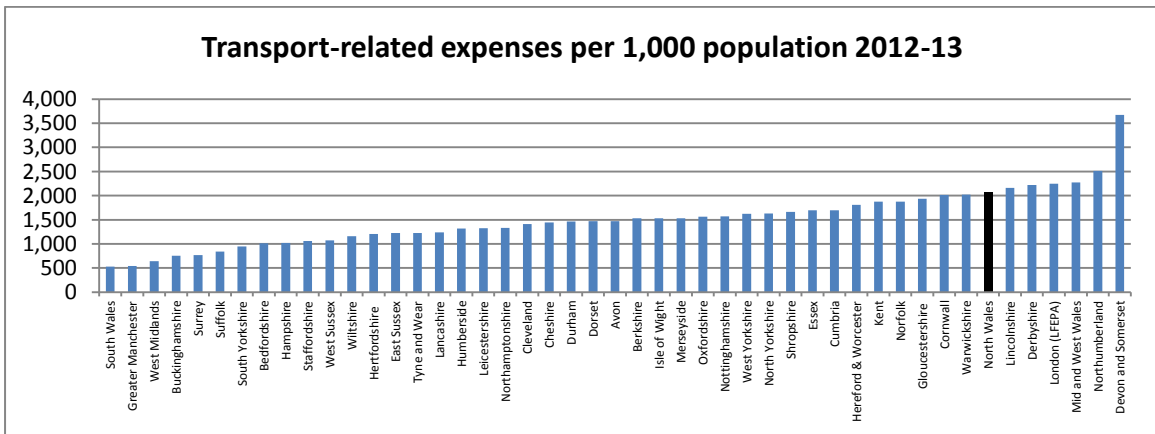
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority has been able to keep its premises-related revenue costs comparatively low. In 2012-13 it cost the equivalent of £2 per head of population for all its owned or leased fire stations, offices, stores, workshops and training facilities.





Fire engines in North Wales have more hectares to cover than the fire engines in the majority of service areas in England and Wales.

This calculation does not take into account such things as road networks and mountainous areas, nor does it consider the availability of the fire engines.



Operating in a predominantly rural area, transport-related costs in North Wales are generally consistent with other predominantly rural parts of England and Wales (with some notable exceptions, such as London).

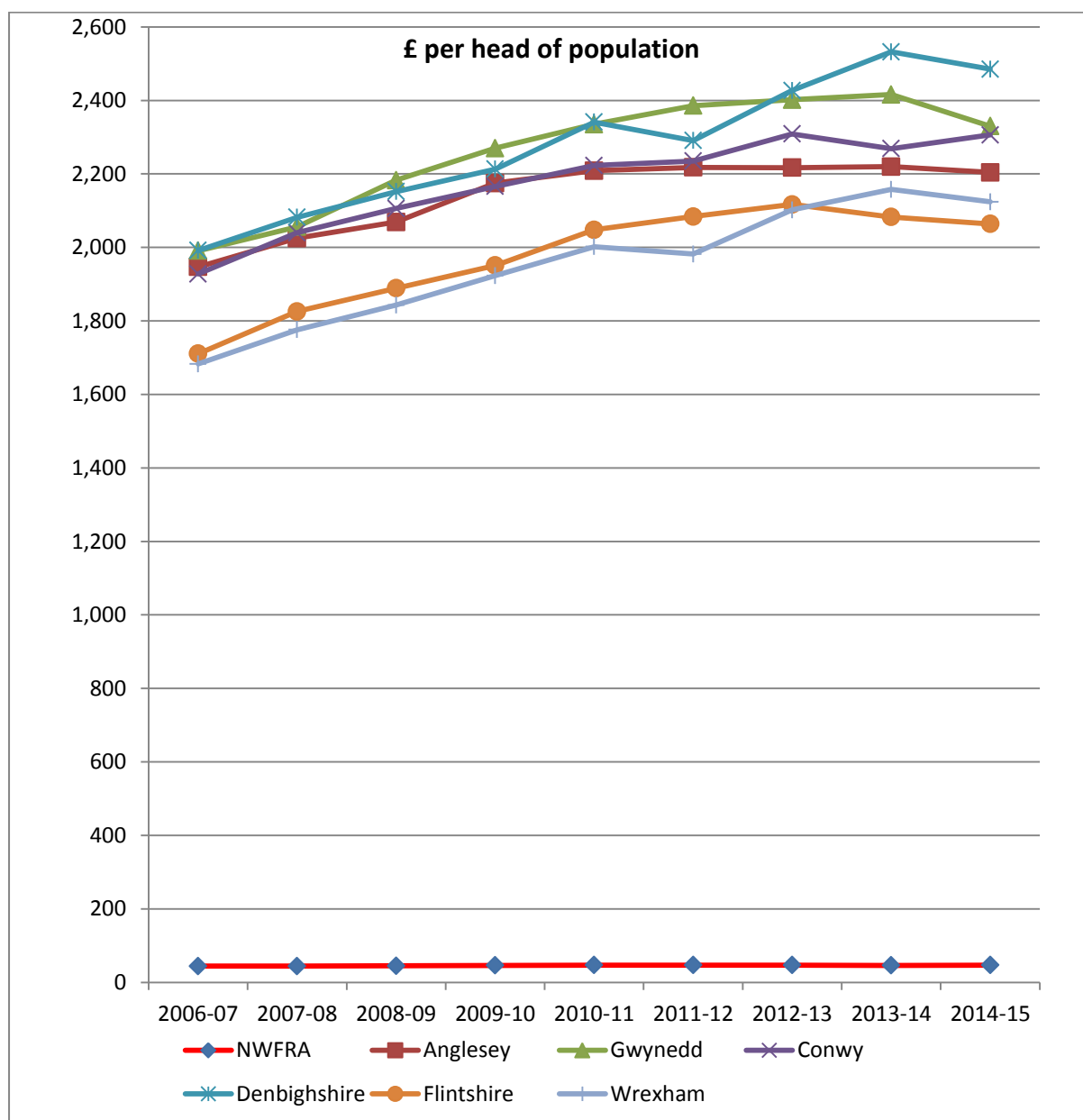
Appendix 2 – Staffing

Staff numbers in North Wales at the end of March 2013 were generally lower than in other parts of Wales, and lower than the Wales average and the England and Wales average across almost all categories of staff.

	Wholetime Duty System	Retained Duty System	Control	Support	Total staff
North Wales	254	407	29	137	827
Average England & Wales	586	264	29	164	643
Average Wales	511	531	37	183	1,261
Highest England & Wales	5,625 (London)	1,117 (Devon and Somerset)	109 (London)	875 (London)	6,609 (London)
Highest Wales	863 (South Wales)	626 (Mid & West Wales)	52 (South Wales)	255 (South Wales)	1,729 (South Wales)
Lowest England & Wales	11 (Isles of Scilly)	39 (Isles of Scilly)	11 (Northumberl and)	1 (Isles of Scilly)	51 (Isles of Scilly)
Lowest Wales	254 (North Wales)	407 (North Wales)	29 (North Wales and Mid & West Wales)	137 (North Wales)	827 (North Wales)

Appendix 3 – The cost per head of population of public services in North Wales

To give some context, the graph below shows the rising cost per head of population of county council budgets and the North Wales fire and rescue budget in recent years.



Source – National Statistics for Wales Local Authority Budgeted Revenue Expenditure (published annually in June). Table 2.

Whereas North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (NWFRA) running costs per head of population have increased by 6.8% over the past eight years, the county council running costs per head of population have increased by between 13.2% and 26.2% in the same period.

Cost per head of population comparison:

£	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority	44	44	45	46	47	47	47	46	47
Anglesey Council	1,947	2,025	2,069	2,175	2,209	2,218	2,217	2,220	2,204
Gwynedd Council	1,991	2,056	2,183	2,270	2,335	2,386	2,402	2,416	2,330
Conwy County Borough Council	1,928	2,040	2,106	2,166	2,223	2,235	2,309	2,269	2,306
Denbighshire County Council	1,992	2,082	2,152	2,213	2,341	2,291	2,427	2,532	2,485
Flintshire County Council	1,711	1,826	1,889	1,951	2,048	2,084	2,117	2,083	2,064
Wrexham County Borough Council	1,683	1,776	1,843	1,923	2,002	1,982	2,102	2,158	2,124

Source – National Statistics for Wales Local Authority Budgeted Revenue Expenditure (published annually in June). Table 2.

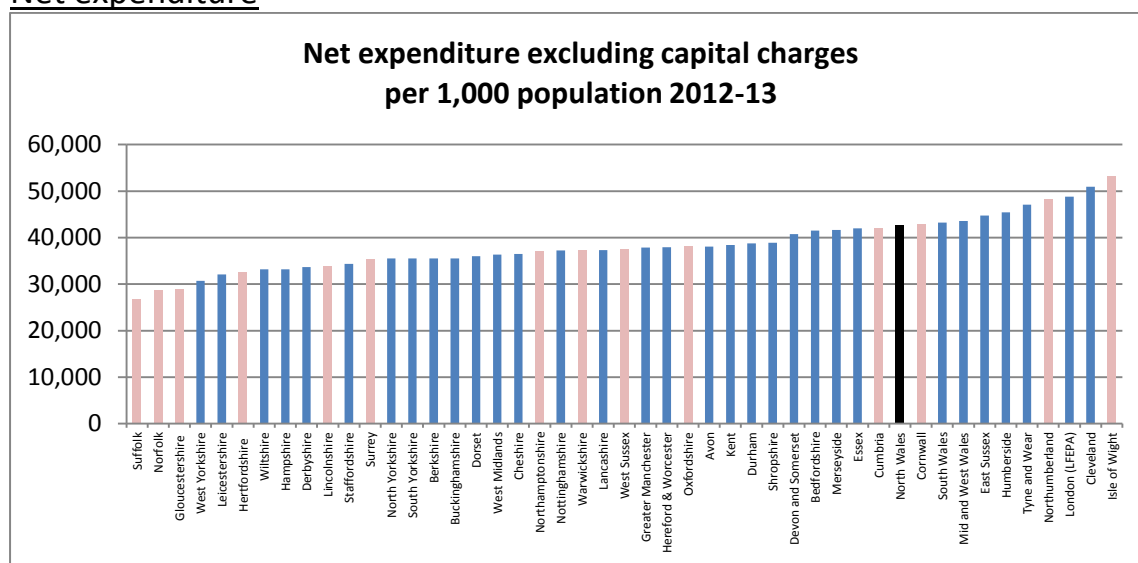
Appendix 4 – The cost of fire and rescue services elsewhere

Although the net expenditure on fire and rescue services per 1,000 population was slightly lower in North Wales than elsewhere in Wales, a number of areas in England reported even lower levels of spending.

Explaining these cost differences is complex as each fire and rescue authority will vary in its make-up, and from year to year. Rurality and population density, the predominant operational duty systems (wholetime or retained), the level and quality of services provided, specific projects undertaken and levels of efficiency can all affect the total running costs.

In some areas of England, fire and rescue services are county council-based, so a proportion of fire and rescue costs are reflected in their county council figures. These are shown in pink in the graph below.

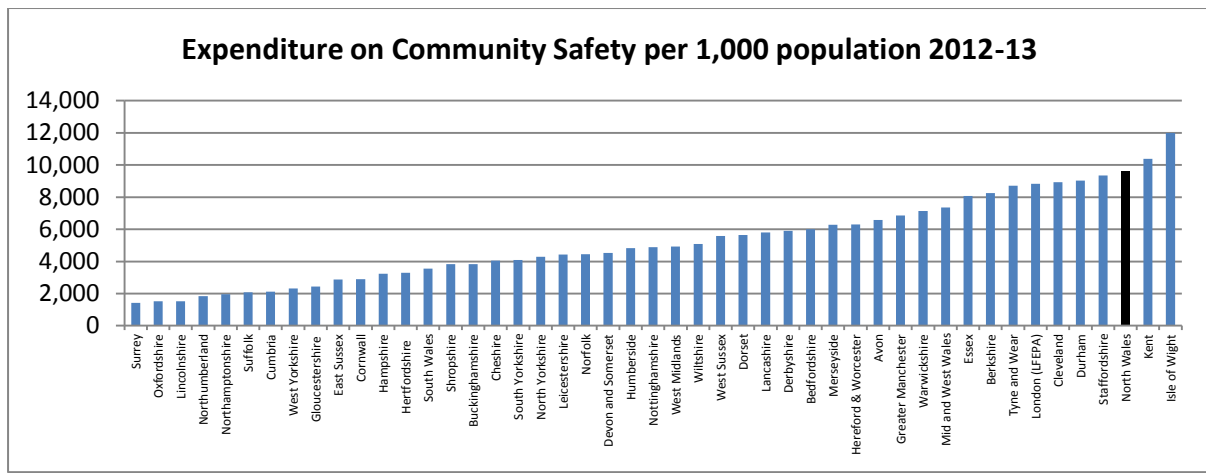
Net expenditure



Community Safety costs

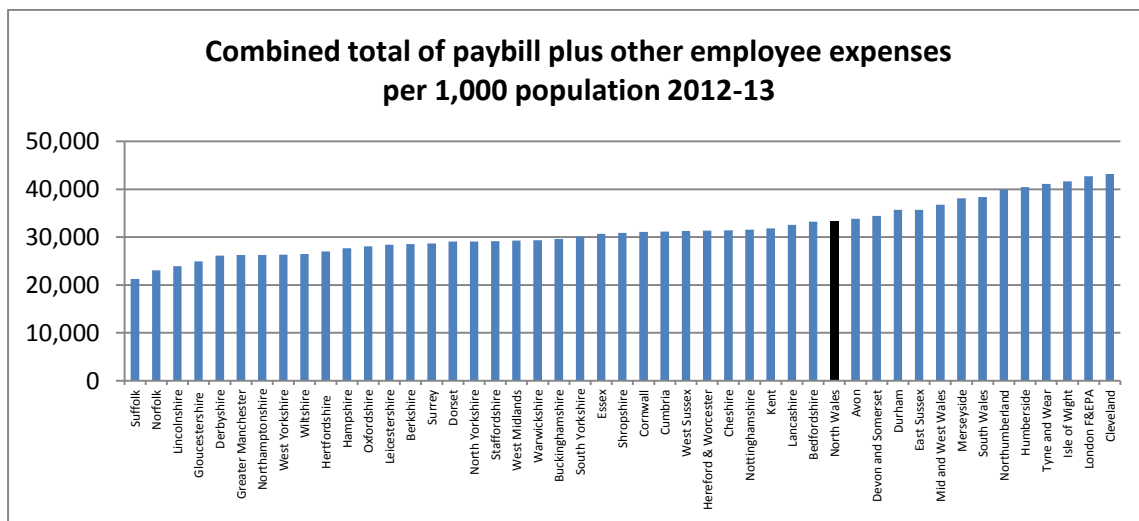
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority takes the approach that it makes much better sense to prevent fires from starting than to simply keep responding to those that do. This is particularly important for rural areas.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that it commits a comparatively high expenditure per 1,000 population to community safety. In 2012-13 this equated to around £9.62 per head of population, compared with around £5.55 for Great Britain as a whole.



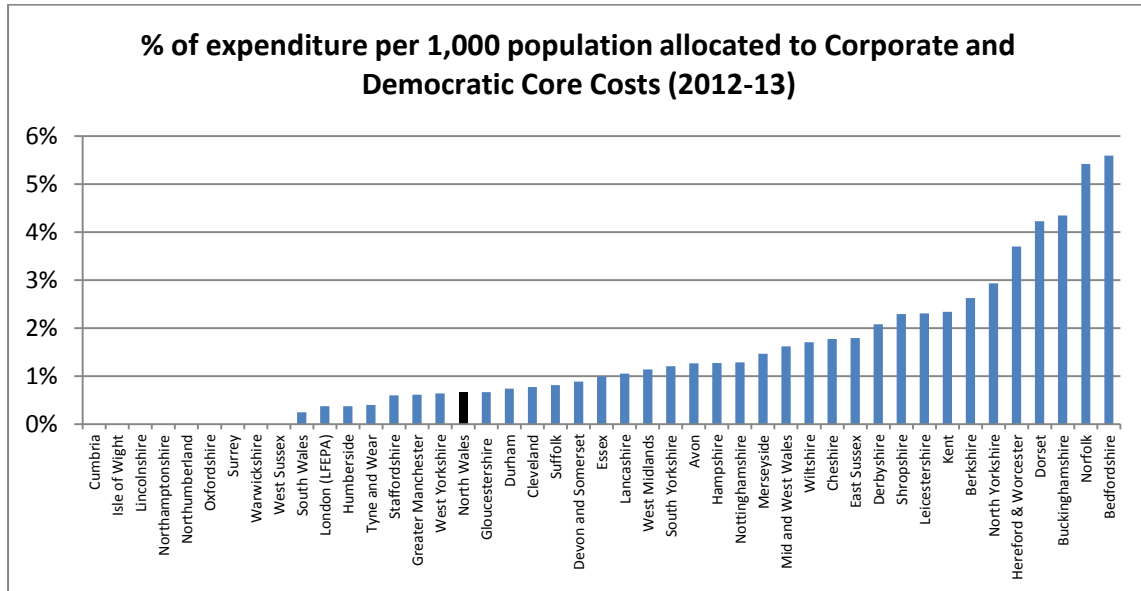
Staff costs

At the equivalent of just over £33 per head of population, employee costs (which include training costs) represent the largest single component of North Wales Fire and Rescue expenditure.



Central costs

In 2012-13, North Wales Fire and Rescue's allocation of total expenditure per 1,000 population to corporate and democratic core costs was amongst the lowest in England and Wales.



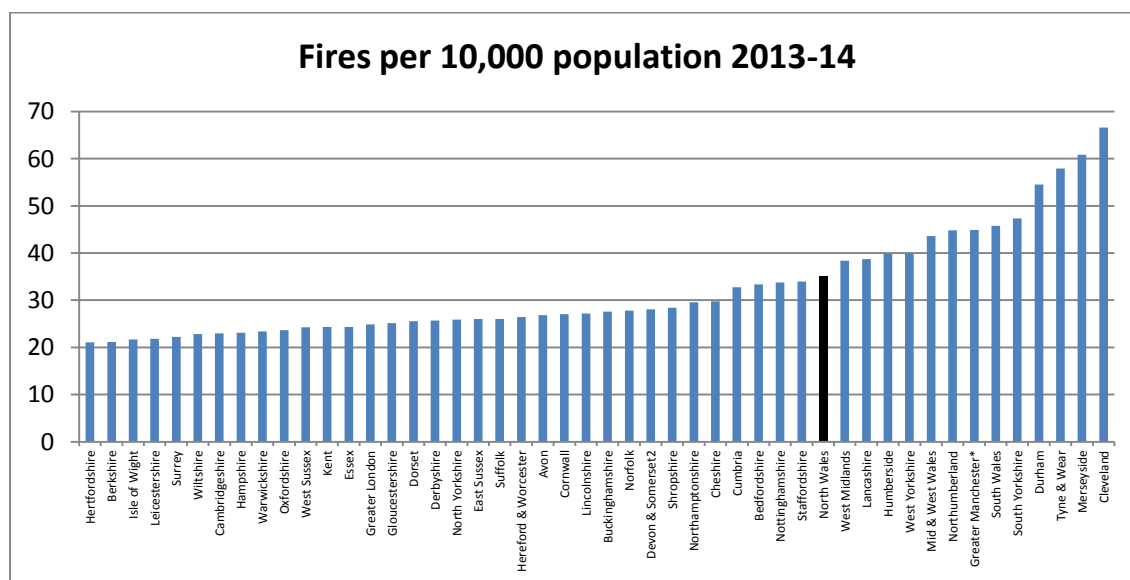
Appendix 5 – Incident numbers and attendance time statistics

During 2013/14, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service attended 2,416 fires, 3,102 false alarms and 837 non-fire emergencies.

In addition to working to prevent fires and other incidents from occurring, the Service also works hard to identify 999 calls that either do not require a response at all or that are better passed to more appropriate agencies to attend. This means that the Service can remain available to deal with genuine incidents where its skills and expertise can be put to good use. As well as reducing the overall risk in the area, it also helps to keep costs down.

Fires:

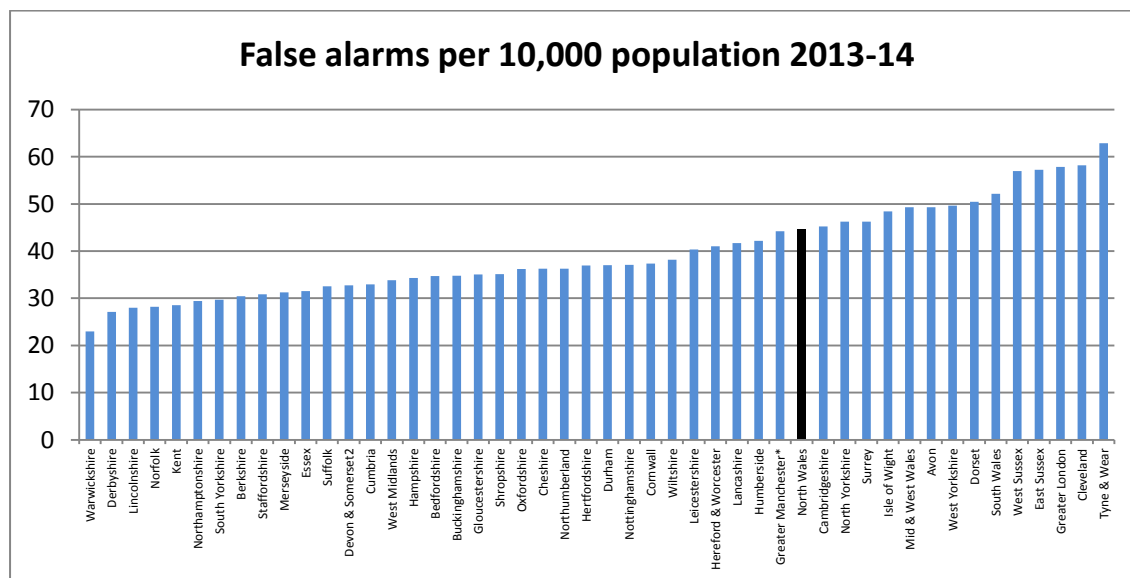
Between 2012-13 and 2013-14, there was a 3% increase in fires in North Wales compared with a 10% increase in England and a 15% increase in the whole of Wales. However, the 3% increase should be seen in the context of exceptionally low numbers of fires in 2012-13 which can be partly explained by the unusually high rainfall in that year.



North Wales	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
The total number of fires attended	3,370	3,297	3,165	2,349	2,416

False Alarms:

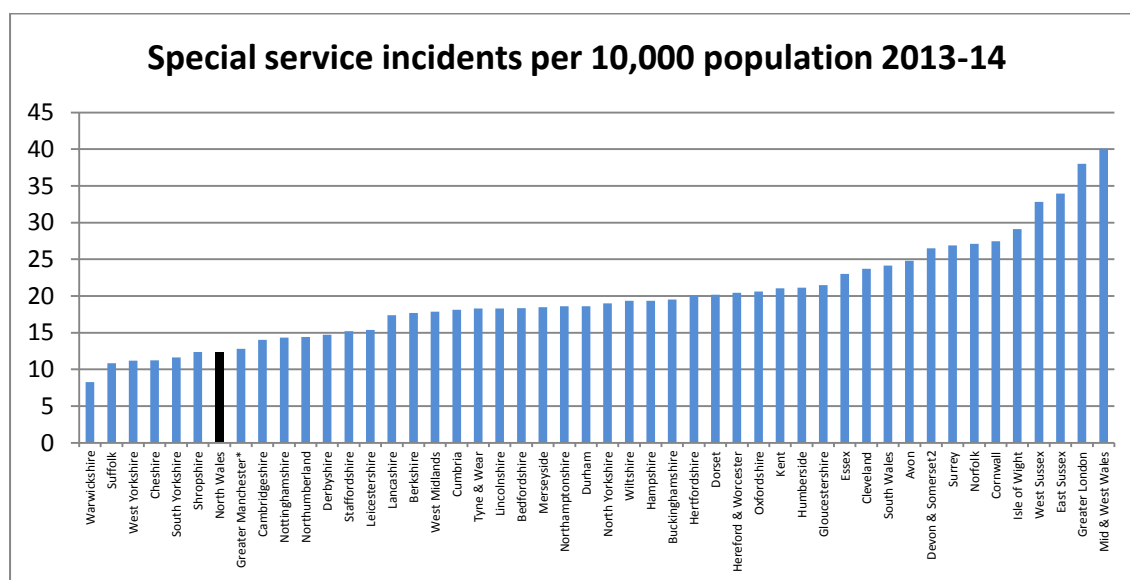
Between 2012-13 and 2013-14, there was a 4% decrease in the number of false alarms attended in North Wales – the same as in England and better than the 1% increase in Wales as a whole.



North Wales	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
The total number of false alarms attended	3,765	3,750	3,566	3,249	3,102

Non-fire emergency incidents (special services):

2013-14 saw a significant reduction in special service incidents in North Wales but this should be seen in the context of unusually high rainfall (flooding) in 2012-13. The impact of weather conditions is particularly noticeable in this category of incidents.



North Wales	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14
The total number of special service incidents attended	1,502	1,360	990	1,204	837
Special service incidents that were road traffic collisions	767	621	461	399	312

The time taken to arrive at fires

North Wales is a predominantly rural area, so distances and travel times have to be considered when planning fire and rescue services.

Attendance times to fires in England are reported by the UK Government as averages. In 2013-14, the average response time for attending fires in predominantly rural fire and rescue authorities in England was 10.5 minutes.

Attendance times to fires in Wales are reported by Welsh Government as percentages within defined time brackets. The North Wales figures - like those for the rest of Wales - have remained relatively constant from year to year, with the majority of fire calls attended in under 10 minutes and the “rurality effect” being reflected in the percentages that took longer to reach. In areas covered by retained fire crews, the attendance time calculation includes the time taken for the crew members to attend the fire station.

	Between 1 and 5 minutes	Between 5 and 10 minutes	Between 10 and 15 minutes	Longer than 15 minutes
2011-12				
North Wales	15%	51%	23%	11%
Mid & West Wales	17%	51%	21%	11%
South Wales	21%	58%	16%	4%
2012-13				
North Wales	15%	51%	23%	11%
Mid & West Wales	15%	51%	22%	12%
South Wales	22%	59%	16%	4%
2013-14				
North Wales	17%	47%	22%	13%
Mid & West Wales	17%	48%	23%	12%
South Wales	21%	59%	16%	4%

Appendix 6 – How much more Option 3 would cost

The graph below shows the maximum additional contributions that would be required from the county councils if Option 3 was selected.

