House of Commons
Communities and Local Government Committee

FiReControl

Fifth Report of Session 2009–10

Report, together with formal minutes, oral and written evidence

Ordered by the House of Commons
to be printed 16 March 2010
Communities and Local Government Committee

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The Reports and evidence of the Committee are published by The Stationery Office by Order of the House. All publications of the Committee (including press notices) are on the Internet at www.parliament.uk/clgcom.

Committee staff

The current staff of the Committee are Huw Yardley (Clerk of the Committee), Sarah Ioannou (Second Clerk), Josephine Willows (Inquiry Manager), Emma Gordon (Committee Specialist), Lorna Horton (Senior Committee Assistant), Nicola McCoy (Committee Assistant), Stewart McIlvenna (Committee Support Assistant), and Hannah Pearce (Select Committee Media Officer).

Contacts

All correspondence should be addressed to the Clerk of the Communities and Local Government Committee, House of Commons, 7 Millbank, London SW1P 3JA. The telephone number for general enquiries is 020 7219 1353; the Committee’s email address is clgcom@parliament.uk
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Acronyms/Glossary

AVLS – Automatic Vehicle Location System, a Global Positioning System transmitter that shows the exact location of each fire appliance in England (to be supplied by EADS)

DCMT1 – initial data collection toolkit, which identifies what FRS address data is contained within NLPG (to be supplied by EADS)

DCMT2 – a more complicated data collection toolkit, which combines the FRS address data with the NLPG (to be supplied by EADS)

EADS – European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company; the main contractor for the IT component of FiReControl.

Fire and Resilience Programme – the CLG-led programme reforming the Fire and Rescue Service, overseeing New Dimension, Firelink and FiReControl.

Fire Control Sounding Board – employee representative body that considers all aspects of the FireControl project.

FiReControl – a CLG-led project to provide a resilient network of nine regional control centres in England, supporting the mobilisation of FRS equipment and personnel to incidents.

Firelink – a CLG-led project to upgrade each FRS’s current main radio-communication system so that they can talk to each other and to ambulance and police services on the same secure network.

FRA – Fire and Rescue Authority; the legislative public and administrative body made up of civilians and councillors.

FRS – Fire and Rescue Service; the operational fire fighting body.

FSMC – the Local Government Association’s Fire Services Management Committee.

ICCS – Integrated Communications Control System, telephony system, which is a component of the technical part of FiReControl (supplied by EADS).

IRMP – Integrated Risk Management Plan

LACCs – Local Authority Controlled Companies, made up of and owned by the former FRAs within the region. The LACC company directors are drawn from the FRAs. London does not have an LACC because the LFEPA (see below) will have responsibility for running the London RCC as a single authority. The FRAs retain the statutory duty to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of fire (under Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004). The LACCs will be the service provider that will enable the FRAs to meet their legal duty. Three RCCs are already under lease to LACCs.

LFEPA – London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (runs the London Fire Brigade and makes decisions on key matters, including strategy, policy and the Brigade’s budget).
Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) – terminals installed in individual fire appliances, allowing the transfer of simple messages and appliance status availability (supplied by EADS)

MRMS – Mobilisation and Resource Management System; a primary component of the technical part of FiReControl (supplied by EADS)

New Dimension – a CLG-led project to provide the fire and rescue service with equipment, procedures and training to respond to a range of threats, such as terrorist attacks and flooding.

NLPG – the National Land and Property Gazetteer; the first national address list database that provides the source of addresses and geographical location of properties across England and Wales, made up of the input of Local Land and Property Gazetteers (LLPGs), which are maintained by local authorities. FiReControl aims to utilise this database and many FRSs are switching to this database.

OMD – Officer mobile Devices (to be supplied by EADS)

Practitioners’ Forum – a body comprised of stakeholders within the fire industry that provides advice to Government and Ministers on policy development.

RCC – Regional Control Centres (nine, one for each region and one for London).

Regional Management Boards – there are nine, one for each region, specific to the FRS.

SEWs – Solution Establishment Workshops, created in the summer of 2009. Workshops comprising of representatives from EADS, the FRS and CLG to address the issue of direct collaboration and stakeholder involvement.
Summary

The primary purpose of the Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) is the prompt and efficient mobilisation of firefighters in response to a fire or other related incident, in order to save lives and protect property.

The aim of the FiReControl project is to enable this critical function to be carried out with greater speed, responsiveness and efficiency: it proposes to replace the existing 46 local FRS control rooms with nine purpose-built Regional Control Centres (RCCs). These centres will handle emergency 999 calls, mobilise resources and support the management of incidents, underpinned by a resilient network technology.

The FiReControl project is part of a key strategic objective of the Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), but its current status is precarious. CLG and the main IT contractor, EADS, have had an adversarial relationship. They do not have a revised contract and there is no currently agreed project plan; until recently, there has been a lack of consultation and collaboration between CLG, EADS and those intimately involved in the Fire and Rescue Services (and some criticise the standard of the present consultation). Project management has been severely criticised, with a rapid turnover of crucial CLG and EADS senior staff. Since its inception, the costs of the project have escalated, and severe delays to the project mean that Fire and Rescue Authorities may now be expected to migrate to the new system at the very time that they should be concentrating on the high-profile safety concerns presented by the Olympic Games in 2012. The main representative bodies of the Fire and Rescue Service all have reservations about the project—many go further and have deep hostility—and fear that, as it is presently managed and designed, it will lead to a less efficient and less safe service.

The project has been beset by a lack of openness and collaboration with the main stakeholders from the start. If CLG had been more open from the start, many of the ensuing problems might not have occurred. This lack of openness has continued to the present, with CLG not allowing us to have sight of independent reviews of its management of the project—even in confidence—which implies a certain insecurity about its handling of the FiReControl project to date.

However, if CLG were to abandon the FiReControl project now, not only would all the claimed benefits of the project in terms of greater speed, responsiveness and efficiency be lost, but it would cost an extra £8 million more than if it were left to proceed. CLG is not quite at the point of no return, but it very soon will be. Our Report recommends that CLG should continue with the project, with renewed vigour, but this recommendation is conditional on CLG:

- resolving its contractual dispute with EADS and implementing a viable project plan;
- closely monitoring delivery of FiReControl against interim milestones, and examining alternative viable options for delivery to be implemented in case of any slippage;
• addressing the shortcomings in its management of the project;

• consulting fully with FRS staff and professionals in defining end-user requirements;

• taking further steps to shift the negative perception of the project and to influence fire and rescue authorities to make the positive decision to switch to the new system; and

• providing assurances that the safety and security of the Olympic Games will not be compromised during the roll-out of the new Regional Control Centres.
1 Introduction

1. The primary purpose of the Fire and Rescue Service is the prompt and efficient mobilisation of firefighters in response to a fire or other related incident, in order to save lives and protect property.\(^1\) This is a key aspect of public safety. The aim of the FiReControl project is to enable this critical function to be carried out with greater speed, responsiveness and efficiency.

2. The initial concept of FiReControl arose from a report commissioned by the Government from the management, engineering and development consultancy Mott MacDonald—*The Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales*—which was published in April 2000. The report concluded that maximum efficiency could be achieved by reducing the number of control rooms from 49 (the number in existence at that time) to nine regional control rooms. FiReControl is part of the ambitious Fire and Resilience Programme, along with two other linked projects: Firelink, a £350 million project to upgrade each FRS’s current main radio-communication system so that the FRS workforce can talk to each other and to ambulance and police services on the same secure network; and New Dimensions, a £330 million project, providing the fire and rescue service with equipment, procedures and training to respond to a range of threats, such as terrorist attacks and flooding.

3. We have followed the FiReControl project throughout its duration, and commented on it in the following publications:

- The Fire and Rescue Service\(^2\)
- CLG’s Departmental Annual Report of 2007\(^3\)
- CLG’s Departmental Annual Report of 2008\(^4\)
- CLG’s Departmental Annual Report of 2009\(^5\)

In all of these inquiries, we raised concern, and expressed some scepticism, about the basic premise of the FiReControl project, as well as its implementation and management. The project has been beset by problems since its inception. Our major Report, published in June 2006, *The Fire and Rescue Service*, studied the progress made in the FRS since the 2003 White Paper, *Our Fire and Rescue Service*, and the subsequent Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. One chapter was devoted to the FiReControl programme, which was then still in its infancy, and raised concerns that are still in existence today, including

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1 CLG’s strategic objective 6 is “to ensure safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies”.


whether the project will enhance resilience, whether the technological infrastructure is adequate, and whether sufficient funding and governance arrangements are in place.6

4. Since we had already studied the FiReControl programme in detail, we did not want to revisit the advantages and disadvantages of the initiative. As a result, this short inquiry into the FiReControl project had narrow terms of reference. We considered: progress with the project so far; the reasons for the cost and time overruns that the project had experienced; and what, if any changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project. We received 33 written submissions and held one oral evidence session, on 8 February 2010. At that session, our first panel consisted of the Fire Brigades Union, the Chief Fire Officers Association and the Local Government Association; we then heard from the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser and the Director for Fire and Resilience from CLG. The European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS)—the company that was awarded the contract by CLG to develop, deploy and maintain the IT system for the FiReControl project—gave evidence alongside CLG.

**CLG’s disclosure of FiReControl reviews**

5. Our inquiry has been hampered by the Government’s decision not to provide us with sight of various reviews of the FiReControl project carried out for CLG. The National Audit Office (NAO) cites four external reviews commissioned by CLG (all of which the NAO has seen in full):

- Two reviews of the Department’s project management by the OGC—in October 2008 and October 2009;
- A technical review of the development of the IT systems, from April to July 2009, by Professor Peter Brook of Qinetiq and Gordon Hextall, the former Chief Information Officer of the NHS Programme for IT;
- An external review of the technical feasibility of the project, the IT Contractor’s ability to deliver and contingency options in November 2009.7

6. CLG’s written evidence refers to these reviews, implying that their conclusions were positive:

> We are regularly monitored through OGC Healthchecks of the project. This October they commented positively on many aspects [of] the project and we are continuing to work with them to ensure successful delivery. We have also sought independent advice on the way forward for the project, and we have been assured that through our strengthened relationship with EADS and their new sub-contractor, we are on track for the development and integration of the full FiReControl solution.8

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7 Ev 125

8 Ev 97
7. However, repeated references in the NAO’s memorandum to the same reviews suggested that may not be the full story:

   Four external reviews of the Department’s project management have recommended strengthening the governance and management of the project which the Department has taken forward.

   In 2008 an Office of Government Commerce Health Check concluded that management of the project appeared to have grown organically without any analysis of what was needed to manage the project.

   The OGC review of October 2008 found that the project governance structure was cumbersome and the project board was not acting as an effective decision-making forum. Lines of responsibility and decision making were not clear and there was a lack of sufficient assurance and robust internal challenge.

   While the OGC review of October 2009 reported that overall project management had improved, it also expressed concerns about the capability and capacity of both the Department and EADS to successfully complete the project. Similar concerns were expressed by the external review in November 2009.

   The reliability and credibility of the Department’s current published project plan, cost estimates and risk assessments have already been questioned by both the OGC and the external review.9

8. In January 2010, we therefore asked CLG to provide these documents to us so that we could judge for ourselves. The Department declined to do so, on the basis that the documents form a body of advice on ongoing policy development and decisions that have not yet been taken; and that they contain information classed as commercially sensitive.10

9. We questioned the Minister on the reasons for the Department’s refusal to let us see those documents, and renewed our request to see them, in confidence if necessary. The Minister agreed to reconsider his decision, but his subsequent letter reiterated what was said previously, and upheld the decision not to make the documents available to the Committee, even in confidence:

   It is imperative that when we commission independent analysis that assessment is able to give the department direct, honest feedback to inform our decision-making. It is equally important that it can consider live commercially or operationally sensitive issues. That is the value of this analysis. I would not want future advice to be constrained by an eye to wider immediate dissemination—this would risk changing the nature of these reports. These reports were commissioned without prejudice and to support policy advice to Ministers on decisions which are yet to be taken.11

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9 Ev 126, 131–133.
10 Appendix
11 Ibid.
10. We have therefore had to complete our inquiry without the benefit of considering directly what other independent reviews of the project have concluded about it. We regret this decision on the part of the Department. We therefore have only indirect reports of those reviews through the NAO references to them. Consequently, we have been unable to take the Department’s assurances about what those reviews said at face value. Indeed, given the weight of evidence we have received from other parties, we suspect that the Department’s references to their conclusions are at best disingenuous, and possibly downright misleading. In the report below, we come to our own conclusions about the Department’s management of this project, and about how the Government should best proceed from here.

11. We would like to thank Lee Summerfield and his colleagues from the National Audit Office for their considerable contribution to this inquiry, both in their written evidence and in their subsequent help and advice.
2 An outline of current views of FiReControl

12. The terms of reference of this inquiry did not ask about the advantages or disadvantages of the project, as these issues had been covered in previous inquiries. However, we wanted to know the general current views of FiReControl to understand the views of the interested parties. The potential benefits of the project are summarised in the memorandum from East Midlands Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd, one of the newly-formed Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs) formed by the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in the East Midlands to run the new East Midlands Regional Control Centre (RCC):

We see this project as delivering superior solutions to 999 emergency call handling and mobilisation of the FRAs’ resources. The standardisation approach to the operation of the RCC will enhance capability, not restrict it, through the use of technology that is currently widely used but not integrated, with all the functionality that FiReControl will deliver […] The final and most important point is that of resilience offered by the FiReControl Project. No other emergency service will be able to offer such a capability. The networking and mutual back up offered by the FiReControl solution, coupled to the technology deployed in FRA vehicles, will establish a standard of capability that is better positioned to meet the challenges being seen and developing in the 21st century.12

13. The first 23 paragraphs of CLG’s written evidence also outline the benefits of FiReControl. CLG describes the Departmental Strategic Objective (DSO 6) that relates to the Fire and Rescue Service: “To ensure safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies” and maintains that the delivery of FiReControl is a core priority for the Department.13

CLG summaries the benefits of implementing FiReControl:

- **increased resilience.** A unified, resilient networked technology ensures that staff in any of the RCCs can answer calls from anywhere in the country and be able to mobilise the appropriate resources.

- **greater fire and rescue service capabilities.** FiReControl will integrate services, by new risk management tools, with the ability to deploy specialist equipment or resources efficiently across boundaries and over large geographical areas. Common call handling, mobilisation processes, technology and training will ensure consistency across regions.

- **improved frontline firefighter safety.** All FRs will have Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs),14 providing information to firefighters, including building information, guidance on the safe handling of chemicals, and the location of the nearest hydrants and water supplies. A new communications system will be based on data rather than voice, accessible through the MDTs. Each MDT will have a Global

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12 Ev 122
13 Ev 94
14 The Firelink project is installing the hardware for the MDTs and FiReControl is installing the software.
Positioning System transmitter—an Automatic Vehicle Location System (AVLS)—which will show the exact location of each fire appliance and will enable staff working with the networked technology to find the nearest FRS resources.\(^\text{15}\)

14. However, the preponderance of evidence had reservations about the project in general. Matt Wrack, General Secretary of the FBU, summarised his union’s opposition to FiReControl, which has been consistently expressed throughout the seven years of the project:

On behalf of the Fire Brigades Union we have opposed the FiReControl project from the start on grounds of its operational usefulness to the Fire and Rescue Service, on the basis of its threat to the efficiency of the Fire and Rescue Service, on the basis of local accountability and on the basis of cost. I have to say that the previous seven years have just confirmed our position more so than when we started out.\(^\text{16}\)

15. John Bonney, President of the CFOA, told us that his association’s positive views of the benefits of FiReControl had not changed, but that alternatives need to be considered as a result of the project’s mismanagement:

The professional Association’s view very much remains as it did at the inception—that we are very committed to the principles and aspirations of the project. We are concerned, as it has developed, at how badly parts of it have been managed and in recent times we have been clear that there needs to be an alternative plan worked up because of our concern about some of the risks with the project at the moment, but in terms of aspirations and the objective of the FiReControl project, we are still very much committed to that.\(^\text{17}\)

16. From our panel of first witnesses, only the LGA’s views have changed since FiReControl’s inception, from ambivalent support to ‘a position of hostility’, as Councillor Coleman explained to us:

The LGA’s position has in fact changed. Having been broadly supportive although quite ambivalent, especially among member fire authorities, we have now moved to a position of hostility and against the project in principle. We have asked officers of the LGA to work up alternatives, rather in line with CFOA, because member fire authorities have come to the view that the project has just been delayed for far too long and they have serious doubts whether it is ever going to work.\(^\text{18}\)

17. These specific comments on the FiReControl project reflect the general tenor of the majority of the evidence submitted to the Committee.

\(^{15}\) Ev 94 and 95
\(^{16}\) Q 1
\(^{17}\) Q 1
\(^{18}\) Q 1
3 Delays and current timetable

18. The following table is an amended version of NAO’s in its written evidence and shows the timeline of key events in the FiReControl project, with significant dates where delays occurred:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>May 2004: CLG starts procurement of IT contract</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 2004: Strategic outline business case published by CLG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>March 2007: CLG contracts EADS for FiReControl IT systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>June 2007: Full business case published by CLG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>April 2008: EADS tells CLG that technology used to develop mobilisation system is not working</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 2008: OGC healthcheck</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>December 2008: New milestone not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>March 2009: New milestone not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 2009: EADS chooses fallback mobilisation system (Intergraph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>May 2009: New milestone not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>July 2009: CLG co-locates its technical and assurance team with EADS in Newport. Ministerial announcement: ‘go live’ date for first RCC extended by a further 10 months. CLG informed of increasing issues with the mobilisation system software.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>August 2009: Hextall/Brook technical review presented to CLG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>September 2009: FiReControl software requirements passed to Intergraph’s USA development team, for inclusion in contingency mobilisation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>October 2009: Key milestone not met. OGC healthcheck.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>November 2009: External review of project presented to CLG. Extended deadline for new key milestone not fully met (revised to December)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
14 Communities and Local Government Committee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>EADS cancels contract with existing subcontractor and switches to Intergraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extended deadline for new key milestone not met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2010</td>
<td>Further extended deadline for new milestone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2010</td>
<td>Extant contractual date to deliver full IT systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>First interim release of Intergraph product for preliminary testing and integration into overall IT system by EADS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>Schedule delivery date of IT system from EADS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2011</td>
<td>Current ‘go live’ date for first 3 RCCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>End of 2012</td>
<td>Current plan for all RCCs to be operational</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ev 128 and 129

19. The FiReControl project began in 2004 and was due for completion, with all RCCs being fully operational, in 2009. However, on 26 November 2008, CLG announced a delay to the programme, with the ‘go-live’ date for first RCCs extended by nine months. On 15 July 2009, CLG announced a further 10-month extension to this timetable, which means the first FRSs will now switch over to the RCCs in May 2011—three years later than the first switchover was originally planned and 19 months later than planned when the IT contract was awarded—and all regional control centres are scheduled to be switched over by the end of 2012.

20. Many of the written submissions demonstrate an appreciation of the arguments in favour of the FiReControl project. However, there is an overwhelming view that time is running out for it to remain a viable option. Kent FRA describes the need for urgency:

   The Authority remains supportive of a better technological solution and accepts the operational logic of an interlinked, resilient national system. The repeated delays and confusion have not only led to a rapid decline in confidence but also the distinct risk of project failure. Such a failure will leave fire and rescue authorities faced with an expensive business-critical risk to be addressed at a time when they are being pressed for substantial efficiency savings. The situation is, we believe, urgent.19

21. CLG’s evidence places the blame for delay on EADS:

   As the Committee is aware, the development of the FiReControl solution has been slower than expected. For their part, EADS has acknowledged that their quality assurance has not been as good as we and FRSs are entitled to expect.20

19 Ev 26
20 Ev 97
22. However, Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Management Board’s written submission exemplifies many views sent to us, in placing the blame on CLG:

The numerous delays in the delivery of this project have led to a lack of confidence in the ability of CLG to deliver a complex project of this nature. The problem stems again from a lack of user engagement at the early stages of the project. From the beginning CLG seems to have failed to grasp the complex nature of this project. If this project is to deliver its objectives there needs to be a new culture of working in partnership with the FRS, more realistic goals and timescales need to be set. This has not always been the case to date.21

23. There is general anxiety about when FRAs will be required to cross over to FiReControl, with the accompanying technical and staffing arrangements and procedures. Dorset Fire Authority outlines this concern:

There is still considerable ambiguity about certain areas of the project. This includes how the Regional Control Centre will operate and interact with the Service, the timescales for delivery of key enablers and the requirements that the Service is expected to meet during the transition period and after transfer of its operations. This hinders the Service’s ability to plan for the future and to know how the Service will ultimately be affected by the project.22

Derbyshire FRS’s written submission goes further:

The need for common procedures, practices, naming conventions and common key datasets is a high priority if the RCCs are to function properly across borders. However after more than five years since the inception of the FiReControl project, after numerous workshops and seminars at all levels there is perhaps only one firmly agreed common way of working which has been promulgated across FRSs and that consists of the establishment of a set of national call signs. Everything else is still being worked upon.23

24. Merseyside FRA highlight the need for contracts to be agreed by the main players, which have not yet been agreed:

Implementation of the project will entail a complicated suite of contractual documents being agreed by fire authorities, the regional control companies, CLG and the main contractors. The details of those contractual documents have yet to be finalised or agreed. The refusal of one or more of the relevant parties to those contracts to enter into them could adversely impact upon the progress or implementation of the project.24

25. In oral evidence, EADS were confident that their new, revised timetable would be met, with Robin Southwell asserting that “we are hitting our milestones”25 and “we are
committed to that [delivery] date” of mid-2011. The Minister gave a more reserved endorsement of the agreed timetable: “I cannot sit here and say to you 100 per cent. that it will happen on time, but all the information I have at hand tells me that it ought to happen”.

**Technical issues**

26. There are serious concerns about the timetable for the work on the specific mobilisation IT system that EADS has now sub-contracted to Intergraph. NAO describes the proposed timetable in its written evidence. In May 2009, EADS engaged with Intergraph to develop a contingency option for the IT mobilisation system. Subsequently, EADS terminated its contract with its original sub-contractor and, in December 2009, agreed a contract with Intergraph.

27. Intergraph is to modify its core ‘off-the-shelf’ software product for the FiReControl project. As the NAO’s written evidence states, Intergraph will develop this IT product in its American and Swindon facilities. However, because of Intergraph’s fixed annual product development cycle, EADS had to confirm with Intergraph its specific mobilisation system requirements by 1 October 2009. This short timescale gave little time for consultation with the FRS on the end-user requirements.

28. Intergraph’s interim IT system product is due for release on 1 July 2010, for integration into the overall IT system by EADS. This product will need to be tested to ensure that it is fully operational and meets the needs of the project. The NAO memorandum states:

   The Department advises that it is engaging collaboratively with Intergraph and Fire and Rescue Service end-users in order to mitigate the risk of escalating cost and delay due to incomplete or misunderstood requirements.

The final version of the Intergraph product is due in October 2010.

29. It is unclear to what extent CLG is managing its risk with EADS and EADS’ subcontractor for this product, in relation to the current timetable. CLG’s caution in oral evidence about the extent to which the current timetable is achievable may be coupled with a statement in its written evidence when discussing this part of the project which falls some way short of total confidence in the ability of its contractors to deliver:

   In contractual terms, we have demanded, and received, greater visibility of deliverables and more interim/shorter milestones from EADS. We will continue to take a close ‘hands on’ management and assurance role and be vigilant for signs of slippage of loss of quality in outputs.
30. Councillor Pearson, from the LGA, voiced concerns over the timetabling of the roll-out of the IT system:

Sadly, there is no guarantee the technology will work and I think successive ministers have been less than straightforward with fire authorities. We had the Minister allegedly come clean in July on the timetable. Fire authorities are reaching a point where they have no confidence in CLG on this project, but basically if the technology does not work there is no choice but to scrap it and start again.31

31. The current FiReControl timetable also relies on FRSs having the required information and staffing levels to meet the timetable as well, as is explained by the Oxfordshire FRA written evidence:

[T]he failure to finalise the technical solution for the project has led to the national team being unable to provide sufficient detail to allow the FRS to work on its own actions to put the processes and data systems to support FiReControl in place. This is a major activity requiring considerable FRS specialist resource (a scarce commodity) and required sufficient lead-time. An inability to progress work poses an increasing risk that when the information finally becomes available FRSs will be unable to resource the necessary work to meet the project timescale.32

32. The NAO describes the proposed sequence of events for the transfer from local control rooms to the RCCs and states that CLG itself is concerned about the present timetable for the three RCCs to go live:

Local control rooms will be transferred to new Regional Control Centres in phases over a 20 month period. The Department expects this to enable any faults or deficiencies to be identified and remedied, thereby reducing the risk of operational failure. All nine Regional Control Centres are planned to be operational by the end of 2012. The Department originally set out in the project’s business case that all Regional Control Centres would be operational by the end of 2009. The Department is concerned that the first three Regional Control Centres may not become operational in May 2011 as planned.33

2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games

33. Both the Minister and Robin Southwell discussed the ‘go-live’ date of mid 2011.34 However, that date is misleading as it refers only to the current go-live date for the first three regional control centres. Much of the written evidence shows concern about the new timetable, whereby all regional control centres will become operational by the end of 2012, because that will mean that the changeover from local control rooms to some RCCs will coincide with the Olympic Games. Kent FRA’s written evidence highlights this point:

31 Q 50
32 Ev 53
33 Ev 128
34 Qq 60 and 66
The proximity of the Olympic Games to the cutover of the RCC causes concern to many Authorities. The Olympics will be a national event, affecting not just London. This point does not seem to have been given insufficient consideration within the planning stages of the FiReControl project and the South East region is still destined to cutover at various points, both prior to and during the staging of this event in Summer 2012.35

34. Dorset is hosting all the sailing events for the 2012 Olympics and Dorset Fire Authority’s written memorandum describes similar concerns to those of Kent:

It is essential for the Service to have resilient call handling and mobilising facilities before and during the games in the event of a large multi-agency incident. If the project timescales were to change yet again, consideration would need to be given of the potential clash in the transfer to the RCC and the Service’s involvement in the 2012 games. In view of a potential multi-agency exercise 12 months before the games themselves, the Authority has determined that any cutover date between July 2011 and the end of the games in September 2012 would be unacceptable and this could affect Dorset’s place in the cutover order and potentially impact on the other fire and rescue authorities in the South West.36

35. Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority’s submission highlights the fact that, according to the present timetable, its FRS will not be integrated into the FiReControl project until after the end of the Olympics, even though Dorney Lakes in South Buckinghamshire is one of the Olympic venues:

[Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service] is now scheduled to cutover just after the Olympics in late 2012 creating a double negative: BFRS will not be part of the integrated FiReControl solution; we will also have to balance a significant amount of preparatory work required immediately prior to cutover whilst managing the risks associated with supporting an Olympics event.37

Alternatives to FiReControl

36. As is readily apparent from the above, the FiReControl project is reaching a critical point in its existence. CLG has been studying several alternatives to the project ranging from the re-procurement of FiReControl to investment in 46 local standalone centres, since early spring of 2009.38 The NAO explained that these options were presented to Ministers in November 2009, but noted that “The Department has not yet set out a trigger point for its fallback options.”39

37. The NAO states that, to date, CLG has spent £202 million on the project. If FiReControl were not to proceed, the £205 million of future lease payments on FiReControl buildings would transfer to the Department. The Department estimated that
a further £24 million would be spent on winding up the project. This would bring the total cost to the Department of discontinuing the project to £431 million, £8 million more than the cost of continuing with the project.

38. Questioned on contingency plans in oral evidence, the Minister was non-committal, preferring to concentrate on delivering the project as planned:

   I know that [CLG] are looking at all different possible configurations, so in that sense for us our focus must remain on delivering FiReControl as it was envisaged in a much better environment than it has ever been in before, while at the same time, pretty obviously, being prudent and looking at contingencies.\(^{40}\)

39. However, it is clear that a decision on contingency options needs to be made soon. As the CFOA’s John Bonney told us:

   Fire and rescue authorities have not been investing in their fire controls in the expectation that the regional control centres would be brought in. We are now saying there is a point we have now reached with the confidence on the project, although we are still committed to the project, where we do believe there needs to be an alternative provided if, for whatever reason, the project is scrapped. We cannot leave fire and rescue services high and dry.\(^{41}\)
4 Project governance and management

Procurement issues

40. In May 2004, CLG started the procurement of the IT contract for FiReControl. It took until March 2007 (just under three years) for CLG finally to award the IT contract, worth £200 million, for the design, development, deployment and maintenance of the core IT systems for FiReControl to EADS. Despite the time taken to reach this decision, there is a widespread view that CLG did not consider in sufficient detail the specifications of the system required, and that there was insufficient professional input into the process.

41. John Bonney told us in oral evidence about this lack of detail:

[...] the rush to procurement meant the level of detail in the specification did not reflect what the professional people were saying. That has plagued the project ever since, both in terms of delays and being over-optimistic about how quickly it could be delivered, how much it was going to cost, and why certain things that were absolutely necessary were never specified and other things were put in that were not needed [...] So in one sense a lot of the work subsequently has been around that failure to be very clear in both output and outcome terms about what was going to be delivered by the project. When we talk about CLG having a lot of resources still committed to this project that is because they are having to work so closely with the contractor to fill in those gaps that should have been filled before the procurement.

42. Shahid Malik confirmed that this was the case:

The problem was that there was a concept and a vision but the detail was not there. In the spirit of continuing in candid mode, we had not engaged the Fire and Rescue Service in the development of the concept and that was one of the gaps.

43. In May 2009, the Public Accounts Committee criticised CLG for poor performance in the management of the New Dimension project, leading to delays, avoidable costs and weaknesses in contracting. CLG accepted this criticism of the programme management of New Dimension, but asserted that this was not applicable to FiReControl:

The Department has done much to address this since 2005 and now has improved systems in place. For example: the lessons learnt on New Dimension were picked up by the Department’s then emerging FiReControl project which put in place specialist resources covering programme management, and commercial and quality assurance competencies. The Department’s finance and procurement functions are now closely involved in the running of the Fire and Resilience Programme Board (which considers not only New Dimension but the Firelink and FiReControl projects as well). There are regular meetings on budget issues between the policy and project

42 Ev 126
43 Qq 7–8
44 Q 58
45 See Acronyms/Glossary
functions. Additionally a new Head of Procurement has been appointed with an increased portfolio of practical experience, which he is bringing to the function. The Department is addressing the acknowledged areas of weakness working with business units including Fire and Resilience Directorate.\textsuperscript{46}

However, the evidence which we have received for this inquiry calls into question the extent to which the lessons of New Dimension have, in practice, been applied to FiReControl.

**Relationship between CLG and EADS**

44. EADS is contracted to deliver the IT system for the FiReControl project, which links the nine regional control centres to all fire stations across England and to their appliances and vehicles, and which enables the transfer of data between them. It is also contracted to maintain and enhance the system following development, until 2015. There is an option to extend this until 2018.

45. The NAO describes the role of EADS:

As well as designing, developing and installing the core resilient IT systems, EADS is required to supply operational support services, including fault repair, maintenance and data back-ups until 2015, with an option for a further 3 year extension up to 2018. EADS has subcontracted the majority of the work to third parties and its main role is to bring these packages together to form the overall IT systems. The mobilisation system will require the integration and customisation of 50 pre-existing Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) software packages.\textsuperscript{47}

46. In the NAO evidence, the following diagram illustrates what EADS is contracted to deliver:

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\textsuperscript{46} Treasury Minutes on the tenth report from the Committee of Public Accounts, Session 2008–09, paras 8 and 9.

\textsuperscript{47} Ev 130
47. While representatives from the LGA, CFOA and LGA at our oral evidence session in February 2010 blamed CLG for rushing the procurement stage, Mr. Housden, Permanent Secretary at CLG, at our oral evidence session on the Departmental Annual Report on 19 October 2009, blamed the delay of the FiReControl project on the failures of EADS to deliver:

We much regret it because the quicker these control centres are up, running and established the more effective will be the protection that is offered to the public and the efficiency of the Fire Service. We certainly regret it on those grounds. It has been a source of great frustration to us that the technology solution, EADS that we are relying on here, has not worked...We procured in the open market a world class provider. EADS are a major defence and systems contractor in the UK and more broadly. They are a multinational, highly successful company. We are entitled to expect that they will deliver on this project and many of the things that they have promised they have done, but we were very disappointed indeed that their technology solution on this particular aspect is not yet working. In the circumstances that we faced, we felt and ministers felt that it was the right thing to do to consult with our stakeholders and to announce a revised timetable, taking into account all the issues. It is a source of great frustration and disappointment to me, as it is to you.49

48. Mr. Housden went on to explain that CLG has renegotiated the terms of the contract with EADS, so that CLG will gain from profits generated by EADS from selling the FiReControl software around the world. When questioned on whether this was letting EADS off lightly, Mr. Housden responded that "we were dealing with the terms of the contract as it was originally framed and the commercial judgment was this was the best way to proceed".50

49. However, EADS’ written submission seems to place the blame for difficulties with the original contract problems with CLG, including CLG’s delay to let and start the contract with EADS:

The contract originally let to EADS was for the delivery of the IT elements of FiReControl. During the tender process, the delivery timescales that would be deemed acceptable for system build and go-live were tightly constrained. These timescales have since proved unachievable for many reasons rooted across the whole programme. A delayed announcement to let and start the contract compounded these pressures [...] A significant proportion of contract requirements have needed further work since contract award in order to define the details sufficiently for implementation.51

48 Ev 130
49 Qq 104–106, oral evidence session on 19 October, Departmental Annual Report 2009.
50 Ibid., Q108.
51 Ev 118
50. This adversarial relationship between CLG and EADS was raised in oral evidence by John Bonney, who said that CFOA found

[...] not only was there not the organised contact with EADS—we were kept at arm’s length, it was through CLG—but the relationship between CLG and EADS was adversarial because it was already in a contractual relationship rather than a partnership approach. That would have been all right if we had got a very clear detailed specification, but when you do not have that you end up, if you are not careful, only sorting the problems out by means of resorting to the legal arrangements. I think that is fundamentally where the difficulties existed.52

51. The South East FRS’s Regional Management Board’s written evidence similarly describes an adversarial relationship between CLG and EADS:

CLG set the contracts with EADS using an output specification, a technique encouraging innovation by not unduly constraining industry. However, it is a technique that assumes a partnering relationship with the provider. The lack of a partnering approach, involving FRSs working to support EADS, was evidenced by an adversarial relationship between CLG and EADS and, in turn, CLG and Regional Project Teams (RPT) representing FRS frustration.53

52. West Sussex County Council’s written evidence blames EADS for the lack of expert input at the beginning and maintains that, even after restructuring at EADS, there is now less day-to-day contact with EADS than there used to be:

Initial contact with EADS was positive, with them portraying the image of a ‘can do’ organisation that place premium on communication with partners. This has not however been the experience in reality with almost a year between formal contract signing and any direct contact with FRSs. The mitigation offered at the time suggested that EADS did not have sufficient personnel to resource the project and it took a considerable period of time to recruit and train staff to the required level. After this time the contact and level of commitment increased significantly and as a result the level of cooperation and understanding also improved. Following an EADS restructure in 2008 this level of commitment has reduced markedly, to the point where no day to day contact remains and only limited contact is made via regional coordinator meetings.54

53. The NAO memorandum explains that CLG believes the original contract conformed to the prevailing Office of Government Commerce (OGC) standards, but goes on:

However, both the external review and the Department concur that in other respects the contract was not well suited to the needs of the FiReControl project. As the contract contains few interim milestones, it does not give the Department an
effective basis for holding EADS accountable for its on-going performance by obliging them to deliver components at planned and frequent intervals.\textsuperscript{55}

54. The NAO states that EADS’ original contract is out of date and does not reflect CLG’s current project plan; the present contract states that EADS is contracted to provide the IT system by March 2010, against CLG’s current scheduled system delivery date of October 2010. EADS’ original contract runs out in March 2010 and to date, CLG has not yet agreed a new contract and they are currently negotiating to revise the contract to reflect CLG’s current project plan.\textsuperscript{56} When questioned on whether there is a contract binding EADS to a finish date of mid-2011, Shona Dunn, Director for Fire and Resilience at CLG, responded with the following:

There are a number of documents that were signed by EADS and by ourselves either in the run up to or just after the July 2009 rescheduling. There is a heads of term agreement setting out the revised expectations and there are two contract change notes which set out a number of additional milestones and revised expectations, both in terms of what is to be delivered and how the relationship between the two organisations will work. That has not been fully taken through to detailed changes in the underpinning contract as yet and that will happen once the ongoing process of reviewing the revised draft schedule that EADS have provided to us is complete.\textsuperscript{57}

55. The NAO evidence states that CLG believes EADS is in breach of contract for failing to meet key contractual milestones, in particular for failing to deliver an acceptable, revised delivery plan. EADS does not accept that it is in breach of contract.\textsuperscript{58}

56. CLG admits that the FiReControl project has not gone to plan:

Implementation of the FiReControl solution has been slower than we hoped, and initially planned. We have thoroughly reviewed our approach and progress, informed by independent advice, and taken tough decisions to ensure we are best placed to make progress.\textsuperscript{59}

The North East Regional Management Board writes about the need for a project plan to enable

[...] FRSs to fully appreciate the scale of the project, estimate effort and resources required to deliver and budget plan accordingly and in sufficient time to deliver necessary outcomes to the appropriate standard.\textsuperscript{60}

However, the NAO points out that, to date, there is no agreed project plan for FiReControl:

An initial project plan from EADS in November 2009 indicated a system delivery date later than required in the Department’s project plan. To date, a detailed and
fully scoped project plan has yet to be agreed between the Department and EADS. This is contingent on EADS first fulfilling its obligation under a contract milestone to provide a detailed updated plan. The reliability and credibility of the Department’s current published project plan, cost estimates and risk assessments have already been questioned by both the OGC and the external reviews. [...] EADS and the Department are working to agree a new project plan up to project completion and put this on a contractual basis.61

57. The NAO’s timeline62 shows that on 21 December 2009 EADS’ project plan was not agreed. The date of 1 February 2010 was the further extended deadline for the new milestone of EADS supplying a detailed plan to CLG. When questioned about the new project plan, Robin Southwell, the Chief Executive Officer of EADS, said that EADS and CLG do have an agreed project plan, but did not say that it was completed and signed off, because “it is iterative because obviously we are reviewing it on a regular basis.”63

**Co-ordination between Firelink and FiReControl**

58. In questions to officials in the Departmental Annual Report oral evidence session on 19 October 2009, the Permanent Secretary of CLG, Mr. Peter Housden, had to concede that there were still “significant delivery challenges” with FiReControl. He said that, in response, “we have improved our capability across the board there.”64 He went on to explain:

The delays we have experienced on both Firelink and FiReControl have been about the technology platform. We have had world-class suppliers who won these jobs in competitive tender, who have been unable to deliver a satisfactory product on the timescale which they promised. In those circumstances we have been open, talked with our stakeholders about it and reformulated the timetable. That has been very frustrating and expensive for us. The main thing is that failure of technology and platforms, but I hope nobody would sit in front of you and say their side of the work could not have been improved, I know we could have done better on that.65

59. Firelink is a CLG-led project to upgrade each FRS’s current main radio-communication system so that staff can talk to each other and to ambulance and police services on the same secure network. This hardware is inextricably linked to the FiReControl software system, yet, according to CFOA’s written evidence, the two projects were not integrated:

At the time of inception of the FiReControl Project the Government was already running the Firelink Project to procure a new wide area radio communications system for the fire and rescue service in England, Scotland and Wales. Whilst recognising the synergies between the projects and the key contribution that the

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61 Ev 133 and 134
62 Ev 128, paragraph 18 has an abridged version of the timeline.
63 Q 100
64 Q 2, oral evidence session on 19 October, Departmental Annual Report 2009.
65 Ibid., Q37
Firelink solution would make to the FiReControl Project, Government failed to integrate the two projects and realise the efficiencies, both in terms of staff and consultancy costs. There was also no alignment of requirements and this resulted in silo working, duplication and inefficiencies. These examples illustrate the chaotic, uncoordinated and poorly conceived development of Government policy in this area to the detriment of the FiReControl project.66

The FBU memorandum draws attention to the lack of a close link between Firelink and FiReControl:

Poor CLG Project Management was compounded by what should have been the close relationship between the FireControl and Firelink projects. Delays to the Firelink Project have had a knock-on effect on FireControl and vice-versa. It is clear from our discussion with a number of those involved in both projects that there was a lack of transparency, openness and communication between the two projects for prolonged and critical periods. The responsibility for that lies heavily at Departmental and ultimately ministerial level.67

The lack of a close link between the Firelink and FiReControl projects illustrates yet again the lack of foresight by CLG. This lack of close integration between the two projects is a further illustration of the inadequate project management by CLG.

**CLG’s project management team**

60. In our oral evidence session on last year’s Departmental Annual Report, Mr. Housden admitted that—five years into the FiReControl project—CLG did not have staff with the relevant specialist knowledge to ensure that EADS was up to speed:

If you take FiReControl, for example, in the last little while we have taken on some additional consultancy expertise to be absolutely sure we could understand properly and have a proper dialogue with the pretty rarefied issues that EADS, our principal contractor, said they were facing in developing the right interfaces to deliver this programme. You want to be confident that you understand and can participate properly in these conversations. In that sense we have taken on additional expertise and it has been a moving target. We did not have that as an issue six or nine months ago, we have now, so we have strengthened our team.68

61. The FBU is strongly critical of the management of the project:

Project Management was supplied by a series of Departments with little historical knowledge of the fire service, informed—if that is not putting it too strongly—by transient civil servants and consultants with no experience of delivering any fire service control system of any size, anywhere. It was overseen by a series of transient ministers.69
62. The NAO memorandum notes the turnover of senior staff at CLG with responsibility for the delivery of FiReControl:

Over the last 13 months the project team has been restructured and new appointments to key positions have been made within the Department’s and EADS’s project team […] There is a team of over one hundred people working on the project. The team is a mixture of civil servants, seconded fire service staff, temporary contract staff and consultants.70

63. The NAO refers to four external reviews of the Department’s project management and states that all have recommended strengthening the governance and management of the project, which the Department has taken forward.71 The NAO also describes the high staff turnover and the reliance on consultants:

There has been a significant turnover of senior staff within the project. In the last five years there have been five different Senior Responsible Officers and four different Project Directors. In 2008 an Office of Government Commerce Health Check concluded that management of the project appeared to have grown organically without any analysis of what was needed to manage the project.72

Over the past 13 months, key senior postholders have changed: CLG’s project director (November 2008); CLG’s commercial director (January 2009); EADS’ project director (February 2009); and EADS’ project manager (September 2009).

64. The NAO also highlight the costs of CLG-employed staff who manage FiReControl. The table in paragraph 68, shows that £124 million will be spent on the project team, which is over a quarter of the total cost of the overall project.

65. The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) comments on the large size of the FiReControl project team, consisting of civil servants, seconded fire service staff and consultants and makes the following observation:

Where one would have expected the risks and the resources required to deliver the project to have sat with the supplier, in this case, CLG seem to be bearing much of the responsibility and resource burden of delivery.73

It goes on to comment that while it is to be welcomed that a large number of FRS staff have been seconded into the project team because of their technical expertise, they do not necessarily have “the authority or necessarily the strategic or political insight to speak on behalf of fire authorities.”74 Furthermore, the temporary removal of FRS technical experts

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70 Ev 126
71 Ibid.
72 Ev 131
73 Ev 64
74 Ibid.
[...] has led to a significant risk emerging which is that the fire services themselves will no longer have the in house capability of capacity to deliver their transition activities that are required prior to being able to accept FiReControl into service.75

66. The NAO’s table below shows the number of full time equivalent (FTE) staff who are working on the FiReControl project:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civil servants (including seconded fire service staff) FTE</th>
<th>Consultants and Temporary Contract FTE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006/07</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007/08</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>104.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008/09</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>114.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>116.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Communities and Local Government (figures for 2004/05 and 2005/06 not available)76

67. Shona Dunn, Director for Fire and Resilience at CLG, commented on the NAO’s assessment of the cost of the national project team as part of the overall project implementation costs:

The national project team is of a very significant size, simply because of the complexity of the project and the numerous different work streams. It is not just a business change programme. It is not just a buildings programme. It is not just an IT programme. It is a very extensive and complex project which, as colleagues were mentioning earlier, necessitates deep involvement from a large number of FRS experts. Amongst that national project team, about a third of that national project team are fire and rescue service secondees, people who are expert in control rooms, the operation of control rooms and so on. It is an extensive team. I think it is important that we have those secondees in place and it is important also for example that we have those 30 people down in Newport co-located with our colleagues in EADS, making sure that the systems integration work is going exactly as it is intended to and that we are keeping on track.77

Ms Dunn went on to say that CLG had strengthened its senior project team within the last 12 to 18 months and there are a significant number of new individuals on the team.78 Although welcome as far as they go, these assurances do little to allay concerns about the significant level of staff turnover associated with the project.

75 Ev 64
76 Ev 131
77 Q 123
78 Q 124
5 Lack of consultation and collaboration in the FiReControl project

68. The CLG memorandum maintains that engagement with primary stakeholders has occurred during the six years that FiReControl has been in existence:

The FiReControl project has been running since 2004. Since that time, we have engaged very closely with the Fire and Rescue Service to understand their needs and to establish their requirements for the Regional Control Centre network.79

69. However, contrary to CLG’s views, the general lack of consultation by CLG is a major theme running through both the written and oral evidence. During most of the FiReControl project’s existence, up until about a year ago, there was a lack of consultation and collaboration between CLG, EADS, the FRAs and the LACCs, despite the legal responsibility of FRAs to prevent or deal with fires and the safety risks connected with this.80 Written evidence from the South East Region supports this view:

CLG owns the contract and commercial processes for FiReControl. FRAs are unsighted on the detailed obligations and outputs of the main contractor, EADS. The FRAs represent the main user and only customer for this contract yet have no contractual relationship with the supplier. Other Government Departments deliver large and complex projects by having a partnership between effectively 2 ‘customers’ as the interface with the provider of operational capability. This has not been the case for FiReControl (nor FireLink) leading to the perception of disenfranchisement of the regions and individual FRAs. **Too often, FRS involvement has been too little, too late when early engagement would have offered better support to EADS and increased project ownership by the end user community.**81

70. This point is reinforced by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA), whose written submission highlighted the feeling of disempowerment by FRAs:

The difficult challenges in the project such as defining all of the use requirements should have been addressed at an early stage; this may have led to much more clarity during the delivery phase. Again we would emphasise that early user engagement would have helped in this area but it is not only the engagement process but also listening to what the users have to say that is important. There needs to be a greater emphasis on partnership working between CLG and the FRS rather than the customer/client relationship which appears to exist at present.82

71. FRAs retain the statutory duty to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and

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79 Ev 96
80 FRAs retain the statutory duty to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of fire, under Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. See paragraph 88 for further information on this.
81 Ev 46, italics added.
82 Ev 65
property in the event of fire, under Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. This statutory duty will not change when the new Regional Control Centres become operational. Despite this fact, the CFOA highlights the lack of consultation with those involved in the front-line services of Fire Control:

Throughout the project the Government have failed to recognise and plan in accordance with the democratic and legal processes within which Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), operate. This frequently results in inadequate time being allowed within the project plan for proper consultation and local decision making. Moreover it reinforces continually the perception within the service of being “railroaded” by central government at the same time that CLG publicly promotes the idea of partnership within the project. This has been a significant factor in eroding the confidence of key stakeholders and FRAs.

Notably, in the early stages there was a gross misunderstanding on the part of Government about the legal and democratic status of Regional Management Boards and their ability, or otherwise, to make collective decisions on behalf of Fire and Rescue Authorities. This resulted in unrealistic expectations about local decision making processes.83

The FBU goes further, stating that CLG actively dissuaded consultation and collaboration with the main players, up until the point when technical IT problems occurred in the summer of 2008:

Up to that point CLG [had] imposed itself as the go-between linking EADS to the FRS. We understand it made a point of ensuring there was little or no direct contact between the contractors and other stakeholders [...]84

End-user requirement

72. The NAO memorandum describes how progress was delayed in breaking down end-user requirements:

The Department set out approximately 2,000 requirements for the IT system in its contract with EADS. These needed to be broken down further into 8,000 more detailed sub-requirements in consultation with Fire and Rescue Services end users to ensure that the system’s design, development and testing activities are aligned to end-user requirements [...] Little real progress was achieved in breaking down the system’s requirements until summer 2009 when the Department agreed with EADS and the Fire and Rescue Services that joint workshops would be held to achieve this. Until this point there was uncertainty as to the design approach to be followed.85

The FBU goes on to describe complications with technical specifications of FiReControl:

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83 Ev 77
84 Ev 103, italics added.
85 Ev 134
There were clearly major issues with the technical specifications the contractors were asked to deliver too. The Project scope has been changed before, after and since the IT contract was signed. There also appeared to be no 'real world' assessment of the true complexity of the project nor of realistic timescales to deliver what was being demanded.\textsuperscript{86}

73. The exclusion of staff from any involvement with the specification and development of FiReControl led not only to delays, caused by a failure to appreciate the end-user needs of the system, but also to the demoralisation of staff and their sense of alienation from the project. The Fire Protection Association submitted written evidence that illustrates low staff morale in the fire community:

The transition to the new arrangements for FRS mobilising has clearly created anxiety for a number of stakeholders in the fire community, including it would appear, some of those who will ultimately be responsible for its governance. That degree of uncertainty, dissent and project delay has done little to instil confidence in the wider fire community, particularly those who fear that the new arrangements will ultimately lead to a 'lowest common' denominator of service provision.\textsuperscript{87}

74. The Minister confirmed that it was the responsibility of CLG to involve the FRS from the start of the project, to ensure that detailed end-user requirements was captured and used to develop the system:

I think it was, absolutely. I take responsibility. We ought to have done that. We ought to have engaged key stakeholders in a way that was adequate. It was inadequate.\textsuperscript{88}

75. Robin Southwell, CEO of EADS, also accepted responsibility for failures to involve the fire community from the start:

I have to agree with the Minister that in hindsight we should have done a little bit more work earlier and we should have done a little bit more work after we had been selected in terms of bringing in the various stakeholders, defining their requirements, understanding the behavioural issues as to how it actually works on the ground, to allow us to gain the traction and momentum which we all wanted.\textsuperscript{89}

**Solution Establishment Workshops (SEWs)**

76. After admitting that EADS and CLG had not taken account of stakeholders’ views, Robin Southwell told us that they had learnt lessons and went on to describe the Solution Establishment Workshops (SEWs), which were created in the summer of 2009 and comprise of representatives from EADS, the FRS and CLG to address the issue of direct collaboration and stakeholder involvement:
[...] we are having end user workshops, solution workshops, on a regular basis. In fact, I believe a few of them are working today, involving the end user on an operational basis so that we are real time ensuring that we have that dialogue which was missing at the beginning and which is now taking place.90

However, earlier in the same oral evidence session, the previous witnesses criticised SEWS, with John Bonney describing them as “not particularly well organised”91 and explaining that not all representative bodies are invited to the meetings.92

77. When asked for supplementary evidence on the issue of satisfying end-user requirements, CFOA sent the following information about SEWs, describing what it considers to be a fundamental flaw in their approach:

The Solution Establishment Workshops (SEWs) are a welcome improvement in user engagement but remain fundamentally flawed in their approach to system design. Each SEW has been focused on developing a single thread of functionality in isolation. Where demonstrations of functionality have been possible, they have been on the basis of unrepresentative data and, when requirements are not apparently met, assurances are given that the functionality will be provided from “a different module” or by “workarounds”. This gives rise to concerns that the system will be unnecessarily complex, unworkable and possibly fail to meet requirements when subjected to tests using real end-to-end scenarios and real fire service data.93

Responsibility for the lack of consultation

78. The issues of end-user requirement and stakeholder collaboration highlight the difference of opinion between CLG and EADS. Although in oral evidence the Minister and Mr Southwell appeared to share responsibility for the lack of stakeholder involvement, in its memorandum, EADS maintains that it is responsible for “deploying and transitioning the System to live operation, including loading the operational data”, while CLG is responsible “for managing the whole ‘business change’ journey for stakeholders.”94 EADS continues to describe the changes that CLG has made in ensuring closer collaboration with the users of FiReControl:

In order to ensure that the arrangements contracted with CLG satisfactorily represent the expectations of the FRS and RCC, these users must be involved at every step of the way. Close tripartite management is essential to enact this.

We applaud the significant changes that CLG and FRS have made to the governance of stakeholder engagement and introduction of collaborative working which is essential to deliver the overall solution into use.
The new operational processes are still being evolved by CLG with the FRS and RCC. Developing the processes alongside the system (as now in the new joint “SEW” workshops) will give a better result, but it does take significantly longer. This collaborative development will improve the chances of success, however, in particular for the FRS and RCC who need to undertake their implementation.\textsuperscript{95}

79. However, as has been discussed earlier, CLG blames the project’s delay—a delay that is largely due to an inability to address the end-user requirement—on EADS.\textsuperscript{96}
6 Relationship between Local Authority Controlled Companies, Regional Control Centres and existing local control rooms

Regional Control Centres (RCCs)

80. The Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) within a particular region will own the new Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs) that will operate the Regional Control Centres (RCCs). The LACC company directors are drawn from the FRAs. One such LACC, the East Midlands Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd., described its formation in its written evidence. Formed in November 2006, its senior management team has been in place for two years, with a small administrative support function, and, more recently two staff training positions readying the RCC for full system training. The RCC is now substantially equipped with the IT infrastructure, on site facilities and equipment as one of the 'first wave regions', due to go live in May 2011.

81. When asked in oral evidence how much the RCCs are currently costing, Shona Dunn commented:

   At the moment there are eight regional control centre buildings that have reached practical completion. The ninth regional control centre, which is London’s, will achieve practical completion in the next few weeks. At the moment I think the monthly lease costs for all of the buildings is around £850,000 and that will rise to just over £1 million a month once the ninth regional control centre is completed.

Shona Dunn described the various ways that staff employed at the RCCs spend their time:

   There are a number of staff that are operating in the centres. There are regional project teams and regional control centre operations teams which are operating out of those buildings. There are a number of activities taking place in those regional control centres. Some of them are being fitted out with equipment. Some of them are being used for training purposes, familiarisation purposes and so on.

82. In response to a written question in November 2008, CLG gave the monthly cost of maintaining the South West RCC in Taunton as £140,783, which equates to a running cost of £4,692 a day. Sadiq Khan, the then Under Secretary of State at CLG, wrote:

   The building is used for a range of purposes including the testing and development of FiReControl IT systems and also technical workshops which bring together Fire and Rescue personnel. It is also used for meetings of Fire and Rescue Authority elected members who are responsible for setting up and running the new Regional

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97 London does not have a LACC because the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) will have responsibility for running the London RCC as a single authority.

98 Ev 122

99 Q 112

100 Q 113
Control Centres. Additionally, the Regional Project Team also works out of the South West Regional Control Centre.101

83. The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) memorandum criticises the RCC building specifications:

The buildings themselves appear to be over specified and are clearly too large just to house a regional control centre. The security arrangements incorporated into the premises appear to be in excess to the threats potentially posed to the buildings. These two things have led to significantly increased costs that will result in a long term revenue burden to fire authorities. Although too late to change, we would like to challenge the design of the buildings and ask why they are so large as we are unaware of the user input into the design process. Had users been more fully engaged in the design process the buildings may have been more suitable for purpose and there may have been more than one design of building that could have catered for specific user requirements. Such an approach may well have led to reduced overall costs.102

Matt Wrack, General Secretary of the FBU, told us that

[...] we have a number of empty buildings which are of no current use to the Fire and Rescue Service costing the taxpayer £40,000 a day. That is more than it costs to employ a firefighter for a year and that is a gross waste of public money.103

84. John Bonney said that the level of over-specification in the centres was ‘staggering’.104 Councillor Pearson commented on a £25,000 coffee machine recently installed in the London centre105 and concluded:

There was a rush to procurement at the beginning of the project and that is why we have these over-specified buildings. When we tell you about over-specified buildings we are talking about security levels that just are not necessary for the Fire and Rescue Service […] I think there was a naivety in what the Fire and Rescue Service actually needed when the Government embarked on this project.106

It could be argued that an over-specified project is preferable to an under-specified project, especially where security is concerned. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the procurement process for the buildings was not properly informed by input from users. The lack of consultation and collaboration on the project has resulted in buildings that have been designed without adequate consultation on specifications needed by those that will work in the buildings and by those who have statutory duties under the 2004 Fire and Rescue Services Act.

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101 Hansard, 12 January 2009, col 240w.
102 Ev 63
103 Q 3
104 Q 4
105 Q 3
106 Q 5
85. All the RCC buildings are the same size and, according to the North East Regional Management Board, are far larger than FRAs in the North East would require. The Board goes on to say that it is currently discussing sub-letting parts of the building in order to offset some of the future costs to FRAs.

86. The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) memorandum cites failures in the procurement procedure as reasons for the lack of convergence of the buildings and the IT systems:

   The concept of running two separate procurement processes, one for the buildings and one for the IT infrastructure, has led to significant cost overruns, as the buildings have or will be completed well in advance of the procurement of the IT infrastructure services. This results in leases, service costs and utility payments on underutilised buildings. In hindsight one must question if this was the correct process and if not, what can be learned for future procurements. We understand that IT and property procurements are very different but believe there should have been closer management at a programme level that could have taken early action to prevent such a divergence in delivery timescales.

87. When the Minister was asked why the procurement of the building was separate from the procurement of the IT system, the Minister defended CLG’s position:

   I think that it is quite unusual to get one company that can do both these very different jobs. One is a kind of technology-based business change project and the other one is a building project. Of course the objective was to try to ensure that they met at one point in time but, because of the delays that we have had on the technology side, clearly the buildings although being well utilised in all honesty will be better utilised once we get the go live dates in those regional control centres [...] I think once we get the go live dates, once they kick into action, that is when you will really see the fruits of the investment that has taken place and is taking place.

**Legal issues**

88. As previously said, FRAs retain the statutory duty to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel for the purpose of extinguishing fires and protecting life and property in the event of fire, under Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004. Written evidence from the North East Regional Management Board stresses the importance of FRAs making the final decision on whether to move their services to LACCs:

   Senior stakeholders in the North East Fire and Rescue Authorities are concerned about CLG and EADS’ ability to deliver the project and to the requirements that will enable FRAs to meet their statutory responsibilities. The final decision on whether the system is acceptable to an FRA is vested with each Authority following the advice...
of their respective Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer [...] CLG [does] not appear to have a robust stakeholder engagement plan to address FRAs’ concerns, especially those who are currently believed to be unwilling to transfer their control room service to the RCC. Indeed there also is a distinct lack of a contingency plan. As a first wave region this is a concern as if not resolved runs the risk of either preventing or delaying go-live in all first wave regions and subsequent follow on regions.\textsuperscript{111}

Cornwall Council raises similar concerns:

There are still concerns that clarity on the financial detail and ongoing financial commitment post cut over is needed before the FRA can make any informed decision on whether the Service will migrate to FiReControl. The FRA will require assurance that Chief Fire Officers will still have direct control over the deployment of their resources.\textsuperscript{112}

89. However, when asked in oral evidence whether CLG had concerns if a local fire authority unilaterally decided it wanted to opt for an entirely different system, Shahid Malik seemed unaware of any dissenting authorities:

Everybody is broadly on board. It would not make sense unless everybody was on board. That is the whole point of having this integrated system with the operability. You have to have buy-in [...] At this point in time I think we are in a better position than we have ever been in.\textsuperscript{113}

On the basis of the evidence given to us by representatives both of FRAs and of the professionals in the fire service, however, we are unconvinced that all FRAs will ultimately sign up to the new system. The Minister’s remarks need to be supported by CLG involving FRAs far more intimately in ensuring that FRAs and the Chief Fire Officers are persuaded of the merits of the FiReControl project.

90. We note that the position is that if FRAs do not sign up, they will need to pay the costs of upgrading their own existing control centres from their existing resources.\textsuperscript{114}

**Existing local control rooms**

91. Many existing local control rooms are becoming insufficient for current needs because FRAs had not previously updated or replaced them, in anticipation of the FiReControl RCCs. Some FRAs are upgrading their existing systems. John Bonney told us that “Surrey upgraded about two and a half years ago on the basis that they could not wait for their regional control centre to be delivered so they were forced to do that at their own cost.”\textsuperscript{115} Councillor Pearson from the LGA commented on Cheshire FRA:

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\textsuperscript{111} Ev 70 and 71
\textsuperscript{112} Ev 121
\textsuperscript{113} Q 107
\textsuperscript{114} Qq 51–2
\textsuperscript{115} Q 36
There are a number of fire and rescue authorities who expected this project to be in by now who have not invested in renewing their control systems, and their control systems have fallen over. There is an example in Cheshire where two years ago they had to renew at vast expense. CLG are picking up the tab for this [...]\(^{116}\)

Our evidence session suggests that CLG has been inconsistent in its financial aid to FRAs. John Bonney told us:

Where there has been sufficient and very hard lobbying, CLG have relented and paid a degree of the project replacement costs. They have not paid for the hardware. They have usually paid for some of the project management costs, which was the case in Cheshire, but that was not the case in Surrey, so it has been a patchwork.\(^{117}\)

92. In supplementary written evidence, the CFOA provided a table of a sample of 25 FRAs that had replaced or upgraded existing systems and that had received financial help from CLG. The cost of the works ranges from £30,000 to £479,000. Of that sample, CLG contributed £384,000 to the cost in three FRAs, out of a total cost of around £6,718,000.\(^{118}\) This supplementary evidence illustrates the piecemeal approach that CLG has taken towards contributing to FRAs’ costs.

93. A later letter to our Chair from the Minister attempts to clarify the Department’s position on this point:

Your Committee asked, at question 109, whether I was indicating a change in policy with regard to meeting costs associated with the Fire and Rescue Authorities maintaining their current control systems. For clarity, I was not announcing a new policy. I was confirming our long-held policy to support the genuine net additional costs for FRAs associated with delay in accordance with New Burdens principles. We have stated that where FRAs have to pay unavoidable additional costs to keep their systems operational for a longer period then we will meet the extra cost Beyond specific FiReControl funding there are well established funding streams for the Fire and Rescue Authorities which contribute towards costs of replacing assets and systems.\(^{119}\)

The Minister adds

I should also clarify, to avoid any misperception, that our agreement to provide funding has been based on evidence and our objective assessment of the case made rather than as a result of external lobbying.\(^{120}\)
7 Costs

94. The following table, taken from the NAO’s memorandum, shows how the delivery timetable and anticipated costs and benefits of FiReControl have changed since the project’s inception:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strategic outline business Case</th>
<th>Outline Business Case</th>
<th>Full Business Case version 1.0</th>
<th>Full Business Case (Parts 1 and 2)</th>
<th>Revised Full Business Case version 1.1</th>
<th>Current forecast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>July 2004</td>
<td>November 2004</td>
<td>June 2007</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to the Department</td>
<td>£120 million</td>
<td>£160 million</td>
<td>£340 million</td>
<td>£380 million</td>
<td>£380 million</td>
<td>£423 million[2,4]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency savings per annum for Fire and Rescue Authorities</td>
<td>(£22 million)[3]</td>
<td>30% (£225 million)</td>
<td>28% (£23 million)</td>
<td>11% (£8 million)</td>
<td>9% (£6 million)</td>
<td>9% (£6 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall project savings/(Cost) in NPV[1]</td>
<td>£86 million</td>
<td>£42 million</td>
<td>(£50 million)</td>
<td>(£211 million)</td>
<td>(£218 million)</td>
<td>(£240 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT operational</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>May 2010</td>
<td>May 2011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAO analysis of FiReControl business cases121

Note 1: Period under consideration for overall project savings / (cost) is 2004–05 to 2020–2021.
Note 2: In addition the Department has a contingency of £17 million.
Note 3: Efficiency saving not provided in percentage terms.
Note 4: These figures exclude any potential royalty income from future sales of FiReControl technology.

95. CLG’s written evidence notes that the FiReControl project “represents £420 million of investment in the Fire and Rescue Service”.122 It goes on to describe the changing financial costs of the project:

- The first indicative cost figure given to Parliament for project implementation was £120 million, which did not include costs of meeting local and regional implementation work, nor costs for installing equipments in all fire stations. At that stage, CLG thought that the IT system would be delivered by commercial off-the-shelf solutions and the integration requirements had not been fully defined.123

- In 2007, the first comprehensive assessment of the total cost to deliver the project was announced. The project cost was estimated at £340 million, based on a

121 Ev 128
122 Ev 95
123 Ev 97
schedule for the first RCC going live in October 2009. The business case forecast national level savings of 28 per cent. compared with the costs of running the current control rooms.\textsuperscript{124}

- In 2008, CLG announced that the total implementation cost would be £380 million. The increase in project costs “followed engagement with stakeholders to further develop understanding of the local and regional costs of implementation including the revision of estimates on training and redundancy costs in particular”\textsuperscript{125}

- CLG commissioned an independent review of the current local control room costs during 2007–08, which found that their running costs were lower than previously estimated. “As a result of that review the annual savings which were reported at 28 per cent. in 2007 were reduced to 11 per cent. in the 2008 Business Case”\textsuperscript{126}

- The final version of the Full Business Case, published in May 2009, estimates the annual national savings once the network goes live to be £6 million (9 per cent.).\textsuperscript{127}

96. It is disappointing that the estimated efficiency savings achieved through FiReControl have been revised downwards significantly during the course of the project. It is particularly unhelpful that one such reduction was caused by CLG’s inaccurate data about current running costs of existing local control rooms.

97. The NAO states that the Department currently predicts that the FiReControl project will cost £423 million. Whilst the Department originally expected the project to realise efficiencies and save costs locally that would be in excess of the costs of the project, the Department now expects the overall project to cost £240 million\textsuperscript{128} more than the local savings forecast. Not every Fire and Rescue Authority will make net annual cost savings locally as a result of the project. The Department plans to make annual payments of £8.2 million to these Fire and Rescue Authorities.\textsuperscript{129}

\textsuperscript{124} Ev 98
\textsuperscript{125} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{126} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{127} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{128} Net present value.
\textsuperscript{129} Ev 128
8 Conclusions and recommendations

98. In May 2009 the Public Accounts Committee criticised CLG for poor performance in contracting and managing the New Dimension project. CLG responded by asserting that it had learnt lessons and was improving its delivery, citing the FiReControl project. Our inquiry shows that this is not the case.

99. The FiReControl project has been inadequately planned, poorly executed, and badly managed. The original contract was ill-suited to the nature of the project. Relationships both with the major stakeholders and with contractual partners have been mishandled. High staff turnover in CLG, especially at a senior level, has compromised the Department’s ability to manage the project effectively. Costs have escalated and projected savings plummeted. The history of the project is a catalogue of poor judgement and mismanagement.

100. There are now considerable doubts about whether the project can be delivered. CLG needs to take this opportunity to consider carefully the points and concerns raised in this Report to review its options and make an informed, clear, open decision about the future of FiReControl.

101. On balance, given the investment of public funds already committed, and the benefits that will accrue, we conclude that CLG should press ahead with the FiReControl project. However, this recommendation is conditional on the assumption that CLG addresses the significant concerns and issues raised in this Report relating to its project management and the relationship with its main contractor and with its stakeholders. In particular, it is conditional on the urgent agreement of a viable project plan, in which the main stakeholders can have confidence, which will ensure that the target ‘go-live’ date of mid-2011 will be met. This project plan must include interim milestones which will allow progress to be assessed on a regular basis and decisions to be taken about whether alternatives need to be considered.

102. CLG should also put in place a communications plan that aims to shift the negative perception of the project and to influence FR5s to make the positive decision to switch to the system. Each FRA has the legal right to make the final decision on whether to accept FiReControl. CLG must respect that right and must work hard to unite all FRAs in supporting FiReControl. Any failure to ensure that all FRAs use the new system would be a significant blow to the ultimate aims of the project.

103. Meanwhile, CLG should urgently draw up and consult on contingency plans for any further failures. As a priority, those contingency plans should ensure ongoing safe and effective fire and rescue cover across the whole country whether or not FiReControl is implemented. They must also ensure that all regions involved will have adequate fire and safety measures in place during the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. The plans should include provision for the maintenance and, where necessary, upgrading of existing control room technology, and CLG should meet the full costs of that to FRAs where it has become necessary as a result of delays in the FiReControl project.
104. We recommend that CLG inform our successors in the new Parliament in July 2010 that a viable project plan has been agreed with EADS, and report on progress against that plan, in particular the early version of the modified Intergraph product.
Appendix 1: Correspondence between the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, the Permanent Secretary and the Chair of the Committee

Letter from Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to Dr Phyllis Starkey, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee

I know you have concerns over the release of documents related to FiReControl to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee as part of its inquiry into the project.

I am keen to be as helpful and as open as possible, and in response to your request I have asked the Permanent Secretary for his advice.

He has advised that, as these documents form a body of advice in respect to ongoing policy development and decisions that have not yet been taken, and as they contain information classed as commercially confidential. I have accepted this advice. Furthermore, I am clear that we have shared this information with the NAO, and I am confident that this has been reflected in their report, which you have seen.

Given these reasons I have concluded that these documents should not be released at this time.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter setting out the Permanent Secretary’s advice, which I have accepted.

[...]

Shahid Malik MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government
8 February 2010
Letter from Peter Housden, the Permanent Secretary, to Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

You have sought my advice in relation to a request received from the CLG Select Committee to release a number of documents referred to in the report prepared by the NAO to inform the Committee’s enquiry into FiReControl. I know that you are keen to be as helpful and transparent as possible in respect of this request. Having considered the content of these documents my advice is that they should not be released at this time.

These documents form part of the body of advice which you have received from officials in respect of ongoing policy development and decisions in relation to this project which have not yet been taken.

In addition the documents contain information which would clearly be classed as commercially confidential. This information is relevant to our ongoing negotiations with EADS and its release could prejudice our ability to conclude those discussions successfully.

For these reasons, I do not believe that these documents should be released at this time and would offer the same advice in relation to a Freedom of Information request. I understand that all of these documents were disclosed to the NAO on a confidential basis during the course of their investigation. I believe therefore that I can be confident that all issues material to the Select Committee’s enquiry have been appropriately reflected in the NAO’s report.

[...]

Peter Housden,
Permanent Secretary, Communities and Local Government
8 February 2010
Further letter from Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to Dr Phyllis Starkey, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee

Thank you for the opportunity to discuss the FiReControl project at the oral hearing on Monday, 8 February. I agreed to consider again the position on whether to release the independent analysis requested by the Committee.

I want to make it clear, as I did at the hearing, that I welcome the Committee’s inquiry into the project and that I recognise the need for your Committee to have access to information to conduct an effective examination.

However, I believe that the advice which I received from the Permanent Secretary—and shared with the Committee in full—holds for the public or private sharing of this material at this time.

It is imperative that when we commission independent analysis that assessment is able to give the department direct, honest feedback to inform our decision-making. It is equally important that it can consider live commercially or operationally sensitive issues. That is the value of this analysis. I would not want future advice to be constrained by an eye to wider immediate dissemination—this would risk changing the nature of these reports. These reports were commissioned without prejudice and to support policy advice to Ministers on decisions which are yet to be taken.

I emphasise again that we shared this information in full with the National Audit Office whom you commissioned to write a report on the FiReControl project. I believe that this ensures that we have shared the substance of the analysis, without exposing commercially or operationally sensitive detail which could prejudice the department’s negotiation position in the future.

I am happy to consider this position again at a time when policy decisions have been made and I am satisfied that the release of this material would not prejudice the department’s position in commercial negotiations.

[...]
Shahid Malik MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Communities and Local Government
10 February 2010
Letter from Dr Phyllis Starkey, Chair of the Communities and Local Government Committee, to Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

Thank you for your letter of 10 February regarding the release of the independent analysis commissioned by the Department of the FiReControl project.

I am disappointed that the Department is not prepared to let the Committee see these documents, even on a confidential basis. I see no reason why its provision confidentially to the Committee would prejudice the Department’s negotiation position.

As I said at the oral evidence session, it is impossible for the Committee to judge the appropriateness of your reliance, in your written memorandum to the Committee, on the advice in those documents if the Committee has not seen them itself. Although you rightly say that the National Audit Office had access to these documents, you will have noticed that the NAO’s report is deliberately factual and avoids making judgements of the sort which it will be necessary for the Committee to make in coming to a conclusion on the Department’s handling of the project.

I expect that the Committee will wish to make comment in its eventual Report on the fact that it has not been able to see these documents. I expect the Committee to consider a draft report around mid-March. If the Department is prepared to reconsider its refusal to let the Committee see the documents concerned before then we would be very pleased to receive them, on whatever basis you consider necessary to protect the Department’s negotiating position.

[...]

Dr Phyllis Starkey MP
Chair, Communities and Local Government Committee
15 February 2010

CLG’s response to Dr Starkey’s letter can be seen in its supplementary evidence, Ev 99.
Formal Minutes

Tuesday 16 March 2010

Members present:
Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair

Mr Clive Betts
Andrew George
Alison Seabeck
Andrew Slaughter

Draft Report (FiReControl), proposed by the Chair, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraphs 1 to 89 read and agreed to.

A paragraph—(Mr Clive Betts)—brought up and read.

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 3
Clive Betts
Alison Seabeck
Andrew Slaughter

Noes, 1
Andrew George

Paragraph inserted (now paragraph 90).

Paragraphs 90 to 101 (now paragraphs 91 to 102) read and agreed to.

Another paragraph—(Andrew George)—brought up and read, as follows:

Nevertheless FRAs should be permitted to disaggregate the question of adapting the technology from adapting the Regional Control Structure, in order to establish an emergency response system which they believe would be better and more resilient.

Question put, That the paragraph be read a second time.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 1
Andrew George

Noes, 3
Clive Betts
Alison Seabeck
Andrew Slaughter

Paragraph disagreed to.

Paragraphs 102 and 103 (now paragraphs 103 and 104) read and agreed to.

Summary agreed to.
A paper was appended to the Report as Appendix 1.

Resolved, That the Report be the Fifth Report of the Committee to the House.

Ordered, That the Chair make the Report to the House.

Ordered, That embargoed copies of the Report be made available, in accordance with the provisions of Standing Order No. 134.

Written evidence reported and ordered to be published on 19 January, 25 January, 1 February, 8 February and 22 February was ordered to be reported to the House for printing with the Report.

[The Committee adjourned.]
Witnesses

Monday 8 February 2010

Mr Matt Wrack, Fire Brigades Union (FBU); Mr John Bonney, President, Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA); Cllr Brian Coleman and Cllr James Pearson, Local Government Association

Dr Roger Diggle, FiReControl Project Director, and Mr Robin Southwell, CEO, The European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company, (EADS); Mr Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Sir Ken Knight, Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and Ms Shona Dunn, Director for Fire and Resilience, Department for Communities and Local Government

List of written evidence

1 Jamie Hockley (FIRE 01) Ev 21
2 Kent Fire and Rescue Authority (FIRE 02) Ev 24
3 Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire & Rescue Authority (FiRE 03) Ev 26
4 Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority (FIRE 04) Ev 29
5 Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Services (FIRE 05) Ev 30
6 Lancashire Combined Fire Authority (FIRE 06) Ev 34
7 Fire Protection Association (FIRE 07) Ev 36
8 Dorset Fire Authority (FIRE 08) Ev 37
9 Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (FIRE 09) Ev 39
10 Local Government Association (FIRE 10) Ev 42
11 LGA (Supplementary) (FIRE 10A) Ev 136
12 South East Fire & Rescue Services’ Regional Management Board (FIRE 11) Ev 45
13 Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Management Board (FIRE 12) Ev 49
14 Oxfordshire Fire Authority (FIRE 13) Ev 51
15 West Sussex County Council (FIRE 14) Ev 53
16 Cllr. Jeremy Hilton (FIRE 15) Ev 57
17 Gloucestershire County Council Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FIRE 16) Ev 58
18 Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority (FIRE 17) Ev 60
19 London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) (FIRE 18) Ev 62
20 Gloucestershire County Council (FIRE 19) Ev 66
21 North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board (FIRE 20) Ev 68
22 Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority (FIRE 21) Ev 74
23 The Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) (FIRE 22) Ev 76
24 CFOA (Supplementary) (FIRE 22A) Ev 79
25 West Midlands Fire Service (FIRE 23) Ev 86
26 Fire Officers’ Association (FIRE 24) Ev 87
27 Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (FIRE 25) Ev 89
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Oral evidence

Taken before the Communities and Local Government Committee
on Monday 8 February 2010

Members present
Dr Phyllis Starkey, in the Chair
Sir Paul Beresford
Mr Clive Betts
Alison Seabeck
John Cummings
Andrew George

Witnesses: Mr Matt Wrack, Fire Brigades Union (FBU); Mr John Bonney, President, Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA); Cllr Brian Coleman and Cllr James Pearson, Local Government Association (LGA), gave evidence.

Q1 Chair: Can I welcome the witnesses and particularly thank Councillor Pearson for stepping in at short notice for your colleague who I think is snowed up somewhere. The Committee has of course previously done a report on FiReControl and other aspects and therefore the stated positions of each of your organisations at that time in regard to FiReControl are on the record and I do not really want us to go over all that again since we are more concerned as to where we are now and where we go next. However, in the first question I would like each of you on behalf of your organisations to say briefly what your position was in relation to FiReControl at its inception, what your position is now, and, if there has been a change, why your position has changed.

Mr Wrack: On behalf of the Fire Brigades Union we have opposed the FiReControl project from the start on grounds of its operational usefulness to the Fire and Rescue Service, on the basis of its threat to the efficiency of the Fire and Rescue Service, on the basis of local accountability and on the basis of cost. I have to say that the previous seven years have just confirmed our position more so than when we started out.

Mr Bonney: The professional Association’s view very much remains as it did at the inception—that we are very committed to the principles and aspirations of the project. We are concerned as it has developed at how badly parts of it have been managed and in recent times we have been clear that there needs to be an alternative plan worked up because of our concern about some of the risks with the project at the moment, but in terms of aspirations and the objective of the FiReControl project, we are still very much committed to that.

Cllr Pearson: In 2005 when I became a fire authority member in Greater Manchester we took the view, in line with the Liberal Democrats of our group, that we would oppose the project in principle. We did not have a majority at the time in Greater Manchester and since then developments have happened. I became a member of the Fire Service Management Committee in the summer of last year and I fully support the current position of the LGA.

Chair: Can we move into slightly more detailed questions about project management. Clive?

Q2 Mr Betts: When we had our previous inquiry I think there were two fundamental problems that we identified. One was whether the technical issues could be overcome satisfactorily. I suppose we have had a number of fairly high-profile problems with technical systems in government computer systems that have not worked or certainly have not worked at first instance. Is your view that we were justified at that time in having concerns and is it possible to remove those concerns going forward? Secondly, I think we expressed our view that the business case simply was not robust at that time. Does it look any stronger today than it did then?

Mr Bonney: There are a couple of things there. In terms of the technical problems I think that some of those continue to exist. The Association is very much of the belief that the technical problems can be overcome but the fundamental problem is the way the project has been managed and the involvement of professionals, those people who deliver on the ground, chief fire officers, and it is a lack of understanding within the government department of that which causes a lot of the technical problems. That is where you end up having a problem. They can be overcome. There has been an attempt in recent times for CLG and their contractor to apply more attention to the users, but I think there is still a shortfall there.

Q3 Mr Betts: Could I pick up one point before I ask other people to respond as well. If you had been told back then when we did our previous inquiry that this scheme was going to cost £240 million more than it
was going to yield in benefits, would you still have supported it then or would you have found a better use for the money within the Fire Service?

Mr Bonney: I would still support the investment in the Fire Service and I would still support the principle. If you asked me five years ago if it should have been run like this, I would have told you then that it should not have been run like that.

Mr Wrack: I think in terms of the initiation of the project, one of the difficulties is that this idea did not come from within the Fire and Rescue Service; it came externally from government. That has been one of the fundamental problems of it from the start, in that the views of professionals within the service have not been taken into account when developing the project from start to finish. I would echo Mr Bonney’s comments. The other professional users are the control staff themselves who are experts in delivering emergency fire and rescue control rooms currently, whose views have largely been ignored. If we have a project foisted on us from the outside, run by a department where we have very great scepticism about their understanding of the issues they are dealing with, with teams who come and go and seem to never take on board the criticisms which are levelled at them by the professionals, whether at chief officer level or at fire fighter and control level.

On the point Mr Betts raised about the costs, in terms of what this project has delivered, as far as we can see, we have a number of empty buildings which are of no current use to the Fire and Rescue Service costing the taxpayer £40,000 a day. That is more than it costs to employ a fire fighter for a year and that is a gross waste of public money.

Cllr Coleman: Indeed, probably for the first time in my life, I would not dissent from the Fire Brigades Union! Last week I went to visit the new suggested London centre and saw the £25,000 coffee machine that has been installed. I have to say I think the politicians on fire and rescue authorities have become more and more sceptical as the contractors have failed to deliver. The delays have now become unacceptable. There has been a change of subcontractors, with very little information passed to fire authorities and the end user. Also, let us be blunt, part of the agenda for this was the Government’s then agenda for regional government, clearly to make fire authorities co-operate as regions in line at the time with the Government’s then thinking of regional assemblies, et cetera.

Q4 John Cummings: Do you think perhaps that has gone a stage further? I had a look around the new centre in Durham and, quite frankly, it put first of all into my mind the question of a regional seat of government. I am wondering now whether somebody has the idea of incorporating all of the emergency services into one building and then to move towards national forces—a national fire service, a national police service and a national ambulance service. Is this what is behind this immense amount of investment that is taking place at the present time?

Mr Bonney: In one sense you could look at a conspiracy theory here but I think it is something slightly more prosaic than that. Those regional control centres were completely over-specified in the first instance and created a level of capacity that was not necessary. That was simply because of the way the project was managed, there was not enough attention paid, as Matt has said, to what the professional users were saying to them about what they needed. If you look at those centres, the level of over-specification in them is quite staggering.

Q5 Chair: Can you clarify, Mr Bonney, when you say over-specification do you mean too much detail or to do things that were not necessary?

Mr Bonney: Too big. The level of resilience, i.e. the level of protection in terms of terrorist threat or environmental threat, is much, much higher than ambulance and police controls, even though they are still part of the critical national infrastructure. It really was as prosaic as that. I do not think there was any belief that they were going to be used for other things. I think they will be ultimately because people will want to use the space.

Cllr Coleman: The London one for example has 72 CCTV cameras in it.

Cllr Pearson: The point being raised by Mr Bonney is absolutely right. At the time when the original question was around the business case, this was sold to us as it would save us money and it would be a more efficient way of delivering this particular thing to us. Steadily as the project has moved on it has become more and more expensive and, luckily for us as individual fire and rescue authorities, we are not being asked to pick up the tab; it is coming under new burdens. Mr Bonney’s point is absolutely correct. There was a rush to procurement at the beginning of the project and that is why we have these over-specified buildings. When we tell you about over-specified buildings we are talking about security levels that just are not necessary for the Fire and Rescue Service. The CLG’s initial idea was to go and consult with the regional management boards. I chair the regional management board in the North West. It has no autonomy over the fire and rescue services that come underneath it. I think there was a naivety in what the Fire and Rescue Service actually needed when the Government embarked on this project.

Q6 Sir Paul Beresford: Who set the business case and who set the specifications, the Government?

Mr Bonney: The CLG.

Cllr Coleman: The CLG.

Mr Wrack: If I might develop a point from Mr Cummings’ question. First of all, on the buildings—and this relates to project management—we have a number of buildings which for example, and alarmingly, are now having to be retrofitted to take account of DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) requirements, which is quite staggering. On the issue of regional fire services and national fire services and so on, that does touch on the key contradiction between this project and Government policy on the Fire and Rescue Service more generally because the
Fire and Rescue Services Act and Government policy is all about the delivery of local, integrated risk-management plans by local fire and rescue services, and yet on top of that they have attempted to bolt a regional structure which bears no relation to the policy setting and operational planning within fire and rescue services. That is the fundamental contradiction with FiReControl.

Q7 Mr Betts: All of you seem to be saying correc
me if I have got it wrong, that one of the fundamental flaws has been that the system has been designed by people in the hierarchy of CLG and the contractors with very little attempt to make reference or seek the views of the people who actually do the job, whether it be chief fire officers or the people in the control rooms who on a day-to-day basis deal with the calls coming in?

Clr Pearson: That is absolutely correct. I visited the new control centre in Warrington and humming away in the corner of the room is a power distribution unit that distributes power around the building. There is no way in hell that anybody who had any experience of contact centres would have put that on the floor where you are supposed to be receiving calls. You need that room to be as quiet as possible. There are things like that have gone in and led into this being a great white elephant for us.

Mr Bonney: From a professional point of view, as you said, we would argue that the rush to procurement meant that less time was invested in talking to those people on the ground who knew how to deliver these systems. I would not necessarily agree with Mr Wrack on the point that it was bolted on. One of the reasons why we were looking at this solution was because of new threats that we had not seen in the UK before. There was a need to mobilise resources from without fire and rescue services right across regions. That still remains sound. When we see mass flooding, when we see some of the events that have happened around the world, you need more than just the resources of that local fire and rescue service, so in that sense, absolutely, the principle was sound but the rush to procurement meant the level of detail in the specification did not reflect what the professional people were saying. That has plagued the project ever since, both in terms of delays and being over-optimistic about how quickly it could be delivered, how much it was going to cost, and why certain things that were absolutely necessary were never specified and other things were put in that were not needed.

Q8 Chair: Are we talking about the initial procurement in 2004?

Mr Bonney: Yes, the period before the contract was let which then led to a situation where the discussions between the contractor and CLG ended up in some very long conversations about, “Now we have set the procurement what is it that you actually want?” So in one sense a lot of the work subsequently has been around that failure to be very clear in both output and outcome terms about what was going to be delivered by the project. When we talk about CLG having a lot of resources still committed to this project that is because they are having to work so closely with the contractor to fill in those gaps that should have been filled before the procurement.

Q9 Sir Paul Beresford: Six years later have conversations reached a conclusion?

Mr Bonney: In one sense I think they are still on-going. I think there is a reality now that this project—

Q10 Sir Paul Beresford: Is dead?

Mr Bonney: —Hangs in the balance a bit and for that reason there is a real focus, certainly from CLG and EADS, to up their game.

Clr Coleman: The CLG’s view is that an incoming Government of whichever party will have to look seriously at whether to pull the plug on this in June.

Q11 Chair: Can we reserve the question about pulling the plug until the end because we have some other detailed questions. We will get to it but I would rather not do it now.

Mr Wrack: There has been an attempt by CLG over the past year to improve communications. Where stakeholders have an issue with CLG is that we are told constantly that all the problems have been addressed, only to find out some months later that a new batch of problems have been identified. That is where people are losing patience with the whole thing.

Q12 Mr Betts: Two additional points. Certainly when we had the first inquiry it was not clear there was unanimous agreement and understanding about how precisely the command and control issues would be dealt with under the new FiReControl centres given they were going to be providing services for a number of different fire authorities and services each with their own command structure and then you were going to lay on top this regional control centre. Mr Bonney, has that been sorted out yet?

Mr Bonney: Has it been sorted out? It is still being worked on. The thing that I would say, though, is that the current fire control systems do not deliver command and control. It is for the officers and professional people who work with fire controls to deliver command and control. We do have to be a little careful here. When we talk about the regional control not having command and control, ie decision-making around an incident, we do not have that at the moment, and the difficulty is of course with a region you would expect that regional fire control to interact with the officers and personnel who make decisions on the ground. That is complicated, but to say that the current fire controls have command and control facilities would not be correct.

1 CFOA have provided further information on end user requirements (FIRE 22A)
Q13 Mr Betts: This is even more complicated. Mr Bonney: It is more complicated because, for instance, in my region Hampshire where I am chief, there are nine fire and rescue services now working with that single fire control and each one will have a command and control structure and of course each one will have to interface with the new regional control.

Mr Wrack: If I may develop some of these points. One of the difficulties—and it goes back to the earlier point—is that the project did not start by finding out in great detail what controls currently do. They simply identified a solution to what they saw as the problem rather than speaking to the Fire and Rescue Service and identifying what improvements and developments there could be. Some of that might have been about greater regional inter-operability and so on. I do not think we accept John’s point that regional controls are necessary to deal with major flooding—far from it—but just to emphasise the importance of command and control; it is absolutely essential for the operational management of an emergency incident. One of the difficulties we have is people thinking that they are developing a project which is something like running an automobile assistance service. I called the AA a week ago. An AA mechanic turned out and he or she can do the job themselves. It is completely different from running an emergency incident where you have large numbers of members of staff, large numbers of decisions, risks to members of the public, to fire fighters, to the environment, all of these decisions; that is the importance of command and control. A key to regional control is the attendance of fire service officers. The mobilisation of fire service officers is again an afterthought in the regional control project. It is staggering to people who work within the service that some of these issues have been neglected right at the start.

Q14 Alison Seabeck: We have listened in your responses to a number of comments regarding your lack of involvement as stakeholders with CLG. Can each of you give me a specific example—I am sure there is more than one—where you feel at different stages you have been completely missed out in the process? Are there certain incidents that stick in your minds where you think, “We found out about this after the fact.” Mr Wrack has given one. Has anybody else got any?

Mr Bonney: CFOA has a team of officers that work with CLG on the project. It can look like we are very involved and, in truth, we do see very good work, but there are occasions when we seem to have very little visibility on some of the things they are doing. For instance, we have been asking for some considerable time for a decision log, a very clear list of decisions that are the key decisions in this project. That has never been forthcoming.

Q15 Alison Seabeck: Have they offered any reason why?

Mr Bonney: No, to be honest. They would wave a piece of paper, it is true to say, that has “decision log” on the top of it, but if you look at the way the project has developed over recent times, it does not catalogue those decisions in proper detail.

Q16 Alison Seabeck: So it does not give you much confidence really, does it?

Mr Bonney: It is immensely frustrating. That said, as professional people we continue to work in this project. What I would say is that it is very easy to be completely dismissive of this whole project. This whole project is very, very important to the public in England. It is fire and rescue services being dispatched and mobilised in a different way; often with technology that many of the fire controls do not have at the moment. I think my Association is very clear that we will continue to work with CLG to deliver this project even though it remains incredibly frustrating on those sorts of occasions where we are asking for something and it seems almost inconceivable that they cannot provide that to us.

Cllr Coleman: CFOA do not have a choice because it is the only game in town. The Government has made it plain that it is the only game in town.

Q17 Alison Seabeck: On that issue you talked about looking at alternatives in your first answer. Do the LGA and do local authorities have the capacity, given the history of this particular project, to offer an alternative without it costing the taxpayer a significant amount of money?

Cllr Coleman: That is a key question. I would say as Chairman of the London Authority, which has been a regional authority for the last 40 years, that we do have that capacity and we have worked as a region for 40 years successfully protecting Londoners.

Q18 Alison Seabeck: What is the option?

Cllr Coleman: What it will force politicians on fire authorities to do is to come to some sensible decisions about joint working, whether that means merging with neighbouring fire authorities, or they may take a decision such as Gloucestershire to work much closer with the other emergency services, or they may take other decisions. I know I am not supposed to discuss this at this stage but if the project falls in London we will procure our own control system. We do not need to renew London until about 2015–16 anyway.

Q19 Alison Seabeck: Would you not accept that London is a slightly different case to, say, Devon and Somerset?

Cllr Coleman: I would entirely but I think it could be the model. In London we could quite happily accommodate the Home Counties as well, the building is so large, there are enough facilities and all the rest of it.

Q20 Alison Seabeck: I am not sure the FBU would want to see that.

Mr Bonney: What Brian says about the “only game in town” is that what you have to realise is that fire and rescue authorities have committed to this
project. After a period of great caution at the beginning, they have committed to it, and have invested energy and effort on the ground to work on this project. To now say blithely, “Okay, we will scrap that and we will just commission it from somebody else,” is dangerous in the extreme. One of the points that CFOA has been saying is that there are now fire and rescue services that are bordering on having completely obsolete systems in the belief that they are waiting for FiReControl, and why should they not? They have seen government money invested in this. Why should they be developing alternatives.

Q21 Alison Seabeck: I think Devon and Somerset is one of those that is getting worried about the gap between one ending and one starting? Mr Bonney: Exactly. So to blithely say “Scrap the project” will leave a number of fire rescue services high and dry, irrespective of the fact that a quick and easy solution might be offered. There are no quick and easy solutions to this. That is why the project is complex. Cllr Pearson: I think the point is about confidence here. Collectively and as Chairman of Greater Manchester I have a responsibility to satisfy ourselves that we can mobilise. Bearing in mind the length of time—and we had initial proposals of when this was going to be ready—the thing has been delayed and delayed and it has posed the question for us locally as to what we can do, what does our plan B look like. We work collaboratively with our neighbours, Cumbria, Lancashire, Merseyside, Cheshire and Derbyshire. You asked a question about specific examples where we have been left out of the loop. I do have some that I do not want to bore you with in detail but the bottom line is here the contract is between CLG and EADS. EADS have other partners like Intergraph and all that sort of stuff. If Intergraph has a question they ask EADS: EADS then asks DCLG; and DCLG then come and ask the fire community through the representatives. As an individual authority that has volunteered on a number occasions to assist and help with forms of data, the relationship has not been great, in fact I would describe it as very poor in that we have volunteered to do things; we have waited six months for a point or a particular thing and we get it on the Monday saying, “By the way, can you have this done by Friday.” It does not bode well for a good working relationship and this is the point about confidence in the project. For those authorities that have been relying on this, who have not invested in their current systems and are really quite high and dry if this project does not go ahead, the whole thing Altogether poses the question if we do not have a regional control—which to be honest is an over-ambitious step—do we have some degree of a national programme so those authorities can then link in. Those are the things that potentially would go to quell the issues that people do not have confidence in what is being proposed at the moment.

Chair: We will adjourn for 10 minutes if it is one vote and 20 if it is two. The Committee suspended from 4.54 pm to 5.04 pm for a division in the House

Chair: If we could restart. Just before we do, one of the questions that we tried to get an answer to but did not, and which I would therefore like you give us in writing afterwards, is specific examples of where you think the end user requirements have not been met. If you could let us have that in writing subsequently that would be very helpful, Alison?

Q22 Alison Seabeck: If I can follow on a little from the relationship between different organisations. Mr Wrack, in your statement you were quite critical of how the relationship between EADS and CLG has operated. Would you like to elaborate, please? Mr Wrack: I think the question needs to be put to both EADS and CLG, but I think it touches on the lack of information that comes back to other stakeholders and the fact that there seem to be poor relationships. We have just recently had a change of sub-contractors and I have to say what surprised us in a recent report from CLG is that this was presented as a great step forward that CLG had to change its sub-contractors, to which the obvious questions is: if that is the case why was it not done some considerable time before? There are difficulties in the relationships and it clearly touches on all the issues that we have been discussing earlier.

Q23 Alison Seabeck: In your evidence you also talked about the fact that CLG made a point of ensuring there was little contact between stakeholders and EADS. Can you give me some evidence for that because the way it is written it is very anecdotal? Mr Wrack: In terms of stakeholder engagement there has been very little direct opportunity for stakeholders to question and discuss with EADS the technical issues. For example, there are various stakeholder meetings—and this does touch on the general communication issue—for example a sounding board that we send people to where the briefings which we are given are very general briefings from CLG whereas we have people who are very technically expert in this area and they want the opportunity to put the detailed technical questions to the people who will be providing the technical solution and that opportunity does not arise.

Q24 Alison Seabeck: I understand that criticism but in your evidence you say that CLG made a point of ensuring that stakeholders were not involved in the EADS. What is the evidence for that, please? Mr Wrack: That is our experience. Mr Bonney: I mentioned before the relationship between EADS and CLG. One of the problems stems from this lack of clear specification at the beginning. What happened subsequently was the contract was let and there was a lot of infilling required to be done. If a partnership-type relationship had been developed, I think that would have been a lot easier.

Q25 Alison Seabeck: And you could have drawn on the expertise that was available?
Mr Bonney: Also, I think it would not have resorted so quickly into what we saw, which was a contractual relationship, which starts to make things much more difficult. What we found, certainly from the professional Association’s point of view, was not only was there not the organised contact with EADS, we were kept at arm’s length, it was through CLG, but the relationship between CLG and EADS was adversarial because it was already in a contractual relationship rather than a partnership approach. That would have been all right if we had got a very clear detailed specification but when you do not have that you end up, if you are not careful, only sorting the problems out by means of resorting to the legal arrangements. I think that is fundamentally where the difficulties existed. Things have improved slightly.

Q26 Alison Seabek: In the last six months.
Mr Bonney: We have a number of solution establishment workshops, as they are called, which bring stakeholders together, but they are not particularly well organised.
Mr Wrack: And they do not involve all stakeholders.
Mr Bonney: They do not involve all stakeholders, that is true.

Q27 Chair: Which stakeholders are not included?
Mr Bonney: It tends to involve professional people involved in the project at the moment from fire and rescue services. It does not necessarily involve, as Matt quite rightly says, all stakeholders. It does not include the representative bodies.

Q28 Chair: Which bodies, just to be clear?
Mr Bonney: The FBU.
Cllr Coleman: Deliberately.
Cllr Pearson: Just to pick up on the point about SEWs (Solution Establishment Workshops). I went down to Newport to visit EADS a week or two ago and the question was in relation to CLG’s relationship with EADS. The issue there came from CLG not really understanding what it was that they were going out to procure. The issue about the rush to procurement was that they did not know what it was they were due to deliver. EADS then procured Ericsson who said they could do it and it turned out they could not. I believe Intergraph at the time were considered and said, “No, we can’t do this,” but obviously we are five years on and they turned round and said, “We have developed and we can.” The point about SEWs is they are a bit like a Chinese parliament. The point is there is nobody within there who can say, “No, this is what the definition is. This is what it is; go away and build it.” That just does not exist. CLG have a lack of knowledge. The people who are in there from the professional side, yes, we do it differently in Manchester as they do it in the West Midlands as they do it in London but there has not been anything from us as a community to say this is what it is going to be. That is endemic as to what the issue is. The point about the timetable of the programme and where we are up to today, unless we bottom out what some of the key fundamental requirements are in detail, we are going to end up delivering something that is not really fit for purpose. I think that is the issue at the moment.

Q29 Chair: Can I just make a point. There is a court case going on and certain matters are sub judice. Any sort of remarks about why EADS switched from one contractor to another are off limits so could we not go down that route. Councillor Coleman?
Cllr Coleman: I do worry that this was a new way of working for fire authorities and many fire authorities simply did not get it. Many fire authorities diverged from the FBU’s view because the FBU are interested in their members’ jobs, which is entirely reasonable, and there are considerable reductions in jobs because of this regional control and indeed it is quite probable that employees of these new controls will not be members of the Fire Brigades Union, as in London where the control room staff are not members of the Fire Brigades Union at all. There has always been that agenda and you can see why the DCLG wanted to keep the FBU, for example, well away from the process.

Q30 Chair: Can we try also not to go down the line of imputing what other people’s views are, particularly when we have the various organisations here and we can get their views straight from the horse’s mouth, otherwise it is going to degenerate between the various members of the panel.
Mr Wrack: Just to take up that one point. In terms of the loss of jobs, of course as a trade union we are concerned about the loss of jobs. The real issue however is the service that is provided to the public because no matter how good your computer system is you need somebody to be able to answer the phone to an emergency call, so the loss of jobs impacts on the service that is provided to the public. That is the very real issue.
Chair: The Committee is well able to make its own mind up about people’s motivation. We do not need other people to do it for us.

Q31 John Cummings: Would you like to tell the Committee what is happening to the existing control centres? Are they being adequately maintained and, if so, at what cost? Are those costs coming from a central budget? Are they coming from your ordinary resources?
Mr Bonney: The existing controls continue to be run by local fire and rescue authorities. They are being funded, and any replacement or upgrading is being provided by local fire and rescue authorities.

Q32 John Cummings: Are they being adequately maintained?
Mr Bonney: I can speak for my professional colleagues that we will adequately maintain them because that is the only way that we can continue to deliver our service and clearly we would take that very seriously. The difficulty is that many of them, although not all, are becoming increasingly obsolete,
and maintaining them and keeping them in a state that is effective becomes increasingly difficult. There comes a point where they cannot be maintained any longer and they have to be replaced. A number of fire and rescue services have done that in recent years simply because they could not wait for the FiReControl project. That is why CFOA is very, very clear there needs to be a second option, because if the project—and I know you want to come on to that—becomes delayed or is scrapped we cannot leave fire and rescue services high and dry.

Q33 Chair: The second question of who pays for it?  
Mr Bonney: The upgrade is fire and rescue authorities. They continue to pay themselves individually.  
Cllr Coleman: We have a key deadline coming which is the Olympics and it is not just a London deadline, it applies to other parts of the country as well. I do not think any fire authority, particularly those with an Olympic commitment, want to be doing a new control room in the first six months of 2012.

Q34 John Cummings: Are you saying that various projects have been delayed because of the inadequacies of the new system?  
Cllr Coleman: I understand that Kent have been given permission, for example, not to sign up until after the Olympics. Am I correct on that?  
Mr Bonney: Kent have, yes.  
Cllr Coleman: In London as well we have had special arrangements. We were originally guaranteed this would all be up and running long before the Olympics came along. Because the timescale is slipping, nobody wants to be putting in a new system on 1 January 2012. Even London’s last date is September 2011. If it is not in by then and running, then we will wait until the Olympics are out of the way. I think that is the same for many other fire authorities.

Q35 Sir Paul Beresford: A few minutes ago, Mr Bonney, you actually said that this was the only show in town. Now you are saying you are looking for an alternative.  
Mr Bonney: No, what we have said is that fire and rescue authorities have not been investing in their fire controls in the expectation that the regional control centres would be brought in. We are now saying there is a point we have now reached with the confidence on the project, although we are still committed to the project, where we do believe there needs to be an alternative provided if, for whatever reason, the project is scrapped. We cannot leave fire and rescue services high and dry.

Q36 Chair: Sorry, Mr Bonney, I do not want to misinterpret what you were saying before but in answer to the previous question I think what you were saying was that some fire and rescue authorities are unable, with confidence, to continue to provide the service they should be providing in the interim before a new scheme comes in and that is why some of them may be upgrasing their existing schemes.

Mr Bonney: Some of them have upgraded already. For instance, Surrey upgraded about two and a half years ago on the basis that they could not wait for their regional control centre to be delivered so they were forced to do that at their own cost.  
Cllr Pearson: There are two elements to your question. One is the technical side and one is the staffing side. On the technical element, it is right that there are a number of fire and rescue authorities who expected this project to be in by now who have not invested in renewing their control systems, and their control systems have fallen over. There is an example in Cheshire where two years ago they had to renew at vast expense. CLG are picking up the tab for this but this is unnecessary renewing of legacy systems to keep them going until the magic day when we cross over. The other part to this is a staffing issue. Most of us expected that we would not be running control centres by now, so as part of the overall wider modernisation agenda, we have taken beds out, we have looked at reducing crews, overtime, we have gone through wholesale reviews on how we provide fire safety, we have looked at our borough command structure and taken out 30 per cent of the officer corps. These are all things that the current financial situation require us to do. What has not been done locally in Manchester for us is a full investigation into fire control and our control centre. It has been sitting there not being reviewed. That has had an on-going cost for us because we still pay the same prices and we have not had the opportunity to go through it and make efficiencies because we were expecting this project to take that away from us.

Q37 Sir Paul Beresford: Mr Pearson, you have just said that some of the organisations that have gone ahead as Surrey had are being paid centrally and yet Surrey and perhaps others have not. Why?  
Cllr Pearson: Sorry, the question is?

Q38 Sir Paul Beresford: You were talking about those who were feeling obsolete or were in a situation of becoming obsolete and had moved ahead.  
Cllr Pearson: As part of the overall project because the delivery of regional control centres has been delayed, the legacy systems in some of the authorities that have not been able to survive up to the revised schedule date have had to be supported. Some have meant a complete renewal.

Q39 Sir Paul Beresford: Who has funded it?  
Cllr Pearson: CLG to some part.  
Mr Bonney: I think I can help there. Where there has been sufficient and very hard lobbying, CLG have relented and paid a degree of the project replacement costs. They have not paid for the hardware. They have usually paid for some of the project management costs, which was the case in Cheshire, but that was not the case in Surrey, so it has been a patchwork.

Chair: Afterwards could you give us the specific data on what proportion was paid for by CLG and what was not? That would be very helpful.
Q40 John Cummings: Do you think that the new FiReControl centres will provide better technology for use by all existing fire control centres?

Mr Wrack: One of the selling points from CLG has been the point that Mr Bonney made earlier, that some local fire controls do not have the most advanced technology. I think part of the answer to that is that a number already do have extremely modern technology and others have, as has just been discussed, delayed the introduction of technology because of the promised introduction of regional controls which is now considerably delayed. In terms of the technology itself, again this goes back to the whole design of the project. They did not sit down and discuss what current fire controls do and therefore what any system of modernisation would be required to do. I will give another example of this. A large number of fire fighters in the UK, as you will be aware, are retained fire fighters. Current controls take account of the mobilisation of retained fire fighters to their retained stations. That needs to take account of whether those retained fire fighters, for example, are available. Some of them are on and off availability depending on their other commitments. Again, this is another issue that has been neglected at the start of the project and is now being thought about years after the project has been initiated. This is staggering to people who work within the Fire Service. I will give you just one example. The gaps in this are so big. We have just received in the post today a number of adverts to fire and rescue services saying regional controls are coming. Here are the issues that are not being addressed by regional controls; we can help you fill the gap.

Cllr Coleman: Let us not be under any pretence that we have some Nirvana at the moment where everything is wonderful. In many small brigades during the night you have two men sitting there answering the telephone. If that goes down then that brigade is in trouble and therefore the interoperability, the fact that the North West is supposed to be able to handle London’s calls if London went down or the South West could take the East of England’s, or whatever, is a key selling point, and if the technology works it will be a vast improvement, particularly on mobilising nationally if it is a flooding threat to the east coast, or whatever the issue is. Let us not think that somehow we have a wonderful situation at the moment.

Q43 Mr Betts: If the key issue is about being able to mobilise other brigades’ fire engines and for various people to speak to each other, would it not have been possible simply to have upgraded all the existing control centres with the same technology so they could all speak to each other and speak to each other’s fire engines?

Cllr Coleman: 46 control centres was never going to be viable.

Cllr Pearson: The point is they are not interlinked and this is the fundamental point. No control at the moment can mobilise other assets.

Q44 Mr Betts: But could you not have upgraded them all so that they were interlinked?

Mr Wrack: Certainly—

Q45 Chair: Wait a minute, Mr Wrack, we are actually asking Councillor Pearson. I will come to you.

Cllr Pearson: Yes, you could put it on a national scale and with the three data centres that are being delivered on part of this it negates the need to have these nine huge control centres delivered regionally which, let us be honest, have not really done us any favours at all. If CLG looked through this and you had a system where individual fire and rescue authorities could tap into a national network and see what assets were available from other areas, that would actually solve the problem. The fact is here that we have built these regional control centres as part of the Government’s regionalisation agenda that has fallen by the wayside. You are absolutely right; we could have done it locally.

Mr Wrack: First of all, in terms of your point about the technology, I was making a point about technology that the current controls do take account, for example, of a very key issue, the mobilisation of retained staff who cover the bulk geographically of the United Kingdom, so that is an important technical point which is not addressed within the FiReControl project. That is the first point I would like to make. In terms of the current system compared with what is on offer, no-one has ever provided any case where current fire control systems have failed. We have asked parliamentary questions and we have had recent examples of
mobilisation of resources in Greater Manchester by Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, for example, so co-operation between emergency fire controls already happens. In terms of the issue about major incidents and floods, I suspect that most fire and rescue services would not want a regional control centre 200 miles away mobilising resources when they are already implementing special policies to deal with the huge number of calls they have for example in mass flooding incidents.

**Chair:** We can make up our own minds when we get contradictory evidence. Mr George, do you want to do the safety questions.

**Q46 Andrew George:** Mr Bonney, earlier you said that it would be dangerous to drop the scheme but are there not also public risks and dangers in carrying on with the existing project, particularly public risk during this period of uncertainty?

**Mr Bonney:** There is always risk in these projects. I will not be an apologist for the project. What I would say is that my professional concern would be that if people just blithely say, “Scrap the project and let’s begin again,” let us look at where we would be, not just in terms of public money and how much has already been spent and how much would be spent in disentangling people from the project, but also what we would then have left for fire and rescue services. You would have a number of fire and rescue services with obsolete systems who would immediately have to start replacing them. My own service, for instance, Hampshire, would have begun to replace their system two years ago. On any scale it would take approximately two to three years to change your system, even if you are going to do that collaboratively. My concern and the concern of the Association is if we just say, “Scrap the project, we will just cut our losses,” the danger is that you have a number of fire and rescue services that are still completely high and dry at a time when public finances are going to be desperately short. They will be looking to central government and presumably to local taxpayers to fund the replacement systems. Certainly the Association’s view is not just to plough on regardless, because that would be a wrong and very unprofessional thing to do, but be very careful about not accepting some of the implications of just walking away from this project at the moment.

**Q47 Andrew George:** Even if we were persuaded that the new FiReControl project would provide a safer service in future? Is there not a question about the current situation? In other words, during this period of uncertainty, are the public more or less safe than, say, they were three or four years ago?

**Mr Bonney:** I would be assured that they are as safe as they were two or three years ago. There is no question about that because fire and rescue authorities themselves are not willing to allow a core piece of their activity to reduce, but that cannot go on forever.

**Cllr Coleman:** Any chairman of any fire authority who allowed his control system to become unsafe should be absolutely ashamed of themselves. I am sure that every chief officer would advise the fire authority when their system was becoming unsafe and members of that authority would make appropriate arrangements. I cannot imagine there is a fire authority that has not got a safe and effective control system at the moment or is likely to have.

**Q48 Andrew George:** I am sure they would not admit to it.

**Cllr Coleman:** Sorry, you are not telling me that any fire authority chairman or member, of any political party, would sit at a meeting, would listen to professional advice from their chief fire officer that the current control system was not adequate and that people in Bristol or Exeter or wherever it might be were at risk and would not do something about it, because I am sure they would.

**Andrew George:** It would certainly raise the wider question about the need for the FiReControl project at all.

**Chair:** We have just gone back to that point.

**Q49 Andrew George:** I know but I would be interested in Mr Wrack’s response.

**Mr Wrack:** I would not argue that there is an increased risk currently to members of the public as a result of what has happened so far. I think that there are risks in embarking further down the road of regionalisation without addressing the fundamental problems around which I think there is a fair amount of consensus. I think the risk that has emerged as a result of the delays relates to issues around staffing. Because of the uncertainty around what is going to happen to staff, there are large numbers of staff who have, for example, retired and not been replaced and there are short-term contract staff and there is a huge amount of uncertainty among the staff. These are areas where there are problems, and in terms of how the service delivers to the public, clearly at the heart of that is the staff. People have mentioned floods. What made the fire service work during the floods is the staff working in those fire controls and when you constantly undermine their morale that does ultimately put the public at risk.

**Q50 Chair:** Can we finally get to the question which you have all been attempting to answer up until now, which is, fairly briefly since you have all gone over it tangentially already: should the Government now abandon the FiReControl programme? If so, what alternative should they consider?

**Mr Wrack:** Yes, I think our position is fairly well-known. We are not into the Government making some cavalier decision about scrapping FiReControl and not addressing the issue it attempted to discuss. I think the project itself needs to be fundamentally reassessed. We think regionalisation of fire controls is a mistake. We think that there are alternatives around the idea of upgrading and networking existing fire and rescue controls which would be a preferable solution to the regionalisation project.

**Mr Bonney:** It is clear from our point of view that we believe the principles and aspirations of the project still remain sound. We have made it clear that it is the
way the project has been managed. As I said, the worst thing that could happen now for fire and rescue authorities, and therefore the public, would be to say scrap it and start again because we would be five years behind and we think the investment and enormous effort, not just from central government but also from fire and rescue services to make this project work, would mean not only that money would be lost but effort would be lost and we would be starting again from scratch which we think is the wrong thing.

Cllr Coleman: Sadly, there is no guarantee the technology will work and I think successive ministers have been less than straightforward with fire authorities. We had the Minister allegedly come clean in July on the timetable. Fire authorities are reaching a point where they have no confidence in the CLG on this project but basically if the technology does not work there is no choice but to scrap it and start again.

Cllr Pearson: I think it is the point Councillor Coleman raised about confidence. At the moment confidence in this project from the service is at rock bottom. If it is going to continue in the way that it is being pushed at the moment to make live these nine regional control centres, I think many, many more millions are going to have to be spent on the project. Some elements of it can be rescued. Some elements of it were a good idea. To have a National Resilience Network is a sensible plan. Unfortunately, the way it has been devised and the naivety as to the requirements where CLG has not really understood what the Fire and Rescue Service needed and what would be of benefit to it will ultimately lead to the downfall of the project.

Q51 Mr Betts: Local government would be content, would it, if the project was scrapped and if we went back to upgrading existing control centres, maybe more effectively linking them, but that would not be treated as a new burden, would it?

Cllr Coleman: If you believe in localism, as I am sure we all do, it is up to individual fire authorities to work out what are the best arrangements.

Q52 Mr Betts: And to fund them?

Cllr Coleman: Indeed, possibly to fund them and to find the efficiencies to do that funding. It can be done. We have 46 fire authorities in England and Wales at the last count. They are not all viable.

Cllr Pearson: To have a one-size-fits-all solution that is mandated on everybody is not the way forward. To have something that would do what we were told it would do at the beginning—ie, save us money, be more efficient and be safer—then yes, by all means bring it on. We would be very happy to subscribe to a project that did that but at the moment this project does not do that for us.

Chair: Thank you all very much indeed for your evidence.

Witnesses: Dr Roger Diggle, FiReControl Project Director, and Mr Robin Southwell, CEO, The European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company, (EADS); Mr Shahid Malik MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Sir Ken Knight, Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, and Ms Shona Dunn, Director for Fire and Resilience, Department for Communities and Local Government, gave evidence.

Q53 Chair: Minister, you will know that the Committee asked for access to documents from the Office of Government Commerce health checks relating to FiReControl and the two independent reviews carried out in 2009 and that the Secretary of State declined to give us those documents. We have the letters here which we will be publishing, I think. Can I just ask how you expect us to verify your written evidence and what you say about the reviews when we as a Committee have not had sight of them, and whether you considered following the precedent of the EFRA Committee and their ministers who allowed them to see OGC (Office of Government Commerce) documents on a confidential basis?

Mr Malik: It is absolutely our intention to be as helpful and as open as possible. Certainly we would not be in the business of obstructing the very important work that this select committee has to do. We have been open with the NAO (National Audit Office) who have seen all the advice. You have a copy of their Report. I hope that is testament to the fact that we are not secretive about this. There are some reasons that you have seen. I am happy to just very briefly repeat. One is that—

Q54 Chair: All the Committee Members have had the letter, so they know the reasons given in the letter. I do not think you need to repeat them. I think the additional question is why you did not follow the example of the Defra ministers and give it to the Committee Members confidentially.

Mr Malik: Each department makes its decisions based on the individual cases that come before it. We made a judgment with respect to your request. It might well be that it is a judgment that does not find favour with you. I think that goes without saying and is pretty obvious from what I am picking up. I do not know if you have considered our reasons and whether you think those reasons are inadequate in any way. It is essential just to ensure, as is set out in the papers—there are commercially sensitive issues there—that issues about ensuring that people who give advice can do so in a candid manner. The NAO has obviously had access to the relevant documentation. In a nutshell, that is where we are.

Q55 Chair: We are probably not going to get satisfaction but clearly we are not satisfied. Speaking as Chair, I think it is unsatisfactory that we have not been given the opportunity to see it on a confidential basis, since I would have thought that members of this Committee could be trusted with commercial information and it would have helped our deliberations. I think we will probably leave it there.
Mr Malik: I do not want us to end this session where you feel as if you have been denied access to something which you think is valuable absolutely outright. Would you allow me to go away and think about how we might be able to accommodate something that would give you a bit more than you currently have? I promise to do so before Wednesday, pretty obviously.

Chair: That would be very helpful.

Mr Betts: When you heard that the Committee was going to do this inquiry, did a smile come across your face or did you think: “Why the hell am I the one that is holding the parcel when the music stops?”

Mr Malik: As the eighth Minister in as many years, it is a very popular job. Of course a smile came to my face. I was not surprised that you wanted to have an inquiry on this issue. The truth is that it is contentious for a whole host of reasons. Fundamentally, the Government is absolutely committed to the concept behind FiReControl. We can see the national resilience that it will bring and deliver. We know that will benefit both fire fighters and indeed the wider community as well. Yes, there was a little smile but I knew it was coming at some time or other and we are here now.

Mr Betts: The reasons you have just outlined for having the project are the same ones that we were given at our previous inquiry and the same ones the Government started off with. When the project started, do you think that people in CLG, ministers, officials and EADS, your contractual partner, actually understood the degree of risk involved and the extent to which this could go so badly wrong?

Mr Malik: To be absolutely candid, I think it is really important that select committees and anyway as a parliamentarian you are candid. The truth is that this did not start off too well. That is on the table. It is a fact.

Mr Betts: Is the 2011 date now guaranteed?

Mr Malik: For any minister, after two delays, to give a 100 per cent guarantee would be rather foolish. We are confident based on all the information that we have that mid-2011 still is the date.

Mr Betts: Are the contractors absolutely confident it is going to be up, running and working without any more hitches?

Mr Southwell: We are committed to delivering in accordance with what the Minister has just mentioned. There is no reason, sitting here, that we do not believe we will meet that commitment.

John Cummings: Are you saying there have been no commitments to that in the past?

Mr Southwell: No, I am not saying that.

John Cummings: What are you saying?

Mr Southwell: I am saying, in answer to the question, my response which is we are committed to delivering in accordance with what the Minister has just said is the schedule.

Mr Betts: What is the contractual commitment, because I understand the current contract that you have does not go beyond March 2010. Is that right?

Mr Southwell: No. Our contractual commitment is as the Minister has just mentioned, to be delivered in accordance with the schedule mid-2011.

Mr Betts: Is it actually set down in a new contract that has been signed by both parties though?

Mr Malik: Let me just make the situation very clear. We have a draft schedule which indicates to us that mid-2011 is the date by which FiReControl will go
live. We are currently looking at that schedule. We are going to finalise it very shortly. All the indications are that 2011 will be achieved and there are some very considerable reasons for having confidence in that because there have been some drastic changes within EADS and some significant changes within the CLG and CLG’s capacity which give us much more confidence. I will probably allow Shona, with your permission Dr Starkey, to respond to that but we have had some significant changes with new project directors, new commercial directors, new heads of communication etc. That gives us confidence on the capacity side of the CLG. There have been significant changes on the side of EADS, including a new chief executive for the project in the UK which gives more confidence.

Q68 Chair: Were any of you in post at the start of this debacle? No?
Mr Southwell: I probably was in the job at the start of this project.
Andrew George: 2007?

Q69 Chair: No; 2004.
Mr Southwell: I was probably just starting the job around then.

Q70 Mr Betts: Is there a contract in place at present which states that this project will finish by mid-2011?
Ms Dunn: There are a number of documents that were signed by EADS and by ourselves either in the run up to or just after the July 2009 rescheduling. There is a heads of terms agreement setting out the revised expectations and there are two contract change notes which set out a number of additional milestones and revised expectations, both in terms of what is to be delivered and how the relationship between the two organisations will work. That has not been fully taken through to detailed changes in the underpinning contract as yet and that will happen once the ongoing process of reviewing the revised draft schedule that EADS have provided to us is complete.
Mr Malik: In a nutshell, the answer is no, but we have a draft schedule which we are looking at. It indicates a mid-2011 date which is the time period that we have already announced. We are confident that we are going to bottom that out and come to a conclusion over the next few days and perhaps weeks.

Q71 Mr Betts: Presumably officials have been negotiating this. If it was July when this revised schedule and other revised documents were put to you and discussions began between the contractors and yourselves, why in February—I make that seven months later—has no revised contract been signed? That is an awfully long time. We are talking about two years from July 2009 to mid-2011. More than a quarter of that time has gone by and no contract has yet been signed. Is this another example of the problems that have beset the contract from the beginning at official level?

Ms Dunn: The negotiation that led up to the July 2009 delay was set down in the heads of terms agreement and subsequently in the two contract change notes. The reason that has then not flowed through to the contract is because of the uncertainty that started to build post the July announcement around whether EADS wished to stick with their original, main subcontractor or whether they wanted to shift their main subcontractor. We are now looking at a draft, revised schedule which takes account of the implications of the shift of main subcontractor. Once we have completed that process with EADS, we will be able to flow those expectations through to the contract. The decision was taken there was no point in flowing them through to the contract until that issue was resolved.

Q72 Sir Paul Beresford: Was there a contract first with the original subcontractor and, if so, what was the deadline on that?
Ms Dunn: There is a contract that does exist. I would have to go back and check. I do not want to give you an inaccurate answer on that.
Mr Malik: We can write to you on that².

Q73 Mr Betts: If there is not a contract then and EADS fail to hit this new target of mid-2011, are there any penalties that they have to pay?
Mr Malik: One of the improvements that we have made is on the commercial contracts side. We have carrots and sticks built into that now in a way that patently did not exist in the past. We have key milestones and many more milestones that EADS have to meet. Payment is on the basis of meeting milestones. Where key milestones are missed, there are penalties by way of liquidated damages. We are in a very different position than we were in a year or so ago or perhaps even less.

Q74 Mr Betts: If you have not signed the contract, surely none of those penalty payments or rewards is—?
Mr Malik: We have agreements.

Q75 Mr Betts: Are they legally binding agreements that actually mean something if they fail to hit the deadlines?
Mr Malik: That is my understanding. I am trying to paint a picture where—

Q76 Mr Betts: What do EADS think about this? Do they agree that they are going to face penalties if they do not hit the targets?
Mr Southwell: If it helps, we are very comfortable with the situation, notwithstanding what you are hearing. We are comfortable because firstly we are in the process of delivering against the schedule which the Minister mentioned, notwithstanding that we are in the final stages of securing the documentation. There is no delay and there is no confusion on our side as we move forward to seek to secure that delivery. The second thing we mentioned, as the Minister alluded to, is we have offered and agreed to

² Additional information provided in FIRE 26A
put in place a regime whereby if we are delayed beyond that we will take a commercial hit to ensure that everyone is aware that we are serious that this will happen. In the context of where we are now, nothing that we are talking about is delaying us getting on with the job. We will deliver this. We are committed to delivering this by mid-2011 and we will subsequently be prepared to pay damages associated with any further delay.

Q77 Chair: If EADS are so terribly satisfied with this, where is the delay in signing the thing that was first negotiated in July 2009? Is it with the department?
Mr Malik: No. This is obviously quite a complex matter. Do you want me to deal with the schedule issue or do you want me to just explain?

Q78 Chair: We need to know why, if everybody agrees with it, it was not signed.
Ms Dunn: There are a number of issues in relation to the shift to Intergraph. There are potential implications for various aspects of the schedule. We are working with EADS to really get into the nitty-gritty of what those implications are, to understand where additional risks are arising and where those risks are falling. We are working together with EADS to get a lot of very detailed information. This is an incredibly complex schedule and complex plan. There are over 200 individual lines within this and within each of those there are many, many more. We need to understand in great detail the exact implications before we can advise the Minister on whether or not he should sign off on that. To answer the point about the penalties and liquidated damages though, the penalties and liquidated damages in the original contract and the penalties and liquidated damages that we have agreed as part of the change control notes are absolutely still extant. They are legally binding and we can call upon them.

Q79 Mr Betts: Have there been any penalties and liquidated damages so far on the original contract?
Ms Dunn: Both around the November 2008 and July 2009 rescheduling there have been negotiated agreements with EADS.

Q80 Mr Betts: How much for?
Ms Dunn: Some of that information I believe is commercially sensitive. Some of that information is included within the NAO Report which you have received. There is a figure around the November 2008 date of a package worth around £10 million in extra services and reduced service charges. There was another package put together around the July 2009 delay.

Q81 Sir Paul Beresford: What in broad terms was wrong with the original contract that you had to redesign it and start again?
Mr Malik: I have alluded to it at the beginning. The problem was that there was a concept and a vision but the detail was not there. In the spirit of continuing in candid mode, we had not engaged the Fire and Rescue Service in the development of the concept and that was one of the gaps. It is a gap that we have since filled. We have a lot of stakeholders now engaged in the project moving forward in a way that was not true when this project was first initiated. There was a gap between the vision and the reality on the ground. The truth is that once we started to engage with fire and rescue services it then became apparent that their needs had not been catered for in a 100 per cent fashion. That means that there were a number of changes to the specifications that were required. At the offset, it was an unhealthy start, mainly because it was a concept and vision and because people who were crucial to the success of the project, the Fire and Rescue Service, had not been included and incorporated in a way that perhaps would have been ideal.

Q82 Sir Paul Beresford: Did these organisations explain this to you at the very beginning?
Mr Malik: We always had some element of stakeholder involvement.

Q83 Sir Paul Beresford: It is just yes or no. Did they?
You said at the very beginning they were not spoken to. They were not involved.
Mr Malik: It could be a difficult one to answer given that I am the eighth Minister in eight years and nobody else has been here at the beginning of the project either, but I am happy to write to you on that.

Q84 Sir Paul Beresford: There is an Australian phrase. You do not know whether you are Arthur or Martha, do you, Minister?
Mr Malik: It is well known in Lancashire and Yorkshire as well.

Q85 Chair: Do you accept it should have been CLG who should have done the detailed end user requirement analysis?
Mr Malik: I am very clear that for this to succeed the Fire and Rescue Service ought to have been much more involved at the beginning.

Q86 Chair: That is not the question I asked. Was it the responsibility of CLG to do that detailed end user analysis requirement obviously in conjunction with the fire and rescue services?
Mr Malik: I think it was absolutely. I take responsibility. We ought to have done that. We ought to have engaged key stakeholders in a way that was adequate. It was inadequate.

Q87 Andrew George: You said you were being candid. I just want to be clearer on the point of fact that, when you said earlier that the project commenced in 2007, in fact of course the project commenced in January 2004. Certainly a letter from the then Local Government Minister, the Rt Hon
Member for Greenwich, to me on 4 April 2005 says that the estimated total net cost of delivering the regional control centre network is approximately 72 million. This covers the cost of setting up the new fire control centres from the start of the project in January 2004 until the last regional control centre goes live during 2008. It is very clear that that is when the project commenced. That cannot be air brushed out of the history of this.

Mr Southwell: It is not my desire or intention to air brush anything. In fact, quite the opposite. I think what I said is actually that the contract was awarded to EADS in March 2007. The concept and the outline business case, this vision thing that I have been speaking about, started in November 2004. At that time the estimate was £120 million. That is what I have here. Because of our engagement with the Fire and Rescue Service and others, there were some significant changes to the specification both on the IT side and on the needs of the Fire and Rescue Service as well as to an extent on the buildings.

Mr Southwell: we have been pressing the Minister about the details of the contract. To what extent do you accept that your company and/or your various subcontractors are at fault in not complying with the contract and not fully understanding the technical complexity of FiReControl?

Dr Diggle: On reflection, I agree and understand exactly where the Minister is coming from in terms of when we initially established and started to gain some momentum in this. In hindsight it is easy but it is not unusual for projects of this complexity that you learn some of the lessons and there is an iterative process going along. I do not know of many, if any, projects where you have really locked in what the requirement is at day one, particularly a project where you are involving a number of stakeholders across the whole of England and you are asking people to put their minds to it, actually to think about how behaviours need to change, how people need to transform their processes and organisational structures. There are many factors. To expect at the very beginning every single one of those factors to be readily understood completely and then put into an end user requirement to be delivered without change over a period of time is a tall order and one that probably is nigh on impossible to undertake.

Q89 John Cummings: That is a rather slack sort of answer when you consider the hundreds of millions of pounds involved. Have you no regrets at all?

Mr Southwell: No. I am simply explaining that, if you have a project of this scale and complexity involving a number of parties who need to become involved and buy into it, there is an element of locking down the final requirement as you go through the early, iterative stage. That is the only point I am making.

Q90 Chair: Do you think the early, iterative stage of this one went on for rather too long?

Mr Southwell: Yes. I have to agree with the Minister that in hindsight we should have done a little bit more work earlier and we should have done a little bit more work after we had been selected in terms of bringing in the various stakeholders, defining their requirements, understanding the behavioural issues as to how it actually works on the ground, to allow us to gain the traction and momentum which we all wanted. I agree fully with the Minister.

Q91 Chair: What about the situation now? We were hearing in earlier evidence from the first set of witnesses that they find it unhelpful that communication at the moment seems to go on through a train of yourself to CLG to the stakeholder. Would it be better for you to communicate directly with stakeholders?

Mr Southwell: I am pleased to say that, having learned the lessons reasonably quickly from where things were not going right—that is a healthy phase in a project that you are not in denial; you are picking up what is going wrong and reacting to it—we instigated a number of changes quite quickly. Two of those which were quite fundamental and which are showing some very improvements are, firstly, that we have co-location of ourselves as EADS, the Fire and Rescue Service and of CLG at one location in Newport, South Wales. That is proving to be really, really advantageous. The parties are working in a team, in a partnership arrangement. The second thing is we are having end user workshops, solution workshops, on a regular basis. In fact, I believe a few of them are working today, involving the end user on an operational basis so that we are real time ensuring that we have that dialogue which was missing at the beginning and which is now taking place. The combination of those two factors as well as a very, very impressive relationship and a very robust but healthy relationship with us and CLG at a project management level, the combination of those three factors—and at all three levels it is working—gives us increased assurance cautiously that we are now on track in that area.

Q92 Chair: Two quick questions. Since when and who exactly is involved in that, apart from CLG?

Mr Southwell: Since when?

Q93 Chair: Since when have you been doing this close working in Newport?

Mr Southwell: We co-located last August in Newport, South Wales, and the workshops commenced in August. Now they have ramped up. How many are taking place today?

Dr Diggle: We have run workshops almost every day since last August.

Q94 Chair: Involving who apart from CLG?

Dr Diggle: Involving ourselves, CLG, the fire and rescue services and whichever supplier has been appropriate to that workshop.

Q95 Mr Betts: Sir Ken Knight has sat there as an interested observer so far. Can I ask whether, if he had been appointed to the post at the beginning of
this project, he might think now he would have a
happier story to tell about how it might have
developed?

Sir Ken Knight: It would be arrogant of me to believe
that the fact that the Government did not have a
Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser in 2004 and indeed
until 2007 meant things might have been different.
This of course is a high profile and a complex project.
You know my background because I have been here
before. This is a real opportunity of step change for
the Fire and Rescue Service. It is an opportunity as
disparate fire controls have appeared at different
rates with different technology since the Second
World War. It is part of a £1.1 billion programme
that the Government is spending on the Fire and
Rescue Service. I recognise and welcome it alongside
the New Dimension and Firelink projects. What it
does for me, Mr Betts, is offer real opportunities at
two levels: opportunities for increased firefighter
safety by information directly to the cab about
incidents that firefighters need to go to and at an
interoperable level allowing fire engines and fire
fighters to cross boundaries seamlessly. These
matters have been very significant as we have seen
over the last five or ten years. I have been in charge
of three fire brigades, from one of the smallest to the
very largest, and seen how fire controls are
operating, this project is a prize that the public will
recognise is worth having.

Q96 Mr Betts: I know you probably will not want to
good drawn there but when this project began you
were still in a position where you could see what was
coming and how it was going to affect you and the
brigade which you were in charge of. Did you have
reservations at that time about how the whole
project was being developed and were you sat there
thinking: “It could be done better if only someone
bothered to ask”?

Sir Ken Knight: It would be pretty complacent at
that time of course because I was in charge of the
London Fire Brigade which already had a Regional
fire control. 20 years ago it merged four separate fire
controls into a single region control. All of the
doubts about people not knowing the addresses,
people not knowing where they were coming from
and the technology were dispelled to what I think is
a much better position. It is a very complex
business change project. They are always dif-
ficult to deliver in terms of the detail, you are storing
trouble for the future. The important thing is that
today, sitting before you, we are in an infinitely better
position than we have ever been before. The
technology, as Sir Ken has said, is technology that
the NYPD (New York Police Department) uses. It is
technology that the fire service in New Zealand uses.
It is technology you use if you are RAC members. It
is tried and tested technology. Our commercial
position is much better than it has ever been. The
 tragedy really is that we are in a much better position
than we have ever been before, both from an EADS
perspective and from a CLG perspective. I hoped
some of the stakeholders that spoke prior would
have said things were not perfect but they are much
better than they have ever been. We accept that it
started off in an inadequate manner but I think we
are in a much better position. It is a very complex
business change project. They are always difficult
and they are always complex, but we are just starting
to get over the hill now and get to the downhill side
of it. We are quite confident and I hope that the
Committee is more confident than it has ever been be-
fere—perhaps I am mistaken—in thinking that
we might deliver this by mid-2011. As I said, I cannot
sit here hand on heart and say 100 per cent but
everything I have seen so far tells me mid-2011 is the
point at which we will have some go lives and we will
be in a different world to the one we are currently in.

Q97 Mr Betts: We are not in that concept, are we? We
are talking about actual delivery and the design of a
system that would work and deliver that concept.
Surely from the beginning you would have been
talking to colleagues in other brigades at the time.
Did you not instinctively have a feeling that things
potentially could go badly wrong with the way they
had been constructed and developed?

Sir Ken Knight: London was somewhat easier
because it was a single fire brigade control mobilising
a single fire and rescue service. The complexity was
outside London where there were a number of fire
brigades being brought into a regional control. I still
do not think it is beyond the wit of either fire
authorities or the service to be able to have this
integrated approach. We know it works elsewhere.
We know that the subcontractor that EADS has
selected has very successful systems elsewhere in the
world. There is no reason why this integration,
which is the resilience that is going to be built into
this potentially—

Q98 Mr Betts: There is no reason therefore why it
has not so far. What has gone wrong?

Sir Ken Knight: I share, I suspect, both the first
session you had and I am sure my Minister’s
disappointment that it has not been delivered so far.
I suspect I share much of the fire service’s
disappointment. I cannot account for the beginning
part of the project. I would like to see its successful
conclusion, frankly, in the interests of firefighter
safety and resilience.

Q99 Mr Betts: Why has it gone wrong?

Mr Malik: I think it is more straightforward than we
think in many ways. If anything starts off really
badly planned in terms of the detail, you are storing
up trouble for the future. The important thing is that
today, sitting before you, we are in an infinitely better
position than we have ever been before. The
technology, as Sir Ken has said, is technology that
the NYPD (New York Police Department) uses. It is
technology that the fire service in New Zealand uses.
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everything I have seen so far tells me mid-2011 is the
point at which we will have some go lives and we will
be in a different world to the one we are currently in.

Q100 Alison Seabeck: This is directed really at the
EADS to start with. Do you have an agreed project
plan for FiReControl?

Mr Southwell: Yes, we do.

Q101 Alison Seabeck: That is good news. That is nice
and positive. When was that project plan completed
and signed off?

Mr Southwell: It is iterative because obviously we
are reviewing it on a regular basis.
Mr Malik: an upgrade of the existing system? It would fall under a new burden if they opted to go to might cost local government, because clearly it department have looked at potentially what a plan B or not his local government colleagues in the plan B in any case. Could I ask the Minister whether looking for a plan B and someone would look for a that if mid-2011 did not happen they would be 2011 timetable, we heard from earlier witnesses am not especially keen on opening up dialogue on Rescue Service. We would only do so after very confident is that we have a very strong technology platform in the Intergraph offering. Q102 Alison Seabeck: As you say, it is iterative so it is changing and moving. Mr Southwell: The framework is there and we are very comfortable with that framework, which is why, as I said earlier in support of the Minister, we are committed to and confident that we are going to hit the go live date because it is against those milestones which we are now hitting.

Q103 Alison Seabeck: Mr Diggle, you have come from a background of working with people like BT, a very large company with lots of big projects. Have you ever come across a project that has been managed in this way when you came into the job? Dr Diggle: Yes, I have.

Q104 Alison Seabeck: Can you give some examples? Dr Diggle: I worked on the National Programme for IT for the NHS. This is a complex initiative dealing with a federated user.

Q105 Alison Seabeck: Are you confident though that we are now in a place, as others of your colleagues have suggested, where this is now moving forward? Dr Diggle: Yes, I am. One of the reasons I am confident is that we have a very strong technology platform in the Intergraph offering.

Q106 Alison Seabeck: If I can very briefly touch on the 2011 timetable, we heard from earlier witnesses that if mid-2011 did not happen they would be looking for a plan B and someone would look for a plan B in any case. Could I ask the Minister whether or not his local government colleagues in the department have looked at potentially what a plan B might cost local government, because clearly it would fall under a new burden if they opted to go to an upgrade of the existing system? Mr Malik: If we are speaking about contingencies and whether we have looked and are looking at contingencies, I think the truth is where you have a business change project of this magnitude it would be extremely foolish not to be looking at contingencies. The answer is yes, we are looking and have been looking for some time at contingencies, but we are very confident that we will not need any contingencies. I think it is prudent for any organisation that is dealing with a project on this scale to try to develop contingency projects and contingency measures. The important thing about those—and I think it is really important that I say this here—is that if we ever did go down that route—and I hope to God we are not in a position where we have to go down that route: the impression I have thus far tells me that we are not in that position—we would only do so with the support of the Fire and Rescue Service. We would only do so after very serious consultation, not tokenistic consultation. I am not especially keen on opening up dialogue on contingencies. I think it might give it some reassurance in some ways, but it might give it a bit of a negative mindset. At this moment in time we are perhaps more positive about FiReControl than we have ever been. We are looking at it but if we got to the point where we had to do something we certainly would not do it in isolation. In many ways we have learned from the past but we are very focused on delivering FiReControl mid-2011.

Q107 Alison Seabeck: You would not have concerns that you would have a local fire authority unilaterally decide it wanted to opt for an entirely different system? Mr Malik: Everybody is broadly on board. It would not make sense unless everybody was on board. That is the whole point of having this integrated system with the operability. You have to have buy-in. I have to say with CFOA—I know John Bonney who was here earlier—we have been very honest in our relationship. They have been honest with us and we have been honest with them. I think they recognise that a lot of good will come from this but of course they want to see it happen and we want to see it happen. At this point in time I think we are in a better position than we have ever been before.

Q108 Chair: Do you recognise that local authorities would have more confidence if they knew they were going to be fully reimbursed by CLG for any additional costs in the meantime? As you know, for many of them, they are having to upgrade their existing systems when they previously thought they did not have to. Mr Malik: I have given a firm commitment on two fronts. Firstly, that if there are expenses and costs which are incurred as a direct result of the delays on FiReControl, my department will seek to meet those costs. What I have also given a commitment to is, once FiReControl goes live, if there are extra costs incurred by fire and rescue authorities, then because of FiReControl going live, we will meet those as well. I have also given a commitment that where fire and rescue makes savings because of FiReControl—and there are some 21 who will—that money will not come back into the central coffers. That money will be reinvested locally by the fire and rescue authorities on their own priorities.

Q109 Chair: Is this a change in policy, because the previous witnesses said that they had examples where fire and rescue services had only been partially funded and only then after, as they put it, extensive lobbying? Mr Malik: I just go back to the very specific point that I was making. If it can be demonstrated that costs have to be incurred because of the delay, we will meet those costs. I do not know about the specific examples that you have been given but I would be very happy to look at them and I would be delighted to respond to you on each and every example that has been given. As the Fire Minister, I am absolutely categorical that if there is a cost that has
been incurred because of delays then it is or responsibility to meet that cost. I have said that to fire and rescue authorities, to CFOA and to others.

Q110 Chair: If FiReControl is fully implemented, is the IT support and maintenance transferable or will it have to be EADS who does it? Is EADS the only firm that can run and maintain the system? 
Dr Diggle: No. In theory, it could be transferred to any maintainer.

Q111 Chair: What does the contract say? 
Dr Diggle: The contract says it is our maintenance contract until 2015, I think.

Q112 John Cummings: Could you tell the Committee how much the regional control centre buildings are currently costing to build and what would have been the previous costs? 
Ms Dunn: At the moment there are eight regional control centre buildings that have reached practical completion. The ninth regional control centre, which is London’s, will achieve practical completion in the next few weeks. At the moment I think the monthly lease costs for all of the buildings is around £850,000 and that will rise to just over £1 million a month once the ninth regional control centre is completed.

Q113 John Cummings: Can you tell the Committee are staff being at present employed in the centres and, if so, what are they doing? 
Ms Dunn: There are a number of staff that are operating in the centres. There are regional project teams and regional control centre operations teams which are operating out of those buildings. There are a number of activities taking place in those regional control centres. Some of them are being fitted out with equipment. Some of them are being used for training purposes, familiarisation purposes and so on.

Q114 John Cummings: I would imagine that the costs of these staff are paid for out of the £800,000 you are talking about? 
Ms Dunn: No. The £850,000 is simply the lease cost of the building. The costs of the regional project team and the regional control centre teams are paid for as part of the project implementation costs by CLG until the point of cut over, at which point they will become part of the steady state costs of the system.

Q115 Chair: Why was the procurement of the buildings done separately from the delivery of the IT system? If they had been together you would not have been left with buildings that are costing £1 million a month? 
Mr Malik: I will be corrected by somebody hopefully but I think that it is quite unusual to get one company that can do both these very different jobs. One is a kind of technology based business change project and the other one is a building project. Of course the objective was to try to ensure that they met at one point in time but, because of the delays that we have had on the technology side, clearly the buildings although being well utilised in all honesty will be better utilised once we get to the go live dates in those regional control centres. I visited one myself in the West Midlands. I met the chief executive and had a quick tour round. They are incredibly impressive buildings. For those who have not been there—I suspect most of you have—they are definitely worth going to just view. Only if you go and view them do you actually get a real understanding of the potential that these regional control centres have. I know there are lots of criticisms about them. It is pretty obvious that you will get that. We are not in an ideal position. I think once we get the go live dates, once they kick into action, that is when you will really see the fruits of the investment that has taken place and is taking place.

Q116 Andrew George: Minister, as you are in candid mode— 
Mr Malik: I am always in candid mode.

Q117 Andrew George: Of course you are. If you were Minister seven years ago and you knew then what you knew now about how the project would develop over time, would you not have gone for an improvement and modernisation of the existing structure rather than the project that the Government has gone with? 
Mr Malik: Absolutely not. Without a shadow of a doubt, I would have gone with this concept but the difference is obviously with hindsight all the errors that we spoke about, the inadequate nature of the beginning of this project, would not have been repeated. We would have firstly got a really good feel for what we wanted. We would have ensured that there was adequate stakeholder involvement in shaping that concept. It would have been much more detailed and so on and so forth. Those are the changes that I would have made but in terms of the concept, the vision and the national resilience that this project will bring, as Sir Ken said, it is one project of three projects which are part of a national resilience programme which will ensure that this country is at the cutting edge of fire and rescue service provision anywhere in the world. I think it is something that in years to come we will rightly be proud of.

Q118 Andrew George: While there is the present environment of tremendous uncertainty, in spite of the positive way in which you have painted the project, how are you dealing with issues of public safety, because clearly the project is not in place? You have the interim, current situation. Are you satisfied that risks to the public arising from this period are being adequately catered for? 
Mr Malik: That is obviously a very reasonable question to ask and I am pleased that you have. Every fire and rescue service has an individual responsibility to ensure that its operations are
adequate in terms of dealing with the safety and the risks that exist in its area. In that sense, I am confident that every fire and rescue authority is taking its responsibility seriously. I think what I have said is that we are going to have some legacy systems for example which could potentially cause some concerns in the very near future. My department is working very closely with every fire and rescue authority to understand if there are needs and to ensure that we are there to give adequate support. Of course it is not the case that we need regional control centres (RCCs) there tomorrow to ensure safety in this country. The reality is that what we have is adequate for today. The whole point about regional control centres is that they deal with both today and tomorrow. You probably will have heard about the threat of terrorism, the threat of climate change, the threat of disease and critical infrastructure failures as well. That is why RCCs are not just about today; they are about the future as well. In that sense they are future proof and that is why they are the kind of buildings that they are.

Q119 Andrew George: Surely there must be risks going on at the moment given the fact that you do not have all the things you say must be in place such as the interoperability. Some of the fire control centres you have said years ago are not really fit for purpose in this modern day. They are not able to perform some of the functions which your new service will be able to perform. Are you not satisfied that the public are very much at risk while this period of uncertainty is going on?

Mr Malik: I think any Fire Minister who was satisfied would not be doing his or her job properly. We are always looking to improve what we have. This will be a significant step change. It is one project of three in a national fire and rescue resilience programme that will ensure that we are at the cutting edge and that we have the best service anywhere in the world. I am confident that what we currently have is adequate for where we are now, but if you are asking me could it not be improved it could be substantially improved and that is exactly what this £1.1 billion of investment seeks to do.

Q120 Mr Betts: In terms of costs, we are told that until the end of last year about £200 million had been spent and another £220 million is going to be spent to complete the project up to 2017. If the plug was pulled today or in the next couple of weeks as some people have advocated, how much money would have been spent on it by the time that decision would be made? I presume there are some costs which are contractually committed now, which would run on even if the project was stopped. If you do not have an answer now, it would be helpful if you could write to us about it.

Mr Malik: Sure. It is an area that I am not particularly keen to speculate on. It is my belief from everything I know that we are not going to be in that position but you are right to ask. I am very happy to write in more reflective mood and give you some detail on what that actually might mean. Quite a lot of the costs that have been incurred have been spent on things that will be useful moving forward. It is not the case that this would be a deadweight loss to the Exchequer, but clearly that is not where we currently are. That is not where we want to be. If the Committee wants to have a bit more of a spotlight on that, I am happy to write and give you some more detail.

Q121 Andrew George: In the letter which I quoted earlier from April 2005, the then Minister told me that we expect there will be net annual savings of 30 per cent in the running costs of the control services from then, the financial year 2009–10. They were anticipating then, after the project should have been fully live by 2008, so within two years there would be 30 per cent savings in the annual running costs. What is the current estimate of that?

Mr Malik: As far as I am concerned, this project was never about cost. It was always about the national resilience that FiReControl would provide. On cost, the current situation is that we expect some £6 million—i.e., nine per cent—annual efficiency savings. The net present value of FiReControl is £240 million. That is the difference between what the existing systems would cost and what this new system would cost. A quick bit of maths—I am happy to be corrected at this stage—tells me that this is one pence per person per week for the best fire and rescue service anywhere in the world. I think that is pretty good value.

Q122 Andrew George: Could you write to us to give the figures for that because I would like to see what your baseline is against which you are saying that these savings are going to be achieved?

Mr Malik: Of course. I would be delighted to do that.

Q123 Chair: Can I just probe about the senior management team on both sides of this project? Firstly, in relation to CLG, how do you justify spending over a quarter of the total budget of FiReControl on project management staff? Why is there such a horrendously fast turnover and why are you so reliant upon consultants?

Ms Dunn: Presumably you are referring to the figure in the NAO Report in relation to the cost of the national project team as part of the overall project implementation costs. The national project team is of a very significant size, simply because of the complexity of the project and the numerous different work streams. It is not just a business change programme. It is not just a buildings programme. It is not just an IT programme. It is a very extensive and complex project which, as colleagues were mentioning earlier, necessitates deep involvement from a large number of FRS (Fire and Rescue Service) experts. Amongst that national project team, about a third of that national project team are fire and rescue service secondees, people who are expert in control rooms, the operation of control

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5 Additional information provided in FIRE 26A

6 Additional information provided in FIRE 26A
rooms and so on. It is an extensive team. I think it is important that we have those secondees in place and it is important also for example that we have those 30 people down in Newport co-located with our colleagues in EADS, making sure that the systems integration work is going exactly as it is intended to and that we are keeping on track.

Q124 Chair: Do you believe now that the project team you have is doing its job effectively?
Ms Dunn: Over the last 12 to 18 months we have a very much strengthened senior project team and we have a significant number of new individuals on the team. We have also been able to start making that shift that you rightly referred to away, where possible, from the use of consultants and towards the greater use of the Civil Service and secondees. There were quite a number of occasions over the last year where we have looked really closely at individual job specifications and determined that, with the right sort of skills transfer, we can move that role to a civil servant or to a secondee and we have done that.

Q125 Chair: Why was that not done at the outset?
Ms Dunn: There are a lot of very specialist skills that are required in the running of a project like this. Although PPM (Project and Programme Management) skills are becoming increasingly common in the Civil Service and increasingly CLG in particular is going well in terms of skilling its staff up in that respect, there is a level of specialism required in some of the project management activities, some of the risk management activities and particularly some of the systems integration, testing and assurance activities that we just could not have found off the shelf, at the beginning of the project. The reason I imagine that took place right at the beginning of the project was we needed the project team there, up and running, operational and effective from the start. The quickest way of doing that was to bring people in with the requisite skills. There is an opportunity now to shift which we are starting to take and there will be an opportunity over the coming years, as we get closer towards cut over and completing the cut over cycle, for the numbers in the project team to come down as well. We did provide numbers to the NAO for how we expect the numbers in the project team to come down over the coming years. There will be challenges in that but we need to try and do that certainly.

Q126 Chair: To turn to EADS, Mr Southwell, you have been very confident that you are happy with the delivery date of mid-2011. You do not feel it is too challenging to deliver by 2011?
Mr Southwell: No. As I said before, we are committed to that date.

Q127 Chair: Why do you think everybody should be as confident as you are that you will be able to deliver now when you have not up until now?
Mr Southwell: As we mentioned earlier, we are hitting our milestones which is obviously a very good comment. Secondly, we have a great team in place. We have Roger, who has been with us one whole year, so his feet are under the table and he is making a measurable difference. He reports to this gentleman here, Paul Watson, who was appointed three months ago as the CEO of the business in Newport. He is a high calibre senior manager in the company. They have amongst them new teams and they are really focused. The quality of the relationship they have with Shona and her team is proving excellent.

Q128 Chair: I think the same question applies. Why was that not in place from the start?
Mr Southwell: From the start we did not have those people in place. As we have all said right from the start here in terms of how we ramped this up, there were lessons that could have been learned. We have given you one. Another one is we wanted experienced, dedicated people from industry brought in to work with our embedded teams. We have learned that lesson as well. The third one is in terms of our strategic partner. We now have in Intergraph an immensely capable organisation that is already bearing fruit. In the spirit of candour and to underpin my confidence as to why things are different and why I am not just brandishing the same old statements, I have material evidence of actual things which have changed for the better which now gives me the confidence which you ask me to express in that committed date.

Q129 Chair: Do you not both think that the taxpayer might have expected that this level of expertise would have been there in both organisations at the start when this enormous public project was begun?
Mr Malik: I talked about £240 million net present value and described it as net present cost. It is actually net present cost. That is the cost. I think the taxpayer would rightly have expected us to have had a much better start than we did all those years ago. I am happy to sit before you and apologise for the inadequate start that there was for this project. I am also here just to say that I think we are in an infinitely better position than we have ever been. I am not here to blame EADS. I think they were at fault quite a lot. We have been at fault as well. They are very trusted in government circles, with the multimillion pound projects that they have with government etc. They have a very good pedigree but the truth is that this was not the perfect start. The taxpayer is right to expect better. All I can say to you is that we are in a much better position. I just hope that lessons are learned here, not just in terms of CLG but right across the board, across Whitehall.

Q130 Chair: The final question: all the witnesses we had in the first panel essentially said that they did not have confidence in the project being implemented on time as it was currently. They recognised you could not just scrap it and go with what there is at present. Essentially, if I am not putting words in their mouths, they were mostly saying that it needs to be modified and something different thought of which builds more on cooperation between existing regional centres and a national resilience network. Is
the department considering that at all? If not, at which point if you fail to deliver on the current timetable, will you decide to rethink the project?

**Mr Malik:** You said the current regional centres?

**Q131 Chair:** I mean the existing ones, the ones that are working at the moment.

**Mr Malik:** Our position is that at this moment in time we are pushing ahead with what we have because we have more confidence in it than we have ever had before. Again, I cannot sit here and say to you 100 per cent that it will happen on time, but all the information I have at hand tells me that it ought to happen. I have mentioned the contingency plans that we are looking at. I know that they are looking at all different possible configurations, so in that sense for us our focus must remain on delivering FiReControl as it was envisaged in a much better environment than it has ever been in before, while at the same time, pretty obviously, being prudent and looking at contingencies which may well include the contingency that you have outlined.

**Chair:** Thank you very much.
Written evidence

Memorandum from Jamie Hockley (FIRE 01)

SUMMARY

— Proposed Governance arrangements set the FiReControl Project up for failure. This paper recommends an alternative direction for FiReControl to take to enable the project to be completed but in a different way than originally envisaged.

— CFOA, LGA, FBU, FRS Professionals are all calling for long term FRS involvement in the governance and Operations of the RCCs. This is not achieved by removing the very staff employed in RCC’s from the Fire and Rescue Service and replacing them with third party Company employees reflecting a client/contractor arrangement.

— I seek to advise the inquiry of the vital importance and strength of feeling for any proposed solution is that Control Centres must be staffed and operated by directly employed and accountable Fire and Rescue Service personnel.

— The recommendation of this document is for the Inquiry to advise Ministers to abandon the present FiReControl RCC proposal and to investigate ways of upgrading existing Fire Control Rooms with FiReControl and FiReLink solutions as recommended by the Local Government Association report to the Fire Services Management Committee 23 November 2009.

— Recognise that FiReControl is not about a regional solution. It is misunderstood. FiReControl is a national solution for England. The reduction in the staffing of the proposed centres ensure that at peak times incidents and life risk calls will be managed in any part of England’s network.

— Acknowledge that this arrangement is a fundamentally flawed method of resilience. True resilience is ensued by the sheer number of professional staff providing this service as at the present staffing level which has showed time and time again to have the capacity to respond to large scale incidents and flooding. A Computer reliant networked solution replacing the professional staffing of 46 FRS into nine centres is totally flawed when it comes to capacity.

What changes, if any need to be made to the Government plans for proceeding with the project?

1. Ministers, CLG, the Civil Service need to recognise that the FiReControl model is fundamentally flawed. In basic terms, it is trying to fit a “square peg into a round hole”.

The present 46 FRS Fire Controls are the central hub responsible for the total in service management of all emergency and incident operations for the Fire and Rescue Authority. They cannot be modelled on other emergency service or utility control centres. The only commonality of any control centre be it FRS, or other service, is the call handling and capacity levels. This is the basis upon which streamlining to an RCC network has evolved which has reflected the resultant staffing levels.

2. The failure to recognise the complexity of each FRS’s unique overarching and detailed management aspects of operational incidents has resulted in the RCC and its IT solutions being years late with no concrete evidence of a successful solution.

3. In the past a lot has been made about the removal of local knowledge when handling emergency calls for help. I agree, that with new systems local knowledge in this specific area of control operations is no longer a necessity.

However what is dangerous and has been lost in this debate is the fact that Control Centre Operatives at an RCC will not be able to continue to have a working knowledge of local mobilising, command and incident management procedures. Quite simply because they will be managing and deploying FRS assets up and down the country. This has made the development of an IT solution which replaces all of this knowledge and skill almost impossible. The system must be so robust and comprehensive that it removes the need for any of this expertise. Locally Integrated Fire Control staff with detailed knowledge of their FRS policies and procedures on how to deploy and manage incidents provides successful resolutions. This cannot be achieved through a network of RCCs. These outcomes have a direct bearing on the reputation of the Fire Service which is held in very high regard by the public.

4. Regional Control Centres will only work effectively and replace the present system if Fire and Rescue Services themselves are regionalised, or furthermore nationalised something that has little or no support from the public or fire service stakeholders.
Regional Control Centre Governance Arrangements

5. As a matter of urgency, the Government needs to review the Governance arrangements for eight of the Local Authority Controlled Company run RCCs. The Governance arrangement for London RCC, involves total stakeholder buy in and allows direct management of the Service to remain within the Fire and Rescue Service, namely the London Fire Brigade. The LACC arrangement was designed to apportion equal control of the RCC between constituent FRAs. It has resulted in the creation of multifaceted & confusing costly governance arrangements totally diluting ownership and accountability away from front line staff, Chief Fire Officers and the FRS in general. Indeed the layers of governance from LACCs to Group/National Services, National Coordination structures and the latest proposals on whether to establish a new Non-departmental Public Body (NDPB), or use an existing quango such as FiReBuy or even the National Police Improvement Agency dramatically removes the whole ethos of a local, accountable Fire and Rescue Service.

6. If alternative arrangements are adopted for the completion of FiReControl such as upgrading existing control rooms with the technology and equipment, many if not all of these costly layers of governance can be removed.

Chief Fire Officer’s Association (CFOA), Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) the Local Government Association (LGA) and the representative bodies the Fire Brigades Union and Unison have all raised concerns about the lack of Fire and Rescue Service involvement in the management and governance of the Regional Control Centres (RCCs) both in the short and long term.

7. Government has failed to place FRS professionals at the heart of its policy in operating eight out of the nine RCCs. They have alienated professional fire service employees by devaluing their commitment to the community and fire and rescue service.

8. Ministers intend to replace integrated, uniformed fire service professionals with a client/contractor relationship. The employees staffing the RCCs will be company staff with no association or belonging to the fire service. They will be providing a business service to the FRS. Employees will not be part of the fire and rescue service team. This is a step too far and exposes the public and the FRA’s to increased risk that their core business is being handled by people outside the fire and rescue service. (Evidence attached—Shahid Malik MP 12 October 2009) Questions in the House.

Shahid Malik 12 October 2009

Staff employed in the London RCC are eligible for the Fire Brigade Long Service and Good conduct medal as they continue to be employed by the LFEPA (London Fire and emergency Planning Authority)

Staff in other RCCs which are controlled by an LACC will not be in Fire Brigade Employment and will therefore NOT be eligible for the medal under the terms of the royal warrant.

Cornerstone and key to the success of operating any regional fire control centre is the fact that it is crewed by Fire and Rescue Service Staff.

Governance arrangements are in such a mess that London will be operated in this way, along with the status quo in Wales and Scotland.

Joining the Fire and Rescue Service is an aspiration of many people. Working in a Local Authority Company is certainly not. The anger felt by Fire Control Personnel at being removed from the service, their medal withdrawn and the unwillingness of Ministers to alter this situation has placed these employees on a war footing with the government.

9. The Government must ensure full stakeholder buy in immediately. It must alter governance arrangements to ensure all Fire Control Centres are operated and managed directly by Fire and Rescue Service employees. These are the people who want to remain in the Fire Service and professionals who are dedicated. They are the only group of people that will ensure delivery of FiReControl. Their professional approach and organising skills homed as part of the team within the structure of the uniformed section of the FRS has consistently exceeded expectations in situations such as the severe flooding at Tewkesbury, the tragic and major blaze at Buncefield and the London Terror Attacks. The public have the right to continue to be served at the front line by professional Fire and Rescue Service control staff.

10. The Inquiry and Ministers must recognise the anger and the utter strength of feeling on this issue and advise the Government to take immediate steps to ensure all control staff employed in any RCC remain as professional uniformed employees of the UK fire and rescue service with their continued entitlement to the Fire Brigades Long Service and Good Conduct Medal. This is cornerstone to valuing and recognising the role of the staff both now and in the future.
11. If the inquiry decides the project should continue in its present form the following recommendations should be adopted:

11.1 The third party contractor arrangement (LACC) should be abolished immediately.

11.2 Any National and regional governance layers should involve FRAs CFOA, LGA and the representative bodies.

Success of the FiReControl will only be accomplished if the Control Centres are under direct management and control of Chief Fire Officers.

Resilience can only be achieved if Governance arrangements are repealed and the Fire Service put back in the driving seat of the RCCs.

Recognise that FiReControl is not about a regional solution. It is misunderstood. FiReControl is a national solution for England. The reduction in the staffing of the proposed centres ensure that at peak times incidents and life risk calls will be managed in any part of England’s network.

Acknowledged that this arrangement is a fundamentally flawed method of resilience. True resilience is ensued by the sheer number of professional staff providing this service at the present staffing level which has showed time and time again to have the capacity to respond to large scale incidents and flooding. A Computer reliant networked solution replacing the professional staffing of 46 FRS into nine centres is totally flawed when it comes to capacity.

12. Resilience Controls (Original Fire Brigades Union Proposal)

The idea of the RCC buildings being used as resilience controls or fire service super centres is one that needs revisiting.

Key to FiReControl, its viability, staffing model and costs is that during busy periods any RCC in England has the facility to take an overflow call from another region which is busy. If the call is involving immediate life risk, the remote RCC will mobilise resources (appliance/officers/attributes).

13. I ask the Inquiry to consider this basic scenario, and the risks involved

Local Fire Controls support mobilisation of the local FRS Integrated Risk Management Plan (IRMP).

Fire Authorities up and down the UK are quite rightly changing the crewing arrangements involving smarter ways of working.

This can mean that firefighters (wholetime/retained or volunteers) may be operating a pumping appliance at a location and because of their skill set are required to be returned to a specific location to collect a specialist vehicle (example Special Rescue Unit) to deploy to a life risk incident. Many high rise appliances and specials are being crewed in this way.

At present due to the professional knowledge, skills and training in local fire service procedures and policies, fire control staff ensure these intricate details are considered and ensure the correct mobilisation takes place when appliances are deployed elsewhere with crews ordered to return to collect special appliances for ongoing dynamic deployment to an incident.

I want to use the scenario of a life risk fire or rescue incident at the House of Commons. London RCC are busy. The 999 call is answered by the RCC network, for example in the North East of England.

The technical solution must be so accurate, up to the minute with real time status that it advises the Operator in the (NE) that the required fire appliances in London to attend (possibly mobile in their area, or deployed already and need replacing) need to be returned to another location for the firefighters to crew specialist vehicles.

There could be a risk that another centre in the UK may have already mobilised this resource. There can be no delay in life risk situations, otherwise the nearest fire appliance may not be mobilised.

I am unconvinced that the system will provide this detail.

14. I call for the Commons Select Committee to recommend that FiReControl be halted in the face of mounting opposition to this project from within the service itself.

15. Acknowledge the technical solution has failed to deliver

16. That the inquiry recommends the changes proposed by the Local Government Association (November 2009) as a suitable way forward.

17. The Inquiry should weight this evidence heavily. This submission is presented from the view on the ground. Representation from the very heart of the FRS. The one fact in this inquiry that is inarguable. Fire Controls and their staff have never let our communities down. In fact they are the very people and services that recognise the requirements of our individual communities.

In complete contrast, unfortunately the same cannot be said about the FiReControl project. It has already let the FRS and its communities down. It has failed to deliver at all levels. The reputation of this scheme is now so damaged with both internal and external stakeholders/contractors that its viability and success is in some considerable doubt.
REFERENCES

Mott MacDonald—The future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms England and Wales 2000 Updated 2003
Out of Control—Fire Brigades Union 2003
Office of Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) Select Committee Report into Fire Service—January 2004
Select Committee Report into Fire Service—June 2006
Local Government Association Fire Service Management Committee—FiReControl Alternative Options—November 2009

Memorandum from the Kent and Fire Rescue Authority (FIRE 02)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

— The Authority is profoundly disappointed at the progress of the FireControl Project and is now extremely concerned that the promised benefits may not materialise.
— The Authority has consistently supported the implementation of the Project on the basis that it represents much-needed technological improvements to a mission-critical function.
— Confidence in the Project, and the ability of the Department and its contractors to deliver the outcome successfully and in good time, has been severely dented.
— Whilst the Project was promised as a cost-saving initiative, it will now cost this Authority considerably more to implement the regional solution than it spends on its current arrangements. Assurances as to future support payments cannot be guaranteed so the long term implications are that Kent and Medway’s council tax payers will be subsidising those elsewhere in the South East.
— Repeated delays to implementation for this Authority have now placed us at risk of system failure as the current system nears the end of its natural life. As this cannot be allowed to happen the Authority is already incurring additional expenditure to develop contingency plans to address the possibility of further delay or cancellation.
— If financial or other concerns drive one or more Authorities to withdraw from the Project then the cost increases for the rest may become prohibitive and the Project could collapse altogether.
— The Authority has long been concerned that the lack of clarity about which functions will be included in the final solution will result in the Authority needing to retain functions in-house, increasing still further the additional cost burden.
— The uncertainty for our staff currently working in mobilising control—who have maintained a very high level of performance—continues to grow. This is undesirable both for them and for the Authority as we expect recruitment and retention difficulties to increase.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Kent & Medway Fire & Rescue Authority has been supportive of the FiReControl Project based on the Government’s assertions that it provided significant technological advantages over the current system, would prove to be more resilient and interoperable, and would save money. The Project has been subject to repeated delay, a lack of clarity over the specification, project management changes, the abandonment of the savings argument (at least as far as this Authority is concerned) and often ineffective communications. We do, however, wish to acknowledge that there has been, more recently, a willingness on the part of senior CLG officials to be more open and honest about the Project and to get to grips with the contractors. Nevertheless, our confidence in the ability of the Project to deliver on its promises has been severely dented and we are now forced into the position where we need to actively plan for further delay or failure.

2. We have set out this brief submission under the following headings; timescales, the impact of the 2012 Olympic Games, costs, the impact on staff, technical issues and the growing risk to the Authority’s function.

PROJECT TIMESCALES—DELAYS AND SLIPPAGES

3. The Authority was originally due to migrate to the new system in 2007. The most recent announcement has meant that Kent’s cutover to the regional control centre has now slipped to November 2012. Key decisions locally have had to be delayed repeatedly and our current mobilising system will be at least five years older than originally envisaged at the time of cutover.

4. Dedicated staff in Kent have assisted development of the FiReControl project since 2005 and external audits have highlighted the quality and timeliness of their work. However, some of the early work at national level, on attribute mobilising for example, is still no nearer completion some four years on. The news that
the prime contractor, EADS, has now appointed an alternative mobilising system supplier, years after contracts were signed, compounds the nervousness felt around project timescales and the possibility of further slippage or project de-scoping.

5. Project slippage has meant that two, possibly three, Authorities within the South East region will now migrate across to the RCC at the same time. The implications of this are still being discussed but inherently it would appear to increase the risk in this demanding final stage of the project that also coincides with the Olympic Games in 2012.

THE PROXIMITY TO THE OLYMPIC GAMES IN 2012

6. The proximity of the Olympic Games to the cutover of the RCC causes concern to many Authorities. The Olympics will be a national event, affecting not just London. This point does not seem to have been given insufficient consideration within the planning stages of the FiReControl project and the South East region is still destined to cutover at various points, both prior to and during the staging of this event in Summer 2012.

7. If, at a time of global interest, the fire & rescue authorities were experiencing problems with mobilising or call handling, the public risk as well as reputational damage would be unacceptable. The Authority has, on many occasions, requested a clear period around the Olympics to ensure that resilience plans can be prepared and exercised with the new or existing Controls in place. We still do not believe it would be advisable to increase risk through cutover of Controls to the RCC network in close proximity to the Olympics event.

COSTS AND FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

8. The Business Case, finally released in May 2009, stated that costs had stabilised at £320 million. These increased to £420 million when the latest project slippage was announced. We believe that further delays are likely and that costs will rise still further. The time has long passed when Authorities believed that this would be an efficiency saving initiative.

9. The cost of the South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre (SEFRCC) is likely to rise due to a number of factors, not least the organisation design (OD) for the number of control room operators and management employed. The OD was presented as a “one size fits all” concept, which is unlikely to be the case when some RCCs will cover four FRAs and the SE region will cover nine.

10. CLG has issued assurances that any region or service facing costs over and above what they are already paying will be supported by a “resilience payment”. In the South East region, only Kent is forecast not to make a saving and at present the annual payment is set at £132,000. Given that, by a number of metrics, Kent’s Control is reckoned to be the most cost-efficient, this is disappointing but not necessarily surprising. We are, however, concerned that these payments are based on outdated assumptions and it is not at all clear how we can challenge this. Moreover, these assurances cannot be given beyond the life of a spending review or a Parliament and, given the severity of the national economic picture, this Authority is likely to face still more increased cost in the future. In effect, council tax payers in Kent and Medway will be subsidising their counterparts elsewhere in the South East.

11. The unresolved question of work that is in-scope or out-of-scope is a matter of considerable concern. Mobilising controls carry out a range of functions beyond simple call handling and any functions deemed out of scope but which are, nevertheless, important for the Authority’s operational effectiveness will increase the overall cost to the Authority. Although the May 2009 Business Case allowed for an additional £1 million to pay for “out of scope” work, the payment would only be made until Authorities had subsumed this work within the organisation and in effect allows for less than one Full Time Equivalent (FTE) per Authority. This demonstrates a lack of understanding of how fire and rescue authorities operate. Even with the possibility of some regional collaboration, there are numerous activities which require an Authority to “own” its data. One FTE is unlikely to be sufficient and an additional administrative and operational cost burden will fall on Authorities.

THE IMPACT ON STAFF

12. The FiReControl project obviously has a direct impact on control staff. The continual realignment of project timescales has not only meant further uncertainty for them, but has also increased management time and costs dealing with resignations, recruitment, and selection. It does seem ironic that a consistently high-performing group of staff are placed in this position.

13. The location of the RCC effectively limits the opportunities for Kent control staff to transfer. This has meant that management resources have also been spent on redeployment opportunities, retention schemes and other opportunities with other agencies. The project slippages also affect internal project plans for dealing with staff’s aspirations, training and future development opportunities.

14. The affected staff are the first point of contact with the communities we serve. They have been working through a period of increased uncertainty since the inception of the Project and the repeated delays and uncertainties have done nothing to allay their long term fears for their future.
TECHNOLOGICAL AND PROCEDURAL ISSUES

15. In a brief submission it would be unhelpful to dwell in detail on the innumerable technical and procedural difficulties experienced by the Project so far. We would, however, point out that much of the promised new technology reflects what we have already invested in here in Kent. Many of the products being made available such as the national interpreting service, SMS emergency calls for the hard of hearing and pre-alerting were initiated within Kent. A major concern is that in the event of any future “de-scoping” to meet either budget or time pressures in the national Project, we may actually lose some of the technological advances we have already made.

16. One specific example may be helpful. For some time, Kent has been using Officer Mobile Devices (OMD) to provide automatic vehicle location, mobilising via data messages and automatic status updates. The FireControl Concept of Operations states the project will provide these. However, recently there has been confusion as to whether this will indeed happen which has forced us to abandon important development work on the system and rely instead on FireLink radios. This is frustrating, time consuming and expensive in terms of training. In our view it is also symptomatic of the lack of clarity in relation to technological and procedural detail within FiReControl.

THE INCREASING RISK

17. Our Corporate Risk process has long identified the FireControl Project as the most significant we face. It relates to a core function vital to discharging the Authority’s statutory responsibilities. It is also the first contact for members of the public needing help. Its continuing effectiveness is, therefore, always uppermost among our concerns.

18. The most recent delay announcement led to a decision by the Authority to commission an independent external audit to investigate the ability of the command and communications functions to remain fit for purpose until 2015, following previous risk assessment outcomes. The Authority is currently considering the full impact of this review which it has just received, but it is clear that detailed contingency plans will need to be developed now, and paid for, to address the possibility of further delay or project failure. In the event that FiReControl does finally deliver on its promises this will have been significant unnecessary expenditure at a time when we can least afford it. Unfortunately, we now view this as inevitable.

19. However, the worst-case scenario is now a possibility. If the Project is eventually abandoned the Authority will need to procure a replacement system, a process that we currently estimate could take as long as three years. The assurances of commitment and delivery have meant that the Authority has not needed to make budgetary provision for replacement. So, at a time of what is likely to be unprecedented financial constraint over the next five years, we will need to make provisions for this as a matter of extreme urgency.

CONCLUSION

20. The Authority remains supportive of a better technological solution and accepts the operational logic of an interlinked, resilient national system. The repeated delays and confusion have not only led to a rapid decline in confidence but also the distinct risk of project failure. Such a failure will leave fire and rescue authorities faced with an expensive business-critical risk to be addressed at a time when they are being pressed for substantial efficiency savings. The situation is, we believe, urgent.

December 2009

Memorandum from Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (FIRE 03)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service firmly believes that the FiReControl Project will deliver enhanced Fire Control capabilities that will not only be able to deal with normal levels of response activity but also the increased magnitude, complexity and frequency of demand associated with terrorism threats and the effects of climate change.

1.2 The increased resilience of the nine networked Regional Fire Controls will ensure that the response from the Fire and Rescue Services will be optimised with the resulting improvement in protection of the population and responding emergency service staff.

1.3 The threat from terrorism remains and many inquiries have identified the need to have command and control facilities with the ability to provide support across the whole of the incident rather than by a number of disparate control facilities. Regional Control Centres will enable a co-ordinated response to ensure optimum deployment of resources in the right place at the right time.

1.4 The increasing changes in climate and extreme weather conditions are becoming more common and require resources from wide areas to deliver emergency and rescue services to large numbers of people, utilising a wide range of resources from many Fire and Rescue Services and other emergency response organisations.
2. Introduction to Author

2.1 Peter Dartford is the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive of Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service. He is the Regional Project Director for the West Midlands and chairs the Regional FiReControl Project Board. He represents the Region at National Level on the Local and Regional Delivery Group and is a member of the Project Assurance Board.

3. Staffordshire Fire and Rescue Service Position

3.1 There are three fundamental areas that must remain at the forefront of any Inquiry or Review of FiReControl. They are three areas that underpin the concept of FiReControl and they are as valid today as ever before. These three areas are:

- Improved resilience of control room operations
- Coping with the effects of climate change
- The need to deal with acts of terrorism.

3.2 Improved Resilience

3.2.1. FiReControl will deliver a national network of nine, resilient, Regional Control Centres, which will receive calls, and mobilise and co-ordinate resources across the country, replacing 46 stand-alone centres.

3.2.2. Secondary mobilising systems will be provided across England to ensure resources can be mobilised when primary systems fail. This facility will be available to every Control Room Operator to mobilise a resource from any Fire Station on the country. Currently this cannot be achieved by any control room outside the particular Fire and Rescue Service whose area the fire station lies in.

3.2.3. At times of increased emergency call rates to control centres, the FiReControl network will automatically divert a call to another RCC should the local RCC be too busy. All such calls will remain in the network and be dealt with, monitored and recorded seamlessly, with no loss of data. Current facilities to deal with this rely on call re-routing via the BT network to a pre-determined fallback control, usually a neighbouring FRS. Should that FRS control room be busy also, the call reverts back to BT to locate an available control room, a process that can take several minutes. If the call is taken by the fallback control, then details of the call are relayed back to the parent FRS via fax, at which point it receives immediate attention.

3.2.4. Many existing Fire Control rooms are not purpose built and are unable to meet modern operational requirements especially when dealing with large scale incidents or spate conditions.

3.2.5. Technology across the existing Fire Control rooms is inconsistent and in some cases ageing, pending the transfer of operations to RCC’s. FiReControl will deliver modern technology and systems that will be consistent across England and are essential to maintain public safety. This will enable any Fire Control Operator in any control room to mobilise any appliance in England, including mobilising appliances across Service boundaries.

3.3 Coping with the Effects of Climate Change

3.3.1. The effects of climate change are now becoming all too common with well documented examples of such events increasing year on year. Examples of extreme rainfall, devastating communities, causing loss of life and infrastructure present all emergency and response services with significant response, logistic and co-ordination problems. Particularly where such events span FRS borders, response arrangements need to be co-ordinated between one or more control rooms, operating with different response, welfare and operational policies. Local control rooms are often over-run with emergency calls and command and control activities in order to cope with demands of the incident. There is no facility to formally transfer demand to another control room other than the existing fallback arrangements. Regional Control Rooms will share the same technology and will seamlessly be able to handle calls from anywhere in the country (see 3.2.3 above).

3.3.2. Two elements of the Fire Resilience Programme have delivered many of their stated outcomes. The Firelink Project has already delivered a single digital wide area communications system that forms an integral part of the FiReControl system and New Dimension has delivered a wide range of capabilities to deal with a variety of major incidents. The FiReControl element, to complete the overall delivery, is required to ensure an enhanced call handling and mobilisation capability. This includes the provision of RCC’s, fire station mobilising equipment and appliance mobile data terminals.

3.3.3. A review of the 2007 floods; “Facing the Challenge” by Sir Ken Knight studied the role of Fire Controls and concluded: “The review findings underpin the rationale for the FiReControl Project and concludes that a number of the difficulties experienced in the existing disparate fire control arrangements will be overcome through the proposed RCC network. ……… The findings also seek to add the experience of the significant events of 2007 to inform the operating protocols that will result from the introduction of RCC’s.

I am satisfied that the introduction of the RCC’s will significantly enhance the service to the public and the response from the Fire and Rescue Service, particularly during periods of peak demand”
3.4 Dealing with Acts of Terrorism

3.4.1. Ever since the events of 11th September 2001 in New York, there has been a growing understanding of the need to manage the co-ordination of large scale incidents where multiple agencies have a role to perform. This has been highlighted in the McKenzie report into the events of 9/11 which states the need for a “well-defined, flexible, and complete command and control structure for major incidents, with clear and consistent responsibilities and roles. In addition, the FDNY should improve the support it provides incident commanders so that crucial functions can be effectively performed, including command and control, planning, logistics and inter-agency coordination”.

The Mott MacDonald report expands this further with: “The scale and complexity of September 11th meant that vast resources were deployed throughout the city with little cohesion or co-ordination. Many resources failed to report to established ‘staging areas’ from which they would have been deployed in a systematic manner to appropriate locations. As a result FDNY control could not accurately track resources or personnel or deploy the appropriate information and command strategies. Dispatch operators were overwhelmed with emergency calls limiting their ability to respond effectively and to concentrate on the dispatch and control of resources and personnel. Voluntary support from units not assigned to the incident and from off-duty personnel complicated control functions. Ineffective and infrequently used recall procedures further confused the situation and created a disorganised environment in which the maintenance of effective control was difficult”.

With regard to the incident at the Pentagon in Washington DC at the same time, Mott MacDonald records: “The response to the Pentagon incident was similarly disturbed by the adverse effects of self-dispatching resources. This proved to ‘complicate the exercise of command, increase the risks faced by bona-fide responders and exacerbate the challenge of accountability’. Although Incident Command procedures were implemented early on, the ad hoc nature in which resources were mobilised and dispatched undermined the ability of the Incident Commander to maintain control of the resources on-site and arriving and to manage a strategic response accordingly.”

3.4.2. Sadly, recent history has proven that the UK is not immune to acts of terrorism following the London Bombings in July 2005 and the attack at Glasgow Airport in June 2007. The FiReControl system will put into place a Control network that will ensure a fully co-ordinated response to such events that will greatly improve public protection and responder safety.

4. Recommendations

4.1. That the FiReControl Project is endorsed by the Parliamentary Committee and is given sufficient and appropriate resources and support to enable it to fully deliver improved capability and resilience in Fire Control operations across the country as soon as possible in order to save lives and raise the standards of public protection and responder safety.

4.2. That the Inquiry gives further support to the outcomes of the FiReControl Project delivering a national scale, fully resilient system that is able to deal with the exceptional demands that occur at times of national level emergency situations as a result of severe climate conditions and terrorist attack, the frequency of which are likely to increase in the future.

4.3. That the Inquiry recognises that to halt or amend the FiReControl Project would delay even further the provision of facilities required by Fire and Rescue Services to meet the challenges of today and the future. Also, that it recognises taking an alternative approach to the provision of these vital facilities is likely to cost more than progressing with FiReControl as planned.

5. References

1. Facing the Challenge—The Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser’s review of the operational response by the Fire and Rescue Service to the widespread flooding in England during 2007: Sir Ken Knight. CLG March 2008


3. The Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms In England and Wales—Update 2003: Mott MacDonald

January 2010
Memorandum from Merseyside Fire and Rescue Authority (FIRE 04)

1. Merseyside Fire & Rescue Authority ("the Authority") is one of the fire and rescue authorities to which the Fire Control Programme applies.

2. The Authority firstly confirms that it will comply with its statutory obligations to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel, and to have regard to the Fire & Rescue National Framework including those provisions relating to the National Fire Control Project.

3. However, the Authority makes the following observations regarding the Fire Control Programme.

Progress with the Project so far

4. The Authority is fully cooperating with CLG and the recently established NW Fire Control Company, in progressing the National Project. However, the Authority is concerned that:

4.1. Whilst the Fire Control building is in place, and has been for some time, it is still not clear to the Authority that the information technology solution contracted for by CLG will be delivered, or be capable of being delivered in full or in part, or whether the current project timetable will be met in whole, or part, or at all.

4.2. There are many convergence issues outstanding, which have yet to be resolved.

4.3. Implementation of the project will entail a complicated suite of contractual documents being agreed by fire authorities, the regional control companies, CLG and the main contractors.

The detail of those contractual documents have yet to be finalised or agreed. The refusal of one or more of the relevant parties to those contracts to enter into them could adversely impact upon the progress or implementation of the project.

4.4. The potential for further variations to the project leaves uncertainty for Control Room staff, who perform an important role for the Authority.

4.5. Whilst a national and regional business case has been produced, this indicates overall only a marginal saving of approximately £400,000 per year across the North West, notwithstanding assumptions entailing approximately a halving of staff. In addition, the assumptions (such as Staffing Models, staffing numbers and IT costs) may or may not be realised in practice, also leading to further uncertainty as to costs.

Moreover, the business case was not completed until after the major contracts (IT and Property) were awarded, which results in a situation where it is extremely difficult to make a decision not to proceed with a project if the business case does not support the implementation of the project. Fire & Rescue Authorities are used to completing a business case before contractually committing any significant sums, thereby giving the Authority maximum flexibility if the benefits sought are not justified by the anticipated costs.

Whilst it is appreciated that realistic costs of ICT and premises are unlikely to be achieved until a procurement process is undertaken, such a process could be undertaken to the point of evaluation of bids, whereupon a business case could be compiled prior to award of contracts.

Where substantial contracts have been awarded prior to conclusion of the business case, then it is likely that a business case would have to take account of the potentially substantial costs of cancellation of contracts, if the project did not proceed, which is tantamount to a business case to the effect that it will be more cost effective to proceed with a project rather than to cancel it because of termination costs.

Whilst it is recognised that CLG has also indicated that additional costs would fall to be met by "New Burdens" grant funding, in the current financial climate it is not clear that any increase in costs will continue to be met by Government throughout the life of the Fire Control Project (for example, in relation to the additional costs relating to any subsequent re-procurement of IT when the current IT contract expires).

4.6. Indeed, because decisions still need to be made as to staffing arrangements, and apportionment of costs under the national IT contracts and the long term arrangements for New Burdens funding, the Authority is not certain as to the financial implications to the Authority of the proposed move to a regional control arrangement.

5. The Reasons for the Cost and Time Overruns which the Project has experienced

5.1. The Authority considers that one of the reasons for cost overruns is the procurement of the buildings for the project in a manner which has resulted in the buildings being constructed and available for use in advance of the Information Technology solution being available (and which currently still is not available).
This position could have been avoided by, for example:

(a) Letting a combined contract for the provision of ICT and premises, and passing the risk of delays to the Contractor. Whilst the risk transfer will have entailed some cost, this could potentially be less cost than has been incurred because of the separation of the two issues, or

(b) Letting contracts for the provision of premises only when it is certain that the Information Technology solution is capable of being provided, or linking the timing of provision of the premises to the availability of the IT (for example, by letting contracts for the accommodation on the basis of options exercisable by CLG when the IT arrangements have been sufficiently progressed, or on a conditional basis).

In addition, the Premises appear to be significantly oversized taking into account the position that it is likely that only approximately 20–30 people are likely to be working at the premises at any one time.

5.2. The Authority understands that there have been problems between CLG and the national IT contractor, in terms of the overall solution. Perhaps a more rigorous evaluation of the bids for the national IT contract would have identified any concerns regarding the ability to deliver the IT solution earlier in the process.

It may have been more appropriate for CLG to appoint a suitable contractor to develop a functional design specification first in terms of designing a technological solution that could provide the functionality sought, and then contracting for the supply of that functional specification, if and when a suitable functional design specification had been produced.

6. What, If any Changes need to be made to the Government’s Plans for Proceeding with the Project?

6.1. In the context that it is not clear to the Authority that the Information Technology Solutions will be in place in sufficient time to enable the existing timetable to be met, it is suggested that the Government:

(a) Reconsiders the overall timetable for the Programme, and/or

(b) Reconsiders adjustments to the proposed dates on which specific FRA's or regions are programmed to move to a regional control facility, and

(c) Develops a fall back strategy for provision of Control Room functions, in consultation with FRA's and the LGA in case the Information Technology Solution is not capable of being delivered on time or at all.

6.2. In the event that the IT contractor is unable to provide the required solution to the extent that it results in the IT contractor being in serious breach of its contractual obligations, then Government is requested to consider the option of termination of the national ICT contract and moving to an alternative arrangement.

December 2009

Memorandum from Derbyshire Fire & Rescue Service (FIRE 05)

SUMMARY

The perceived benefits of the Regional Control Centre programme were largely as follows:

— To create Control Rooms capable of dealing with very large incidents, especially cross border.
— To have Control Rooms with a great deal of technological resilience with commonality of controls to facilitate fall-back arrangements.
— The accrual of cost savings in moving from 46 to nine Control Rooms.
— Enhanced collaboration between the emergency services with such cross border and standardised entities.
— Enhanced service delivery benefits with more regional working with common procedures, practices, naming conventions and common key datasets with efficiencies in information accessibility and resources.

1.0 For the above to be realised, however, it would appear essential in the first place, purely from an operational perspective, to sort out common procedures, practices, naming conventions and common key datasets, certainly across a region and probably nationally upon which the technological solution would be based given that the Control Room would no longer be based within a single FRS but would need to service a number of FRs.

1.1 Secondly, it would also appear essential to sort out the political and legal relationships that would have to pertain between the RCCs and the individual FRs and the Government so that everyone was fully aware of their rights and responsibilities under the law and within the wider political landscape.
1.2 Thirdly, given the nature of the technological resilience envisaged for the RCCs with their specified need to be able to fallback to each other in the event of any serious failure and the data rich environment that would be needed to overcome issues of lack of local knowledge etc a tried and tested “end to end” technological solution needed to be specified which could support the procedures, practices, naming conventions and datasets detailed above.

1.3 The Mott Macdonald report of 2003, The Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales, puts forward what it sees as a good example of how a new integrated regionally based Control Room could realistically be achieved wherein it cites the example of The South Wales Fire and Rescue Service which was created from three existing Fire Services, Gwent, Mid Glamorgan and South Glamorgan.

1.4 The new regional service was created with all of the appropriate political backing and legal underpinning in place. Procedures and practices were then rationalised and common naming conventions and key datasets created for the new service. Obviously the relationship between the new Regional Control Centre and the South Wales Fire Service was made clear as the Control Room was firmly established as part of the new command structure with the appropriate technology specified to underpin all of this and put in place with a high level of positive user engagement.

1.5 It would appear that the FiReControl project has attempted to do items 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 in parallel to each other in a rather jumbled fashion rather than in the logical order pursued in the South Wales Fire Service scenario with the establishment of a new political framework of responsibilities followed by a related legal framework, followed by new common procedures and practices and consequent common naming conventions and datasets, followed by the specification of appropriate, resilient technology to underpin all of this with the appropriate user involvement. Thus we still do not have clear common practices and procedures in place across the region or nationally and have not established common naming conventions to any great degree, apart from the single instance of national call signs. Nor have we identified key datasets which we all can utilise and appear to be some way in the distance.

1.6 Although LACCs have been formed to oversee the RCCs it is still not clear what the legal framework is and how individual FRSs will relate to the RCCs. What can FRSs legally expect from the RCCs and what can the RCCs legally expect from the FRSs. Are indeed the RCCs the agents of the FRSs who thus far have the legal responsibilities for Fire and Rescue activities or will there be some other arrangement.

1.7 There is also no clear political framework in place that encompasses the relationship between the Government, the LACCs, the RCCs and individual FRSs. However, with all of that up in the air, a contract has been signed between CLG and EADS to put in place a technological solution for a national network of nine RCCS. The FRSs have had no direct sight of this contract and so cannot comment upon its suitability directly, CLG being the customer and EADS the contractor with FRSs being some vague “end user”. However as the contract was signed in 2007 it has become apparent to FRSs that there would appear to be no tried and tested technological “end to end” resilient solution ready to be rolled out but merely a core system which is being constantly added to and refined.

1.8 The related Firelink project which supplies the radio communications is also a little semi-detached from the FiReControl project with often unforeseen anomalies when the two projects coincide. For FRSs it is often difficult to know where responsibility lies between the two for any specific product or activity.

1.9 From the FiReControl project, software products already released have left a lot to be desired in terms of their quality and appear to be constantly being worked upon. To the FRSs, therefore, the perception has gained ground that CLG have signed up to a generalised functional specification which will be translated down the line into a more refined technical specification as needs must.

1.10 The cost savings promised also do not appear to be now realisable with deadlines being continuously abandoned and with all costs spiralling from their predicted base possibly as a result of the lack of legal, political, procedural and technological resolution alluded to above.

1.11 Thus the conclusion appears to be that major legal, procedural, political problems still exist and even the technological solution is not settled two years after contract signing. FRSs, therefore, have little confidence left that all of these issues can be resolved in a reasonable timeframe and are already having to look to other possible solutions to prop up their existing, ageing mobilising systems. This is all the more galling to FRSs as they perceive that if the one billion pounds plus, which it is considered will be the cost of the FiReControl project, had been divided amongst the individual FRSs, perhaps with some central guidance on levels of resilience and cross border collaboration, then there would have been more than enough money for technological resilience and enhanced functionality based upon existing control room structures. Needless to say staff morale would also have been rather more enhanced than it is at the present time.
2.0 Issues

2.1 Political and legal framework for RCCs

2.1.1 As expressed above it is crucial for FRSs to know where they stand in relation to the RCCs. In the main it is understood that RCCs will carry out the wishes of the individual FRS when mobilising resources within the FRS’s boundaries, as expressed by the business rules etc formulated by the FRS and sent across to the RCC. However in exceptional circumstances the RCC reserves the right to mobilise resources as it sees fit especially regarding very large incidents, cross border etc by passing FRS rules in those instances. Thus the RCC by implication has legal responsibilities in its own right, separate from the FRSs. At present it is only FRSs which have statutory duties to undertake fire and rescue operations and to mobilise appropriate resources in a timely fashion. Statutory duties, it would appear would need to be extended to include the RCCs. Thus there would have to be a clear legal demarcation between the rights and responsibilities of the RCCs as opposed to those of the FRSs.

2.1.2 At present the political and legal governing bodies of the FRSs consist of Fire Authorities based upon local authority boundaries. The RCCs are going to be governed, politically and legally it would appear, by LACCs consisting of councillors from the region in which they operate. However if a FRS has a problem with the RCC which it cannot work out using the normal channels it would have to appeal to the Fire Authority to take that forward to the LACC for resolution. But as the same councillors sit on both bodies there is not something of a contradiction in their respective roles.

2.1.3 Undoubtedly at present there is an implied overlapping of responsibilities between FRSs and RCCs which could potentially be dangerous. If the RCCs were wholly subordinate to the FRSs in their legal obligations, operations etc then there obviously would be no such problem but with the RCC’s perceived responsibility to act regionally or even nationally if it needs to then there is a de facto authority embedded within the organisation which sooner rather than later needs to be translated into a legal reality.

3.0 Common Procedures, Practices and Datasets

3.1 The need for common procedures, practices, naming conventions and common key datasets is a high priority if the RCCs are to function properly across borders. However after more than five years since the inception of the FiReContol project, after numerous workshops and seminars at all levels there is perhaps only one firmly agreed common way of working which has been promulgated across FRSs and that consists of the establishment of a set of national call signs. Everything else is still being worked upon.

3.2 All of the above needs to be established so that FRSs can embed these new procedures, practices, naming conventions etc into their organisations and this is extremely time consuming. Once these have been embedded within the FRSs then mechanisms need to be formulated whereby key datasets related to these procedures and practices can be sent across to the RCCs.

3.3 Because of the detached nature of the RCCs (detached from individual FRSs) their ability to operate effectively will depend to a very large extent on the quality of the data sent from the FRS so it is essential to ensure that information rich data is sent across in a timely fashion and that the integrity of that data is maintained. Similarly data needs to be received from the RCCs at the FRSs so that the FRSs can be in a position to know how their resources are being deployed and how their resources are performing over time (all of which FRSs are aware of now).

3.4 We appear to be a very long way off from establishing these things and if the RCCs are not going to become very poor quality call centres then these things are essential. The richness and quality of the data used and outputted will to a large extent dictate the quality of the RCC operation.

4.0 The Technological Solution

4.1 At contract signing in 2007 the FRSs were under the impression that CLG had signed up to a tightly specified “end to end” nationwide mobilising system which just needed to be rolled out and installed at each station within each FRS. However as the months and years have rolled by it has become apparent that the specification has not been that tight. Initially no station end mobilising kit had been specified there was merely the core system at the individual RCC.

4.2 The provision of the station end kit was presumably to be the responsibility of the FRS plus the negotiated attempt to interface with the RCC’s core system. As the difficulties of that became apparent eventually the powers that be relented and station end kit was included in the scope of the project. But this still does not include one key system. FRSs at present, via a mobilising cabinet, send mobilising messages to stations which appear on printers and which set off lights and alarms, alert officers using paging systems or similar and alert retained fire fighters using proprietary alerter systems consisting of small range vhf transmitters based at stations, connected to their control rooms.

4.3 The retained fire fighters have small pager-type receivers which receive the mobilising call notifying them to attend their stations. The retained alerter system is still not included under the FiReControl project, even though retained fire fighters comprise a substantial part of the FRS’s workforce. It is the FRSs responsibility to supply and maintain such a system and interface it to the RCC system via the RCC network. This will complicate the operation of the RCC, obscuring system responsibility when it should be centred...
on a single entity (as it is in most FRSs now). Needless to say if FRSs were setting up a new mobilising system they would specify such a system end to end, including retained alerter systems and have maintenance responsibility operationally in one place.

4.4 Furthermore, this late in the project, a key functionality of the system has not yet been determined. There is still no technical definition which defines how officers will be alerted and mobilised. The recently suggested switch from the Ericsson core mobilising system to an alternative Intergraph product this late in the day further enforces the doubts as to the suitability of the technological solution. CLG and EADS have suggested that switching systems should not greatly alter the findings of functional workshops which have attempted to determine how the system will operate but FRSs experience of system architecture suggests that each system has its own methods of doing things embedded within it and it is not so easy to change things.

4.5 So far DFRS has received two major IT products from the project. These are MDT1a (Mobile Data Terminal software for holding risk-based data within the fire appliances) and DCMT1 (Data Collection and Management Toolkit software for collation of risk based data related to the existing mobilising gazetteer). Both of these products although based on commercial “off-the-shelf” software have displayed numerous quality flaws which have had to be rectified in ongoing and often acrimonious discussions with EADS and CLG. Indeed a number of issues are still outstanding.

4.6 Major issues are also still outstanding regarding such matters as how we will connect to the RCC, how we will send data to them, how we will receive data from them, how we will maintain key datasets, how the station end kit which they are supplying will be installed and maintained etc.

4.7 Thus the conclusion that FRSs have come to is that there was never a tried and tested technological solution ready to be deployed which could meet the aspirations of the correct levels of resilience and functionality detailed within the FiReControl literature and we are still a long way from achieving those levels. There is a danger that aspirations will be watered down as problems with the technological solution multiply to the extent that the functionality of the RCCs will be worse than the existing functionality based upon Control Centres in FRSs.

5.0 Costs

5.1 One of the benefits of the RCC network was going to be the savings accruing from the reduction of 46 to nine controls for the country. However it has become apparent that these predicted cost savings have largely evaporated. Even the FiReControl literature is not now predicting any substantive savings. FRSs would point to the time overruns and the still unresolved issues surroundings all of the above.

5.2 There is still a massive discussion still to be had between the FRSs and the RCCs as to how much “back office” functionality will be undertaken in each organisation to replace what is undertaken now in FRS’s control rooms over and above the simple mobilising process, all of which is not costed. Although CLG recompense FRS for various so called “new burdens” costs arising out of the Firelink and FiReControl projects nevertheless there are still substantial costs which are not met. Large parts of the extra, unforeseen, expenses incurred for maintaining the present mobilising system which in DFRS is well over three years beyond its original end contract date have had to be met by the FRS.

5.3 A large part of the extra staffing costs are not met which includes the extra work other staff members have to undertake within DFRS beyond the core project team. Although some of these staffing and other costs can be seen to have brought some value to the FRSs in that they have allowed the FRSs to examine various procedures and processes, nevertheless it has to be admitted that much of this cost would be unjustifiable in the ordinary course of events. Thus there are substantial costs to the FiReControl project incurred by the FRSs which do not appear within the official project figures which if they were to be properly costed would definitely wipe out any proposed savings and would probably show that the FiReControl project taken as a whole was more expensive than the status quo with as yet unproven and unrealised benefits.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Unless certain political, technological and legal barriers can be quickly overcome to expedite new ways of working and the appropriate use of common technology then the project as it now stands is probably not achievable to the quality standards envisaged in a reasonable timescale.

6.2 As a good number of FRSs have mobilising systems now well beyond their contracted life it could be a good time for a number of neighbouring Fire Services to come together to jointly procure a new locally based but resilient mobilising system. Thus an alternative model needs to be considered, perhaps based upon existing control rooms with proper technological and procedural resilience designed in, between immediately neighbouring Fire Services.
6.3 FRSs could be legally tasked with planning for very large incidents which crossed borders as this is primarily a procedural issue rather than a technological one. Such a project would involve between two and five services which would form a manageable project team and have a good chance of reaching some sort of conclusion in a reasonable timeframe.

December 2009

Memorandum from Lancashire Combined Fire Authority (FIRE 06)

1. INTRODUCTION

In response to the call for evidence for the Select Committee on FiReControl, Lancashire Combined Fire Authority provide a submission under the following main headings:

— Project Management.
— Costs.
— Staff issues.

The Authority continues to actively engage with the CLG to discharge its responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework to deliver the best solution forward for the Regional Control Centre. However, it believes increasing costs, together with numerous slippages, threaten the viability and credibility of the project.

2. PROJECT MANAGEMENT

2.1 Business Case Approval

Ministerial leadership and key CLG staff has regularly changed throughout the project. This has resulted in a lack of continuity, particularly with verbal commitments. One example of this was the Senior Responsible Officer (SRO) committing at a North West Seminar, that Authorities would be presented with the full business case to approve or otherwise. This was originally due in spring 2005 but delayed until October 2006. On her departure this commitment was remembered by elected members, but lost to the FiReControl Project.

With the presentation of a full business case in 2009 and lease and infrastructure service contracts signed, the CLG has in essence delivered a fait accompli to Authority Members. This is reinforced by the £320 million committed to the project to date, over 75% of the expected cost.

2.2 Slippage

The project has been blighted by slippage. It is understood that in a project of this type unforeseen events may cause some change in timescales. However, most recent issues revolve around the infrastructure services contract. Part of this procurement would have included agreeing specification and delivery to an agreed project plan, with financial remedies for non-compliance. It would be helpful for the contractual cause and consequences of any slippage to be explained to Authorities.

Timing and communication of slippage has also been disappointing. Little regard has been given to the dedicated, professional staff working in Control Rooms across the country whose careers are deeply affected by these changes. Announcements as Parliament recess with little notice to FRA has become a common approach.

2.3 Accommodation

Although FRA's have had some input on the accommodation workstream they were not provided with the proposed design until after construction contracts had been let. By any measure the accommodation is too big for solely a Regional Control Centre. For example in the North West the maximum number of staff handling calls will be less than 20, yet there are 47 potential office spaces, 80 parking spaces and a refectory for 30 (albeit any breaks would be staggered). The opportunity to provide a fit for purpose, more economic and efficient Regional Control Centre has simply been missed by the CLG. It will be for FRAs to pick up these additional costs through the lease and facilities management contracts.

2.4 Central Project Delivery/Resources

It is evident that the different workstreams in the project have been delivered at very different rates. Hence many of the RCC buildings were nearing completion before the infrastructure service contract was let and available nearly 4 years before the programmed cutover date. It is also worrying, given the project has been running since 2004, that the detailed requirements of the technical solution is still being developed. It is not clear what the Central Project Team with significant numbers of secondees have been progressing throughout the project to date. Slippage has meant that some FiReControl work has not been available to action. Within FRA, resources can be redirected onto other necessary work when not required to work on
FiReControl issues. However, this is not the case with the Central Project. It is only recently that FRS secondees have been released from their role within the Central team and returned back to FRS to reduce costs when workflow has been interrupted by blockages in the project.

2.5 Sustainability

It is understandable that following terrorist attacks in London and abroad there will be an increasing emphasis on resilience. However resilience must be coupled with sustainability. The building lease for the RCC is for 25 years (possible two years extension), the infrastructure services contract is for eight years (possible three years extension); the FM contract is for seven years (possible two years extension) and the Firelink Contract for 10 years. However all the emphasis is on initial delivery not how these contracts will be aligned, renewed or refreshed in the future. It remains unclear who will fund the next generation of the system and how replacement will be managed whilst maintaining resilience and interoperability.

3. Costs

3.1 Financial Assumptions

A weakness of the FiReControl project is it is continually working against an uncertain financial backdrop. The business case is difficult to follow as there is not clear trail about the project costs and benefits included since the inception of the project, without cross referencing to at least three other substantial documents dating back to 2004. Despite the presence of the Finance Working Group, financial assumptions are not agreed before publication. This results in a full business case being issued when assumptions made are still in dispute.

For example, it is assumed in the business case that the current cost incurred in running existing controls will automatically be saved on transition to RCCs. This is simply not the case. With the efficiency agenda most FRS are seeking to downsize so extra office space is not required. Furthermore a commercial let of a control room which is normally integrated within a wider premise is not feasible.

3.2 Cost Apportionment

Lancashire CFA would also contend that the CLG’s apportionment of infrastructure service and central support team costs is flawed.

The CLG has stated their intention to apportion should have been:

— Simple, transparent and easy to understand.
— Relatively stable over time.
— Reflects the region’s ability to pay.

Their preferred method was apportionment based upon the relative share of tax base and they went out to consultation on that basis. This is the method for apportionment that was used in the Full Business Case. The Authority would argue, given that all RCCs will have identical IT specifications and requirements, that shared costs should have been split equally between regions. This would also have avoided the situation where local tax payers in one region subsidise tax payers in another. This approach fulfils the first two CLG criteria in the bullet points above. Also given the CLG has already agreed the concept that resilience payments will be made to regions incurring net additional costs, the regions ability to pay will be taken into account by this provision.

3.3 Critical National Infrastructure Requirements

The requirement for RCC to be part of the Critical National Infrastructure is obviously a CLG requirement based on enhancing national resilience. It is well in excess of current standards. The business case does not highlight clearly what elements of the costs are attributable to national resilience and Critical National Infrastructure requirements. Lancashire Combined Fire Authority believes that in line with the New Burdens doctrine such costs should be clearly identified and centrally funded. One example of these costs is the 24/7 security required at the RCC. FRA will be liable for these costs through the facilities management contracts. Clarity regarding how these costs have been allocated is required.

4. HR Issues

4.1 Over prescription of Structure and Staffing

It is recognised that HR solutions rests with the employer in this case the respective RCCs. It has taken time to resolve the governance issue to enable the employer to become a legal entity and all parties must accept some responsibility for any delays.

However the FiReControl Project has generally adopted a utopian approach to HR issues.

The papers provided are largely theoretical best practice, detached from the reality of existing terms and conditions and TUPE tensions. Much of the work that has driven efficiencies has been commissioned on a regional basis. It is unfortunate that the Project could not have been more proactive in this respect.
The supervisory structure was devised when staff numbers were estimated to be 100–130 and has never been adjusted despite operator numbers being reduced. This provides a level of supervision particularly at a senior level unparalleled anywhere else in efficient Fire and Rescue Authorities. This is just another example of lost opportunity to optimise the RCC.

4.2 Communications

Over the duration of the project Communications has generally been poor. There have been some good examples such as the locations release but the FiReControl Communications leads have been many and short-lived. The problem is less to do with individuals and more to do with the priority Communications commands in the FiReControl Project.

Most recently there have been some encouraging signs, with the appointment of a new Communications Lead with the recognition of who is responsible for which messages to which stakeholders.

Part of the frustration is the consistency and credibility of the messages we give our staff. Fire and Rescue Authorities relate to their dedicated and professional staff whose careers will change dramatically as a result of these proposals. Within an ever changing environment they remain surprisingly patient with remarkable levels of morale considering the challenges they are facing. Only certainty with the project will provide the firm basis upon which local release of information can be planned.

January 2010

Memorandum from the Fire Protection Association (FIRE 07)

1. Summary

1.1 The following list represents the key concerns of the FPA in relation to the FiReControl project:

— Delay and a lack of information emanating from the project reduce the wider fire community’s confidence in the intended outcome.

— That the “convergence” issues being addressed within the project scope will not address the broader issue of inter-operability.

— The lack of opportunity taken by the project to address duplication and inefficiency caused by the retention of “local” support arrangements.

— Whilst recognising that responsibility for identifying and reducing risk rests with the local fire and rescue authority, there is a growing concern that local resourcing (and reductions) will ultimately impact on the Critical National Infrastructure and the FRSs ability to support over-the-border or national incidents. The intended added resilience provided by FiReControl will be countered by the removal of resources.

2. Submission

2.1 The transition to the new arrangements for FRS mobilising has clearly created anxiety for a number of stakeholders in the fire community, including it would appear, some of those who will ultimately be responsible for its governance. That degree of uncertainty, dissent and project delay has done little to instil confidence in the wider fire community, particularly those who fear that the new arrangements will ultimately lead to a “lowest common” denominator of service provision.

2.2 It is suggested that the new control centres will despatch appliances based on local determination through individual Integrated Risk Management Plan determination. An underlying concern is therefore the ongoing divergence of mobilising standards and attendance criteria evident since the inception of IRMP. Facilitating such variance may on the one hand be classed as supporting local needs; on the other it could be argued that it supports a “postcode” lottery of fire cover for local communities.

2.3 Whilst the Government’s investment of money and resources in this project is recognised, there is a concern that this has not been matched by local support for implementation and the opportunity taken to secure further efficiencies through the regionalisation of support infrastructures for Controls and management information systems; items currently viewed as being “out of scope”. Such an arrangement cannot be viewed as being in the best long terms interests of effective FRS management, particularly in an uncertain financial future for the public sector.

2.4 The convergence products listed on the CLG website as being supplied by CFOA for inclusion in the project are relatively low level issues and ones that ought to have been taken for granted in any project of this nature. Of greater concern is how the issue of service inter-operability is to be secured? Divergence in risk reduction and resourcing facilitated by IRMP has the potential to contribute to a situation in which it is likely to be increasingly more difficult to secure safe systems of work where neighbouring fire and rescue services come together operationally. This is not a situation that appears to be being addressed by this project or by other means.
2.5 If, as it appears to be the case, the new Control Centres will “play-back” mobilising arrangements for individual fire and rescue services they cover, and within IRMP frameworks fire and rescue authorities are free to remove resources based on risk assessment (with no national minimum provision as a baseline) at what point does this impact on the critical national infrastructure and the whole service’s ability to respond to major incidents, or at a more local level, mutual aid arrangements. We would urge the Committee to press for assurances that every effort is being made to guarantee future interoperability and avoid carrying forward inconsistencies in service delivery and operational practices. Whilst the primary driver for the regional approach is naturally one of resilience, a secondary objective of driving up service delivery standards, consistency and performance should not be overlooked.

January 2010

Memorandum from Dorset Fire Authority Summary (FIRE 08)

1.1 Dorset Fire Authority has significant concerns about the FiReControl project. In summary, these are:
- The commitment by central government to a major investment before the Business Case had been fully developed.
- “FiReControl resilience payments” which do not meet the Authority’s own estimates of projected costs.
- Financial assumptions which have changed from a projected saving of 30% to a cost to the Authority.
- Significant delays in the delivery of the project with consequential impact on Fire Control staff.
- Concern that any further delay to the project could mean that Dorset’s cutover date will clash with the 2012 Olympics events in Dorset.
- Loss of confidence in the ability of either CLG or EADS to deliver the project or provide the technological solutions to support the RCC or individual fire and rescue authorities.

2. FiReControl Business Case

2.1 The Fire Authority was disappointed that the Government chose to implement this project and commit the taxpayer to substantial investment before the Business Case had been fully developed. The Authority’s own experience in seeking financial support for a major Government supported PFI project was that the sponsoring government department required a fully costed final business case before approving the provision of finance. This does not appear to have been followed in the case of the FiReControl project. Members of the Authority felt that because the Regional Control Centre had been completed and the main system contract awarded before the Business Case had been finalised, they would have little choice but to accept what is in effect a fait accompli.

2.2 The Authority wrote to the Minister at CLG responsible for the Fire and Rescue Service in October 2008 and reminded him that:
- Final commitment to the project will not be made until the Full Business Case (FBC) is published and the legal obligations of best value have been satisfied.
- The Authority reserves the right to withdraw from the local authority controlled company (LACC) at any time.
- The Authority will not agree to long-term financial or contractual obligations entered into by the LACC, eg the lease of the RCC, until it is satisfied that the proposal to deliver a service through the LACC is justified.
- The Authority will not agree to move its operations into the Regional Control Centre, either in principle or in practice, until it is satisfied that both operational and financial requirements have been met.
- The Fire Authority’s primary concern is that the Regional Control Centre will cost more than the current Authority’s own Fire Control and this is detailed in section 3 below.

3. FiReControl Resilience Payments

3.1 The Fire Authority failed to understand why fire and rescue authorities should bear the cost of national resilience. If fire and rescue authorities were building or installing new Fire Controls they would not be installing the level of resilience that is specified for this project. That is a central government decision and it was the Authority’s view that central government should bear the cost of that national resilience. The Authority considered that the best way to do this would be for CLG to calculate the extra cost of the resilient aspects of the project, eg increased costs for the building, the FM contract and the infrastructure services contract, and to make those payments centrally.
3.2 Previous versions of the Business Case proposed that any shortfall in costs between current Fire Control centres and the proposed Regional Control Centre would be met through a payment to regions rather than directly to individual fire authorities. Although this was changed in the last version of the Business Case so that the payment would be in the form of a “FiReControl Resilience payment” direct to fire authorities, this fire authority is not convinced that the proposed payment is correct. It believes CLG has overestimated the level of cashable savings authorities will actually achieve by closing their control rooms and has underestimated the true costs to the fire authorities after cutover. Some of these costs relate to activities which will be required after cutover, including operational liaison, performance and contract monitoring and data management. The Business Case makes only limited assumptions about the resources required to support these functions.

3.3 The Fire Authority’s other concern on costs is the duration of any resilience payment as it had been suggested this would only be for three years after cutover. The Government has stated “this should not be interpreted necessarily as a point of cessation as the principle remains that no FRA should be in a financially worse position that they were prior to their move to the RCC.” Whilst the Authority should be reassured by this statement, it will continue to press for these payments to remain for as long as there is a potential deficit. The Authority will also want to ensure that the payment is not absorbed into revenue support grant (RSG). As Dorset is at the “floor” for revenue grant settlements, any payment included within RSG will be lost in the revenue grant formula.

4. Financial Savings

4.1 Members of this Fire Authority were extremely disappointed that the 30% savings anticipated at the start of the FiReControl project have evaporated. In February 2007, during a visit to the South West, a senior civil servant stated that based on the likely cost apportionment model, the region would realise savings of 20%.

4.2 When Part 1 of the Full Business Case was published in July 2008, it became clear that based on its estimates of the steady state costs of operating the RCC and the cashable savings from closing its existing control room, the Authority would face increased annual costs. Although this been recognised to some extent by the “FiReControl Resilience payments” referred to above, the Authority is still disappointed that the anticipated savings have failed to materialise.

5. Delays to the Delivery of the Project

5.1 Staff in the Authority’s Fire Control were informed in 2003 that Dorset’s call handling and mobilising function would transfer to a regional control centre as early as 2005 and they would consequently face redundancy. Successive delays to the project have been particularly unsettling for staff who are expected to maintain their commitment to the Service whilst being unable to make plans for their future. This group of staff are extremely loyal and totally committed to the values of the Service yet they exist in an environment of uncertainty and doubt.

5.2 There is now significant delay in the delivery of key elements of the project. This has made forward planning by the Service difficult due to the uncertainty of the scope and functionality of the solution that will be supplied. The Authority now has serious doubts that the current cutover timescale will be achieved. Any further delay will only increase the anxiety being felt by both current staff in Fire Control and those seconded to the Service’s own project team.

5.3 There is still considerable ambiguity about certain areas of the project. This includes how the Regional Control Centre will operate and interact with the Service, the timescales for delivery of key enablers and the requirements that the Service is expected to meet during the transition period and after transfer of its operations. This hinders the Service’s ability to plan for the future and to know how the Service will ultimately be affected by the project.

6. 2012 Olympic Games

6.1 Dorset will host all the sailing events for the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games. It is essential for the Service to have resilient call handling and mobilising facilities before and during the games in the event of a large multi-agency incident.

6.2 If the project timescales were to change yet again, consideration would need to be given of the potential clash in the transfer to the RCC and the Service’s involvement in the 2012 games. In view of a potential multi-agency exercise 12 months before the games themselves, the Authority has determined that any cutover date between July 2011 and the end of the games in September 2012 would be unacceptable and this could affect Dorset’s place in the cutover order and potentially impact on the other fire and rescue authorities in the South West.
7. **CONFIDENCE IN THE PROJECT**

7.1 Dorset Fire Authority is becoming increasingly sceptical that the FiReControl project will actually be delivered, at least in the form which is currently proposed. It has asked officers to consider alternatives to the Regional Control Centre, including retaining the existing facilities, moving to a collaborative solution with a partner authority (including potentially another emergency service) or establishing a sub-regional solution.

7.2 The Authority’s scepticism has been prompted by the late delivery of key products and the regular changes to the cutover schedule. The Authority is losing confidence in the ability of EADS to deliver the technological solutions which are an inherent part of the Regional Control Centre’s concept of operations. The Authority has also lost confidence in CLG’s ability to support the project and has doubts of the soundness of CLG’s financial calculations.

8. **CONCLUSION**

8.1 The Fire Authority has no doubts that the FiReControl project has the potential to deliver benefits. The Mobile Data Terminals being provided as part of the Firelink project will enhance firefighter safety by providing key information about operational risks. The networking of the nine regional control centres will allow peaks in demand and large incidents to be managed more effectively.

8.2 The Authority is not convinced, however, that these benefits should be delivered through a prescribed national solution that provides an unnecessary level of resilience at considerable cost to the taxpayer. Most of the key benefits could have been met through local or sub-regional solutions combined with the provision of the national Firelink infrastructure.

January 2010

**Memorandum from Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (FIRE 09)**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

— Whilst Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority (BMKFA) has expressed concerns on a number of occasions regarding the FiReControl Project (the Project) Members and Officers of the Service have worked to support it throughout its life.

— The deadlines required by the Project have been demanding at times but officers of the Service have consistently met these in order to avoid causing further delay often at the expense of local initiatives.

— The delays in providing a credible solution mean that Buckinghamshire Fire & Rescue Service (BFRS) Officers struggle to “sell the concept” to staff groups.

— Project credibility has been further affected by regular slippage.

— BMKFA has serious concerns regarding the manner in which costs will be met in the future and information offered by CLG has provided little reassurance.

— At this time BMKFA is predicting that an additional £350,000 per annum will be required to support the discharge of duties under Section 7 of the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 (FRS Act 2004) following cutover to the Regional Control Centre (RCC).

— Continued uncertainty over the Project increase the risk to this Authority created by loss of Control room staff.

— At present the costs associated with provision of national infrastructure will fall to local Fire and Rescue Authorities.

— The initial project scope has now been altered resulting in the removal of some elements such as the optimal resource location software, the result being that the Project now offers little that is not already available in many existing Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) Control rooms.

— Provision of equipment such as Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) is welcomed but the delays associated with the Project mean that the technology offered is now considered out of date in many FRS.

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This report is submitted on behalf of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes Fire Authority and supports the South East Regional Management Board response. It is intended to offer a more local perspective for the consideration of the Committee.

2. Within this submission reference is also made to the Firelink Project which, whilst not part of the direct Select Committee remit, is fundamentally linked to the Project and is quite obviously a key enabler.
BFRS Project Involvement

3. BFRS has resourced the Project from its earliest stages and remains well placed to meet the deadlines and milestones set. This organisation believes that the concept itself is a valid one if somewhat utopian. However throughout the Project BMKFA has expressed concerns regarding the removal of local control rooms in favour of an untried and untested concept. Indeed throughout the Project slippage and technical difficulties have further reinforced this perspective.

4. At this stage, and with budgets likely to be adversely affected by the current financial climate, this Authority is more concerned that ever regarding the lack of clarity on Project costs. At this time there are no clear costs for either the FiReControl or Firelink Projects upon which the Authority is able to base its future cost projections.

5. The limited functions that will be carried out by the RCC’s will almost certainly result in a large number of activities that are currently carried out by existing control room staff having to be undertaken elsewhere within FRS. This will undoubtedly dilute any possible cost savings and indeed many FRS, including BFRS, have real concerns that any savings will be realised.

6. At Project start BFRS had an old but reliable mobilising system. In the early stages of the Project it was felt inappropriate to begin a replacement project for that system given the impending RCC’s. However following a number of Project delays and the ageing system that we were using it became apparent that there was a need to consider a replacement. BFRS has had that replacement system in place since mid-2009 and has had to do so in order to ensure that it can continue to meet its statutory duties under the FRS Act 2004.

7. BFRS has chosen to upgrade some elements of its existing mobilising system, but has not carried out a total refresh as might have been undertaken had FiReControl not been underway. There will therefore be further work to be undertaken should the FiReControl Project not deliver a system in the near future.

8. Despite the slippage BFRS has, to date, managed to maintain a technically capable and appropriately staffed control room but the continued uncertainty will undoubtedly begin to take its toll in the near future as staff look for increased job security.

9. Dorney Lakes in South Bucks is within a mile of the border with Royal Berkshire and is one of the 2012 Olympics venues. Had the project delivered according to a number of the earlier deadlines then the upgrade would have been completed prior to the Olympics with the obvious advantages of integration that this would have provided should a response be required to the events. However BFRS is now scheduled to cutover just after the Olympics in late 2012 creating a double negative: BFRS will not be part of the integrated FiReControl solution; we will also have to balance a significant amount of preparatory work required immediately prior to cutover whilst managing the risks associated with supporting an Olympics event.

The Capabilities being Provided

10. The delays now mean that what may have been a viable advance in technical capability a number of years ago is now common place within many FRS. This means that a vast quantity of public money will now be spent with little hope of any real advances. Granted the ability to mobilise across borders will be an advantage but this assumes that there is cross-border mobilisation on a large scale, this is not the case and therefore the advantages that this offers are limited.

11. The technology that is being offered in terms of vehicle mounted MDTs to facilitate data transfer and improve availability of risk information to crews are now in wide use within many FRS including this Service. The proposed software provision is already in use by a number of FRS but in a far more integrated way than is currently available via this Project. It should also be noted that a number of Services already have a more advanced MDT solution in use meaning that at cutover to RCC’s they may have to accept a reduction in functionality.

12. The MDT hardware offered under the Firelink Project is now also showing its age before it has even been fitted, a number of Services having now taken the decision to replace fixed MDT’s as provided under Firelink with demountable units which have many advantages in terms of functionality for the support of Fire Service operations.

13. The Firelink project has provided an improvement to inter-brigade and inter-service communications, however many FRS have seen their wide area radio costs multiply by a factor of 10. Whilst Firelink is a key enabler for the FiReControl Project there has been a lack of standardised provision with each FRS allowed to specify its own requirements. The FiReControl Project has also, to date, failed to clearly detail the methods that will be used to mobilise resources. This has resulted in no standardised provision for FRS and as such it is entirely possible that some FRS will have to incur further costs involved in the provision of further communications equipment in order to ensure that an RCC is able to mobilise their resources.

14. On a purely emotive issue one of the assumptions of the FiReControl Project is that technology is able to deal with any local issues and as such there is no need for local knowledge in local control rooms. This is a flawed concept since technology may be able to deal with locality issues but it will struggle to support people who are genuinely in distress and for that there is no substitute for the human factor. Concentrating on meeting caller demand based upon purely quantity factors completely misses the need to
appreciate that when people are under significant stress in an emergency quality of call management becomes a more important factor. The demand to handle calls quickly will place considerable pressure upon RCC Control Room Operators to concentrate on quantity not quality.

15. Project reviews have resulted in some elements being removed. For example the proposed resource optimisation system based upon the FSEC algorithms has been removed. This was designed to ensure that risk to the public was appropriately managed, but this has been removed to be replaced by a system whereby Brigades simply nominate key stations based upon a set of simple, but arbitrary rules. The ability for CRO’s and the RCC to balance risk at times of high demand is therefore removed in favour of a basic set of rules simply because it became apparent that this was too difficult and/or too expensive to achieve.

16. There are also a number of performance issues relating to the prime contractor; to date the DCMT1 terminal has failed to deliver anything useful to BFRS. Both it and DCMT2 have experienced significant delays and MDT1.0a is now faced with a significant credibility issue due to the difficulty in transferring data to the terminals and no immediately available network capability.

17. At this time the main system known as the Mobilising and Resource Management System (MRMS) does not appear to exist and the schema required to allow FRS to develop interfaces to this and other critical systems is not yet available prompting further fears of impending delay.

PROJECT GOVERNANCE

18. The current RCC premises costs (£160,000 per month) are significant, the total project cost predictions, £43 million (as detailed in parliamentary questions), is a significant sum and one which many members of the public may feel is disproportionately high. With a general election due to take place in the next year, and with the suggestion that other parties may take a different view to the existing Government, project credibility is further undermined.

19. The contracts themselves have remained an area of contention with many FRAs. Whilst BFRS would like to support the Project and in particular to ensure that the systems and services provided meet contractual obligations a lack of visibility has hampered this.

20. Members of this Authority and Officers of the Service do not believe that either the contractor, nor CLG, have properly engaged with us as key stakeholders and perhaps more importantly it is felt that there is in many cases a lack of true understanding of the business needs associated with the receipt and handling of emergency calls.

21. The recent consultation on in-service contract management has further undermined the relationship between this Authority and CLG by not providing useful information or alternative options with the circular. Indeed it appears that prior to the consultation deadline work was already underway to recruit Board members for the Non-Departmental Public Body making the consultation process appear as a paper exercise.

22. The lack of stakeholder engagement at an early stage in respect of the RCC building, in the South East at least, has created concerns over the specification process used. It is felt by this Authority that the building is over-specified and will cost considerably more than needed. This cost will have to be borne, at least in part, by the residents of Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes. There remains no route through which these costs can be challenged by this Authority.

CONCLUSION

23. Within BFRS there is a very real concern that staff have lost faith in the project and there is no doubt that after a further three years our project team will be suffering a considerable degree of scepticism over whether the project will ever reach fruition, whilst project credibility is probably now at its lowest ebb.

24. BFRS is confident that the quality of our data is high and that we will be in a position to provide what is required by an RCC. However the large scale automation required within the RCC environment is an area that historically FRS have not utilised simply because emergencies, by their very nature, are difficult to predict accurately and whilst there may well be some similarities many require a more flexible approach that would be difficult to achieve through automation, hence the need for experienced, well trained staff who have the time to make quality decisions not be forced to achieve a quantity target.

25. It is accepted the Project has demonstrated that in the event of large scale and/or widespread emergencies there is a need for a greater integration. As such a local control room in each FRS may not be the ideal approach but consideration to simply integrating existing facilities (where they remain suitably robust) must now be reconsidered.
26. Whilst this Authority will continue to resource the Project to the best of its ability the pressures being placed upon the Service to deliver in so many other areas will undoubtedly begin to impact on FiReControl deliverables. Given the almost inevitable further delays and this Authorities stated position that it supports local control rooms staffed by local operators it is the recommendation of BMKFA that the continuation of this Project must be carefully considered.

January 2010

Memorandum from the Local Government Association (FIRE 10)

INTRODUCTION

1. The LGA Group is made up of six organisations—the Local Government Association, the Improvement and Development Agency, Local Government Employers, Local Authority Co-ordinators of Regulatory Services, Local Partnerships and the Leadership Centre for Local Government. Our shared ambition is to make an outstanding contribution to the success of local government.

2. The LGA is the single voice for local government. As a voluntary membership body, we are funded almost entirely by the subscriptions of over 400 member authorities in England and Wales, including all 46 fire and rescue authorities (FRAs) in England. We lobby and campaign for changes in policy and legislation on behalf of our member authorities and the people and communities they serve. The Fire Services Management Committee is the LGA’s policy making body for fire matters and Fire Control is one of its priorities for 2009–10. The LGA would be very keen to attend the Committee’s oral evidence session to provide further information on the challenges Fire Control is presenting the fire service.

3. Fire and rescue services are run by locally accountable FRAs comprising elected Members. These services range in size and configuration from the Isles of Scilly Fire and Rescue Service, serving just over two thousand people, to the London Fire Brigade, serving well over seven million people. Many services rely on on-call firefighters while others have all full time firefighters. Along with responding to incidents, all fire authorities have two main responsibilities—enforcing fire legislation and promoting fire safety. Much work is done in partnership with local authorities, the police service and other agencies and the main focus for FRAs is delivering a comprehensive and effective fire and rescue service.

SUMMARY OF LGA SUBMISSION

4. Key points:

— the project so far has been characterised by a lack of leadership, poor procurement and contract management in government which, coupled with contractor inertia, means Fire Control is at serious risk of becoming another failed Government IT project;

— confidence and trust in the project is at rock bottom, most Fire and Rescue Authorities are beginning to consider what alternatives to Fire Control might be put in place, some have had enough and want the project cancelled;

— any net additional costs falling on FRAs of the project proceeding, or failing, must be funded under New Burdens principles, this includes Firelink;

— a realistic economic and operational assessment should be made of alternatives to Fire Control to inform thinking on the future of the project.

PROGRESS WITH THE PROJECT SO FAR

5. The introduction of the Fire Control project in 2004 was based on the premise that current control and mobilisation systems could be greatly improved in both resilience, networking and efficiency by merging the existing 46 control rooms into nine Regional Control Centres (RCCs) with a single up to date software system. Fire Control would offer benefits in terms of public safety, fire fighter safety, national resilience, efficiency, interoperability and mobilisation of national fire assets (New Dimensions).

6. The RCCs will be networked to automatically back each other up in times of increased demand or individual RCC failure and able to deploy the nearest suitable appliances regardless of fire service boundaries and provide data direct to fire service vehicles.

7. Major national contracts for IT and facilities management are in place. Eight of the nine RCC buildings are built, with the London building due for completion in February 2010. Three RCCs are under lease to Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs); all eight LACCs have appointed Directors and other key staff to set up and run the RCCs. In their turn, FRAs are advanced in their preparations for transition to RCCs by putting in place staffing arrangements, preparation of data for the new IT systems and developing common ways of working.
8. The current timetable is for the first RCCs (North East, East Midlands and South West) to go live in spring 2011, with the full system expected to be in place by the end of 2012. A key milestone is the 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

9. The total implementation cost of Fire Control is about £380 million. The Government has committed to ensuring that any net additional costs falling on FRAs are funded under New Burdens principles, where those costs arise solely as a result of its policy decision to introduce Fire Control. To date a total of £43 million has been paid to FRAs with an additional £58 million indicated over the remaining two years of the CSR07 period (2009–10 and 2010–11).

10. A key associated project is Fire Link, which provides the digital radio and data network in fire service vehicles and the RCCs. On completion, FRAs in England, Scotland and Wales will use the same network which will allow some interoperability with other Fire and Rescue, Police and Ambulance services.

11. The rollout of the full voice and data Fire Link solution is linked to the implementation of Fire Control. The installation of the interim (voice only) solution for English FRAs (other than London which is getting the full solution now) is due to completed by spring 2010. The full Fire Link solution is also being installed in Wales and Scotland. In Scotland and Wales the project will deliver integration of Fire Link equipment with existing control room systems and Incident Command and Control Systems.

12. In terms of Fire Control project management, the LGA is represented on the Project Board and sub-groups, and also chairs the Fire Control Sounding Board which involves employee representative bodies. The Fire Control project team in CLG has recently improved their stakeholder engagement and quality of communications.

LGA VIEW

13. Fire Control has been a high priority for the LGA and the fire community as a whole since the Government set out its policy direction in the June 2003 White Paper. Initially the LGA supported the implementation of the Fire Control project provided it:

   — was affordable and provided better value for money for council tax payers;
   — offered increased resilience and greater operational effectiveness in terms of call handling and incident response;
   — enhanced inter-operability, and
   — allowed more effective working with other emergency services.

14. However, the economic picture has changed and confidence of FRAs in the project has plummetted as ongoing delays have increased costs further and expected savings from Fire Control look unlikely to materialise. In September 2009, in response to concerns expressed by FRAs over delays and increased costs of this national project, the LGA's Fire Services Management Committee adopted, by majority vote, the following resolution:

   “The FSMC is against the principle of the implementation of Regional Control Centres however will continue to engage with CLG to ensure FRAs are properly resourced, will afford effective oversight and review the programme regularly on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Authorities and will continue to promote good industrial relations where applicable and asks LGA officers to develop alternative options in the event of project failure, to be brought back to the FSMC at a future date.”

15. There are a number of reasons why the Fire Control project may fail: national or local political decisions, financial constraints or action following contract breaches. FRAs are already looking at risk mitigation should the project fail.

REASONS FOR THE COST AND TIME OVERRUNS WHICH THE PROJECT HAS EXPERIENCED

16. Any hi-tech project carries some risks and this is an ambitious project involving bespoke IT and communications infrastructure, common ways of working, new buildings, new operating companies and staff transfers. The awarding of the contract for the Fire Control IT system to EADS Defence & Security Systems in April 2007 should have been a point for escalation in the pace of project delivery. However, the two 10-month delays in the project schedule, announced in October 2008 and July 2009, have arisen from EADS' failure to deliver on key project milestones. Most recently EADS has replaced a key sub contractor (Ericsson) for the Fire Control mobilising system.

LGA VIEW

17. Not only has EADS failed to deliver the product on schedule but CLG has failed in its strategic commissioning responsibilities with procurement capability lacking at the point of letting the contract; the National Audit Office report of October 2008 confirms this. Efforts have been made by CLG more recently to improve contract management.
18. By way of example, the replacement of Ericsson as a sub-contractor has been presented as a positive development but for FRAs it reinforces ongoing concerns around systemic failures in CLG’s management of the contract and the performance of EADS as the main contractor. There are implications for FRAs of the change which have yet to be addressed and which provide a snapshot of current FRA concerns:

— FRAs will need to be reasserted that the current schedule will not be affected by the change of contractor, as changes to either final roll out or interim milestones will have implications for them;

— The capacity of the system to deliver its intended purpose should not be compromised by the switch of contractors. Any reduction in functionality will not be acceptable and any “workarounds” must produce the same, if not improved, functionality when compared to present systems and be in place in time for the move to RCCs;

— costs to FRAs must not increase and this must include any potential incidental costs that could be pushed onto FRAs for the complete or optional functionality.

19. Essentially FRAs are not convinced that EADS will improve their performance or that CLG can manage EADS to deliver that improvement. In fact customer confidence in the project is at an all time low. EADS’ performance to date has fallen well below what is acceptable and they do not seem to have an adequate explanation as to why this is the case, for example basic quality assurance seems to have been missing in early equipment provision. To reassure FRAs CLG must be scrupulously honest about what went wrong in the past and what they and EADS are going to do to put it right, structurally and strategically, in the future. This will require leadership, transparency and trust.

What, if any, changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project?

20. It is the view of the majority of the LGA’s Fire Services Management Committee that the costs of this project now outweigh the benefits when set against the current economic climate, the quality of contract management and product delivery to date and the slim likelihood of radical improvement. Without some rigour in the project management and sharp sanctions for contractor failure it is hard to see how this project will deliver without further significant public investment. There will undoubtedly be a point at which it is better value for money to call a halt than continue to invest in a losing proposition. The LGA cannot be sure when that point will be reached but would be keen for early discussions with CLG on this.

21. Although FRAs have shown great forbearance in maintaining their input to the project, with one FRA recently describing the preparations for Fire Control as “onerous”, uncertainty over the future of the project has led some FRAs to call for the upgrading of existing control rooms instead.

22. Cancelling the project would have implications for FRAs and initial investigations with FRAs have found that business continuity plans are being developed which identify a number of risk scenarios that would require mitigation. For example, some of the first wave of FRAs due to move over to RCCs are particularly vulnerable as control room systems may be overdue for replacement, with other FRAs needing upgrading by 2012. A handful have commissioned new HQ buildings without control room facilities in anticipation of RCCs being delivered. Other risks identified include Olympics preparedness and staff turnover due to project uncertainty.

23. Some FRAs have, not unreasonably, put investment in control room equipment and accommodation on hold in anticipation of Fire Control and should not be penalised. One FRA has estimated that it would cost £2 million to upgrade its control room systems and control room accommodation if Fire Control fails.

24. The Fire Control Business Case (version 1.1, May 2009) puts the total implementation cost of Fire Control at approximately £380 million and also estimates that it would cost £320 million (at 2006–07 prices) to cancel existing national contracts and unwind the project. It is assumed that this cost includes the disposal of the RCC buildings, thought to be around £200 million, as well as the winding up costs for LACCs and project management staff directly employed by FRAs. This would mean zero benefit for a total expenditure approaching £500 million (when transitional costs are taken into account) and a waste of public funding of this magnitude would undoubtedly attract negative coverage and scrutiny.

25. There would be further financial effects should the project be cancelled, this is because the business case includes assumed savings (called “cost avoidance elements”) in other areas and it would become necessary to make financial provision for those projects that need to continue. This would include Firelink as the Fire Control project would have installed the Firelink solution in nine control rooms, so avoiding the cost of integrating the system into 46 existing controls. It is difficult to identify the cost of installing Firelink into all local control rooms as the cost information that is in the public domain is dependent on Fire Control proceeding, it is however believed to be considerable.

26. The LGA has started to look at what alternatives to Fire Control might look like but is constrained by the level of information in the public domain about the project. Early discussions have identified public safety, fire-fighter safety, national resilience and interoperability as key benefits of any replacement scheme. It is important that all possible options can be considered and the LGA is keen for Government and others to open up a public discussion so that the best solution can be found for FRAs and the communities they serve.
27. Were the project to fail public safety would be maintained as FRAs would still have legal duties under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help, for summoning personnel and to develop mutual aid schemes with other FRAs.

28. Should the Government decide to continue with the project then the LGA would want to see the following put in place:
   - clear leadership at Ministerial and official level with effective oversight arrangements so that CLG and EADS can be held to account by the fire sector;
   - open and honest communications on problems and successes, responsibilities and liabilities;
   - proper engagement with elected members on FRAs and LACCs; and
   - full funding of costs to FRAs in line with new burdens principles for both implementation and also running costs in the future, at the moment these are only guaranteed by CLG for three years.

January 2010

Memorandum from the South East Fire & Rescue Services’ Regional Management Board (FIRE 11)

SOUTH EAST REGION SUBMISSION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

— The SE Region wants the benefit of the full operational capability promised by the introduction of the FiReControl programme.

— Programme governance and management has alienated key stakeholders although it is recognised that there are current attempts to rectify this.

— Problems with EADS deliverables have been exacerbated for a want of partnering and support from the client side. Whilst getting better this needs to be improved further.

— Confidence in both EADS and CLG’s ability to deliver the capability remains low.

— Fire Authorities remain sceptical of CLG delivering on financial guarantees, particularly in light of FireLink financial changes mid programme.

— FRAs are increasingly concerned about the final actual costs associated with FiReControl (and FireLink), as the savings originally promised are eroded.

— For some FRAs, further delays exponentially increase the risks associated with legacy controls and mobilising systems approaching obsolescence.

— The establishment of the Regional Control Centre buildings, and the Local Authority Controlled Companies to run them, has been achieved.

— Concerns remain over the costs of national requirements associated with the Regional Control Centre falling to local authorities.

INTRODUCTION

1. This report is submitted on behalf of the South East Regional Management Board (SE RMB) which represents nine authorities (Buckinghamshire, East Sussex, Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Kent, Oxfordshire, Royal Berkshire, Surrey and West Sussex). This is the largest region by population representing 8.2 million people, has the highest number of authorities and is the third largest by area.

2. The SE Region has consistently supported the CFOA stated position1 on FiReControl and remains committed to establishing a viable Regional Control Centre (RCC). This submission seeks to give a regional perspective and may not necessarily reflect individual submissions made by the regions’ Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs). We recognise that the inquiry is for FiReControl but reference will also be made to the FireLink project.

3. The Select Committee wishes to establish:
   (a) Progress with the project so far.
   (b) The reasons for the cost and time overrun which the project has experienced.
   (c) What, if any, changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project.

1 The Association [CFOA] supports the project on the basis that it will bring to all FRSs a level of service currently enjoyed only by those who operate the best performing control centres and provided that ongoing funding for the solution is both adequate and fairly apportioned.
This submission will address the Select Committee requirements by commenting on:

— Project Governance and Organisation.
— Timeframe and Confidence.
— In-Service Contract Management.
— Finance.
— The SE RCC and associated costs.
— How to proceed.

**PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND ORGANISATION**

4. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) owns the contract and commercial processes for FiReControl. FRAs are unsighted on the detailed obligations and outputs of the main contractor, European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS). The FRAs represent the main user and only customer for this contract yet have no contractual relationship with the supplier. Other Government departments\(^2\) deliver large and complex projects by having a partnership between effectively two “customers” as the interface with the provider of operational capability. This has not been the case for FiReControl (nor FireLink) leading to the perception of disenfranchisement of the regions and individual FRSs. Too often, FRS involvement has been too little, too late when early engagement would have offered better support to EADS and increased project ownership by the end user community.

5. CLG set the contracts with EADS using an output specification, a technique encouraging innovation by not unduly constraining industry. However, it is a technique that assumes a partnering relationship with the provider. The lack of a partnering approach, involving FRSs working to support EADS, was evidenced by an adversarial relationship between CLG and EADS and, in turn, CLG and Regional Project Teams (RPT) representing FRS frustration. By necessity, FRSs have recently been asked to supply piecemeal expertise to support EADS which falls short of the kind of partnering relationship envisaged by Government. The Office of Government Commerce (OGC) advice states:

> Partnering is a form of collaborative working between customers and suppliers......In contrast with traditional “arms-length” procurement and contract management approaches, partnering is characterised by a greater degree of openness, communication, mutual trust and sharing information......Both parties work together to identify optimum solutions and to anticipate and resolve problems in a constructive, collaborative way. The arrangement needs to be based on mutual trust and openness, a recognition that the relationship itself is as important as the contract and a conviction that partnering makes good commercial sense for this particular programme.

6. The recent shift towards better engagement with suppliers represents an important step in achieving the kind of co-operation and collaboration needed to overcome significant technical challenges and deliver products that are fit for purpose. Due to uncertainty surrounding the technical solution to be delivered by EADS, FRSs have been unable to make advances in command, control and mobilising systems. The emerging project assurance systems and allied testing mechanisms, if effective, should support EADS and increase end user confidence which has been low for some time. The changes in the contractual relationship between CLG and EADS witnessed in recent months is welcomed and is doing much to move towards the project approach advocated by the OGC.

**TIMEFRAME AND CONFIDENCE**

7. CLG and EADS have so far struggled to deliver any substantive output on time, and “shortcuts” have been sought which introduced concerns amongst the FRS about the quality of the solution. Where programme delays have become evident to all concerned, there has been firstly denial and then delay in the actual announcement of slippages. This has lead to a degree of distrust and cynicism on deadlines issued by CLG. This is unhealthy, leading to unwillingness for busy FRS staff to commit resources to support project outcomes. Unfortunately, delay has become an expectation.

8. In good faith, many FRSs accepted previously published dates for the FiReControl capability being delivered as their planning assumption when considering the procurement of replacement mobilising systems. Delays to date have left a number of FRSs carrying increasing and serious risk as current systems reach or pass obsolescence. FRSs continue to mitigate risk under existing contracts but this approach is finite. More worrying for some FRSs is a growing concern that FiReControl will not be delivered at all, leaving some FRSs to begin procurement against a deadline imposed by their failing mobilising systems. This will carry significant operational and commercial risks. These risks become even more serious in the context of the economic and financial constraints likely to be faced by the sector in the coming years. The intent of the Pre-Budget Report seems clear in terms of reducing public debt and spending and fire is not among the few services identified for specific spending protection commitments (education, health and

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\(^2\) For example, the MOD has a Customer 1 and Customer 2 distinction between the deliverer of capability and the end user of that capability, which is a relationship that operates throughout the acquisition cycle.
policing). Fire and Rescue Authorities face a potential “double whammy” of spending constraint and significant unplanned expenditure if FireControl fails to deliver on its promises and it will have an impact on front line services.

9. Within the SE, mobilising and control technology will become obsolete for four FRSs in 2010 and a further two in 2011. Mitigation is in place to extend the life of legacy systems but at varying degrees of additional cost and an increasing and changing risk profile. It is possible that even a short additional delay to the current SE cutover period of March—December 2012, may force 3 of SE FRSs into replacing their current systems and the others to re-appraise the resultant risk and consider a replacement programme. This unplanned expenditure will be significant and wasteful.

**In-Service Contract Management**

10. The manner in which FRSs and FRAs were “consulted” over the in-service management of both FiReControl and FireLink contracts was disappointing in that only a single option was presented with little information or evidence provided against which to make informed comment. The lack of clarity within the documentation raised concerns about the true intention of this consultation which eliminated all other options other than the proposed solution of incorporating Firebuy to manage the service contracts for FiReControl and FireLink. It would have been reasonable to expect more engagement before deciding on how the two key contracts underpinning FRS operational capability would be managed. Before the consultation process was complete, CLG had already advertised for Board members for the re-vamped Non-Departmental Public Body (NDPB) reinforcing the belief that this was a notional exercise, not consultation. All three emergency services will be using Airwave suggesting a potential requirement for a single organisation managing the contracts for all three. Without further consideration of this potential structure, it was difficult to make a judgement between the potential benefits of aligning FireLink and FiReControl within the Fire sector as opposed to aligning the three emergency services’ use of the Airwave system.

**Finance**

11. There is a lack of clarity with the financial models for both FireLink and FiReControl projects. FRSs are finding it difficult to commit to accurate forecasting to support budget submissions. The SE region held a finance briefing day on 19 November 2009 in order to close on issues first hand with CLG and FireLink finance staff. Nineteen points for further clarification were taken away for further work by the on-hand experts.

12. The update of the FiReControl business case published on 6 May 2009 showed the SE region with a forecast saving of £1.5 million, the largest of any of the regions. The Ministerial statement which accompanied it reiterated that this would be available for reinvestment in front-line services. This claim continues to be viewed with scepticism and, rather than expecting savings, many FRAs in the SE are fearful of an increase in cost damaging their medium term financial strategies. Although this is entirely a matter of opinion that scepticism is built on the following:

(a) Indications that the SE RCC will cost more to operate than assumed in the business case.

(b) Doubts that the cost of activities that will stay with FRAs after RCC “go-live” have been fully recognised in the assessment of future costs.

(c) Uncertainty about FiReControl payments as it is unclear how these will be recalculated prior to cutover to the RCC.

(d) CLG have yet to succeed in providing reassurance around these matters, fostering an air of deep concern and exacerbated by delays in the project.

(e) The staffing model for the RCC and assumptions made on FRSs staffing after “go-live” remain problematic.

13. It has been reported to the Fire Finance Working Group that the cost of the delay to the project has been £40 million, part of which may be recoverable in liquidated damages from EADS. Delays have produced knock-on implications for FRAs, particularly with respect to existing systems, some of which are now being used well beyond the end of their normal lifetime. CLG continue to insist that any expenditure on systems prior to cutover will fall to FRAs. For reasons outside FRA control, it is increasingly likely that cash will need to be spent in ways that do not represent value for money, for example on extending contracts on obsolete equipment. (Also see paragraphs 9, 15 and 16). Similarly, views of CLG are being damaged by a perception that hardball is being played over funding of implementation expenditure. While FRAs will accept that budgets impose constraints with current levels of New Burdens allocations, there is a risk that FRAs will be unable to resource all the activities that they need to complete in the timescales required. The only alternative to this would be for FRAs to subsidise costs, which is an unacceptable proposition in the current financial climate and contrary to Ministerial stated intent.
Regional Control Centres

14. The building, commissioning and establishment of the Regional Control Centre (RCC) in Fareham and the network of eight other RCCs nationwide have been a success. Most worthy of note include:

(a) South East Fire and Rescue Control Centre Limited (SEFRCC) being incorporated in August 2007. It has had very stable participation by nine Directors and has met at least 20 times to conduct company business.

(b) The Chief Executive, Senior Operations Manager and Service Support Manager are in post and are supported by an Office Manager, Human Resources Advisor, Company Secretary, Finance Advisor and Legal Advisor.

(c) Delivery of key elements of the Human Resources work stream is on track including the development of a credible staff transition plan which will enable the efficient transfer of people and operations to the new RCC.

(d) The establishment of a Company led consultation supporting engagement with representative bodies and staff.

15. It is a matter of record that the SEFRCC Board has concerns over the cost of the RCC building. The resilience features of the building are impressive and the rationale understood. However, the Board are aware that the lifetime cost of the lease (£43 million over 25 years) will be borne by the owning FRAs. Whilst all parties are aware that this is not a commercial rental, and is akin to a private financing initiative, this is under challenge because:

(a) The Board and FRAs were not involved in the procurement process, so cannot provide required assurances that it is value for money.

(b) The total amount payable is well in excess of the cost to build the facility.

(c) There appears to be no opportunity to review or challenge these costs.

(d) The cost forces a re-investment of a substantial proportion of efficiency savings expected to be realised by FRs and FRAs and invested elsewhere.

16. The SEFRCC Board maintain the size of the facility exceeds what is needed by the region. The reasons for the design and scale of the SE RCC have been explained. However, they centre on the need for future proofing, national resilience and the fall back of operations from other regions. The future proofing is not against any regional measure in this regards and the other requirements represent national requirement not regional need. The cost cannot be justified by the Board to its owning authorities and FRS customers. Similar concerns apply to ICT investment and management of the future upgrade/replacement. The combined impact of these matters moves the balance of RCC running costs to elements over which the company has little or no control. This creates concern about the ability to manage overall costs and to make ongoing efficiency savings.

How to Proceed

17. The SE FRSs have done all they can to support and assist CLG to deliver the projects. We have robust governance in place; we are the only region to appoint, and pay for, a full time professional Project Director to deliver FiReControl; we are paying for an additional 3.5 Full Time Equivalents to strengthen our Regional Project Team in the run up to RCC “go-live” and we have actively sought to support and strengthen CLG national work streams to assist in successful delivery.

18. FRAs and their FRSs did not instigate this project; they were not party to drawing up the requirement that underpins the contract; do not have access to the detail of the contract with EADS; had little influence in the specification of the Regional Control Centres (RCCs). Additionally, they have an imposed Private Developer Scheme (PDS) and facilities management contract to run the buildings and now witness the handing over of the key in-service management of both FiReControl and FireLink contracts to a NDPB on which they will have representation but no control. It is somewhat ironic therefore, to be asked how we see the project best proceeding. However, if this is a continuation of the improving stakeholder management experienced in the last 12 months, we welcome this opportunity to contribute the following comment on the future but feel unable to advocate any alternative delivery strategy:

(a) It is not possible to judge whether continuing the current strategy may be the best way forward as we know too little about the commercial risks and obligations to assess the implications of sticking with it or finding an alternative. Continuing as we are presupposes that the EADS solution is deliverable and CLG mitigate delay risk by funding replacement mobilising systems where a case can be made.

(b) Most SE FRSs are now reliant on the outcomes of FiReControl being delivered or CLG funding an alternative.

(c) Any alternative approach run by CLG would need to start with the FRS community being fully involved at inception and embraced as partners not just stakeholders.
(d) Alternative regional collaborative ventures, perhaps working to deliver a national specification, may reduce FiReControl scope and risk but Government would also need to re-appraise the requirement for national resilience capabilities and how they are funded and delivered.

(e) A National Network provides vital resilience and negates the need for local and costly fallback arrangements. Any alternative to FiReControl must have resilience as a core requirement which is fully funded.

**Conclusions**

19. Most FRSs are now reliant on receiving the capability promised by the FiReControl project. It is clear that the expected cash savings have been eroded and all SE authorities now have to consider the spectre of increased costs in the future. In hindsight, CLG should have partnered EADS in line with OGC guidance and more fully involved the FRS in requirement setting and contract drafting. Bold and welcome commitment on funding associated with both FireLink and FiReControl must be honoured. Additional costs resulting from delay cannot be borne by local authorities. The success of building, commissioning and establishing the RCCs is recognised. Similarly CLG must recognise and fund the high running costs associated with this PDS as local authorities had no option to market test other potential solutions. CLG must also fund the over specification of RCCs designed to meet national resilience requirements.

20. CLG has opted to manage this project from the outset and has sight of all the contractual and commercial information on which to assess technical and financial risk. The SE Region is prepared to continue with the current delivery method as long it now delivers the promised capability on time and without shifting additional cost and risk to local authorities. Any alternative strategy must begin by enfranchising and partnering the FRS community. Any option for local or regional collaborative ventures must be funded appropriately and national requirements additionally funded. Networked resilience remains a key outcome.

January 2010

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**Memorandum from Yorkshire & Humberside Regional Management Board (FIRE 12)**

In response to the Communities and Local Government Committee’s decision to undertake a brief inquiry into the FiReControl programme, the Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Management Board wishes to offer the following comment with respect to the terms of reference set:

The Committee will consider the progress with the project so far; the reasons for the cost and time overruns which the project has experienced; and what, if any, changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project. Written submissions to be received by Friday 8 January 2009.

The Yorkshire and Humberside Regional Management Board is comprised of members from the region’s four fire authorities, West, South and North Yorkshire together with Humberside FRA and exists to deliver various important national goals that were defined in the 2004 White Paper “Our Fire and Rescue Service”.

**FiReControl Project—Business Case**

The final Business Case, published in Spring 2009, brought together both the national and regional cases for the first time. Elected members up to that point had received information and made decisions at a local level against the original strategic case, which presented the rationale for the project across a range of policy areas. The strategic benefits that the project aims to achieve have been supported by fire authority councillors and officers across the region, however, the critical matter of the project’s final cost to individual fire authorities and therefore the communities they serve had not been presented until the regional case was published.

The original concept predicted national savings on current control room costs of up to 30%, whereas it appears that nationally savings will only be achieved when the network is operating fully, in say 2015. CLG’s calculations suggest that 21 FRA’s will achieve savings, while 24 will face increases, which are to be covered by a new Resilience Grant. CLG, however, have made it clear that it will not commit the Government to maintaining the grant beyond three years; it will be reviewed in each Comprehensive Spending Review.

That statement alone has created nervousness and confusion at a local level. Firstly, how has CLG been able to secure the millions required to cover the first three years of operation of each RCC when that will probably, if not, definitely fall within a subsequent CSR period. Secondly, it appears that when it is advantageous to do so CLG can organise longer term financial support as is the case with the New Dimension assets it wishes to transfer to local government and will financially assist the Service in maintaining national resilience for the duration of the asset’s operational life, the contract we believe is for a duration of 16 years. If indeed national resilience continues to be paramount and the RCC network forms part of the critical national infrastructure, surely long term financial assurance is not an unreasonable expectation or request of individual fire and rescue authorities?
FiReControl Project—General

Each of the four constituent Fire Authorities that make up the Yorkshire & Humberside region have committed significant resource and time to both the planning and implementation phases of the project. Members of the Regional Management Board have received updates of national, regional and local progress on a quarterly basis. A range of issues, problems and concerns have remained fairly constant throughout, namely:

Limited user engagement in the development of technical requirements; the difficulties associated with separate procurement processes for the building accommodation and the technical solution; security arrangements and the specification and size of the accommodation itself; limited consultation in the development of the project meant an opportunity was missed to learn from the service’s existing control rooms; lack of clarity with regard to new burdens settlements for the life of the project; lack of genuine partnership working between CLG and the FRS; and ongoing delays with the technical solution.

From the early stages of this project there has been a lack of effective user engagement and consultation. This has led to a lack of understanding within the central project team of the technical requirements needed to procure a system that would satisfy the operational requirements of individual fire services. The procurement process was undertaken despite the majority of user requirements lacking definition. These apparently were to be resolved post contract award.

At the time, both the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and fire service representatives voiced concerns that this would bring uncertainty and risk to the development of a state of art technical solution. It remains unclear why CLG were so confident that the successful bidder would be able to develop a system that would meet all of the yet undefined requirements. The ability of the mobilising system to be able to reflect FRS’s individual IRMPs remains a central requirement of the project and if not delivered it would leave FRS’s to further question CLG’s approach.

Fire Authorities have a duty under section 7(1) Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to make provision for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area. Also, under section 7 (2) (c) it must, in particular “make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel”. Should confidence in the final system remain low it will be the local Chief Fire Officer who is responsible for undertaking a risk based operational judgement whether to migrate from their current mobilising arrangements to the one offered.

Statutory responsibility will not change once the network of Regional Control Centres become operational even with the contractual arrangements and service level agreements between FRSs and the LACCs in place, it remains with individual FRAs.

As already mentioned the decision to procure the accommodation and technical solution separately, rather than by way of an integrated approach, has been questioned at a local level. The buildings appear to be over specified and are too large. The security arrangements incorporated into the premises appear to be in excess to the threats potentially posed to the buildings, both of which have increased costs that will result in a long term revenue burden to fire authorities in Yorkshire & Humberside. Resilience and security requirements were designed to meet Government standards but once again consultation was not undertaken with Fire Authorities at a local or regional level.

FiReControl and Firelink Projects have operated simultaneously but separate of each other with their own management structures despite many similarities and a requirement to bring about integrated solutions. This has not only led to delays to the overall programme and problems associated with technical aspects of the two projects but also once again excessive back-office costs to the programme itself and inevitably to FRA’s in the longer term.

The project is being delivered by a team within CLG that consists of civil servants, seconded fire service staff and consultants. The team appears to be very large for a project of this nature. One would have expected the risks and the resources required to deliver the project to have sat with the supplier, however, in this case CLG seem to be bearing much of the responsibility and resource burden of delivery.

The impact of this on the service in general is that it has drawn a lot of the technical expertise from fire services into the centre. From one perspective this is to be welcomed, as it is only by engaging with users that a viable product will be produced, but this has led to a significant risk emerging which is that the fire services themselves will no longer have the in house capability or capacity to deliver their transition activities that are required prior to being able to accept FiReControl into service.

Supposedly there remains a commitment from Government that the FiReControl Project will not be a net new cost burden on fire authorities. The main concern for fire authorities is the ongoing revenue costs of the project post implementation. The most recent business case has set out the projected annual payments that are to be made to authorities incurring additional costs because of the project.

Concern regarding the long term future of resilience payments has not diminished. CLG have only been able to give an undertaking to review these payments after three years, which is confusing as it has been able to direct funding to the New Dimension programme for long term maintenance and servicing contractual arrangements. While it is accepted that a review is required once steady state has been reached to ensure that payments remain accurate there is a fear that the review could lead to these payments being reduced or
discontinued. This would lead to an increased burden for local tax payers. In order to ensure that fire authorities are willing to commit to this project, a clear commitment is required that the principal of new burdens funding will apply for the full term of the project and not just the first three years.

The numerous delays in the delivery of this project have led to a lack of confidence in the ability of CLG to deliver a complex project of this nature. The problem stems again from the lack of user engagement at early stages of the project. From the beginning CLG seem to have failed to grasp the complex nature of this project. If this project is to deliver its objectives there needs to be a new culture of working in partnership with the FRS, more realistic goals and timescales need to be set. This has not always been the case to date.

The impact of delays to the project on the FRS is not insignificant. Dedicated project teams have to be kept in place with a lot of expertise either being seconded to the national project team or committed to the project internally. This takes away valuable expertise for delivering other projects and programmes that are essential to maintaining a first class service to the public.

**Recommendations**

The final arbiter of whether the FiReControl system is acceptable to any individual FRS should remain with the respective Chief Fire Officer, otherwise CLG may need to consider the use of directive powers.

There needs to be more effective user engagement if the project is to be delivered successfully with all user requirements captured and clearly defined.

The FiReControl and Firelink projects should be consolidated with significant savings in consultants fees.

Less reliance should be placed on the use of consultants for specification purposes when there are reliable sources of advice readily available within other government departments.

More regular external project reviews should be undertaken and there should be a greater willingness to accept change within the project as circumstances change.

There may need to be a clearer definition of responsibilities between the CLG and the supplier as it appears that there is a large central team having to support the supplier and so taking on a greater burden of the risks involved.

Ongoing impact on the FRS should be closely examined by CLG and communicated in a transparent and informed manner.

The defining of user requirements should be addressed immediately.

The financial settlement to cover the net new burden to the FRS needs to be a transparent process that is based on the real impact to authorities and not on the cash available to the project.

There needs to be a very clear message from the government to fire authorities that new burden payments will continue for the life of the project and not just the first three years.

If the government should decide to change either the project in its entirety or any aspects of its delivery strategy the service itself should be offered the opportunity to manage the implementation itself, either by refreshing existing systems or by collaboration with partners. The government should provide full funding for this to be implemented.

An Options Review should be undertaken and communicated to all 46 FRAs as part of a formal consultation exercise.

*January 2010*

**Memorandum from Oxfordshire Fire Authority (FIRE 13)**

**Executive Summary**

— Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority continues to oppose the project unless all specified functionality and outstanding areas of concern are fully addressed.

— Despite this, Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Authority (OFRA) will fully engage in the project to ensure the most beneficial outcome to its local communities.

— Whilst unsighted as to the reality of the contractual position, OFRA considers that continuation of the project is the most appropriate course of action, subject to enhanced leadership and support from Communities and Local Government, supplemented by active and robust contract management.

— Whilst continuation is still favoured, OFRA will actively work with colleagues in the South East, and if appropriate nationally, to identify and if necessary implement alternative provision. This will only be feasible with the full financial and commercial support of Communities and Local Government.

— OFRA fully endorses the South East Regional Management Board submission.
GENERAL

1. The OFRA's formal position on the FiReControl Programme is one of opposition unless areas of concern are fully addressed. Whilst this is the official position, practically the Authority has undertaken to engage fully with the wider programme, investing considerable time, finances and managerial effort to ensure that the issues can be identified and resolved as part of the programme management. The Authority has committed fully to active involvement with the Local Authority Controlled company and will do all it can to ensure the successful operation of the South East Regional Control Centre should it become operational. In effect this translates into a position whereby the Authority will support the continuation of the FiReControl programme, subject to the delivery of the full operational capability as identified in the concept of operations and the resolution of all remaining areas of concern.

2. As an Authority which responded to exceptional levels of demand caused by the July 2007 flooding OFRA recognises the underpinning resilience issues which predated the introduction of the project. Current mobilising arrangements, whilst managed effectively, were not designed to meet the increased levels of resilience that are now deemed appropriate within the wider national context. As a direct result of several delays (original cut over in 2007 now intended July 2012) each of which, while increasing the risk, individually did not make the upgrading of the Authority’s mobilising system financially or practically viable. Subsequently this Authority now finds itself in a position whereby the risk to its legacy mobilising system is approaching an intolerable level. Therefore, the Authority seeks removal of uncertainty and the decisive action of CLG to either drive through the full implementation of the project on the current timetable or to announce alternatives, including if considered the only viable option, programme abandonment.

3. The present situation is not of the Authority’s making and the current FiReControl Programme would not have been the chosen option had it had the local autonomy to dictate its future mobilisation arrangements. However, OFRA having reviewed all factors it has awareness of or responsibility for, considers that the most appropriate way forward both for local and national purposes will be to continue with the current project. Whilst this is the case, continuation must be supported by genuine commitment, visible leadership and financial support from Communities and Local Government.

4. This Authority has been party to and endorses the South East Regional Management Board submission. Consequently the remaining submission focuses exclusively on what changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project.

CHANGES TO THE PROJECT

5. OFRA have actively tracked this project via its appropriate portfolio holder and Scrutiny Committee and have contributed fully to the South East Local Authority Controlled Company. All of these areas have registered increasing levels of concern over programme governance, financial consequences and central support and contract management and assurance. This is evidenced by continued slippage, refusal of business cases, failure to supply deliverables and failures of those products that have been delivered. The following actions are considered essential to ensure the continued ability of the Authority to actively engage with the ongoing and hopefully revitalised project.

6. Programme Governance—recent improvements in programme governance must be sustained and improved upon. Active partnership with individual Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) to address concerns must be enhanced. Action should be taken to streamline the governance structure to improve the speed of decision making and make ownership and responsibility clear.

7. As the contract was let, and is currently managed by Communities and Local Government, individual FRS’s have no ability to ensure active contract management. Whist more active management can be evidenced by the actions relating to the replacement of the Mobilising supplier, this must be sustained and improved upon. The continued failure of the main contractor to meet the deliverables timeline must be addressed and repetition prevented.

8. Where deliverables have been received the quality assurance process has repeatedly failed to ensure that these products are fit for purpose. It is essential that a more effective and robust process is put in place to ensure improvement and where failures exist that abortive work from FRS’s is recompensed.

9. OFRA has ongoing concerns regarding the financial implications of the project both in the short and long term. It is essential that mechanisms are put in place whereby CLG can deliver, in perpetuity, the financial guarantees which underpin the project. The original business case and its subsequent iterations have continually eroded the theoretical savings that would have allowed OFRA to undertake “out of scope” activities within the overall current budget. Any potential removal of future “resilience” payments could have the effect of increasing overall cost the OFRA. This is not acceptable.

10. This Authority remains deeply dissatisfied in the contractual arrangements let by CLG relating to the Buildings, Facilities Management and ICT. All these items appear to be either at considerable expense or include a degree of over specification that is inappropriate for FRA’s to fund in the longer term where national resilience is the root cause.
11. One aspect of continued financial support is the constant refusal by CLG of legitimate business cases submitted by this Authority (both for Firelink and FiReControl items) for support to undertake actions that have been identified as being in scope for financial support. With the difficult financial environment continued proactive actions by this Authority to take early and enabling actions for the project cannot be sustained unless the previously identified financial support is maintained.

12. OFRA has limited resources available to undertake the specialist work that is necessary to implement the project. These resources are fully committed in not only implementing FiReControl but also the Firelink project. However, the failure to finalise the technical solution for the project has led to the national team being unable to provide sufficient detail to allow the FRS to work on its own actions to put the processes and data systems to support FiReControl in place. This is a major activity requiring considerable FRS specialist resource (a scarce commodity) and requires sufficient lead-time. An inability to progress work poses an increasing risk that when the information finally becomes available FRS’s will be unable to resource the necessary work to meet the project timescale. This creates considerable frustration in the FRS and the constant changes to the project delivery dates makes resource planning very difficult. All this has reduced the FRA’s confidence in the ability of the project to deliver an acceptable solution within the current timescales. The action required is to resolve the technical issues quickly and authoritatively, communicate these to all stakeholders, including third party software suppliers, and fund actions under the New Burdens principles as originally intended (eg interfacing of supporting systems).

13. The OFRA mobilising system is dated and has previously not been replaced due to the impending mandatory movement to FiReControl. However, this coupled with ongoing delay and increasing concern over the current cut over timetable now results in increasing and potentially intolerable levels of risk. This Authority remains proactive and will continue to meet its Business Continuity responsibilities and where prudent either invest in limited interim upgrades or alternative collaborative actions. Financial support from CLG will be essential. However, this is clearly sub optimal and the most appropriate way forward is the delivery of the original project on the current timetable, avoiding any further cost escalation and with all intended functionality.

14. Whilst OFRA still consider project continuation the most appropriate option it will actively engage with partners to consider alternatives should the current project become clearly non viable. OFRA is aware that alternatives are being considered by CLG and consider that any alternative strategy must begin by enfranchising and partnering the FRS community. Any future alternative approach should not merely be handed down from CLG as a “fait accompli.” Any option for local or regional collaborative ventures must be funded appropriately and national requirements additionally funded. Networked resilience remains the underpinning requirement to meet current and potential future needs.

January 2010

Memorandum from West Sussex County Council (FIRE 14)

SUMMARY

— West Sussex County Council (WSCC) continues to support the FiReControl project and the operational capability, resilience and financial benefits identified by the project business case.

— Delays in the delivery of FiReControl have necessitated the upgrading of the current mobilising system at an increased financial burden to WSCC.

— A series of delays and the existing uncertainty as to the delivery of the project has resulted in a lack of confidence in CLG to deliver a product that will meet the user’s requirements.

— The current financial climate and its impact on Fire and Rescue Services will put pressure on the internal capacity available.

— Confidence in the ability of EADS to deliver a fit for purpose solution remains low.

— Confidence in the ability of the project to deliver any financial efficiencies remains low.

— The moral of current staff is difficult to maintain due to the large number of uncertainties surrounding the project.

— Any further delays will take the project into cutover close to the London 2012 Olympics, which may cause resilience and capacity issues.

INTRODUCTION

1. West Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (WSFRS), is one of nine Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) within the South East Region and is part of West Sussex County Council (WSCC). This report is submitted on behalf of WSCC and the areas identified within it relate to the impact delays have had on WSCC and WSFRS. The authors of this submission have been afforded the opportunity to input the South East Regional Management Board (SE RMB) submission and are in agreement with the views expressed within it. In line with the guidance promulgated by Communities and Local Government (CLG), it is not the intention to utilise information submitted within the SE RMB report as the basis of this submission.
2. WSCC maintains support for the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) stated position on FiReControl; it continues to support the project from a regional and internal perspective and remains committed to delivery within the current stated timeframes.

3. In order to provide information that will assist the committee in considering:
   — Progress with the project so far,
   — The reasons for the cost and time overruns which the project has experience; and
   — What, if any, changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project.

WSFRS has identified a number of key themes, which will provide the foundation for this submission.
   — Longevity of legacy systems and replacement costs.
   — Overall project delays and FRS confidence.
   — Capacity to deliver in current economic climate.
   — European Aeronautic Defence and Space.
   — Company (EADS) performance to date.
   — Premises costs and staffing models/costs.
   — Effect on staff morale.
   — Effect on control staff recruitment and retention.
   — Olympics impact.
   — Technical Issues.

LONGEVITY OF LEGACY SYSTEMS AND REPLACEMENT COSTS

4. The cutover date for the SE region FiReControl has suffered a number of delays from October 2009 as stated in the Fire control full business case version 1.0 to the latest date of March 2012. These delays have put the Service in a position of having to decide whether to continue maintaining legacy systems and equipment or to replace them as part of the existing mobilising and communications programme.

5. Had the original cut over date been met the existing WSFRS mobilising system would have been fit for purpose up to this point and the additional financial burden placed upon the Service would have been limited to that required to facilitate data migration for the FiReControl project and related work. However due to the delays in cutover the WSFRS mobilising system has reached a point where either upgrade or replacement has become essential.

6. As a result of lack of confidence in the FiReControl project being delivered on time WSFRS commissioned a Mobilising and Communications Capital Project. The strategy of this project was to assess the risks associated with the FiReControl project and has resulted in a plan to replace the mobilising and communication system in a modular way. This forward thinking on behalf of the Service has now paid dividends and risk critical services can be maintained.

7. An IT upgrade of the existing mobilising system was favoured over replacement in order to lessen the financial burden placed on the Local Authority. It is fair to say that were it not for the RCC project the Service would have been likely to adopt a different approach to the procurement of a future mobilising system by entering a competitive tendering process and establishing a long term mobilising solution covering all aspects of the system.

8. In the long term WSCC still feel in a position of vulnerability with regard to the upgraded mobilising system. This is due to the upgrade being a mid term solution in order to allow the County to maintain risk critical systems and allow for data migration to RCC. Current lack of confidence in the RCC going live within the existing projected time frames or either cancellation or change of direction would leave the Service requiring a replacement mobilising system in place within four to five years. The financial burden placed upon the County has been significant with a capital expenditure of circa £275,000, and revenue costs being met by utilising existing staff for project management and functions which have impacted upon the delivery of other work streams.

OVERALL PROJECT DELAYS AND FRS CONFIDENCE

9. The RCC project has experienced a series of delays from the signing of the initial contract through to the last official delay announced during the summer of 2009. There is also a widely held belief that cut over will not take place within the current time frames. This has resulted in considerable amounts of additional time being required for managing the new time tables, re mapping resource plans to the transition plan, submitting reports to both local and national controlling bodies, re-allocating work activities, in addition to identifying how these changes affect competing service resource requirements. The overall effects of these delays has resulted in a lack of confidence for many of those working closely with the project and a difficulty keeping personnel focused on activities allocated to them.
10. Many within the Fire and Rescue Service community feel that detail of what the FiReControl project will and will not actually deliver in operation has yet to be clearly presented. Progression beyond a “concept” has yet to be clearly articulated and FRSs have and are continually being required to develop solutions to problems that should have been considered at a much earlier stage in the project life cycle. The lack of clear direction from CLG and the inability to provide detail/clarification on request has naturally impacted on confidence of individuals striving to deliver project work streams.

CAPACITY TO DELIVER IN CURRENT ECONOMIC CLIMATE

12. Although grants have been made available from the CLG throughout, not all FRS activity has been covered by a grant. To provide accurate evidence of this expenditure would prove particularly difficult as to do so would require a complicated breakdown of the work undertaken by each individual involved in the project as well as any associated costs, travelling, accommodation, equipment etc. Nevertheless, in view of the outlook for local government finance beyond 2010–11, it is difficult to say whether it will be possible to maintain this level of unfunded commitment and so an increase in specific grant may become necessary if FRA-dependent activity is to be completed to schedule.

13. WSFRS like many other FRSs across the country are facing an uncertain financial future. It is however fairly clear that public sector funding is coming under increased scrutiny and will be reduced. Internal capacity is coming sharply into focus and the requirement to deliver internal improvement and RCC work streams within the extant and projected future funding arrangements will become increasingly difficult and impact on both quantity and quality of what is delivered.

EUROPEAN AERONAUTIC DEFENCE AND SPACE COMPANY (EADS) PERFORMANCE TO DATE

14. Initial contact with EADS was positive with them portraying the image of a “can do” organisation that place a premium on communication with partners. This has not however been the experience in reality with almost a year between formal contract signing and any direct contact with FRSs. The mitigation offered at the time suggested that EADS did not have sufficient personnel to resource the project and it took a considerable period of time to recruit and train staff to the required level. After this time the contact and level of commitment increased significantly and as a result the level of cooperation and understanding also improved. Following an EADS restructure in 2008 this level of commitment has reduced markedly, to the point where no day to day contact remains and only limited contact is made via regional coordinator meetings.

15. The late replacement of Ericsson with Intergraph has again raised significant questions about their ability to deliver a suitable solution on time. The continuous delays in the project perpetuate dissatisfaction and a lack of confidence in both the project and EADS performance.

PREMISES COSTS AND STAFFING MODELS/COSTS

16. The cost of the premises for the 25 year lifetime is high, available figures vary between £43 million and £51 million, and will be borne by the regional FRAs. WSCC have concerns regarding the level of value for money provided and the overall cost in comparison to what could reasonably be expected in a commercial market. In addition the specification for the buildings is partly a reflection of national infrastructure requirements. WSCC’s view is that this element of cost should be funded by Government, especially when set in context of the concerns in paragraph 19 about the likelihood of the project delivering net savings.

17. Although SEFRCC are planning on staffing levels above that recommended in the national modelling there remains no guarantees that the proposed levels will be sufficient to deal with spate conditions or indeed steady state operations. This is however a matter of conjecture and will remain so until trialling has been carried out.

18. A number of risk critical functions currently delivered by existing control rooms/staff are deemed out of scope for FiReControl, these will still be required after cutover and FRSs will need to make local arrangements to facilitate this. To date the full extent of these requirements are unknown making it difficult to attach a resource and financial cost to it.

19. In common with most of the SE region, West Sussex remains sceptical of the figures in the business case and continues to doubt whether net savings will arise once the full expenditure implications are taken into account. Consequently, even though the business case optimistically suggests that West Sussex will make the biggest saving of any FRA (£357,000 per year), the County Council’s Medium Term Financial Strategy will need to make allowance for potential additional on-costs associated with both FiReControl and FireLink. Should this additional funding be required it will obviously have an impact on the delivery of other services.
EFFECT ON STAFF MORALE

20. At the initiation stage of the FiReControl project the effects on staff morale were obvious and quantifiable. Due to the number of delays and uncertainty regarding the project’s future there has been a definite shift in how it is viewed by the existing control staff. There is now a general lack of belief that the project will ever be delivered, this view has been reinforced by the Conservative Party Green Paper and the recent change of position expressed by the LGA. This lack of belief has had an impact on the level of engagement in consultation by control staff.

21. Individuals remain unhappy about the prospect of moving to the RCC but this does not appear to be affecting performance or commitment.

Main concerns expressed by existing control staff:

— Loss of identity due to no longer being part of an individual FRS.
— Concerns over the ability to maintain the level of service delivery currently achieved.
— Inconsistency with other arrangements, London RCC staff still belonging to the FRS but the other RCCs being LACC controlled.
— Working along side colleagues under different Terms and Conditions
— Losing the right to the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal especially for those who will have served almost 20 years.

EFFECT ON CONTROL STAFF RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

22. Traditionally recruitment and retention has not been a difficulty and this is still the case. However the insecurity felt by new employees due to temporary contractual arrangements is a concern particularly with regard to retention.

23. WSFRS did lose control staff in the early stages of the project but retention has not been a significant issue more recently, again this may be attributed to the lack of faith in the project being delivered.

24. The loss of experienced control staff to the FiReControl project and to other areas of the Service in order to secure their long term future has been experienced and is likely to increase as cut over approaches.

OLYMPICS IMPACT

25. WSCC remains committed to ensure all work is completed in order to meet the March 2012 cutover date. Should there be any further delays to cut over this would take the date dangerously close to the London 2012 Olympics. WSFRS will be integral to the emergency planning for the maintenance of Olympic infrastructure and any delays would have a serious impact on the Service’s ability to facilitate both of these projects simultaneously.

26. The close proximity of cutover to the commencement of the London Olympics raises issues over the operational reliability of the new system, and the new operating procedures and ways of working for the RCC in tandem with the training that will be required by all FRS operational staff on special operational procedures relating to 2012 security and emergency arrangements.

27. There remains a lack of clarity around how the National Coordinating Centre will interact with the RCC and also the requirement for one RCC to act as the controlling mind for UK fire resilience particularly during 2012.

TECHNICAL ISSUES

28. A wide range of technical issues have been identified by the Service Technical Support professionals. It is not the intention to identify them in this submission but this report needs to highlight underperformance in the management of the technical aspects of the project and concerns over the ability of the final solution to deliver an acceptable product to the end users.

CONCLUSION

29. As previously stated WSCC remains committed to the FiReControl project and support the original stated benefits to be realised. WSCC has been forced to meet significant costs for upgrading the legacy system due to project delays, and it is clear that the originally stated cost benefits will not be realised. WSCC is disappointed in the historic central management of the project and confidence in the ability of EADS to deliver remains low.

January 2010
Memorandum from Cllr. Jeremy Hilton (FIRE 15)

1. I was the Cabinet Member for Fire in Gloucestershire when we opened the TriService Centre in 2003. Prince Charles was the guest of honour at the official opening.

2. I have consistently opposed the closing of our TriService Fire Control and moving it 70 miles away into the regional control centre at Taunton. The RCC takes away local knowledge, which in my view undermines resilience.

3. The TriService Centre has highlighted the benefits of inter-service co-operation in Gloucestershire and the minute-by-minute command of major incidents. Something that will be damaged by a move to the RCC.

4. Currently the chief fire office can talk to his control staff face to face. In future, he will have to pick up the phone to speak to his control staff—what nonsense.

5. The TriService Centre was a pioneering project supported by the government with a £2.6 million Invest to Save grant.

6. We opened the TriService on time and under budget, with a saving of £209,000 on its original budget of £6.4 million.

7. Inter-service co-operation and intelligence has improved since the TriService Centre opened as all three 999-control rooms sit side by side. Concurrent dispatch has improved.

8. The ability to deal with major emergencies has been enhanced as was shown by the superb way in which the emergency services worked together during the devastating floods that hit Gloucestershire in 2007.

9. Gloucestershire has been given a green flag for dealing with floods by the Audit Commission (9 December 2009) in its report on the Comprehensive Area Assessment for the county.

10. It only takes five minutes to set up silver command, which operates within the TriService Centre adjacent to the three 999-control rooms.

11. Gold command operates from the new police HQ just 100 meters away.

12. The moving of the 999 fire control to Taunton will undermine the close working relationship built up between the three blue light services in Gloucestershire since the TriService Centre opened in 2003.

13. Technical developments have been put on hold because of the Regional Control Centre project. The communications infrastructure (radio communications) is now extremely fragile due to the excessive delays incurred through this national project.

14. The RCC offers no communication advantages that cannot be plugged and played from the TriService Centre. The TriService Centre can be fully compatible with data and voice communications over the new FireLink system.

15. At the LGA Fire Service Management Committee (November 2009) I asked Roger Hargreaves from CLG whether it was technically possible to link the TriService Centre and other fire controls for both data and voice communications with the new FireLink communications system—he said yes.

16. The reason why we have the RCC project is more about establishing regional fire authorities than improving resilience. Regional fire authorities have now been abandoned and so should the RCC project.

17. In my view, the government should have from the start, designed new fire control communications architecture (FireLink) and then asked all fire authorities to upgrade their fire controls rooms and link into FireLink so that all control rooms were modernised.

18. Financial inducement could have been given to encourage joint control rooms where fire authorities were willing to combine. Similar to the grant we got for the TriService Centre.

19. The RCC project has been a failure; it is late, over budget and full of technical problems. Only a fool would risk handing over 999 calls to the Taunton RCC and close down our excellent TriService fire control.

20. In Gloucestershire, we should stick with our TriService fire control, as we know we can trust it to serve the people of the county.

21. On 30 October 2003, Ian McCartney, then Minister without Portfolio wrote to Nick Raynsford the fire minister, following a visit to the TriService Centre, to ask, “whether there was scope in future plans to retain and develop the TriService Centre.”

22. On 13 November 2003, I wrote to Nick Raynsford the fire minister to invite him to visit the TriService Centre to see for himself how well it worked. He never came.

23. The Mott MacDonald report commissioned by the ODPM—“The Future of the Fire Service Control Rooms,” clearly states that the analysis of the TriService Project was too early in the project and should be allowed to proceed. The report recommends that “a medium to long term plan is derived that considers the integration of the of the three ISB projects (TriService Centres) into the regional arrangements at a future point.”
24. On 24 May 2004, I met Nick Raynsford in London to brief him on the TriService Centre and to ask him to consider plugging the TriService Centre into the new network of fire controls as Mott MacDonald had suggested—I remain disappointed that he failed to act on this request.

25. The Audit Commission in a 2005 report on the TriService Centre said that the TriService Centre had significantly exceeded expectations in improving public safety, improving safety of employees; and cost savings.

26. The Audit Commission warned that removal of the fire control would have a major negative impact on the project, both financially and operationally.

27. I sit on the LGA Fire Service Management Committee and at our meeting on September 2009; the committee decided that is was against the principle of the implementation of Regional Control Centres.

28. The FSMC also asked LGA officers to develop alternative options in the event of the RCC failure. It is now time that CLG did the same. I hope the select committee will call for the scrapping of the RCC project.

January 2010

Memorandum from Gloucestershire County Council Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee (FIRE 16)

Gloucestershire County Council’s Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry. We do so on the basis of being elected members and not technical or subject matter experts. We would like to emphasise that this is a non-political response from the committee which includes members from the county council and district councils in Gloucestershire.

As far as the members can ascertain the project will not be in the best interests of the residents of Gloucestershire for the reasons identified in the attached submission. In stating these reasons the committee would hope to address the three key areas the parliamentary committee are considering:

— Progress with the project so far.
— The reasons for the cost and time overruns which the project has experienced.
— What if any changes need to be made to the government’s plans for proceeding with the project.

1. INTRODUCTION

We would wish to emphasise the value of the current emergency fire control facility in place and urge the parliamentary committee to consider carefully the need to continue with the Regional Control Centre (RCC) project. Since the inception of the project the political, economic, climate change and terrorist environments have all significantly changed in a way which could not have been envisaged and catered for. Importantly this committee believe that the concept of having “all your eggs in one basket” needs to be reconsidered against this background of change. We need to have confidence in the project but as time has progressed along with the delays, the disappearance of efficiency savings and receding resilience arguments, our confidence has waned.

2. SUMMARY

The main concerns of the Community Safety Overview and Scrutiny Committee over the project are as follows:

(a) There will be no cost savings for the authority once operating in normal state. The opposite may well be the case as, apart from the huge project development cost, the final outcome will cost more to operate.

(b) We have serious concerns over the project delay on our existing fire control infrastructure. A new radio system was planned in 2001 as part of South West collaboration. Because this project was stopped by government at the time there are now serious resilience issues with existing ICT systems which are in need of a refresh. If the RCC project is not delivered, this issue still needs to be addressed by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

(c) Out of scope activity and therefore residual costs have still not been fully identified.

(d) The quality and level of service will not match that which is already available locally.

(e) Ambiguity remains over governance and authority of the resources of the RCC and its eight partners when one or more fire and rescue agencies have unusual demands upon the resources in the centres and resolving these issues will inevitably lead to further delays and costs.
(f) No consideration has been given to the long term management of nine RCCs in terms of maintaining national resilience. If we accept, and we do not, that RCC are about improving national resilience, the government need to implement some form of governance, assurance, long term management, asset refresh and operating procedures that will provide uniformity across all nine RCCs. Only recently has the government considered this through what it calls “in service management”. This is a very good example of the lack of long term thinking and project planning at project inception. This example is a demonstration of how we as stakeholders have little confidence in respect of project management, level of competence employed and more importantly the statutory outcomes these RCCs must deliver.

(g) The technology to provide a solution on the scale required is not available nor will it be for sometime, leading to the inevitable reduction in functionality or further delays and increased resources. It is accepted that parts of the technology are available but it is marrying it all together on a national scale which is proving so difficult.

(h) Resilience is better served by more controls rather than fewer.

(i) In 2007 Gloucestershire experienced catastrophic floods and our emergency services performed extremely well. We believe this was due to the simple fact that our senior fire officers have a clear picture and intelligence about the size and scope of the flood emergency at all times. We believe this was due to the locality of our Fire Control being at the heart of the operations. Maintaining this overall command and control for our senior fire officers is essential if they are going to be able to deploy resources appropriately and timely. We have serious doubts that this level of command and control will exist as easily as it does within the tri service centre due to the remoteness of the Taunton based RCC. We think this will be a serious test for any RCC and we would ask the committee to consider this and satisfy itself that the aspect of command and control for brigade commanders is not lost or diminished in anyway through the new arrangements.

3. Progress

3.1 If the original plan was being followed, Gloucestershire would have migrated to the new control in 2009. The proposed date is now September 2011. We question this, as there is still no real evidence to suggest that the technological solution has been developed and is in test phase. This view is supported by the recent publicity around EADs (the contractor) to the project and their software provider which they have recently changed, which does not promote confidence in elected members that the project is progressing well.

3.2 The project predicted 30% savings which were revised to 10%, which now sits at £60,000 across the entire South West region. Further work is ongoing but the emerging evidence is that the final cost will be greater than that currently spent on the existing regional arrangements. As the project has progressed it is evident that the original premise is proving incorrect and that increased cost will rest in someway with the tax payer. If this was guaranteed to deliver a higher quality level of service, this could be worth the investment. However, much of the tactical and operational detail around what is going to be delivered, how it is going to be delivered and by who, is still not clear. The committee can only surmise that further work and consequently further costs are yet to be identified and considered.

3.3 There remains a need to clearly set out to fire and rescue authorities the work which will still reside within their remit and therefore the residual costs. It is of concern that this real issue is not yet fully addressed at this late stage in the project, as it could cause further delay.

4. Reasons for Cost and Time Overruns

4.1 During the floods in Gloucestershire in 2007, the fire part of the tri-service control received 17,500 calls from BT exchanges. It is these types of situations that the RCC project as envisaged would address more effectively. It is the view of this committee that in trying to find the solution to handling that kind of volume or a similar situation there has been difficulty.

4.2 Linking all nine controls and carrying sufficient data to ensure mobilising if one centre becomes overwhelmed or out of action is extremely complex and difficult to resolve within the current parameters. This is why the delays and cost overruns are being incurred, and will continue as perhaps the wherewithal is simply just not available. What further delays and cost overruns are acceptable? And at what point does the project sponsor question if the specification can actually be delivered as opposed to being informed that it can be delivered given time and resources.

4.3 Our concern is that the final outcome will deliver a much slimmed down and less comprehensive service than that already available, as emergency mobilising is so much more than operating a call centre.

4.4 Sir Michael Pitt referred to the success of the tri-service control in Gloucestershire in his report on the lessons learned from the 2007 flooding. He indicated that the arrangements in Gloucestershire for coordinating the emergency services during the devastating flooding in the county in July 2007 were a model of best practice and should be adopted in other parts of the county.
4.5 During the snow falls in early January 2010 the Highways Agency website “crashed” as demand outstripped capability. Running an emergency service calls for levels of resilience in excess of what is the norm. In trying to find a level of resilience which is currently available locally on a small scale is proving very difficult on a larger scale and even if available would come at increased cost. We would site two examples here:

(a) A local company switches from an analogue phone system to a digital one and suffers complete failure of the system during a power cut. The solution is to reinstall at cost a number of analogue phones to remedy the situation.

(b) Currently in Gloucestershire we have five alternative methods to mobilise our resources. The RCC solution will have only two. To provide the same level of resilience across the country we believe would put an unreasonable burden on individual fire and rescue authorities.

5. Governance and Accountability

These remain issues that need resolution. The statutory responsibility resides with the fire and rescue authority, but until some of the operational questions about how things will actually work are answered, the fire and rescue stakeholders will continue to ask questions and this will continue to delay progress.

6. Conclusion

The inquiry asks “what if any changes need to be made to the government’s plans for proceeding with the project?” Subject to further evidence from other consultees supporting our concerns, we would ask that the Communities and Local Government Committee carefully consider recommending an option which leads to the termination of the project.

January 2010

Memorandum from Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority (FIRE 17)

1. Executive Summary

— A sufficient level of resilience for the FiReControl project is yet to be demonstrated to the Surrey Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority).

— The Authority needs reassurance that the technology will have sufficient currency and provide at least the same comprehensive level of functionality that is currently in use within Surrey.

— There is a lack of clarity and detail associated with the project, which is impeding local delivery of the transitional arrangements.

— It does not appear that the FiReControl project will deliver the financial savings originally identified and it could impede the development of other efficiency savings for Surrey. The project should not create any additional financial pressure on the Authority.

— It is essential that central government retains a significant stakeholder interest in the long term governance of the FiReControl project.

2. Introduction

2.1 The Authority has been making preparations to transfer its mobilising control arrangements to the Regional Control Centre (RCC) as required by the Fire and Rescue Service National Framework 2008–11.

2.2 This position is only tenable on the basis that the benefits of the FiReControl project are delivered and no additional financial burden is placed on the Authority.

2.3 It should be noted that Surrey Fire and Rescue Service (the Service) had sufficient concerns regarding the potential for delay in the project to warrant investment in a new mobilising system. The previous system was installed in 1994. This has been operational since 2 December 2008 and combined with advanced mobile data technology this means the Service already has access to all of the projected benefits of the FiReControl project and is working with another FRS on the same system to develop a reciprocal fallback solution.

3. Areas of Concern

3.1 The Authority requires total confidence that the FiReControl solution has end to end resilience prior to transfer of undertakings. This is currently difficult to assess as there is insufficient detail associated with the project implementation plan. For example, there is no clarity on the fallback arrangements (the third way) or the proposals to adopt the 46 disparate networks currently in use by the participating Fire and Rescue Services (FRS).
4. **Technological**

4.1 The delays to the project could result in the delivery of out of date technology against the initial specification. As previously mentioned, the Service believes that it already uses technology in advance of the specification being provided by the FiReControl project and the Authority would be reticent to relinquish these facilities. For example, demountable mobile data terminals are used for incident command support, data capture, community safety education and language translation within Surrey.

5. **Project Detail**

5.1 It is noted that the FiReControl project has already been subject to delays but it is has not been apparent what has caused them. In order to be reassured, the Authority requests transparency as to the reasons for these delays and other variations to the project plan.

5.2 There is also a lack of detail relating to the requirements being placed on FRAs. These include requirements for data provision schemas, ways of working action plans, minimum attribute levels, etc.

5.3 The lack of and delays to published guidance on proposed Service—RCC technical interfaces is delaying local development on the project.

5.4 Without a greater level of project detail, it is difficult for the Service to undertake the work required to support the transition plan.

6. **Transitional Arrangements**

6.1 Although the Service has taken steps to ensure the resilience of existing mobilising control arrangements, delays in the project are increasing the risk associated with staff retention until cutover. Further slippage in delivery of the FiReControl project would exacerbate this risk and clarity regarding the central provision of funds to cover these costs is required.

6.2 The implementation of FireLink phase C ahead of the FiReControl project could lead to a loss of functionality to the Service of access to risk critical information and a dynamic mobilising capability, which is outlined in the Surrey Integrated Risk Management Plan. A contingency for this will need to be developed and is likely to create additional cost which, under the circumstances, the Service is naturally unwilling to bear.

7. **Financial**

7.1 The cost of the solution is also a key concern, initial indications from the Chief Executive of South East Fire Regional Control Centre Ltd (SEFRCC) are that the staffing numbers proposed centrally may not be adequate and a proposed enhanced staffing level has been circulated for consultation. It is difficult to accurately ascertain appropriate staffing arrangements until the end to end solution is seen to operate and the detailed ways of working and contingency arrangements are finalised.

7.2 This is coupled with a concern that the cost of residual activities that will stay within individual Services has been under estimated.

7.3 The updated FiReControl business case published on 6th May 2009 indicated a forecast saving of £70,000 for the Authority, taking into account the above factors it is a real concern that the actual costs will wipe out this saving and potentially create an increased financial burden.

7.4 The project is currently a barrier to exploring other options that could derive greater savings from collaboration with another Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA).

7.5 The long term funding for this national resilience capability should be adequate and transparent and should not increase the financial burden on the Authority.

8. **Governance**

8.1 The contractual arrangements regarding premises and infrastructure are currently between the Communities and Local Government department and the providers, with FRAs as end users having limited visibility and understanding of the potential risks. The potential change to the contract management to be via a non-departmental public body increases concern as to where these risks may be borne.

8.2 The continuation of central government funding and involvement in the long term governance arrangements for RCCs is considered essential to maintain national resilience arrangements.

9. **The Way Forward**

9.1 With the information currently available to the Authority it is not possible to judge whether the current project is the best way forward as the financial implications of adoption or abandonment cannot be judged. Reassurance regarding the resilience of the technical solution is impossible to gain as the end to end solution is yet to be provided.
9.2 The Authority is in the fortunate position of having identified the potential for delay and have refreshed the mobilising control technology. This leaves the Authority far less reliant on the delivery of this project than is the case elsewhere.

January 2010

Memorandum from the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) (FIRE 18)

SUMMARY

1. While many of the comments in this submission appear negative they are made in the context that we would wish both central government departments and the fire service to learn lessons from the FiReControl Project. We acknowledge that the management of the project has changed during its life and that some of lessons appear to have been taken on board by the current management team within CLG. LFEPA continues to support the principle of the project, subject to certain caveats around operational effectiveness and affordability, and would wish to emphasise that any decision to change the scope of the project or indeed to cancel the project would have significant financial and operational risks for this authority. This submission to the Select Committee wishes to draw the attention of members to the following particular areas:

(a) The lack of effective user engagement in the development of user requirements for the FiReControl project.

(b) The importance that the final decision on the acceptability of the project delivered remains with the Chief Fire Officer/Commissioner.

(c) The drawbacks of using separate procurement processes for the building and IT aspects of the project.

(d) Over specification of parts of the project, including security arrangements.

(e) A lack of consultation in the development of the project meant an opportunity was missed to learn from London’s existing regional control room.

(f) The new burdens settlements have been fair so far but there has been a lack of clarity on whether this will continue for the life of the project.

(g) For this project to deliver its objectives there needs to be a new culture of working in partnership with the FRS.

(h) Delays to the project are utilising valuable fire service expertise that could be being utilised on other fire service projects.

THE LONDON FIRE AND EMERGENCY PLANNING AUTHORITY (LFEPA)

2. The London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) run the London Fire Brigade (LFB) and is a functional body of the Greater London Authority.

3. The LFB is the third largest firefighting organisation in the world; it employs approximately 7,600 staff and covers the 620 square miles of Greater London and is the UK’s largest fire service. The LFB operates on a regional basis across all aspects of service provision including its control room function.

FiReControl

The development of user requirements

4. From the early stages of this project there has been a lack of effective user engagement. This has led to a lack of understanding within the central project team of the technical requirements needed to procure a system that would satisfy the operational requirements of 46 individual fire services.

5. This lack of understanding, together with a rush to procure a system, meant that CLG went into the procurement process with a large number of user requirements lacking definition. These were to be resolved post contract award. At the time, both the Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) and fire service representatives voiced concerns that this failing would bring uncertainty and risk to the system development. It was unclear how CLG could be confident that the successful bidder would be able to develop a system that would meet all of these yet undefined requirements. If the successful bidder were unable to meet all the user requirements the whole concept of the project would be undermined with it failing to match with FRS Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMP’s). This was one of the main precepts on which the project was based, and the promise that IRMP’s would not be compromised was crucial in gaining the support and co-operation of FRNs.
6. We understand that there are still a considerable number of these requirements that have not been addressed. CLG need to work closely with FRS representatives to ensure that there are suitable systems in place to facilitate the development of the outstanding requirements with user representatives and fund the facilitation of this engagement where required. Should this engagement not take place and provide satisfactory outcomes the project could lose further credibility with the service and may not be acceptable to them. It has always been stated that the final arbiter of whether the system is acceptable to an FRS will be the Chief Fire Officer/Commissioner who must make a risk based operational judgement that the system will fully meet their requirements. This must remain the case whatever path the project may take into the future.

7. The Authority has a duty under section 7(1) Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to make provision for the purpose of extinguishing fires in its area and protecting life and property in the event of fires in its area. Also, under section 7 (2) (c) it must, in particular “make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel”. This responsibility will not change once the network of Regional Control Centres become operational even with the appropriate Service Level Agreements between each FRS and the limited companies set up to run the RCCs (except in the case of London where LFEPA will retain responsibility).

The procurement process

8. The concept of running two separate procurement processes, one for the buildings and one for the IT infrastructure has led to significant cost overruns, as the buildings have or will be completed well in advance of the procurement of the IT infrastructure services. This results in leases, service costs and utility payments on underutilised buildings. In hindsight one must question if this was the correct process and if not, what can be learned for future procurements. We understand that IT and property procurements are very different but believe there should have been closer management at a programme level that could have taken early action to prevent such a divergence in delivery timescales.

9. The buildings themselves appear to be over specified and are clearly too large just to house a regional control centre. The security arrangements incorporated into the premises appear to be in excess to the threats potentially posed to the buildings. These two things have led to significantly increased costs that will result in a long term revenue burden to fire authorities. Although too late to change, we would like to challenge the design of the buildings and ask why they are so large as we are unaware of the user input into the design process. Had users been more fully engaged in the design process the buildings may have been more suitable for purpose and there may have been more than one design of building that could have catered for specific user requirements. Such an approach may well have led to reduced overall costs.

10. We are fortunate in London that it will be possible to maximise the use of the premises by housing not only our Regional Control Centre, the London Local Authority Coordination Centre, the Brigade Resource Management Centre but also the Fire Service National Co-ordinating Centre within the premises. We are aware that there are others who are looking to sub let some of the excess accommodation in order to reduce the future financial burden to those authorities.

11. In terms of the security arrangements that are designed into the buildings we believe that they may have been over specified considering the current threat assessment for this type of premises. We understand that there needs to be an element of future proofing in order that significant expenditure is not incurred in the future, but do question why each individual building has been built with such a high level of redundancy. The resilience of FiReControl was to come from having a networked solution with capacity and staffing levels that would cope with any one of the buildings being taken out of commission. The capital cost of this perceived over specification is of concern, as is the long term revenues cost of maintaining it, and this will fall to the FRS.

12. We understand that the requirements for resilience and security were designed by consultants. Government organisations such as the Centre for Protection of National Infrastructure (CPNI), who could have offered objective advice, were not consulted until the requirements were fixed. If government security advisers like the CPNI had been consulted at a much earlier stage it is possible that the building security specification and the subsequent costs would not be as great as they are.

13. For some years the user community has said that the FiReControl and Firelink Projects should be brought together within the same project management structure. There are many cross cutting issues between the two projects. The Firelink radio solution is the communications bearer for FiReControl as well as being the FRS main scheme radio system. Although CLG have attempted to bring the two projects closer together at a programme level, there are tensions in having two separate projects delivered by two separate firms of consultants. We understand that these started as two distinct and separate projects but it became clear some years ago that they were to become mutually dependant. We consider that it would have been much more effective in terms of communication and the use of consultants’ time if they had been made a single project when this interdependency was first identified.
User engagement

14. One thing that has been missing from this project is the ability to learn from users and their previous experiences. There is a perception that CLG are delivering a product to the FRS rather than working in partnership with them to deliver a successful outcome. The London Fire Brigade’s existing regional control centre could have been used as the model for other control centres within this scheme. Had the project chosen to do so it would have realised that it was not necessary to develop large buildings on huge sites with complex and expensive security arrangements to achieve a similar outcome. London’s Regional Control Centre is and will remain the busiest fire control room in Europe, handling 300,000 emergency calls and around 500,000 non emergency calls annually. The London control room, its systems and the staff who work there have served the capital well during all the events of recent years.

15. One weakness of London’s current system is the inability to offload calls when the number of incoming emergency calls exceeds the number of Control Room staff available. This is commonly known as “spike” and “spate”. Spike can be defined when a single incident simultaneously generates an excessive number of emergency calls, e.g. a vehicle alight on a motorway. Spate is where excessive numbers of emergency calls to multiple locations are received over a prolonged period of time, an example being electric storms associated with intense rainfall causing wide-scale flooding to premises and property. Under both these conditions, callers currently have to wait until a Control Officer is available to take their call. Under FiReControl, the network has the ability to route the call (under these circumstances) to other Regional Control Centres. If the call is to a fire or a life-threatening special service call, i.e. non-fire related, the call will be answered and responded to quickly. While a fully functioning control centre is in place which is skeleton staffed 24/7 there is a reliance on the Metropolitan Police Service to take calls that are queued with the BT or Cable & Wireless operators in excess of reasonable waiting times. This arrangement is unsustainable due to the volume of calls that are dealt with by the MPS. Prior to the introduction of the FiReControl Project the London Fire Brigade had been actively engaged in seeking reciprocal arrangements with another FRS but these discussions ceased with the advent of this project.

16. The project is being delivered by a team within CLG that consists of civil servants, seconded fire service staff and consultants. The team appears to be very large for a project of this nature. Where one would have expected the risks and the resources required to deliver the project to have sat with the supplier, in this case, CLG seem to be bearing much of the responsibility and resource burden of delivery. Despite having a large number of FRS staff seconded into the project team CLG need to ensure that they have effective user engagement arrangements in place. While the seconded staff have technical expertise they do not have the authority or necessarily the strategic or political insight to speak on behalf of fire authorities.

17. The impact of this on the service in general is that it has drawn a lot of the technical expertise from fire services into the centre. From one perspective this is to be welcomed, as it is only by engaging with users that a viable product will be produced, but this has led to a significant risk emerging which is that the fire services themselves will no longer have the in-house capability or capacity to deliver their transition activities that are required prior to being able to accept FiReControl into service.

Support for local Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs)

18. One of the tenets of this project has been that it would support the IRMP within each fire service. While it is understood that such a commitment had to be made in order to secure even the most tentative of approval for the project among fire authorities, this may not have been the right approach. It means that for each type of call, there are up to 46 variations in how they may be handled and attended. For instance, depending on the FRS a call to a person shut in a lift could be attended as an emergency, attended as a non-emergency or not attended at all.

19. While some regions, noticeably the South East, have begun to work together to identify areas of common and best practice, there has been no central drive for this to happen nationally. There was a missed opportunity in the early stages of the project to encourage and support work both within regions and nationally to identify common and best practice. This could have greatly reduced the technical requirements of the project. There are workstreams within the project that are there to address the “New Ways of Working” but these are designed to identify how the FRS will operate within the structure of the new system rather than identifying common or best practice.

Financial impact on fire authorities

20. There is a commitment from Government that the FiReControl Project will not be a net new cost burden on fire authorities. To date the cost of implementation is being met through new burdens funding. We have found that in general the settlements for ourselves have been fair and we are pleased to see that there are mechanisms in place for fire authorities to bid for further funding if additional costs are identified.

21. A concern for both us and other fire authorities is the ongoing revenue costs of the project post implementation. The most recent business case has set out the projected annual payments that are to be made to authorities incurring additional costs because of the project. There are two concerns over these payments. The first is that they need to be agreed with fire authorities. In London we are still waiting for a response to our concern that these proposed payments do not accurately reflect the additional financial
burden. Delays to questions such as this make it difficult for financial officers to plan future budgets accurately. They also give rise to fears that the money available for fire authorities may be based more on the availability of cash to the project than an accurate assessment of the new burden to fire authorities.

22. The second concern is the long term future of these payments. CLG have only been able to give an undertaking to review these payments after three years. While it is accepted that a review is required once steady state has been reached to ensure that payments remain accurate there is a fear that the review could lead to these payments being reduced or discontinued. This would lead to an increased burden for local tax payers. In order to ensure that fire authorities are willing to commit to this project, a clear commitment is required that the principal of new burdens funding will apply for the full term of the project and not just the first three years. We would ask the committee to demand an assurance from the government that that the project is fully funded in both the short and long term and that these assurances are provided explicitly to fire authorities.

Project timetable

23. The numerous delays in the delivery of this project have led to a lack of confidence in the ability of CLG to deliver a complex project of this nature. The problem stems again from the lack of user engagement at early stages of the project. From the beginning CLG seemed to have failed to grasp the complex nature of this project. If this project is to deliver its objectives there needs to be a new culture of working in partnership with the FRS, more realistic goals and timescales need to be set. This has not always been the case to date.

24. The impact of delays to the project on the FRS is not insignificant. Dedicated project teams have to be kept in place with a lot of expertise either being seconded onto the national project team or committed to the project internally. This takes away valuable expertise from delivering other projects and programmes that are also essential to delivering and maintaining service to the public. CLG and suppliers need to commit to the current timetable and if further delays become apparent these need to be shared at the earliest opportunity with the user community.

Conclusions

25. The conclusions that we would like to see included in any report from the committee include:

(a) The final arbiter of whether the FiReControl system is acceptable to any individual FRS must remain with the respective Chief Fire Officer or Commissioner.

(b) There needs to be effective user engagement from the earliest stages of a project to ensure that all user requirements are captured and defined. There would be benefit in fostering a greater partnership approach with the FRS.

(c) There should be a clear audit trail of decision making that is transparent for all to see; this together with greater user engagement at all stages of development may have enabled the design of the buildings to be challenged at an early stage and more practical solutions delivered at less cost.

(d) There should have been a greater strategic understanding of the change programme from the outset, this may have resulted in the FiReControl and Firelink projects being consolidated with significant savings in consultants fees.

(e) Less reliance should be placed on the use of consultants for specification purposes when there are reliable sources of advice readily available within other government departments and of course within the FRS itself.

(f) More regular external project reviews should be undertaken and there should be a greater willingness to accept change within the project as circumstances change.

(g) There may need to be a clearer definition of responsibilities between the CLG and the supplier as it appears that there is a large central team having to support the supplier and so taking on a greater burden of the risks involved. There should be a recommendation to have a comprehensive review of the entire procurement process.

(h) The impact to the FRS should have been more closely examined at the outset. As CLG became aware that this was not just another IT project to be delivered the draw on fire service resources to support the project delivery has increased significantly.

(i) The difficult challenges in the project such as defining all of the user requirements should have been addressed at an early stage; this may have led to much more clarity during the delivery phase. Again we would emphasise that early user engagement would have helped in this area but it is not only the engagement process but also listening to what the users have to say that is important. There needs to be a greater emphasis on partnership working between CLG and the FRS rather than the customer/client relationship which appears to exist at present.
(j) The financial settlement to cover the net new burden to the FRS needs to be a transparent process that is based on the real impact to authorities and not on the cash available to the project.

(k) There needs to be a very clear assurance from the government to fire authorities that new burden payments will continue for the life of the project and not just the first three years.

(l) If the government should decide to change any aspects of its delivery strategy the service itself should be offered the opportunity to manage the implementation itself, either by refreshing existing systems or by collaboration with partners. The government should provide full funding for this to be implemented. However it must be emphasised that any decision to change the scope of the project would have significant financial and operational risks for this authority.

January 2010

Memorandum from Gloucestershire County Council Regional Control Centres (FIRE 19)

— This submission has been written by Cllr Will Windsor-Clive, Cabinet Member for Community Safety, on behalf of Gloucestershire County Council.

— This submission highlights concerns that Gloucestershire County Council has with reference the Regional Control Centre (RCC) project. In particular:
  — Poor project planning and implementation—continual delays leading to additional burdens on Fire and Rescue Services (FRS).
  — Inability to cope with changing need—for example changes to fire station provision.
  — Impact on staff.
  — Reduction in resilience—rather than increasing resilience, the RCC project is actually reducing resilience of some command and control functions.

— It also includes a covering letter and attaches additional reports with further background information on the County Council’s opposition to RCCs.

1. Gloucestershire County Council has consistently opposed the move to a regional control centre (RCC) since the inception of the project. We continue to have deep seated concerns about the project, particularly with regards the damage it would do to Gloucestershire’s Tri-Service centre. This facility, established in 2003 as a Government Invest to Save project, cost £6.3 million. The Tri Service centre was developed on recommendation of a Government Report (Mott Mcdonald) which highlighted the benefits of horizontal integration with other emergency services. In doing so Gloucestershire brought together the control rooms of all three of the emergency services in the county under one roof. In July 2007 the Tri Service Centre proved its true value and effectiveness from a command and control perspective when the county was hit with the worst peace time disaster in the last century caused by significant flooding and loss of water to 350,000 people.

2. We remain deeply concerned that a regional control centre would not have performed to the same standard and that this could have put lives at risk. We have already made substantial comment on this and, mindful of the requirement that submissions to the committee should not be already published, I have confined this representation to focusing on some of the failings of the implementation of the project itself. Nevertheless, I have attached our earlier submission to your committee (Housing, Planning, Local Government and the Regions Committee, The Fire and Rescue Service Session 2005–06 Volume II oral and written evidence Pages Ev 72 to EV 76) as well as the Audit Commissions post emergency assessment of our Tri-Service facility (Post Evaluation of Joint Emergency Communication Centre Project, Audit Commission January 2005–12–07).

3. Even looking solely at the projects failings, rather than structural concerns with the concept behind the project there are substantial and concerning issues. These are set out below. Of particular concern to me is the failings which mean that resilience will be reduced under the RCC project and the substantial impact of delay on the project so far. Already the project, intended to save money, is costing more than previous arrangements. It would be unacceptable if it were also to be the case that the intended increase in resilience had the effect of reducing it. At the moment there is a real risk that the taxpayers who I represent will find themselves paying more, for a less safe service, which they do not want. That is clearly not an acceptable situation.

OPERATIONAL CONCERNS WITH THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REGIONAL CONTROL CENTRE PROJECT

Poor project planning and implementation

4. The project management of this project is not good. There have been regular delays to various aspects of this project. For example agreed dates regularly slip by and when this happens Fire and Rescue Services are simply expected to adjust their own work schedules to accommodate the delay. FRS staff are expected to change their work plans and schedules regularly to accommodate poor project planning from the RCC. Gloucestershire is not new to programme management and has a good deal of experience through
developing the Tri Service Centre, the Joint Training Centre and more recently a £40m community Safety project. A project managed locally in Gloucestershire in the same way as the RCC would simply just not be tolerated.

5. For a more detailed example let me highlight one relating to data capture. Data capture management is a key part of the migration to the RCC. It means providing the RCC with all the information it needs to operate. This includes information such as policy, procedures, types of risk, equipment carried on individual appliances, skills and competencies of individual etc. GFRS is a pilot for this project. The first toolkit DCMT1 suffered from substantial software errors and incorrect documentation. GFRS have concerns about the suitability of this for fire control requirements.

6. DCMT2, which is intended to build upon and remedy the problems with DCMT1 was due to be delivered to FRSs by December 2009. As yet, there has been no date fixed for the delivery of this equipment. It is unclear exactly how any FRS can cut over to the RCC until such time as this sort of information has been properly captured.

Problems with new fire stations

7. Gloucestershire is in the process of carrying out a PFI procurement to build 4 new fire stations and a Countywide Life Skills Centre. As these are outside the initial scope of FireControl, we were keen to meet with EADS to progress issues relating to budget forecasting and building specification issues. As this was identified at an early stage, CLG has asked to oversee this part of the process. Currently GFRS are waiting for CLG to release a call off catalogue with cost information. This was due to be released week commencing 30 November, but at time of writing has still not been received. This part of the PFI project cannot be progressed until this is received. In summary the RCC project appears to focus on a moment in time and does not have the flexibility to address simple changing needs like substituting or adding a new fire station. If level of flexibility is missing on this simple matter what will occur on more complex mobilising changes

Information unavailable

8. There is still substantial uncertainty about when aspects of this project will take place.

9. An example of this is the installation of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs). These terminals, installed in individual fire appliances will allow for the transfer of simple messages and update appliance status and availability. Currently we have hard copy of plans and risk information MDT will be able to produce these electronically at scene. In addition they will have pre determined data buttons, so instead of sending a voice message they will be able to send a data message to update status, and to inform attendance, availability and resolution status of the incident. Installation into GFRES appliances is scheduled to take place from the 11 January to the 23 February 2010.

10. However, the MDTs, which were due for delivery on 4 December 2009, have already been delayed until the early January 2010. The process for updating the information stored on the MDTs still appears to involve sending individuals with laptops to each fire station to manually update the unit in each appliance when the information stored there needs updating. This could potentially be both quite time consuming and expensive. As yet it remains unclear when the MDTs will be available for installation.

Delays to upgrading equipment/obsolescence

11. The significant delays to this project are already reducing the effectiveness of Gloucestershire Fire and Rescue Service and increasing its costs. In 2001 the South West Region were on the brink of procuring a new radio system for all FRS’s in the SW, this was halted by government because of the RCC project. Under normal circumstance we would have replaced much of our ageing command and control hardware with more modern equipment. This has now had to be put on hold pending the outcome of the RCC project. As equipment increasingly becomes obsolete it becomes extremely difficult to maintain or find replacement parts whilst also lacking the features of more modern equipment. The RCC project has held us back from making improvements and weakened our infrastructure.

Impact on staff

12. Maintaining our high quality and experienced staff is of key importance in maintaining the operational effectiveness of the current GFRS control room. This staffing issue is even more prominent in Gloucestershire as Fire and Rescue staff anxious about their future could simply look for job opportunities in the Police or Ambulance control rooms, located in the same building To overcome this position and reduce risk to the service we have put in place a very comprehensive retention strategy. This has been at great cost to the Authority and the risk has never been recognised by CLG. However despite our very best efforts many of these staff have now been operating under an effective threat of redundancy from the RCC programme since the inception of the project. There are fewer jobs at RCC than across the region and, given the location, it is too far for many to commute or relocate, even if the posts were available.

13. The continuing uncertainty which they suffer as a result of this project is forcing GFRS to work much harder to maintain key control room staff. This has already cost over £70,000 to date. A full copy of the retention strategy for GFRS control room staff is attached for information.
14. The whole argument surrounding RCC’s was to improve national resilience however that argument now appears silent. From our perspective the RCC project will reduce, rather than increase the resilience of GFRS, particularly with reference to the retained firefighters, who make up 60% of GFRS’ firefighting staff.

Contingency for mobilising outstation failure

15. There are two parts to the current mobilisation system, whereby a retained fire station is notified of an emergency. The mobilising outstation (MOS) receives the alert from the control centre and activates the alerter base station (ABS), which pages the retained firefighters. At present, in the event of a failure of the MOS, GFRS can activate individual ABS via telephone from any mobile or landline. Under the RCC plan, the mobilising outstation will be replaced with RCC equipment. However, there are no plans to replicate the capacity to activate individual ABS. This means in the event of an MOS failure, there will be no option but to mobilise an alternative fire station, with attendant delay.

Less resilient outstations

16. The likelihood of an MOS failure is also increased by the RCC’s use of less resilient equipment. With the current GFRS equipment, there are five potential communications channels between the fire control and each fire station. These are:
   - Primary computer network, as primary route (or bearer).
   - Bank of four modems as secondary bearer.
   - Five individual modems, each on separate lines.
   - Pager based system.
   - GSM modem (ie mobile phone modem) as backup.

   The GSM modems are installed but not currently in use. In addition, GFRS also maintains alternative procedures to mobilise individual fire stations via telephone and radio.

17. In contrast, the equipment that the RCC wishes to replace this with has only two bearers:
   - ADSL internet.
   - Vodafone Paknet (a packet radio technology).

18. If both systems fail, for whatever reason, there is no capacity to mobilise by telephone or radio. This system would not be safe enough for a GFRS in-house solution. In the opinion of professional officers it is too limited and not resilient. It is further exacerbated by the lack of capacity to directly activate ABS systems. In effect, the proposed RCC system increases the risk that fire stations will not know there is an emergency to respond to.

19. We would ask the committee to consider the national resilience question in their deliberations. Is the same argument put forward at the time of inception still current or in fact have things now moved on. If so I would suggest that local resilience is not compromised by current arrangements and that the RCC appears to be adding little in terms of improvements.

Mobilising senior officers

20. Senior officers above the rank of Watch Manager are often required to attend larger-scale emergencies or particularly sensitive incidents. There are 30 such officers in Gloucestershire, with six on duty at any time. Currently they can be mobilised by home phone, mobile, pager or radio. Worryingly, it remains unclear how these officers will be mobilised under the RCC project. It has been suggested that this will take place using a combination of home telephone and Airwave radios. However, as the contract for Airwave does not extend to using the radio out of its vehicle holster (doing so incurring substantial additional costs) and coverage cannot be guaranteed in buildings, this is obviously not a suitable solution. It seems likely that, at the least, an additional pager system would have to be procured, with attendant additional cost and delay. This does not appear to have been planned at the moment.

January 2010

Memorandum from North East Fire and Rescue Regional Management Board (FIRE 20)

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The North East Region remains committed to the FiReControl project and throughout the last five years has demonstrated a strong resolution to provide all support necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the project. Further the region continues to demonstrate a firm desire to remain a first wave region, despite the challenges and risks this poses.
1.2 The submission to the Select Committee may appear contentious but it is considered that this is viewed as constructive feedback and that lessons will be learnt and improvements made to ensure the successful implementation of the FiReControl project. This submission highlights, in particular the following areas:

1.2.1 The lack of effective user engagement in the development of the requirements for the FiReControl project across all key areas.

1.2.2 The importance of the Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive and the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in making the final decision to cutover control room services to the Local Authority Controlled Companies.

1.2.3 The challenges and costs of introducing a new governance structure—Local Authority Controlled Companies, who do not have accountability and responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 and Civil Contingencies Act for the provision of an emergency control room service to the public.

1.2.4 The need for an effective stakeholder management plan that provides transparency in the decision making process and transparency on progress with key areas of the project especially the development of the main system by EADS Ltd.

1.2.5 Over specification and complexity of the design and development of the project, critically the building and security requirements.

1.2.6 The risks of using separate procurement processes for the RCC building and IT infrastructure service contract.

1.2.7 The on-going financial impact on FRA’s.

1.2.8 The implications on continued delays to the project including maintaining operational continuity for an emergency control room service and the impact on stakeholder and current FRS/prospective LACC control services employees’ confidence.

1.2.9 The lack of a clear business change strategy and end to end operational model for a resilient national network of Regional Control Centres (RCCs).

1.2.10 The need for a detailed project plan, enabling FRAs to fully appreciate the scale of the project, estimate effort and resources required to deliver and budget plan accordingly and insufficient time to deliver necessary outcomes to the appropriate standard.

1.2.11 The North East Regional Management Board has submitted a number of letters to CLG outlining a number of concerns about progress with the project from a national perspective.

2. KEY ISSUES

2.1 Project Progress in the region:

2.1.1 The North East Region has remained committed to the FiReControl project throughout the last five years and continues to provide all support necessary to ensure the successful implementation of the project. Key areas where progress has been made in the region include:

— Establishment of a dedicated regional project delivery team since 2004–05, utilising subject matter experts in the fields of project management, control room operations, FRS IT and Communications, FRS data management.

— Agreement in 2005–06 by all four FRAs under the auspices of the Regional Management Board to combine New Burdens funding into a regional project budget with delegated authorities to the Regional Project Board to manage effectively against the delivery of project priorities.

— Establishment of a joint Regional Project Board between FiReControl and Firelink from 2004 with clear terms of reference and delegated authority from each FRA to deliver the FiReControl project successfully on behalf of the four constituent FRAs in the North East region.

— In keeping with accepted project management practice independent project assurance systems were established in 2007 through the project board contracting with the Audit Commission to perform this role. The first project assurance report in December 2007 confirmed that the region had established robust processes to facilitate issue escalation, effective communication and appropriate decision making. The report also confirmed that through the regional project board governance the appropriate and effective project management arrangements are in place to support the implementation of the project.

— Strong and continued commitment by all four FRAs to be a first wave region.

— 100% track record in responding to documents either through formal consultations or simply in reviewing key project documents issued by CLG.

— The North East region has contributed subject matter experts (SMEs) to the national project either directly through secondments of FRS staff from the NE or through contributions at national workshops and steering groups.
2.2 The Development of User Requirements and User Engagement

2.2.1 The Region has expressed concern from the early days of the project on the lack of effective user engagement. CLG did not fully appreciate the technical requirements of a system that would satisfy the operational requirements of 46 (now 45) locally governed fire and rescue services.

2.2.2 The North East believe that CLG have relied heavily on consultants and civil servants who do not have sufficient business knowledge of the fire and rescue service, particularly in the critical development phase. Of concern in the current delivery phase is the extent to which resources are being used by CLG to assist EADS in delivering. It would be expected that the majority of the resourcing and therefore risk would rest with the supplier at this stage of the project.

2.2.3 A lot of technical expertise has been drawn into the national team and away from FRSs who require the specialist skills to help deliver the project in the region. Whilst recognising the need for greater user engagement, this also creates a major risk that FRSs will have neither the capability of capacity to deliver the transition activities essential if the RCC is to be brought on-line.

2.2.4 In March 2006 a limited number of FRS users were invited by CLG to review the technical requirements through a month long review process in London. The North East was represented throughout this process. During this review a number of concerns were highlighted including:

— the lack of clear definition of a significant number of the requirements;
— FRA users not having access to the full information due to perceived commercial constraints;
— suppliers did not have sufficient knowledge of the FRS business to fully develop the proposals or were enabled to have direct contact with FRAs to develop this understanding; and
— requirements needed to be defined and reviewed in the context of the business processes for the RCC in order to provide an overview of the whole system, however at this time a number of business processes were yet to be developed.

2.2.5 CLG also gave a commitment from the launch of the FiReControl Project that the system would support the 46 (now 45) sets of individual local integrated risk management plans (IRMPs). In developing a national networked system this would always prove challenging and provide additional risks but was necessary to gain the support and approval of FRAs. This is one of the main foundations that the project is based on and the commitment that local IRMPs would not be compromised was critical in both gaining and maintaining FRA support.

2.2.6 To-date key stakeholders in the FRS user community along with key stakeholders in the LACC have not had sufficient visibility of progress with the main system build. Key stakeholders have not been provided with access to the project milestones and delivery dates that are a requirement on EADS; recently this information became available via internet publication of the EADS vs Ericsson court case. Equally FRAs have not been party to the change control process with no visibility of the changes requested by CLG/ EADS. Most critical is the lack of demonstrable progress with the main system build. EADS/CLG have not been able to show to end users that they have a working system that enables the core business to be delivered eg ability to answer emergency calls from the public, mobilise fire resources to emergency incidents and provide incident support to officers on the incident ground. In addition, EADS have not demonstrated to end users that the system proposed will support the key concepts of attribute based mobilising, mobilising the nearest appropriate resource and mobilising over data, the prime design on which the Firelink Airwaves contract is based for the new digital radio scheme, rolled out throughout England.

2.2.7 Coupled with the announcement in 2008 that there was to be a substantial change to the system architecture from the original proposal by EADS and more recently the announcement on 11 December that EADS have terminated their contract with Ericsson for the provision of a Mobilising And Resource Management System (MARMS), confirming that a contract has been awarded to another company entirely, namely Intergraph. Senior stakeholders in the North East Fire and Rescue Authorities are concerned about
CLG and EADS ability to deliver the project and to the requirements that will enable FRAs to meet their statutory responsibilities. The final decision on whether the system is acceptable to an FRA is vested with each Authority following the advice of their respective Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive Officer.

2.2.8 Finally CLG do not appear to have a robust stakeholder engagement plan to address FRAs concerns especially those who are currently believed to be unwilling to transfer their control room service to the RCC. Indeed there also is a distinct lack of a contingency plan. As a first wave region this is a concern as if not resolved runs the risk of either preventing or delaying go-live in all first wave regions and subsequent follow on regions.

2.3 The Procurement Process

2.3.1 The two major procurement elements of the project have been conducted and implemented separately, one for the RCC buildings and one for the IT infrastructure. Given the delays to the project and the delivery of the main IT infrastructure, this has resulted in the RCC buildings being completed well in advance of the IT infrastructure being ready. The NE RCC achieved practical completion at the beginning of July 2007. Whilst the costs of the lease, facilities management costs and utilities payments are paid by central government up to the point of go-live costs are substantial and draw into question whether the two procurement exercises should have been better aligned.

2.3.2 The RCC buildings, which are the same size throughout the country, are far larger than FRAs in the NE (and possibly other regions) would require to operate a regional control centre. Further the security requirements built into the building design far exceed the requirements that any FRA in the North East currently needs and appears disproportionate to the level of the threat posed to the building and its infrastructure. Both these issues could leave FRAs with significantly increased costs and a long term revenue burden when compared to their current accommodation and overall existing control room costs. For the NE RCC pro-active discussions are taking place with a number of organisations on sub-letting parts of the building with a view to offset setting some of the costs and future financial burden to fire and rescue authorities.

2.3.3 A key benefit of the project and as stated in the FiReControl business case is to provide enhanced technology—best of breed—to deliver the control room service and in equipping fire crews with mobile data technology, bringing all FRAs to the same standard. Subsequent developments in fire service operational best practice with a greater focus on data being available to fire crews and enhanced technology becoming available in the market place, has resulted in fire services substantially investing in enhancing their existing systems over the last five years, particularly on mobile data technology. There is concern that CLG/EADS do not appear to have a technology refresh policy that provides the user community with assurance that the final solution will reflect the enhanced technology available.

2.3.4 Of major concern is the procurement of a mobilising and resource management system (MARMS) by EADS that is not currently operational in any English fire and rescue service, either in the previous Ericsson system or in the recently announced contract awarded to Intergraph. The development work required to make the system fit for operational fire use in England and to meet the requirements may lead to a further delay to the project.

2.3.5 The lack of a re-procurement strategy may cause future problems for FRS's. The initial contract with EADS was awarded in 2007 on an eight year basis with the option to extend for a further three years. Given the delays to go-live this means that by the time the North East goes live currently scheduled for May 2011, four years of the contract life span will have expired. CLG appear to have no plans for re-procurement of the technology.

2.3.6 In addition, given the delays to the project there is concern that the technology to be delivered has not been refreshed to keep pace with technological developments in the open market or reflect the changes that have taken place in the fire and rescue service throughout the Country.

2.4 National Network of RCCs

2.4.1 A key benefit of the FireControl project will be the introduction of a network of nine resilient RCCs that at times of exceptional high call volumes (spate conditions) enabling calls to be re-routed to the non-home RCC for prompt answering. Enhanced technology will also enable RCCs to mobilise FRA resources from any one of the nine when there is a threat to life.

2.4.2 The lack of a detailed operational strategy and procedures to enable a national network to come to fruition is a concern. There appears to be an over reliance by CLG on what the system will do to enable the resilient network to operate, overlooking the business change impacts on the staff who will work from the RCC many of whom are existing control room staff.

2.4.3 It may be prudent for CLG to take a more balanced approach that takes the national business design model with supporting processes (WOW) and utilises good practice from around England. Equally greater emphasis should be placed on the skills of the professionally trained control room operators who will contribute to the successful operation of the RCCs.
2.4.4 The amount of effort and resources required to implement a consistent way of working has been significantly underestimated. This is the fundamental element of the business change process and has not been driven from a national perspective. Without a consistent common way of working this will render the national network inoperable.

2.4.5 Lessons must also be learnt from previous moves to a regional control centre as in the case of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service, London Fire Brigade and the Metropolitan Police.

2.4.6 The governance model of individual FRAs and the introduction of nine LACCs who operate as independent companies does not easily support an effective national governance and decision making process necessary to support a national networked operation.

2.5 Financial Impact on FRAs

2.5.1 The North East has previously responded to all versions of the business case published during the course of the project. In the earlier versions of the business case we expressed reservation at CLG’s claim that the project would generate 30% efficiency savings. In July 2008 CLG published the business case in two parts with a Regional Annex showing that there would be net additional costs incurred in the North East along with a number of other regions. This was the first formal acknowledgment by CLG that some regions may not realise the 30% savings previously stated as a key benefit of the project.

2.5.2 The North East have previously commented that we do not believe that the business case has identified all of the costs associated with the operation of the Regional Control Centre. For example it does not include the full costs of running the Local Authority Controlled Companies. This gives rise to two major concerns. Firstly the on-going revenue costs and burden this may place on Fire and Rescue Authorities. The second concern relates to the long term future of New Burdens payments to cover net additional costs. Whilst acknowledging the commitment from government that the FiReControl project will not place a net new cost on fire authorities, CLG gave an undertaking to review these payments after three years, raising concerns that this could lead to payments being reduced or discontinued. Whilst it is accepted that government will want to undertake a review once steady state is reached, a clear commitment is necessary that the principal of New Burdens funding will apply for the full term of the project and not just the first three years. This clear commitment is essential in maintaining fire authority buy-in and in providing assurance that new net additional costs will not be a burden to local tax payers.

2.6 Governance arrangements

2.6.1 One of the main challenges with implementing the FiReControl project has been on introducing a regional way of working and a regional governance structure. Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 responsibility and accountability remains with fire authorities for the provision of a control room service to the public. This will not change under the FiReControl project.

2.6.2 In 2006 CLG conducted a second consultation exercise on the arrangements for the operation of the RCCs. The consultation paper stated CLG’s preference for an LACC for each region except London, but did not offer further information or rationale behind this decision and no further evidence was provided as to why the Government believes that the LACCs are a more effective model. The North East had previously stated it’s preference for a lead authority type arrangement.

2.6.3 The region has given support to the establishment of the LACC, being amongst the first to set up the company in January 2007 and in appointing a Regional Control Centre Director in August 2007. This has not been without challenges, most significant being the impact of local elections and local government re-organisation on the LACC board of directors. Since incorporation the make up of the LACC board has changed twice with the majority of directors being replaced on each occasion, and it is envisaged that there will continue to be “churn” in the future as the local electorate make their views known. This does not provide a stable environment for any company to operate under.

2.6.4 There are also a number of on-going financial and legal concerns. Under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004, section 7 states that a Fire Authority must “make arrangements for the dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel”. This responsibility will not change once each LACC takes over the operational running of the control room service even though a contractual relationship will be established between each LACC and it constituent FRAs. Issues have been raised on whether FRAs will be exposed legally by transferring a core part of the business to an organisation that does not have any responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 or under the Civil Contingencies Act. This matter has been debated by the Fire Lawyers Network and seems unlikely to be resolved to FRAs’ satisfaction, without clarification or action on the part of the Secretary of State. Given there is no legal impediment, the management of the relationship between LACCs and constituent FRAs will be potentially complex with little clarity on how FRAs could remedy unsatisfactory performance.

2.6.5Whilst acknowledging that Government would fund the set up costs associated with the LACC, these were minimal when compared to the on-going revenue costs. Of concern to FRAs are the long term revenue costs and on-going financial burden of running a separate organisation structure. FRAs still believe that there are more effective and less costly governance structures.
2.6.6 The final decision on the acceptability of the final solution rests with each Fire and Rescue Authority following the advice from their respective Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive. It is unclear whether CLG have fully appreciated the need for Chief Fire Officer/Chief Executive to have complete confidence in the final solution or they will not agree to cutover.

2.8 Project Progress—Timetable for go-live

2.8.1 Since the launch of the FiReControl project in 2004 there have been numerous go-live dates announced by CLG. Originally scheduled to go-live in November 2006, the first major announcement of a delay came shortly after the contract was awarded to EADS in March 2007. At this time Government announced that go-live was re-scheduled to October 2009. We have subsequently had two further go-live dates July 2010 and the currently scheduled May 2011 for first wave regions. The continued delays to the project, combined with the lack of demonstrable progress by EADS on building the main system have all contributed to a decline in confidence of senior stakeholders in the North East FRAs on CLG and EADS ability to deliver a project of this scope, scale and complexity. This has been reinforced recently by all regional project managers in writing to CLG (via the Local and Regional Delivery Group).

2.8.2 Following each announcement of a delay FRAs and the region have conducted an impact assessment to identify the risks associated with the delay. We have previously highlighted to CLG the risk that in the North East all four FRs control room systems will need significant investment or replacement to be fully replaced in 2013 in order to maintain operational continuity. Furthermore three out of four FRs in the North East will move to new Headquarters within the next three years. Two out of three are doing this as part of PFI developments whilst the third will do so in line with its long term estates strategy. All of these moves were influenced by the FiReControl project which removed the need for in house control room facilities to be maintained beyond 2010. In all three cases existing control rooms are currently located in HQ buildings and future plans do not include any control room facilities.

2.8.3 As FRAs are responsible for business continuity planning and in maintaining operational continuity for the provision of a control room service to the public, they must now seriously consider procurement of new control room systems should the FiReControl project be unable to deliver a satisfactory outcome. To allow sufficient time for this process will mean that implementation on this will need to start early in 2010. Of serious concern is the significant amounts of funding FRAs would need to invest to replace control room systems when they would reasonably have expected to cutover to the RCC by now. Because of the FiReControl project no financial provision has been made for the replacement of existing control room facilities and systems beyond 2010. FRs are only in this position due to the delays to the FiReControl project and rightly expect CLG to support New Burdens funding to maintain and upgrade existing control rooms facilities until the FiReControl project delivers a successful outcome.

2.8.4 The delay in rolling out the main IT infrastructure is also having a significant impact on the FRAs ability to fully implement and progress the project. A major area of work will be the conversion and migration of data, which FRAs have consistently maintained requires a minimum of 18 months to complete. This was initially integral to the original planning assumptions used by CLG however as a first wave region, we have repeatedly seen the delivery window shortened due to delays by EADS and CLG in delivering the key tools and information to FRAs. This substantially increases the risk that FRAs will not have sufficient time and capacity in resource terms to deliver due to the potential narrowing of the delivery window.

2.8.5 We have estimated that in the North East some two million data records will need to be converted and migrated to enable the RCC to operate fully. The first stage of the data conversion process is to create a FiReControl Gazetteer. A key tool (DCMT1) to enable FRAs to undertake this work was delivered 19 months behind schedule. Originally scheduled to be delivered at the end of October 2007 it was not rolled out until September 2009. When installed it quickly became evident that there were significant issues with the quality of the product provided.

2.8.6 The second stage of rolling out a toolkit (DCMT2) has been repeatedly delayed. DCMT2 has been designed to enable FRAs to convert all of the data sets that are critical to mobilise resources and provide incident support. Originally due for delivery in March 2008 this is currently scheduled for roll out during the summer of 2010. Delays experienced by FRAs in receiving the necessary tools and information from CLG also increases the risk that the quality of the data will be compromised if insufficient time is allowed for the validation and testing process. This will have a direct impact on the decision by an FR to cutover the control room operations to the RCC.

2.8.7 Finally, the North East has concerns about the quality of the project planning within the national team. An essential part of a projects successful implementation is in having a robust project plan. Each month CLG publish an updated transition plan, however, this plan lacks sufficient detail to enable an FR to assess fully the scale of the work involved and lacks any reliable delivery dates. Many of the dates included in the Section A part of the transition plan are now in the past and are highlighted as at risk, indicating the difficulties EADS and CLG are experiencing in delivering against a plan. This absence of a robust and detailed plan has also been highlighted by CFOA as a significant risk.

January 2010
Memorandum from Wiltshire and Swindon Fire Authority (FIRE 21)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
— The programme has extensively overrun its original timescale.
— It is now some five years late.
— This overrun is directly affecting the existing control room staff morale and impacts on management of this FRS.
— There is a loss of confidence amongst elected members, management and firefighters and a belief that it will not be successful.
— The concept was part of a much bigger plan at a different political timescale and agenda.
— It was over ambitious in its concept.
— There has been a lack of understanding of the technical hurdles needed to be overcome to ensure success.
— This FRA has tried to help at all levels of the programme.
— There is a reluctance by CLG to accept the impact of the Out of Scope work
— The successful Wiltshire and Gloucestershire Tri-Service Control room models should be revisited.
— There is a possible way forward in using the SW RCC for Devon and Somerset FRS with dated equipment and control rooms
— This SW RCC could also provide resilient fall back to other FRSs in the SW region.
— The improvements in the FireLink programme are welcomed.
— Data handling technology such as Mobile data terminals and risk information transmission already exists.

PROGRESS WITH THE PROJECT SO FAR
1. The project was initiated by Central Government and, whilst this Fire Authority recognises the legitimate right of the (then) Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and the Department for Communities and Local Government to reorganise control rooms, we judge it is not acceptable for individual fire authorities to share the burden of continuing extensive delays with considerable impact on staff morale, additional workloads and expense which all falls outside any “New Burdens” agreement.
2. The financial outlook for Fire Authorities in 2010–11 and 2011–12 cannot bear ongoing costs of this project which will, if carried through to completion, be handed over to FRAs at some future point in time to fund.
3. This FRA has not changed its position since the last Select Committee in that it has yet formally to agree to voluntarily move its mobilising operation into the now completed South West RCC building at Taunton.
4. The ongoing delays from an original completion date of 2007 have meant continuing uncertainty and a considerable loss of confidence, which has had a serious impact on:
   (a) staff confidence and morale, leading to staff leaving the FRS’s employment;
   (b) an impossibility to forward plan in terms of staff likely to apply to work at the new SW RCC; and,
   (c) a continuing loss of confidence by fire authority Elected Members, management and firefighters in the programme—the complete opposite effect of what was publicly intended and stated at the programme’s onset.

THE REASON FOR THE COST AND TIME OVERRUNS WHICH THE PROJECT HAS EXPERIENCED
5. The FireControl programme was intended to provide benefits in public safety, firefighter safety, national resilience, efficiency, interoperability and mobilisation of national fire assets (New Dimensions’ appliances and equipment). This Fire Authority accepted all these original promises as a means to further improve the safety of the community and its firefighters in Wiltshire and Swindon.
6. The project was conceived at a time when regional government, regional management boards, regional fire authorities and fire & rescue services were part of the current Government’s programme. The 2004–05 National Framework document stated in paragraph 2.3 that the Government was “committed to a regional approach where that is the most appropriate level”. Following the North East referendum decision in November 2004, the political direction has changed and the 2008–11 National Framework document stated at paragraph 4.3 “whilst closer joint working at a regional level has a role to play in improving efficiency; Government has no plans to introduce a regional fire service”. CLG has continued to try to deliver this unique project through a different political, governance and financial model—its own creating many of the reasons for the cost and time overruns.
7. The original stated expectation was a significant financial saving in the order of 30%—a figure which is now recognised as unattainable.
8. It was also originally stated that the FireControl programme would deliver a mobilising solution that was as good as or better than the equivalent FRAs’ control rooms—a point to which I shall return.

9. Finally, the FireControl programme was stated as delivering a high level of resilience—again a point which will be referred to later.

10. This project was embarked upon, for the best of reasons, placing complete reliance on new (albeit unproven) information technology. Regrettably, there is a long history of such projects both in Government, for example in Defence and the NHS, and in the private sector, for example in the aerospace sector with the current example being EADS’ A400M military aircraft project. Knowing that the required technology does not exist, it is so tempting for the politician leading to believe, with the time available due to other routine work, often likely to take a year or two, and that a solution will have been achieved, to overcome systems design and execution that are known to exist at the start of the project. Mr Micawber’s approach, “hoping that something would turn up”, was laughable in a novel but is devastating in modern industry but, because of it, the RCC project has failed to meet its deadlines and is now nearly half a decade behind schedule. The system still has not been fully designed, delivered and tested from end to end.

11. Criticism has been levelled at the project management and numerous changes of personnel involved—all of which have led to a continuing loss of confidence that this project will deliver any of the stated benefits to FRAs.

12. This criticism is not made lightly—of all English FRAs, Wiltshire and Swindon has contributed at SW regional and national levels to try and assist the project through professional advice from officers on many aspects, including the treasury functions of the SW project and political leadership at LGA level.

13. It has also become clear that the RCCs will not undertake all of the functions already carried out by existing FRS mobilising controls—leading to the “Out of Scope” project to assess what work would still be undertaken by individual FRSs under the new RCC arrangements.

14. It is quite clear that some means of data collection and monitoring of functions beyond 999 call handling will fall to individual FRs and this will mean that staff will continue to be employed in some sort of “non-emergency” control room function, with the additional expense borne by individual FRAs.

What, if any, changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project?

15. This Fire Authority would submit that the experience of Wiltshire FRA in operating the Tri-Service Control room since 24 March 2004 following considerable financial investment by this Government under its Invest to Save budget of £7.5 millions, now warrants revisiting as a possible model for future adoption. It is noted that, since the inception of the Wiltshire model and a very similar Tri-Service Control room in Gloucestershire, one Welsh fire and rescue authority has decided to copy some of these functions with a dual police/fire facility.

16. The Wiltshire Tri-Service facility has been independently audited by the Audit Commission and judged to be successful by its three constituent “blue light” services with resilience embedded until at least 2015 without further investment being required. This has always been seen as a long-term investment (circa 30 years’ contract) and illustrates the forward thinking and innovation of previous Chief Officers and Elected Members at NHS Health; Police and Fire & Rescue Authority levels.

17. In particular, the expected advantages of placing all three “blue light” services under one roof have been realised, namely:

— The ability to share information technology.
— The close professional working relationship between all three services.
— The “bespoke” construction of the building making it totally “fit for purpose”.
— The very high level of resilience against business disruption incorporated in its construction.
— Dedicated “Gold Command” and “Silver Command” multi-agency rooms within the same building, able to undertake the strategic management of emergencies, whilst being physically close enough to liaise with operational commanders through the mobilising control room on site.

18. It is noted that the “resilience aspect” of the FireControl project remains an argument for its continuation. It is fully accepted that any mobilising control must have sufficient resilience incorporated into its design.

19. The Wiltshire Tri-Service control room has proved, over its operation in almost six years, that satisfactory resilience has been incorporated, with fall-back arrangements in the event of “spate conditions” and overload of 999 calls to firstly Avon FRS and now Gloucestershire FRS control rooms, with reciprocal arrangements whereby Wiltshire FRS can take any overload of 999 calls from those FRAs. Similar arrangements exist for the other emergency services and, in respect of Wiltshire FRS, a fall-back facility to Service Headquarters exists should the Tri-Service Control room have to be evacuated—this is frequently exercised and rehearsed as part of our Business Continuity arrangements.

20. In the continuing uncertainty of global terrorism atrocities, the need for even greater levels of resilience may be required.
January 2010

Memorandum from The Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) (FIRE 22)

1. The Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) is the professional membership association of the strategic managers of the UK Fire and Rescue Service and as such is an organisation well-placed from which to present an informed view on the FiReControl programme. CFOA is both a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity with the charitable objects of reducing the loss of life, personal injury and damage to property and the environment by improving the quality of fire fighting, rescue, fire protection and fire prevention in the United Kingdom. These aims are pursued through the provision of advice, information, leadership, research, informed comment and other services to relevant bodies and to the Association’s own members.

2. The Association has been in existence since 1941 and is governed by a Board of Directors who are all trustees of the charity which is led by a Presidential Team encompassing the roles of President, Vice President and Vice President Elect. CFOA is funded by a combination of government grant, subscriptions from UK Fire and Rescue Services and individual membership subscriptions.

3. The Association has had a close relationship with the FiReControl programme since its inception and provides a number of advisory personnel on the project. It is our belief therefore that we have the required professional experience and authority to provide substantive evidence to this inquiry.

   — We are supportive of the principles of the project which is to deliver a network of nine regional control centres.

   — The project has been beset by poor project governance and management. The difficult relationship between CLG and the primary contractor EADS has exacerbated the delays and momentum of the project.

   — The project rapidly evolved from the conceptual stage to a full Government procurement project in the absence of proper consultation with the fire and rescue service this has been the root cause of many of the problems which now exist.

21. Given the completion of the nine Regional Control buildings and using the South West as an example, these could be utilised to provide an even greater degree of resilience and fall-back than currently exists.

22. It is already accepted that some FRS have dated equipment and control rooms requiring extensive upgrades at considerable expense. Again, using the Taunton RCC building as an example, this could be utilised to provide dedicated command and control mobilising for Devon and Somerset FRS, whose own two control rooms are overdue for replacement, whilst also accommodating a “super resilient” fall-back arrangements for modern Tri-Service control rooms such as Wiltshire FRS and it is suggested that this model be explored as a similar arrangement for Gloucestershire and other FRS.

23. This situation, whilst improving still further the resilience arrangements, continues with the considerable advantages of a locally based mobilising control room, totally under the control of the FRA with its legal responsibility for receiving 999 calls under the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help, for summoning personnel and to develop mutual aid schemes with other FRAs. This approach would also maximise the advantage of locally based control room operators utilising their local knowledge for call handling.

24. Significant benefit is claimed for the improved data handling to be provided to fire appliances and officers through the FireControl and FireLink programmes. It is important not to blur the distinction in that the improved radio scheme has been required urgently for many years and is most welcome. However, other FRAs already provide mobile data terminals (MDTs) as a stand-alone system and, therefore, it is apparent that existing information technology, delivered through the existing control rooms, would still deliver an improved system of information to the incident ground, without reliance on totally unproven technology.

25. In summary, technology already exists to provide much of the claimed data improvements such as automatic vehicle location systems, MDTs etc. Indeed, if the project continues to be delayed, individual FRAs will have to consider purchasing such equipment to ensure it fulfils its legal obligations in terms of firefighter safety—a subject attaining even more importance nationally with recent increases in firefighter fatalities and other events leading to inspections of FRAs by the Health and Safety Executive.

26. In conclusion, what is urgently required now is a proper, open and transparent review of the complete programme. This needs to include a frank reappraisal of the political, financial and governance arrangements now in place in which this regional programme was intended to operate.

27. Notwithstanding the ongoing escalation of terrorist activity and the need to maintain resilience in operating an emergency response, it can be argued that in almost six years of operation, the Wiltshire Tri-Service Control has not failed at any time, its resilience arrangements have worked and this legacy needs to be properly considered as a viable alternative which provides local control to protect its citizens and firefighters.
— Government failed to integrate the FiReControl and Firelink projects and thus realise efficiencies, both in terms of staff and consultancy costs and the alignment of requirements.

— Confidence in the project has been eroded by a lack of appreciation by CLG of the democratic and legal processes by which FRAs operate.

— Cost and Time overruns have been caused by the initial urgency to enter the procurement phase of the project which resulted in an extensive set of high level requirements that, in almost all areas, lacked adequate detail, leaving the detail to be elaborated post contract award.

— It remains imperative that if the project is to succeed that all future costs incurred by fire and rescue authorities in delivering this project continue to be met by Central Government.

— It is now necessary to have a “Plan B” contingency option, with guaranteed Government funding on which fire and rescue authorities can rely in the event of project failure for whatever reason be it political, economic or technical.

INTRODUCTION

4. Whilst many of the issues raised within this submission are critical of the project approach, management by CLG and the primary contractor EADS, we do recognise the extent and complexity of this endeavour and the value of the FiReControl project both at a local, regional and national level if the stated project outcomes are achieved. The Association also recognises that in recent months there has been improvements in the governance and management of the project. Had the current arrangements been in place at the start of the project it is most probable that the project would not have been beset by some of the difficulties that are referred to in this submission.

THE FiReControl Project

5. CFOA has and continues to support the concepts of resilience and efficiency that lie behind the FiReControl Project As such we have and continue to provide tangible support to the project through the Senior Professional User and a team of professional advisors who are embedded within the Government project.

6. CFOA have always held and stated publically the view that the Government were and remain unrealistically optimistic in relation to the timeframe for the delivery of the project, its costs and the financial benefits that might be realised from it. This we have formally stated to key officials on numerous occasions.

7. It is apparent that the project was devised in haste, based upon, amongst other things two reports by consultants Mott MacDonald. The project rapidly evolved from the conceptual stage to a full Government procurement project in the absence of proper consultation with the fire and rescue service. This led to a lack of understanding of operational requirements and ill informed claims of the range of perceived benefits from the outset. It appears that this project was driven by political ambition rather than the delivery of an effective operational service.

8. From the outset, there was a clear commitment from Government that the FiReControl Project would fully support the Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) (recently introduced by the same Government) of all fire and rescue services (FRS) without any apparent recognition of the additional technical and procedural complexities that this would bring to the project and its technical solution. Seeking to service the individual needs of the 46 English FRS exponentially increased the complexity of the project.

9. At the time of inception of the FiReControl Project the Government was already running the Firelink Project to procure a new wide area radio communications system for the fire and rescue service in England, Scotland and Wales. Whilst recognising the synergies between the projects and the key contribution that the Firelink solution would make to the FiReControl Project, Government failed to integrate the two projects and realise the efficiencies, both in terms of staff and consultancy costs. There was also no alignment of requirements and this resulted in in silo working, duplication and inefficiencies. These examples illustrate the chaotic, uncoordinated and poorly conceived development of Government policy in this area to the detriment of the FiReControl project.

WORKING WITH STAKEHOLDERS

10. Throughout the project the Government have failed to recognise and plan in accordance with the democratic and legal processes within which Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), operate. This frequently results in inadequate time being allowed within the project plan for proper consultation and local decision making. Moreover it reinforces continually the perception within the service of being “railroaded” by central government at the same time that CLG publically promotes the idea of partnership within the project. This has been a significant factor in eroding the confidence of key stakeholders and FRAs.

11. Notably, in the early stages there was a gross misunderstanding on the part of Government about the legal and democratic status of Regional Management Boards and their ability, or otherwise, to make collective decisions on behalf of Fire and Rescue Authorities. This resulted in unrealistic expectations about local decision making processes.
CLARITY AND TRANSPARENCY WITHIN THE PROJECT

12. Over the last seven years that the project has been running there have been a series of decisions, some involving procurement considerations which appear to have been made on an arbitrary basis without any formal governance or approvals process. The absence of any decisions log means that there is no audit trail or accountability for many of the decisions that have shaped the development of the project and it is now difficult to understand how the project has evolved into what it is today and what will be delivered at the end of the project. CFOA has formally requested the establishment of a decision recording mechanism on numerous occasions.

13. CFOA have been concerned that the work of the Project Board and the agenda for its meetings has not been based around a project plan and a “critical path”. Indeed, whilst repeated requests have been made, there has been a total lack of visibility of these crucial documents and it is felt that this has hampered the ability of the Project Board to play an effective part in the governance of the project in the way that would normally be expected.

SPECIFICATION OF REQUIREMENTS

14. During the requirements capture phase of the project, prior to procurement, it was clear that the Government had developed a high level model of what the project would deliver based on political ambition rather than a clear understanding of the operational user requirements. This resulted in areas of the project being over specified whilst in many cases the practical detail required was missing. In some cases attempts by CFOA to introduce the reality of what was required resulted in unwarranted accusations of “gilding the lily”.

15. There remains a significant discrepancy between the approach that the Government has taken to national resilience in the fire and rescue service in relation to the technological and security related aspects of the FiReControl Project and that taken in relation to both Police and Ambulance control rooms. All these control rooms are categorised as part of the national infrastructure yet only the fire service Regional Control Centres are being required to meet the high standards of specification being rolled out by FiReControl. It appears on this basis that the FiReControl Project has suffered from a degree of unwarranted over specification and therefore cost in these areas.

16. The unrealistically ambitious timeframes allocated to the project by Government led to an inadequate period being allowed to develop a proper understanding of what the project should deliver and the requirements that should form the basis of any procurement. There was a widely held perception that there was pressure to rush to procurement in order to achieve clearly unrealistic timescales for project completion.

17. The urgency to enter the procurement phase of the project resulted in an extensive set of high level requirements for the “Infrastructure Services” which, in almost all areas, lacked adequate detail, leaving the detail to be elaborated post contract award. Whilst fully recognising that in such projects it is frequently not possible to develop all the detailed requirements until the high level architecture of the solution is known, CFOA registered its concerns at the time that, with so many detailed requirements being deferred to post contract award, it was not possible to derive any assurance that the contracted solution would eventually meet user requirements. In addition, with the elaboration of so many detailed requirements being deferred until post contract award, this would inevitably lead to both cost and time overruns and there would be a need for extensive user engagement post contract award to ensure that the detailed requirements being elaborated would meet the operational expectations and requirements. Furthermore, there could be no confidence that the supplier would be able to provide a solution that would satisfy the detailed requirements.

PROJECT ARRANGEMENTS AND FUNDING

18. The Government’s project team is, by any standards, extensive; incorporating Civil Servants, consultants and seconded staff from the fire and rescue service. Any arguments to justify a team of this size prior to procurement in order to expedite the procurement process expired some years ago once the procurements had been tendered. Maintaining a team of this size is inevitably costly and questionable. In order to manage such a team the work is sub divided into work streams, It has been evident that there is a lack of co-ordination between the work streams and that elements of the project have developed in “silos” unsighted on related work or decisions made within other work streams. As a result of the need to elaborate so many detailed requirements post contract these teams continue to provide the powerhouse of the project at a time when the bulk of the effort and the attendant risk should be carried by the contractor.

19. The commitment from Government that the FiReControl Project will not impose a net new burden on fire and rescue authorities is welcomed. It is recognised that, to this point in the project, the costs to the fire and rescue service in delivering this project have been met through “New Burdens” funding. It remains imperative that if the project is to succeed that all future costs incurred by fire and rescue authorities in delivering this project continue to be met by Central Government. This must include the costs necessary to integrate legacy back office systems with the FiReControl solution where necessary.

20. We have real concerns over the ongoing revenue costs of the FiReControl service in steady state. The current proposals for Government to make “Resilience payments” direct to fire authorities incurring additional costs from taking the FiReControl service are welcomed. However, at present Government has
been unable to commit to these payments in the long term, undertaking only to review the payments in three years. The concern here is that these payments may be reduced or withdrawn in future years leaving fire authorities with a significant and unaffordable new burden without sufficient or any compensating grant.

**Contingency Arrangements**

21. The catalogue of delays that have beset the project and the way in which these have been managed has resulted in a total lack of confidence in the ability of Government and its supplier to deliver the project. Most fire and rescue authorities have fully aligned their plans with the delivery of FiReControl leaving them in a very vulnerable position in relation to the discharge of their statutory functions if FiReControl project should fail. It is now necessary to have a “Plan B” contingency option, with guaranteed Government funding on which fire and rescue authorities can rely in the event of project failure for whatever reason be it political, economic or technical. We have been urging the Minister and senior officials to commit resources and attention to developing a viable worked through contingency arrangement. We have offered our support to work with them on this.

22. Delays, uncertainty and a lack of substantive information being made available by CLG and its supplier with regard to the technology solution has resulted in corresponding delays in the fire and rescue service preparedness to migrate to FiReControl. There continues to be a lack of confidence that the project can be delivered by CLG and their suppliers within the currently published timeframe. Notwithstanding, there are some signs that the supplier at least, is enhancing their capacity and capability in order to deliver the project without further delay. However, it is highly unlikely that the fire and rescue service has the capacity to correspondingly increase its transition activities, even if additional funding should be made available. It should be absolutely clear that any such delays from FRAs will be as a direct consequence of the lack of information being made available on which their services can progress transition plans rather than additional delays originating within the service itself.

23. A national, networked FiReControl solution, albeit delivered locally through Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs) inevitably requires a degree of central co-ordination and management (including contract management) in order to ensure the ongoing resilient and collaborative nature of the solution. Regrettably, there remains considerable uncertainty about what is to be managed centrally, how it will be managed and the cost overhead that will be incurred, development of this aspect of the project seems to be given a lesser priority than the delivery of the Regional Control Centres despite the critical nature of the centralised work. More recently there has been progress in the creation of a Non Departmental Public Body (NDPB) that is intended to take on responsibility for the centralised functions. As all fire and rescue services and LACCs will be dependent upon the efficient and effective discharge of central functions, the absence of answers to key questions about the governance and delivery of these functions is a considerable concern. This work should be significantly more advanced at this stage of the project.

**Conclusion**

24. CFOA has and still remains supportive of the principle of the FiReControl project. As such we have been an active, if independent contributor to the programme. The Association’s support is dependent on the basis that it will bring to all FRAs a level of service currently enjoyed only by those who operate the best performing control centres and provided that ongoing funding for the solution is both adequate and fairly apportioned.

25. We have watched confidence steadily decline in the project as poor project management, inadequate communications and deteriorating stakeholder relationships have eroded patience, goodwill and faith amongst the FRAs. This situation is not irreconcilable but requires a renewed effort by CLG and EADS to listen, to work more professionally and pragmatically in order to deliver a project that many FRAs are relying upon for their own resilience.

January 2010

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**Supplementary memorandum from the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (FIRE 22A)**

**The FiReControl Project**

This evidence is being submitted by the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) in response to requests for further written evidence from the Select Committee during its hearing of Oral evidence on Monday 8 February 2010.

The Select Committee asked for specific examples of where end user requirements have not been met. In order to put the following response in context it is necessary to understand that the FiReControl project is still some way from delivering fully functioning Regional Control Centres. As such, the final technical solution remains unclear and the end user has not had an opportunity to evaluate the full technical solution. Our comments that follow therefore only relate to our current understanding of the proposals.
At the point that the initial, outline proposals were evaluated by the user community on behalf of CFOA there were a total of 573 questions or comments on the outline proposal that could not be answered by CLG at that time. Since that time most items have been marked as closed, but it is frequently not possible to understand exactly what was done in order to achieve a closed status. The user community has not received feedback on the original comments/questions. As a consequence there is a feeling of uncertainty as to whether or not user requirements will be met.

The Solution Establishment Workshops (SEWs) are a welcome improvement in user engagement but remain fundamentally flawed in their approach to system design. Each SEW has been focussed on developing a single thread of functionality in isolation. Where demonstrations of functionality have been possible, they have been on the basis of unrepresentative data and, when requirements are not apparently met, assurances are given that the functionality will be provided from “a different module” or by “workarounds”. This gives rise to concerns that the system will be unnecessarily complex, unworkable and possibly fail to meet requirements when subjected to tests using real end-to-end scenarios and real fire service data.

Whilst developing the FiReControl solution with EADS, CLG have failed to respond to extensive user experience in deploying control room and mobile data technologies. This failure to recognise and learn from existing best practice has undoubtedly contributed to many of the problems that the project has encountered thus far. Specific examples relate to the deployment of mobile data terminals, station end equipment and operational procedures for managing incidents at special risks such as airports.

Table 1 below sets out some of the more detailed requirements where current understanding of the final solution that does not, at present, meet user requirements.

The Select Committee also asked for details of instances when fire and rescue authorities have found it necessary to upgrade or replace existing control room equipment arising from delays in the delivery of the FiReControl Project. In order to provide an up to date picture, information was sought from the fire and rescue service during week commencing Monday 8 February. The table that follows only includes information from those services that were able to respond by Friday 12 February and is therefore not a complete picture but it would be reasonable to consider it to be a representative picture.

Only costs already incurred, or already committed to, have been included in Table 2 below. There will continue to be a need to replace and upgrade existing control rooms over the next few years until FiReControl is delivered in order to be able to continue to deliver statutory functions. In some cases these replacements and upgrades are already planned but have not yet commenced.

The Chief Fire Officers’ Association

16 February 2010
Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>User Requirement Description</th>
<th>Current Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 A satisfactory and resilient end-to-end method of alerting and mobilising FS offices to</td>
<td>At a very late stage, during 2009, CLG published an Office Mobilising Strategy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>emergency incidents</td>
<td>Since then they have failed to provide a coherent method of delivering that</td>
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<td></td>
<td>strategy within the FiReControl Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>2 Data validation toolkit. FRS data that is to be captured for use in the live system must</td>
<td>This is the subject of an outstanding Change Control Note that has yet to be</td>
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<tr>
<td>be tested/validated before the start of OAT</td>
<td>approved</td>
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<td></td>
<td>There is a potentially large workload associated with capturing FRS rules,</td>
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<td></td>
<td>information and data. For example FRS business rule scripts, PDA information</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and action plans amongst others. Ongoing delays in providing the Data Capture &amp;</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Migration, PDA builder and data validation tools is likely to result in Fire</td>
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<td></td>
<td>and Rescue Services (FRSs) needing to complete a significant amount of work</td>
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<td></td>
<td>that will be beyond their capacity to complete in a short time</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Late availability of the data validation tool has the potential to leave FRSs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>unable to QA the full range of data each needs to provide for the mobilising</td>
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<td></td>
<td>system before the start of operational assurance testing, with a consequent</td>
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<td></td>
<td>negative impact on an FRS’s ability to make the decision to go-live</td>
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<tr>
<td>3 Provision of the “NOT” Boolean function to support development of Pre-determined Attendance</td>
<td>It is proposed that appropriate rules can still be constructed without the ‘NOT’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>rules</td>
<td>function, but this appears to be a cumbersome and not a user friendly process</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 The radius from which resources proposed for a standby move are identified needs to be</td>
<td>Default filter will be to limit resources to those within a (system wide)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>configurable in relation to local geography (eg fire station density—a five mile radius in</td>
<td>preconfigured radius of the standby location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the centre of a dense urban area should identify a suitable number of resources, but the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>same radius in a remote rural area may not find any)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Dynamic talk group allocation. Users require that the allocated radio talk group for an</td>
<td>There is no plan to provide this functionality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>incident to be set automatically when the mobilisation message is transmitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Effective system usability for end-to-end workflows without lengthy or numerous (manual)</td>
<td>Usability is not being demonstrated until late in the development process, when</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>work arounds</td>
<td>it will be potentially difficult to make changes without an impact on the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>schedule. This is currently the position for workflows within individual system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>components, as well as workflows that run across system components, leaving the</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>high risk position where it is likely that end-to-end workflows will not be</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>properly evaluated before final testing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Requirement Description</td>
<td>Current Position</td>
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<td>------------------------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 The system must be sufficiently configurable at FRS to facilitate the differentiation specified in FRA Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs)</td>
<td>In a number of circumstances, it is unclear how this can be achieved without introducing significant complexity that will impact on usability. The challenge of trying to accommodate the individual business needs and systems of all FRSs within a single national mobilising and resource management system is making the development of the system very complex and compromises the efficiency of the FiReControl system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 The FiReControl solution must provide each FRS with at least the same level of (or more) functionality than their current mobilising system</td>
<td>It is currently unclear whether this requirement can be met. The more technically advanced FRSs (eg Norfolk) are already operating at a level of sophistication beyond that currently proposed within the FiReControl solution. It is likely that by the time of go live more FRSs will be in a similar position, with the potential to end up with reduced functionality compared to their existing systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 The FiReControl solution must not cost any Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) more than the cost of its current provision</td>
<td>There is currently a three year commitment by CLG to cover additional costs, but no certainty of the longer term position.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 CLG should give direction to ensure the FRSs adopt all components necessary to ensure end-to-end resilience</td>
<td>CLG currently identify the appropriate solution components but in some cases leave their adoption, or otherwise, to the decision of each individual FRS thereby compromising national resilience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Post go-live Users require a single point of contact for FiReControl, Firelink and New Dimension functions that needs to be completed to a unified standard at national level. This would ideally be the case for service management, data updates, system updates and ultimate replacement</td>
<td>It is currently unclear how, if or where these functions will be centralised. FRSs will need to fully understand this position before signing contracts with Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 System updates (including data updates) must be applied to all positions across the FiReControl network at the same point in time to remove the risk of Control Room Operators (CROs) working with different information at the same point in time</td>
<td>Current understanding is that some updates will only be applied to the system (ie operator terminals refreshed) after the terminal has been logged off and back on to the system. A rigorous process must be developed to manage the risks associated with this.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Fully enabled Mobile Data Terminal (MDT) to facilitate integration of FRS requirements in addition to those of FiReControl</td>
<td>MDT essentially limited to incident notification, communication and associated functions eg wider use as an integral part of FRS wide area networks relating to non-emergency duties is currently not being provided due to rigorous security requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 FRSs should be able to fully integrate the ‘back office’ elements of FiReControl (including MDTs) to their own networks and applications without excessive security limitations. This is to minimise the need for double keying, reduce errors, maximise return on existing investment and promote efficiency</td>
<td>Integration is only being catered for in limited circumstances and subject to strict security limitations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 The presentation of appropriate resources for relief duties must be able to be made on the basis of business rules as well as radius from incident</td>
<td>The presentation of relief appliances is proposed to be on the basis of radius from incident and make no provision for the automatic or effective manual methods of applying appropriate business rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User Requirement Description</td>
<td>Current Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16  The immediate visual presentation of the caller location to the operator on the Geographic Information System (GIS), as well as the textual recording of the address within the incident frame</td>
<td>It is necessary for an operator to validate the caller’s location before identifying the incident location</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17  Effective address matching</td>
<td>The complexity of matching addresses is a major concern to the end users, which may ultimately lead to non-acceptance of the solution. Examples have been seen in the SEWs where unexpected or unacceptable matches have been proposed. This gives rise to a risk that the address matching functionality being offered under FiReControl will not meet the basic needs of the current FRS controls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18  Ability to identify any shortfalls from the proposed attendance based on attributes</td>
<td>It has been stated that they are unable to provide the details of the shortfall in a recommended Pre Determined Attendance (PDA), merely to warn the CRO that there is a deficiency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19  Ability to mobilise to deployment and access points as well as or instead of the incident address</td>
<td>This functionality is currently extremely limited and relies on extensive manual intervention by the operator. This has a significant impact on mobilising to airports as well as many other special risks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Upgrade/Replacement Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Isle of Wight</td>
<td>Replaced station end equipment, upgraded mobilising system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warwickshire</td>
<td>Replacement Integrated Communication Command System (ICCS), replacement mobilising system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bedfordshire &amp; Luton</td>
<td>ICCS replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shropshire</td>
<td>Install an interim mobilising system and relocation of Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lancashire</td>
<td>Replaced the station end equipment at all 39 stations and the Voice Recording equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kent</td>
<td>Replaced station end equipment, relocation of fallback control room, ICCS touch screen replacement, telephony replacement, mobile data systems, mobilising computer hardware</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devon &amp; Somerset</td>
<td>Refreshed hardware, software upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornwall</td>
<td>Server hardware replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avon</td>
<td>ICCS upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrey</td>
<td>Mobilising system upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheshire</td>
<td>Replacement mobilising system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derbyshire</td>
<td>System health check and replacement equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Sussex</td>
<td>System upgrades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Yorkshire</td>
<td>Hardware replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucestershire</td>
<td>Mobilising system upgrades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oxfordshire</td>
<td>Upgrades of servers and ancillary items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Sussex</td>
<td>Mobilising system and ICCS upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cumbria</td>
<td>ICCS upgrade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staffordshire</td>
<td>Replacement mobilising, ICCS and voice recording hardware, interfaces and enabling works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorset</td>
<td>Hardware replacements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humberside</td>
<td>Upgrade mobilising system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Upgrade/Replacement Works</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Yorkshire</td>
<td>ICCS replacement, status messaging upgrades, MDT upgrades</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nottinghamshire</td>
<td>ICCS replacement, mobilising system hardware, MDT replacement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>Replacement mobilising system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Royal Berkshire</td>
<td>ICCS upgrade, mobilising system hardware, secondary Control hardware</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Memorandum from West Midlands Fire Service (FIRE 23)

The West Midlands Fire Service (WMFS) is aware of and confirms that it will comply with its statutory obligations to make arrangements for dealing with calls for help and for summoning personnel, and to have regard to the Fire & Rescue National Framework including those provisions relating to the Fire Control Project.

Notwithstanding this position WMFS would wish to make the following observations regarding the Fire Control Project.

1. Progress with the Project So Far

WMFS is fully co-operating with Communities and Local Government (CLG) and the Local Authority Fire Control Company (LACC) which for the West Midlands Region was established in February 2007, in progressing the National Project. However, WMFS is concerned that:

1.1 Whilst the Fire Control building is in place, it is not clear to WMFS that outcome the recent change of sub contractor from Ericsson to Intergraph (December 2009) in relation to the mobilising system and associated information technology systems will still be able to be delivered within the recently revised timetable, which is May 2011.

1.2 WMFS recognises that there is still a considerable amount of work to be completed in relation to the convergence issues, which have yet to be concluded. The impact of this work will influence the final deliverables in terms of how the RCC and the Fire Service will function.

1.3 Whilst WMFS welcomes the recent FRS Circular 73/2009 which seeks an input from interested parties into the high level contractual proposals; it is clear that the implementation of the project will require a wide and complex suite of legal documents to be agreed by and between CLG, EADS, Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs), the Local Authority Controlled Companies (LACCs), and the other main contractors.

1.4 These contractual documents have yet to be finalised and agreed. Therefore, refusal by one or more of the relevant parties to those contracts to enter into them could adversely impact upon the progress or implementation of the project. The recent transfer of New Dimension Assets provides a recent example of the challenges incumbent in reaching such agreements.

1.5 The potential for further variations to the project; particularly extending existing time lines leaves uncertainty for our Control Room staff, who perform an important role for WMFS. This has the potential to become a significant risk to the Service in relation to staff retention and the ability of WMFS to be able to continue to provide an effective and competent Control Room.

1.6 Whilst a national and regional business case has been produced, this indicates an overall additional cost to the West Midlands Region of circa £710,000 (based on 2006-07 prices), which the Government intend to meet in the form of a resilience payment (Section 31 Grant). In addition, the assumptions (such as Staffing Models, Staffing numbers and IT costs) may not be realised; which would lead to further uncertainty as to future funding requirements.

1.7 The business case was not completed until after the major contracts (IT and Property) were awarded, which has given rise to a situation where it is extremely difficult to make a decision not to proceed with the project even if the business case does not support the continued implementation of the same.

1.8 Whilst it is appreciated that CLG has also indicated that additional costs would currently be met by “New Burdens” Section 31 grant funding; WMFS is aware that CLG has stated that it will look to channel future funding (Section 31 Grant) through a different mechanism and that the concerns of Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) and other interested parties would be considered before implementing any change.

1.9 Therefore, in the current financial climate it is not clear as to if and how any increase in costs will continue to be met by Government throughout the life of the Fire Control Project; or indeed beyond the current CSR07 period (for example equipment and IT systems refresh).

1.10 Indeed, because decisions still need to be made as to the apportionment of costs under the national IT contracts and the long term arrangements for New Burdens funding, WMFS is not certain as to the financial implications to WMFS of the proposed move to the Regional Control Centre. Any increase in costs for a system which does not have the current full range of functionality that the newly installed system within WMFS Fire Control (2008) has, will lead to an increased burden of the communities of the West Midlands as that additional capacity will need to be provided by WMFS.
2. **The Reasons For The Cost And Time Overruns Which The Project Has Experienced**

2.1 WMFS considers that one of the reasons for cost overruns is the procurement of the buildings for the project in a manner which has resulted in the buildings being constructed and available for use in advance of the Information Technology solution being available (and which currently is still not available).

This position may have been avoided by, for example:

(a) Letting contract/s for constructing the buildings only when it was certain that the Information Technology solution was capable of being provided, or linking the timing of provision of the premises to the availability of the IT (for example, by letting contracts for the accommodation on the basis of options exercisable by CLG when the IT arrangements had been sufficiently progressed, or on a conditional basis).

In addition, the RCC building/s appear to be quite spacious when considering that under the current arrangements only approximately 25/35 staff will be working at the RCC at any one time.

2.2 WMFS is aware that there have been issues between CLG and the national IT contractor, resulting in a change of the sub contractor for the mobilising elements of the overall solution. A more inclusive evaluation of the bids for the national IT contract may have identified any concerns regarding their ability to deliver the IT solution to the required functional specification earlier in the process.

3. **What, if any changes need to be made to the government’s plans for proceeding with the project**

3.1 In the context that WMFS remains uncertain that the Information Technology Solutions will be in place in sufficient time to enable the existing timetable to be met, it is suggested that the Government:

(a) Revisits and validates the timetable for the Project and

(b) Develop a fall back strategy for provision of Control Room functions, in consultation with FRA's and the LGA in case the Information Technology Solution or other key elements of the project are not capable of being delivered on time or at all, and

(c) If option (b) is subsequently implemented: that all of the current Fire Control Project work (including convergence and standard operating protocols) be used to underpin any alternative solution.

(d) That consideration should be given to a wider set of performance standards which include a 100% commitment to allocate the right resource to the right incident rather than just about call handling times.

(e) That consideration be given to a system that is wider than just a mobilising centre but considers the wider resource management issues that a modern fire service requires to fully discharge all of its wider functionality.

January 2010

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**Memorandum from Fire Officers’ Association (FIRE 24)**

1.0 **Summary**

1.1 The FOA is not opposed to the principle of control room combination as we consider that some action would be required for national resilience purposes.

1.2 In the face of strong political pressure for change we have accepted the reality of Regional Control Centres and attempted to focus on protecting our members’ interests.

1.3 The FOA is concerned about the impacts of long-standing and continuing uncertainly about future employment status and failure to fully capitalise on opportunities for re-training and re-deployment during very long lead-in periods.

1.4 Each Region currently appears to be working on individually on the production of policies for areas such as maternity, equality, health and safety, etc. It is considered that there is scope for much greater collaboration and agreement of good practice that could minimise duplication of effort and reduce overall preparation costs.

1.5 The FOA is concerned about delayed delivery of project objectives in respect of technological solutions and we find it necessary to question whether ICT systems will be robust and have fully tested for reliability before the first control centres become operational.

1.6 The FOA would not wish to see the impending general election leading to elements of the FiReControl project being implemented before they are properly developed and tested for reliability. Similarly, any transfer of staff to LACCs should not occur until matters such as pay and conditions have been adequately addressed.

1.7 We will expect to see public reporting against such indicators to allow stakeholders to assess whether regional control rooms bring about improved service delivery and efficiency gains.
1.8 The FOA would prefer to see a national approach towards the pay and conditions of RCC staff but, being realistic, we have indicated our willingness to engage with individual LACCs with regard to pay and conditions and would expect the FOA to be recognised where our members are employed.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Fire Officers Association is one of the few organisations not opposed to the principle of control room amalgamation in that we realised that there may have been some difficulties, in terms of national resilience, if all fire and rescue services were to continue operating local, often small, control rooms. Our position has been that we could be persuaded by convincing evidence produced in support of proposals for change.

2.1 We have also attempted to adopt a realistic attitude in the face of the political will to introduce Regional Control Rooms and the likelihood that control room amalgamations would occur irrespective of stakeholder opinion.

2.3 We are conscious that a general election will be held during 2010 and that a new government with different views on Regional Control Rooms, may be formed. On no account would we wish to see any attempt to tie the next government’s hands by bringing forward elements of the FiReControl project before they are properly developed and tested for reliability.

2.4 Similarly, any transfer of staff to LACCs should not occur until matters such as pay and conditions have been addressed.

3.0 STAFF ISSUES

3.1 As a representative body, our priority has been to protect the interests of FOA members currently employed in control rooms by encouraging existing employers to engage with staff and their representative bodies at the earliest possible stage and to maximise opportunities for re-training and redeploying supernumerary staff during the long lead-in periods. We remain concerned about the degree of uncertainty amongst control room staff about future employment prospects and hope that current and future employers can work together to deal with outstanding matters and reduce the risk of future staff problems.

3.2 We are sure that LACCs would wish to have a well motivated workforce which might not be the case if staffing issues, such as conditions and transfer arrangements leave some staff with feelings of bitterness or resentment over the way that they or their colleagues been treated.

3.3 In regions where consultative arrangements were established at an early stage, our experience has been that there is a will to engage with and listen to staff representatives. However, this positive view only applies to those regions whose new control centres are due to come into operation in the first tranche of changeovers.

3.4 We appreciate the recent invitation to attend the December 2009 meeting of LACCs chairs and the opportunity to put forward opinions about the way ahead. Members of this group appeared to welcome cooperation with trade unions and we look forward to ongoing dialogue with individual companies during the transition period and beyond.

3.5 Whilst we would prefer to see a national approach towards the pay and conditions of RCC staff, we again are realistic and see that there is little chance of such an approach being applied by LACCs. We have therefore indicated our willingness to engage with individual LACCs with regard to pay and conditions and would expect the FOA to be recognised where we have members employed by a LACC.

3.6 We are concerned that HR issues do not always attract the required level of priority since agenda time can be devoted to technical matters during joint consultative meetings with representative bodies.

4.0 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

4.1 Regional management boards are sending in excess of 15 policy documents per region to each trade union and this creates an enormous workload for the representative bodies which, we feel, is unnecessary. Such policies cover matters such as maternity, equality and diversity, health and safety, etc.

4.2 We recognise that LACCs are independent bodies who will seek to govern and manage according to local preferences and priorities but we feel that this type of policy document should be fairly standard across organisations and we see no good reason why policies cannot be agreed nationally in line with good practice and adopted universally by RMB’s.

4.3 Furthermore, the production of individual policy documents is wasteful of resources and such duplication of effort is not efficient, especially during a time when public sector finances are under severe pressure. It seems strange that the opportunity for national collaboration has not been grasped when, for several years, the service has been subjected to criticism for failing to engage in effective inter-service collaboration.

4.4 If universal adoption of policy is not possible we would like to see at least some collaboration to, so far as is possible, standardise policy whilst leaving room for local flexibility and variation.
5.0 TIMESCALES

5.1 We are concerned over the considerable period of delay in delivering against project objectives, even with extra time having been available, the number of software updates and technical issues to be dealt with causes this Association to question whether IT support systems will be in place and operating reliably by the time control rooms are scheduled to go live.

6.0 PERFORMANCE MONITORING AND REPORTING

6.1 We remain open to persuasion about the business case for change and this can only be tested once new control rooms become operational. We believe that the case still needs to be proven and that it will be necessary to develop a set of performance indicators to measure the extent to which anticipated benefits are delivered.

6.2 We will expect to see public reporting against such indicators to allow stakeholders to assess whether regional control rooms bring about improved service delivery and efficiency gains.

January 2010

Memorandum from Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority (FIRE 25)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service has contributed a great deal of time, energy and resource to the FiReControl Project. However, tangible outcomes and benefits to the Service to date have been limited and delays to the project mean that we must seek an interim solution whilst continuing to work toward the project’s aims.

The Service recognises the benefits which the concept of the FireControl Project will bring. However, we are concerned that the business case continues to confuse the benefits delivered through the technological improvements, with the creation of single service control centres in English regions. Put simply, the majority of operational and tangible benefits claimed for the project are delivered through the proposed improvements in technology to deliver interoperability and resilience. These benefits do not rely on the creation of regional control companies and regional control rooms. However, the business case continues to point to the benefits delivered by new technology to justify the cost of RCC.

Equally, many of the claimed benefits of the project relate to enhanced resilience to respond to major and wide area events. Our experience suggests that RCC will pose as many new challenges as it resolves in this regard, and that far greater resilience would be created through multi-agency control rooms operating within Local Resilience Forum areas, themselves generally based on Police Force areas. Our neighbouring Police and Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) colleagues in Wales have established a very successful and cost effective model of joint, coterminous, control rooms.

Investment in existing controls has been limited due to the impending cutover to RCCs. As a result, many of the technological advances RCC will ultimately deliver would otherwise have been in place many years earlier. It is equally apparent that technology has moved forward considerably since the technical specification for the project was set in 2004. Recent investigations into interim solutions have identified that advanced, cost effective software systems are now available for installation “off the shelf”. These systems may not have existed when the FiReControl Project commenced, but now make the bespoke systems being developed to meet our 2004 technical specification look both expensive and inflexible.

In addition to the publicised IT issues, time and cost overruns have been caused by the lack of impact analysis or consideration of assessments and advice already completed. At the time the project was envisaged, it was assumed that it would result in considerable savings. When this proved not to be the case, the business case changed to suggest a vast improvement in capability for no additional cost. However, we remain concerned that the full cost for individual Fire and Rescue Authorities has been hidden. In 2004, public sector finances may have enabled individual Authorities to make up the funding gap through additional Council taxation or general efficiencies. Given the changed economic circumstances we now face, this is unlikely to be the case in the future.

Given the above, we would suggest that there needs to be an urgent review of the Business Case to ensure that the fundamental premise that it is based upon is still sound and that the solution is affordable for individual Fire and Rescue Authorities.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Submission by Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Authority to the Select Committee is done in accordance with the published terms of reference.

— Progress within the Project.
— The Reason for Time and Cost Overruns.
— Changes that Need to be Made.
1.2 The Authority continues to actively engage within the project to discharge its responsibilities under the Fire and Rescue Services National Framework. However, we are becoming increasingly concerned that increased costs, together with numerous delays, threaten the viability and credibility of the project.

2.0 PROGRESS WITHIN THE PROJECT.

2.1 Hereford and Worcester Fire and Rescue Service (HWFRS) has made significant local and regional progress within the project. However, very few tangible outcomes have been delivered at this point in time.

2.2 The Service has made a significant contribution to the project both regionally and nationally. We provided five station managers to assist with the creation of the Convergence (now Ways of Working) documents which have still to be issued, were instrumental in the creation of the Co-ordinator role, developing the job description which has now been adopted nationally, and provided personnel to sit on various groups, such as the Finance Working Group.

2.3 HWFRS has and continues to contribute fully to regional and national work to meet the Transition Plan but has recently raised a risk on the regional risk register of “Confidence in the Project.” This concern has arisen for a number of reasons:

— Issues and concerns raised early in the project have now begun to be realised eg timescales of data capture and migration, the use of NLPG and costs of station end equipment installations.
— The mixed messages that are now being received about the future of the project, the departure and turnover of key staff, the reorganisation of the management structure and the differing views of the political parties.
— Repeated delays now moving cutover past key milestone dates.
— The changing financial reality for fire and rescue services impacting the future affordability of the solution.

2.4 Tangibles delivered in HWFRS include:

2.4.1 DCMT1
— DCMT1 was delivered late (January 2009) due to technical problems.

2.4.2 Station End Equipment
— Station end Equipment Surveys were completed in August 2009. The cost estimates submitted have since been rejected (November 2009).

2.4.3 Transition Plan
— The Delivery Assurance Reporting Tool (DART) has been in use since 2007 and checkpoint 1 & 2 are complete. Each delay to the project requires a review of the plan and this takes in the region of two months to complete. Delays are not spread equally amongst the checkpoints but are “frontloaded.” This has given Hereford & Worcester a further 10 months to complete the Gateway 1 activities but has added no additional time between the gateways. It is clear that a “lessons learnt” exercise has not been carried out and linked to an impact analysis to ensure that realistic timescales are identified for future activities.

2.4.4 Code of Connection

2.4.5 Workpackages
— Numerous work packages as required.

2.4.6 Regional and National Contributions.
— LACC established.
— Members agreement completed.
— Practical completion of the RCC building.
— Initial Staff Pool.
— Job matching.
— HR, Finance and Legal working groups.
2.5 Existing Fire Controls

2.5.1 It is important to note that as a result of the FiReControl Project, there has been very little investment in existing controls.

2.5.2 It is clear that the benefits described in the FiReControl Regional Business Case (e.g. Caller Line Identification, Sat Nav etc) will offer significant added value to FRSSs and should improve the service to the public.

2.5.3 It should also be noted that if the project had not dissuaded FRSSs from making routine investment in existing controls, the majority of these features would already have been delivered and operational as technological advances have made the necessary software systems available and affordable.

2.5.4 HWFRS has recently carried out a review of the Service Strategic Risk register to assess the impact of the latest delays. This and the ongoing uncertainty surrounding the project has resulted in the need to progress “interim” solutions for the existing control ahead of cutover to RCC.

2.5.5 The predicted major benefit of RCCs is that they deliver resilience by providing “fallback” to each other whereas the majority of existing controls only have limited fall back options.

2.5.6 Investigations into interim solutions have identified that full fallback is possible between FRSS using similar systems with minimal investment.

3.0 The Reasons for Time and Cost Overruns

3.1 Time Overruns

3.1.1 It is clear that current time overruns have been brought about as a result of technology issues. This is evidenced by the significant delay in the rollout of DCMT 1 and the recent replacement of Ericsson with Intergraph as the primary supplier of the mobilising solution.

3.1.2 This is of major concern as we had been led to believe that the technology is “off the shelf” and is “proven” and already in operation in FRSSs within the U.K.

3.1.3 Had the technology not created delays, it is likely that other aspects of this complex project would have. HR issues surrounding the transfer of staff have not yet been agreed within the region and despite the efforts of all concerned, it is clear that the complexity of staffing issues have not been fully recognised. This has led to an inconsistent understanding around TUPE and an inconsistent approach to the relationship between the transfer of all staff to the Fire Control Company, and the transfer of the Fire Control undertaking itself. It appears that where guidance may not have supported the projects progress, it is left open for local interpretation.

3.1.4 Significant progress has been made within the region to devise plans for staffing the RCC both initially and at steady state, and for providing retention and redeployment options. However these are yet to be agreed by CLG and will require funding. If funding is not forthcoming these plans will have to be revisited immediately as the staff for the ISP are required to be in place a significant time before cutover of the first FRSS (May 2011).

3.1.5 Legal Issues. The LACC Members’ agreement is now signed and the LACC is functioning. However, this was not without difficulties and Hereford & Worcester has needed to seek independent legal advice to ensure that all legal matters are in the best interests of the service and the public.

3.1.6 Specialist groups have been established by the project to give definitive professional opinion (e.g. Finance Working Group). It is apparent that time delays have been created by not heeding the advice of these groups at the outset and having to return to it once other options have been exhausted.

3.2 Transition Plan

3.2.1 It is clear that insufficient time has been allowed within the plan to ensure that all of the work required before cutover is completed. This is evidenced by the Data Impact Analysis carried out in 2007. This analysis determined that it will take HWFRS 3–4 years to complete all of the data capture conversion and migration required before cutover.

3.2.2 This work started in January 2009 with the delivery of DCMT1. However this is incomplete and does not provide a method for capturing data relating to railways, motorways, pipelines and waterways. Cutover for HWFRS is in March 2012 therefore any further delay with rollout will result in a delay to cutover.

3.2.3 In addition, Hereford & Worcester has contributed nationally to produce work packages such as Ways of Working and Attributes but these have yet to be released. With the amount of work still to be completed it is unlikely, given the impact analysis, that data capture and migration will be completed in the time allotted in the Transition Plan.

3.2.4 Staff availability has not been considered within the Transition Plan. It is not possible to quickly employ staff or transfer staff to carry out individual pieces of work within the short timescales often given by the Project. Internal Departments have little capacity to deal with work activities that are released with
short turn around times. This was evidenced by the releases of the Ways of Working documents for review in July and August 2009. Hereford & Worcester was not able to comment on the majority of the documents due to the availability of key staff within the two week window given.

3.2.5 Recently, there have been two delays announced. Following each announcement, it took approximately two months to update and release the new plan. Given that these delays were nine and 10 months, a two month delay each time did not allow meaningful work to be progressed for four months as new transition activities were not known.

3.2.6 Each delay has not been spread across the Transition Plan evenly, but has been “front loaded”. The practical impact is to give Hereford & Worcester a further nine and 10 months before having to pass through gateway 1, but thereafter the time between gateways is exactly the same. Logically, this would seem to indicate that the only issues capable of resulting in delay related to work activities in Gateway 1 only. However, whilst this is unlikely to be the case, we are unable to quantify any risks as no impact analysis has been carried out of these later activities. It is inevitable, that as FR5s begin work on the activities in the other Gateways and further issues are identified, more delays will be forthcoming.

3.3 Cost Overrun

3.3.1 The FiReControl Project has provided funding to FRSs through the “New Burdens” principle. However this is insufficient to meet the actual costs incurred. This is evidenced by the resource plan submitted by HWFRS. There also appears to be an assumption that when something is needed urgently, New Burdens cash can create an instant resource when this is not necessarily so.

3.3.2 Further costs within the project are hidden. Funding is provided for the Co-ordinator Role in each FRS. However increasingly other members of the FRS are being called upon to work within the project. For example in Hereford & Worcester the following staff have been directly involved in the project

- DCFO
- Director of Finance
- ACFO
- Head of HR
- Fire Control Manager
- Facilities Manager
- ICT Manager
- Project Board
- Project Board/Finance Working Group
- HR
- HR Exchange
- HR Groups
- Property
- IT issues

3.3.3 The cost and loss of capacity to the Service of providing these staff to the project is not covered and is therefore hidden. Increasingly this cannot be allowed to continue and will lead to cost overruns.

3.3.4 Recently, surveys to provide station end equipment were carried out. The cost estimates were submitted to the project and for 50% of the stations in Hereford & Worcester these were rejected as being too high. This was based on the cost of the rollout of the early station end equipment. Differences within individual FR5s do not seem to be considered and that will inevitably cause further delay.

4.0 Changes that Need to be Made

4.1 It is clear that delays in the project have primarily arisen from technology issues. However, had this not happened, it is likely that delays would have resulted from a number of other areas. The project was also conceived on the basis that it would save money, or at least, cost no more for an enhanced service. Our calculations confirm that the RCC will present a significant additional cost in some regions, not all of which will be recognised in New Burden funding from government. The ability of FRS to meet these additional and hidden costs in the coming years presents a considerable risk. If the project is to continue there are a number of areas that would benefit from urgent review.

4.2 The Business case, references to 9/11 and major incidents should be immediately reviewed. 9/11 occurred 10–12 years prior to the predicted go live of the RCCs. In the intervening period our operational systems and protocols have changed considerably and we have gained further experience dealing with significant disruptive events (flooding, terrorism, weather and pandemic). The Business Case and technological specification is predominantly “backward looking” in that it seeks to provide a solution to past events on the basis of outdated operational and technological assumptions.

4.3 The FiReControl Project has determined that a system of RCCs is the best solution for dealing with major and wide spread incidents. Whilst there is no doubt that greater interoperability between controls and seamless fallback arrangements are required during these events, technological advances mean that there is little additional value in putting this technology in just nine buildings. Indeed, it is our experience from recent events (eg flooding) that a multi agency approach based on Local Resilience (LR) areas may be more suitable. This has been progressed in Wales where a consistent and co-terminus Police/Fire and Ambulance approach has now been adopted.

4.4 Hereford & Worcester has raised concerns regarding the operational functionality of the RCCs in times of spate or during a major incident. Whilst it is important that we have interoperability and seamless fallback with other control rooms, which will be delivered through the technology solution, not regional centres, it is equally important that FRS officers and our Local Resilience Forum partners have full local and immediate control of our resources to ensure that operational priorities are established and can be
This will involve for example changing predetermined attendances on a dynamic basis. We are informed that technological solutions will be developed to address these issues, but at this point in time, it is difficult to see how this will be possible within an RCC structure. An approach with linked controls based on LR partners would alleviate these issues.

4.5 Many of the technological difficulties within the project are driven by the requirement to house controls in regional centres. Given the huge developments in commercial technology have occurred since the business case and technical specification were created in 2004, the same level of interoperability could be delivered without regional buildings. Given that the project is now so delayed, and to avoid the solution being obsolete before it is even delivered, the technology and underpinning assumptions should be completely reviewed to ensure they remain appropriate and represent best value.

4.6 The RCCs will deliver a size and standard of building that would be considered unacceptably extravagant in most FRSs and local government organisations. Local FRSs have had no option but to accept this “gold plating”, but the resulting costs will have a significant impact on the future affordability of the project. Some of this over provision appears to have been specified by government to meet their perception of the needs of Critical National Infrastructure, rather than to meet any local or regional requirement. The requirement for this level of provision and the level of national funding support should therefore be reviewed to reflect this.

4.7 A review of the Business Case should include a realistic appraisal of the costs and savings. The Business Case clearly identifies that it will cost more to run RCCs than the existing provision (£4.9 million pa). This however is offset against avoidance of cost for items such as installation of solutions provided by FiReLink (a nationally mandated requirement).

4.8 The Business case states that there are economies of scale and that small control rooms are not cost effective. This fails to take into account activities classified as out of scope for RCC and how many FRSs have used any spare capacity to deliver other essential functions. Post RCC, these functions will still need to be carried out and Authorities will need to establish specialist functions to do the work previously undertaken by control staff, in addition to meeting the costs for RCC. A review of the premise that there are economies of scale should be carried out to include all of the work currently undertaken by Controls and the true and changing cost of RCC. It is worthy of note that even without the cost of “out of scope activities”, the Business Case identifies that the forecast cost for London (the largest existing control and therefore presumably the most cost effective) to run RCCs is £2.7 million pa more than their existing costs.

4.9 CLG has stated that no FRS will be financially disadvantaged by moving to the RCC and to ensure this they will receive a grant to “make up” the difference. However, this grant will not necessarily cover the actual additional cost to Authorities and is in any case only guaranteed for a limited time after cutover. The funding provided to FRSs should be reviewed to ensure that realistic levels are attained. Hidden costs should be identified, recognised and funded for the life of the RCC’s.

4.10 Given the changing economic climate, an affordability assessment for each FRA should be conducted to ensure that RCC will remain affordable. By way of example, in our own Authority, we estimate that even with New Burdens funding, the RCC and replacement for “out of scope” functions will cost an additional £0.5 million per annum. To put this figure into context in terms of front line services, £0.5 million per annum equates to the running costs for five of our twenty seven retained fire stations.

4.11 The transition plan must be reviewed urgently to ensure that an impact assessment is carried out on each major activity. This should ensure that realistic timescales are established from the outset and would allow for sufficient “breathing space” to be built in. The result would be that a new realistic schedule for cutover is produced.

4.12 Resource plans provided by FRSs should be used as the basis of funding for the project. Failure to do so will lead to funding “gaps” later on in the project and will mean that FRSs are not able to continue with the Transition Plan

January 2010

Memorandum from the Department for Communities and Local Government (FIRE 26)

The Communities and Local Government Select Committee has launched a brief inquiry into the FiReControl project and has called for written evidence by 8 January 2010. This memorandum is the department’s response to that call.

THE CHALLENGE

1. The challenges we face as a country are changing: we have seen the impacts of climate change floods in Northumberland, Gloucestershire and most recently in Cumbria; the scope of large industrial incidents like the Buncefield oil depot fire; and the developing nature of the terrorist threat, as we saw in the 2005 London bombings. These are real threats to our country’s safety and resilience.
2. The Fire and Rescue Service has done a professional and courageous job in responding to all of these events and many more. But these challenges have also highlighted the dangers they face and how they have succeeded despite shortcomings in some systems and equipment. We are committed to equipping the Fire and Rescue Service with the tools they need to meet these challenges and to protect the public.

The Government’s Response

3. We set out to understand the nature of these challenges and the possible responses. It was clear that the issues we faced as a country were no respecter of traditional boundaries and our ability to deal with these challenges would require a greater level of co-operation and interoperability between the Fire and Rescue Services than ever before.

4. The Government commissioned an independent analysis of the options by Mott MacDonald in 2000, which was updated in 2003. It became clear through this that the current communications systems in the FRS could not provide a basic level of resilience across the country. Even now, there are 46 independent, standalone control rooms which operate with varying technologies and work differently.

5. From the evidence in the 2000 and 2003 Mott MacDonald reports, The Future of Fire and Rescue Service Control Rooms in England and Wales, and through consultation with the Fire and Rescue Service, we decided to put in place for the first time a national network to handle emergency calls and mobilise resources across England.

6. We chose a network of nine Regional Control Centres which would be able to back each other up whenever emergency call volumes peaked, providing greater national, regional and local resilience. These centres would be able to direct resources from more than one FRS to a particular incident at times of great stress.

7. This decision to go ahead was firmly rooted in our objective to modernise the Fire and Rescue Service, informed by the conclusions of the Bain Review in 2002. The project itself is an integral part of the Fire and Resilience Programme which is a £1 billion Government investment in the FRSs.

8. Alongside FiReControl, the other two projects which make up the programme are: Firelink—a common interoperable radio communications system; and New Dimension, which has put in place a wide range of new capabilities including equipment and training to deal with major incidents, such as high volume pumps for flooding. Taken together these projects provide a powerful platform for the future of the Fire and Rescue Service.

9. We committed to deliver this programme in the 2003 White Paper, Our Fire and Rescue Service White Paper, and the FiReControl project tasked with setting up the regional control centre network began in March 2004. Our commitment to deliver has been reinforced through consecutive Fire and Rescue Service National Frameworks. The current version covers 2008–11.

10. As a department we have a clear Departmental Strategic Objective which sets out to ensure “safer communities by providing the framework for the Fire and Rescue Service and other agencies to prevent and respond to emergencies (DSO6)”. Delivering FiReControl, and the rest of the Fire and Resilience Programme, is a core priority for the department.

The Case for FiReControl

11. The benefits of the FiReControl project which will be delivered by implementing the Regional Control Centre network can be broken down into three categories: increased resilience, greater Fire and Rescue Service capability, and improved firefighter safety. These are explored below.

Increased Resilience

12. The major benefit of the FiReControl project is the resilient network which it will deliver. Every Regional Control Centre will be able to back up any other at busy times, and ensure a better service to the public. The networked technology will ensure that control staff in any of the nine Regional Control Centres will be able to answer calls from anywhere in the country and be able to mobilise the appropriate resources in the quickest and most effective way.

13. Currently, this is not possible. Today the Fire and Rescue Service has 46 stand-alone control rooms which take 999 calls. There is a large disparity in the technology they use and they cannot access a common communication system to provide backup for each other in the event of a large scale incident. In recent emergencies, such as severe flooding and large-scale urban fires, independent control rooms have been unable to cope with the high volume of calls that they have received and calls have been held in long queues and sometimes even lost. Neighbouring control rooms have been able to take messages only.

14. The existing control room system does not meet modern operational requirements. They are not purpose-built and many would not be capable of responding sufficiently effectively to a large scale incident, such as a natural disaster or terrorist attack. The RCCs are purpose-built, modern facilities which are securely designed to form part of the Critical National Infrastructure. Each RCC has green credentials and
provides a much improved working environment for staff. Their locations were carefully chosen to address staffing needs and take account of environmental risks such as flooding. They are built to a highly resilient standard, and each building can continue to operate in times of crisis, such as in the event of a power loss.

15. The Chief Fire and Rescue Advisor Sir Ken Knight’s review of the response to flooding in 2007, Facing the Challenge (2008) stated that his review findings “underpin the rationale for the FiReControl project and conclude that a number of difficulties experienced in the existing disparate fire control arrangements will be overcome through the proposed regional control centre network.”

Greater Fire and Rescue Service Capabilities

16. The FiReControl project is introducing a wide range of tools to raise the capability of all Fire and Rescue Services up to the standard of the best. These tools include the integration of new risk management tools which will allow for more accurate and effective mobilisation of resources. Currently, FRSs cannot deploy specialist equipment or resources efficiently across boundaries or over large geographical areas. With FiReControl, local Integrated Risk Management Plans will be coordinated to mobilise an efficient response.

17. When a member of the public makes a call, the caller’s location (from a mobile or a landline) will be identified automatically, helping the Fire and Rescue Service respond to those who cannot communicate or are uncertain of their surroundings.

18. If a call cannot be handled by the “home” RCC, whatever the reason, it will automatically be transferred to an available operator in another region. Under the FiReControl project, the introduction of common call handling and mobilisation processes, technology and training, will then allow for calls to be consistently managed.

Improved Frontline Firefighter Safety

19. The new system will also deliver significant safety benefits to the public and to firefighters.

20. The rollout of Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) to all FRSs across the country will provide risk information to firefighters, including information on buildings and details of known risks and hazards, guidance on the safe handling of chemicals and details of motor vehicle design in road traffic accidents, and the location of the nearest hydrants and water supplies. This will also enable every FRS to meet the improvement notice issued by Health and Safety Executive. The Firelink project is installing the hardware for the MDTs, and FiReControl will provide the software.

21. We are also introducing a new communications system based on data, rather than voice. This system will facilitate quicker, more effective information flow at incidents—for example on the status of incidents. The data system will be a significant benefit to firefighters, and will be accessible through the MDTs.

22. Each MDT will be equipped with a Global Positioning System transmitter which will show the exact location of each fire appliance. This will enable control staff working with networked technology to identify the available appropriate Fire and Rescue Service resources with the shortest journey time for an incident anywhere in England. This is called the Automatic Vehicle Location System, and it will also provide information on the quickest route to the incident.

Who will see these benefits?

23. The FiReControl project is delivering benefits to everyone in England. It represents £420 million of investment in the Fire and Rescue Service and will provide:

A better service to the public

— When a member of the public makes a call, the caller’s location (from a mobile or landline) will be identified automatically.

— The control centre computer systems will help the RCC staff to locate and mobilise the appropriate resources instantly.

— And, because there is a network to absorb increased demand, during a large scale emergency, more calls will be able to be answered more quickly.

Safer frontline firefighters

— Firefighters will be able to access consistent and timely information through on-board computers in their cabs.

— This will provide firefighters with satellite navigation technology and access to vital information like the location of the nearest hydrants and water supplies.
Better technology for Control Centre Operators

— All control operators across England will have modern equipment, use the same technology and be able to work together across the network to back each other up at busy times.
— The new systems will provide control room operators with technology to help them do their job more effectively, including information on the nearest and most appropriate resources for any incident.
— They will be able to contribute their expertise to help in large-scale incidents in other regions.

Project Components

24. FiReControl is a complex and ambitious project, and implementation has not been straightforward. The delivery environment is by its nature diverse, with considerable work required by 45 FRSs, the main contractor EADS Defence & Security (and their sub-contractors), local authority controlled companies who will run the RCCs, and the national project team.

25. The FiReControl project has been running since 2004. Since that time, we have engaged very closely with the Fire and Rescue Service to understand their needs and to establish their requirements for the Regional Control Centre network.

26. The FiReControl project can be broken down into three main components: the IT solution and delivery of equipment; Regional Control Centre buildings; and business change. We have made considerable progress against each of these.

Development of the IT solution and Delivery of Equipment

27. EADS was awarded the contract to develop, deploy and maintain the IT solution in March 2007 following a competitive procurement process. EADS is contracted to deliver the resilient IT system that links the nine regional control centres to all fire stations across England, and their appliances and vehicles, and which enables the transfer of data between them. They are also contracted to maintain and enhance the system following development, until 2015. There is also an option to extend this until 2018.

28. We have started rolling out mobilising equipment into local fire stations. At the start of January 2010, over 125 stations are using the FiReControl interface equipment to communicate between their control room and their fire stations. Indeed, we have had a specific programme of work to roll out some of this equipment in advance of the main roll out to assist FRSs whose current equipment had become obsolete or hard to maintain. When the network goes live all FRSs will use this equipment to communicate with the Regional Control Centres.

29. The development of the initial software for mobile data terminals (in-cab computers) is complete and the roll-out of these terminals to all FRSs taking this software is now well underway. Firelink has supplied the hardware for the MDTs.

30. Many of the “ways of working” operational policies and procedures have been drawn up in partnership with the FRS, EADS, and their sub-contractors. We have engaged with all nine regions to develop the list of mobilising attributes that each FRS will use to define their specific attendances. This work is being driven forward through further and continuing engagement with the FRS community.

Construction of Regional Control Centre Buildings

31. The FiReControl network will be operated out of nine Regional Control Centre Buildings. The specifications for these purpose-built buildings have had to be drawn up, detailed work on location selections, and making preparations for facilities management services have been a key component in the project.

32. We have made good progress on the buildings. Eight of the nine Regional Control Centres have been built and the ninth (London) is on track for completion next month, February 2010.

33. To date, EADS has kitted out three of the RCCs (South West, East Midlands, and North East) with furniture, Audio Visual and IT equipment. In a fourth region, the West Midlands, the fit-out is substantially complete.

Implementing Business Change

34. FiReControl is a large business change project. For example, there are new bodies set up to run the RCCs which will have the opportunity to develop the culture in the RCC and training will be in place to prepare control room operators for the move into the Regional Control Centres. These are essential to the successful delivery of the FiReControl project.

35. The move to a national network requires a standard approach to a number of operational policies and procedures to be developed and adopted across the country—replacing up to 46 different approaches. Developing and agreeing these new “ways of working” is a significant undertaking and these operating
protocols are being drawn up in partnership with FRSs, RCCs, EADS, and their sub-contractors. At the time of writing, almost all of the key principles have been drafted and reviewed by the FRS. Significant work is being put into developing the detail which sits behind these principles.

36. The Fire and Rescue Authorities in every region outside London have come together to set up Local Authority Controlled Companies which will run the Regional Control Centres in the future, including employing the RCC staff. These LACCs are maturing and making important decisions about the future of their service.

37. We are working closely with the FRs to enable them to build their “pre-determined attendance” protocols which will, in turn, enable them to deliver their Integrated Risk Management Plans through the Regional Control Centre network.

**THE WAY FORWARD**

38. Our first priority over the coming months is the development of the integrated IT solution, being delivered by our contractors EADS. As the Committee is aware, the development of the FiReControl solution has been slower than expected. For their part, EADS Defence & Security has acknowledged that their quality assurance has not been as good as we and FRSs are entitled to expect.

39. EADS has reorganised its senior management and designated this as one of their top three priority projects in Europe. They have given us their assurance at the very highest level that we will now see the standard of performance, delivery and quality on this project that we would expect from such a major global company in this field.

40. Following a key design review in March 2009, the design approach was revised to involve both the department and the end users in the elaboration of the requirements and the solution. A series of Solution Establishment Workshops were scheduled and these are attended by members of the national project team, FRS secondees, representatives from the Chief Fire Officers’ Association, EADS technical designers and suppliers.

41. A recent significant development is that in December 2009 EADS changed a key sub-contractor from Ericsson to Intergraph to deliver the core mobilising system. EADS had concerns about the slow progress in developing the mobilising system. Therefore, in November 2008, they started to explore the viability of alternative mobilising systems.

42. In December 2009, Ministers agreed that EADS could change sub-contractor to Intergraph, and its Intergraph Computer Aided Despatch system product (I/CAD). Prior to that, a full impact assessment was undertaken and significant work was carried out by the project team and FRS representatives to review the functionality offered by the new supplier.

43. In contractual terms, we have demanded, and received, greater visibility of deliverables and more interim/shorter milestones from EADS. We will continue to take a close “hands on” management and assurance role and be vigilant for signs of slippage or loss of quality in outputs.

44. Equally, as a department we have raised our game to ensure that we have the right level of professional capacity on the national project team in areas like contract management, governance and operational processes. We welcome the Committee recognising this at the session on the department’s annual report last autumn.

45. We are regularly monitored through OGC Healthchecks of the project. This October they commented positively on many aspects the project and we are continuing to work with them to ensure successful delivery. We have also sought independent advice on the way forward for the project, and we have been assured that through our strengthened relationship with EADS and their new sub-contractor, we are on track for the development and integration of the full FiReControl solution.

46. Our team of FRs secondees, around a third of the national FiReControl team, will continue to work at EADS’ offices in Newport to provide assurance on the design, development and test of the IT solution as it progresses. At the same time, the department and EADS have jointly commissioned an independent study aimed at strengthening our relationship, funded by EADS.

47. We believe that we will know the full impact of this approach, and be able to assess EADS renewed delivery approach, in Spring 2010.

**PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION COSTS AND SCHEDULE**

48. Since the initiation of the FiReControl Project in 2004 the first indicative cost figure given to Parliament for project implementation was £120 million. This did not include costs of meeting local and regional implementation activity, nor did it include the costs for installing equipment in every single fire station in England. At this stage the expectation was that the IT system would be delivered by commercial off-the-shelf solutions and the integration requirements had not been fully defined. In 2005 the Outline Business Case was published which indicated an expected completion date of January 2009.
49. As we developed the FRSs’ requirements we were then able to assess the funding they would need for a range of local and regional implementation activity. We also developed a firmer idea of the costs of the Regional Control Centre building leases and the costs of equipment to be installed in every fire station in England to support improved mobilisation.

50. In 2007, the first comprehensive assessment of the total cost to deliver the project was announced in the first version of the Full Business Case 1.0. We were in a position to do this at this time as all the major contracts had been signed, including the £200 million contract with EADS to develop, deploy and maintain the IT system. The project cost at this time was estimated at £340 million based on a schedule for the first Regional Control Centres going live in October 2009, with the whole network up-and-running by September 2011. Under these assumptions, the business case forecast national level savings of 28% compared with the costs of running the current control rooms.

51. In 2008, we announced that the total implementation cost would be £380m. The increase in project costs followed engagement with stakeholders to further develop understanding of the local and regional costs of implementation including the revision of estimates on training and redundancy costs in particular.

52. We also initiated an independent review of the current control room costs during 2007–08 which established that the running costs were lower than previously estimated. As a result of that review the annual savings which were reported at 28% in 2007 were reduced to 11% in the 2008 Business Case.

53. In the final version of the Full Business Case, published in May 2009, the annual national savings once the network goes live are currently estimated to be £6 million (9%), as set out in the FiReControl Full Business Case 1.1, published in May 2009.

54. The figure of £1.4 billion which is often cited as project cost is in fact the total cost of providing control room services over the 16 year period 2004–05 through to 2020–21 (the life of the Business Case). It includes the running costs under current arrangements, the project implementation costs for FiReControl, and the running costs for the new RCC network.

55. We have three fundamental funding principles which we have stuck to throughout the life of the project. Firstly, the department will meet all the costs involved in developing the system and for the FRS’ transition to the network. This commitment is being met.

56. Secondly, no FRS will be left out of pocket by the move to the RCC network. To this end, we have committed to meet the net additional costs falling to Fire and Rescue Authorities following their move to the RCC network ie those costs over and above their current costs of providing the control room function. This is a total estimated cost of £8.2 million per annum and there are 24 Fire and Rescue Authorities eligible for funding under New Burdens principles, which will be reviewed after three years.

57. Thirdly, where FRAs are forecast to make a saving they will be able to keep these and reinvest them in frontline services. This applies to 21 Fire and Rescue Authorities which are estimated to realise savings which total £3.2 million per annum.

58. The project timetable was extended by nine months in November 2008, aiming for the first RCCs to be up-and-running in Summer 2010. The Fire Minister’s statement to Parliament explained that, following a thorough review of all aspects of the FiReControl project, a number of difficulties with the ICT and other dimensions of the project were identified.

59. In July 2009, we announced a 10-month delay to the project due to technical problems with developing the IT system in a way which will meet all our and the FRS requirements.

60. We now expect the first Fire and Rescue Services to cut over to the Regional Control Centres in spring 2011 with the last switch over by the end of 2012. As a result of this delay, the forecast costs of delivering the project rose from £380 million to £420 million—this is the cost of keeping the national, regional and local FiReControl project implementation teams going for longer, as well as the RCC accommodation.

61. At that stage, a deal in principle was reached on a royalty agreement which would offset this increase. We believe it is the best approach in order to continue to develop the network, so the country can reap the resilience benefits, while enabling the taxpayer to recoup the costs of the delay. The original contract costs to the department have not increased. We provided the Committee with a more detailed note on this issue in November 2009.

CONCLUSION

62. FiReControl is a large and ambitious project, with benefits which are well worth realising—greater resilience in the event of a crisis, improved FRS capability for day-to-day operations and safer frontline firefighters. The public expects an effective and efficient service when they call “999” and delivering the FiReControl project will enable the Fire and Rescue Services to deliver this as well as make the right response to incidents of all sizes.
63. Implementation of the FiReControl solution has been slower than we hoped, and initially planned. We have thoroughly reviewed our approach and progress, informed by independent advice, and taken tough decisions to ensure we are best placed to make progress. We are committed to delivering FiReControl and the substantial benefits it will deliver for national resilience, for public and firefighter safety and for improved capability in England’s Fire and Rescue Services.

January 2010

Supplementary memorandum from CLG (FIRE 26A)

SELECT COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO FIRECONTROL: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Thank you again for the opportunity to discuss the FiReControl project with you, and your Committee, on Monday 8 February. At the session I undertook to provide more information to your Committee covering finance, our contract with EADS and stakeholder involvement in the project. Thank you also for your letter of 15 February in which you asked me to reconsider my decision not to release the independent analysis requested by the Committee. I will set out the position on this matter first.

I have considered the release of the independent analysis very carefully and have again concluded that it would not be right for me to release these documents at the present time.

In reconfirming this conclusion, I have noted that my officials have considered general practice across government by consulting other Government Departments including the Office of Government Commerce. They have also considered the government-wide approach to Freedom of Information and consulted with the department’s own Freedom of Information team. The consistent view is that the independent analysis should not be released as, aside from matters of commercial confidentiality, these documents form part of a body of advice which I have received from officials in respect of ongoing policy development, and decisions in relation to this project which have yet to be taken.

I have set out below the further information that you requested in the Committee which I hope you will find useful.

FINANCE

Your Committee asked, at question 109, whether I was indicating a change in policy with regard to meeting costs associated with the Fire and Rescue Authorities maintaining their current control systems. For clarity, I was not announcing a new policy. I was confirming our long-held policy to support the genuine net additional costs for FRAs associated with delay in accordance with New Burdens principles. We have stated that where FRAs have to pay unavoidable additional costs to keep their systems operational for a longer period then we will meet the extra cost. Beyond specific FiReControl funding there are well established funding streams for the Fire and Rescue Authorities which contribute towards costs of replacing assets and systems.

As you know, EADS has now delivered to us a detailed draft schedule which we are working through with them. We will then be working with the Fire and Rescue Service to consider the implications of this schedule.

I should also clarify, to avoid any misperception, that our agreement to provide funding has been based on evidence and our objective assessment of the case made rather than as a result of external lobbying.

At question 122, I said that I would set out the baseline figures against which we are saying that savings are going to be achieved.

It is estimated that the annual cost of providing a FRS emergency control service in England, had FiReControl not gone ahead, would be £66.7 million. The total annual cost of providing nine networked control centres under FiReControl is estimated to be £60.7 million. The difference is an overall annual saving of £6 million (9%). This is set out in more detail in the FiReControl Full Business Case.

I was asked about the expenditure which is committed at this point should the project be terminated (question 120). I should caveat this section with the reality that the actual figures involved would depend on the particular circumstances in which the decision to end the project was made—this is applicable particularly to the commercial settlement which would have to be reached with suppliers.

We estimate the position at the end of February to be a little over £200 million in terms of costs to date. With regard to contractual and other committed costs the most significant element relates to the Regional Control Centre building leases. The total remaining costs of the RCC leases over their full terms is £280 million through to the final lease payment on the final RCC (2034/35). There may be opportunities to offset some of this cost but this represents an amount that is contractually committed.

Additionally, there would be compensation payable to other contractors, notably Airwave for not completing the full roll-out of the Firelink solution. This is estimated to be £11 million and would represent a material reduction in Firelink functionality for the Fire and Rescue Services. To avoid this compensation payment and secure the Firelink benefits in each of the 46 Fire and Rescue Services we estimate that it would cost in the region of £120 million. There would be other costs involved in winding down the project, including legal fees and redefining the facilities management and security arrangements at the RCCs.
The position with regards to EADS in terms of compensation/damages is another significant uncertainty with potential financial upsides or downsides, depending on the circumstances in which any decision was taken.

**Contract**

We are working closely with EADS to go through the draft schedule line-by-line to understand any implications. On the contractual point raised under question 72, I agreed to clarify the dates in the contract between the department and EADS, with the original sub-contractor.

The key contractual date in the CLG-EADS contract relates to Final System Build (FSB). In the original contract signed in March 2007 the date for FSB was August 2009, with EADS’ original subcontractor. The projected “go-live” date on the basis of this was then October 2009. We agreed new contractual dates with EADS through formal Change Control Notes, still with Ericsson as a subcontractor, which moved the FSB date to March 2010. As Shona Dunn said at our oral evidence session the March 2010 contractual date remains extant.

I should reconfirm that the schedule remains as published in July last year although, as we made clear at the oral session, no guarantees can be given until we have completed the detailed scheduling work. The subsequent move to Intergraph has consequences for some elements of that schedule and EADS has provided a revised draft schedule to us which we are reviewing and will discuss with Fire and Rescue Service.

**Stakeholder Engagement**

As part of your inquiry the involvement of stakeholders has clearly been an important issue. Your Committee raised this with me at question 83.

We recognise that our stakeholder engagement could have been better from the outset, and that we could have managed relationships more effectively. Our early engagement with stakeholders tended to be one-way and I accept that we did not listen as carefully as we should have to their views.

I would now say that we are engaging and involving our stakeholder much more effectively in delivering the project—both in our governance arrangements and in our open and constructive everyday dealings. It is pleasing to see that a number of the submissions to the Committee recognise that this has improved over the last year—we will continue to build on this.

I would not want the Committee, however, to be left with the impression that stakeholders were not involved from the outset. Stakeholders were consulted in developing the policy approach, and FRS representatives were asked to comment on the design of the buildings. We also took on a number of secondees from the FRS to ensure that we had control room—and wider FRS—expertise at the heart of the project.

We currently fund a team of four representatives from the Chief Fire Officers’ Association (CFOA) to work full time on the project; they are closely involved in the development of the IT solution, operational policies and procedures and working practices, providing technical and professional advice.

CFOA and the Local Government Association play an important role in the project’s governance structure. They sit on the Project Board and the CFOA Senior User chairs the Project’s monthly stakeholder meeting, at which all Regional Project Directors are represented. There are also representatives from every region on key working groups covering finance, legal and HR matters.

On our wider engagement, there are regular project boards in each of the English regions at which the national team and EADS are represented to discuss the issues with representatives of each and every FRS in England. We also attend a range of local and regional meetings through dedicated Business Relationship Managers, project team subject matter experts and project planners. This is in addition to the regular contact we have with the FRs through Ministerial and official level contact.

Other examples of our efforts to improve our communications include, but are not limited to:

- A monthly FiReControl project update aimed at FRS staff working in the regions who are involved in project delivery (example attached).
- Production of a brochure aimed at a wide stakeholder audience (copy attached).
- A series of Fact Sheets explaining different aspects of the project for a variety of audiences including FRS communications professionals.
- A demonstration of the FiReControl solution to be shown at major stakeholder events.
- Provision of information and briefing packs to key stakeholders on major project developments and issues (for example, publication of the FiReControl Business Case and the EADS switch to Intergraph).
We have put communications and stakeholder engagement at the core of the project’s governance structure, which includes a senior Stakeholder Advisory Group and a Communications Network bringing together professional communication experts together from across England.

I hope you find this response helpful.

Shahid Malik MP

Memorandum from the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) (FIRE 27)

1. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) represents approximately 45,000 members covering all ranks and duty systems in the fire & rescue service including approximately 4,000 officers, 11,000 firefighters working the retained duty system and 1,500 firefighters (control). This represents over 85% of all uniformed operational personnel currently serving in the fire & rescue services. The FBU welcomes the opportunity to submit evidence both written and verbal to the Select Committee and this submission deals with some of the key issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to appear before the Members of the Select Committee to support our submission and to attempt to answer any questions they may have upon it.

Overview

2. The Government originally “sold” the FireControlProject on Invest to Save principles. The result, it was asserted, would be a much better and more resilient system which would be delivered in a staged cutover between 2006 and 2007 and pay for itself within five years.

3. FireControl is now massively over the original cost estimates, there are significant problems and doubts about the technology, what it can deliver and whether the system will be “resilient”. The Project will not be complete, even on current timetables until the end of 2012 at the earliest, if at all. There will be no savings, it will cost more.

4. The problems must be put down to lack of foresight, major errors at the beginning and since, poor project management, lack of stakeholder engagement or genuine “sign up”, an inability to take proper note of real concerns and the dismissal of doubters and sceptics out of hand.

5. Costs and timescales became totally out of control, leaving some FRS’s with ageing systems that require imminent replacement. Many had not upgraded because of the expectation that a new RCC system would be in place by 2006–07 and then later 2008–09.

6. Many have no planned Control facility going forward. The responsibility of the fire authority remains to ensure control systems are fit for purpose to fulfil its statutory duty irrespective of the FireControl Project which may or may not be concluded.

7. Such is the state of the Project and lack of confidence in it that a fundamental independent review must be undertaken involving all stakeholders and utilising and upgrading current controls, the FBU’s preferred option, must be considered as part of that process.

8. Assertions about the resilience of the new system are now central to the new Government “spin”. There is no evidence to support claims of greater resilience or that the end result will be a much better system.

9. It is important to temper the Government “spin” with a dose of realism about what has been achieved and what could be achieved.

Progress so far

10. The RCCs buildings are nearly all built. None are close to being operational and their costs are a significant drain on the Project.

11. Supposedly “resilient”, they are red brick construction with considerable areas of glass situated behind wire-fencing in open business parks. Some are based on flood plains, flight paths or close to airports and major motorway junctions, all of which undermine claims of “resilience”.

12. There have been numerous delays and cost-overruns. Morale has plummeted, confidence in the Project has nose-dived across the service. There has been immense pressure on senior operational managers. Some key staff have left.

13. The adoption of the LACC model has created major problems and a whole cottage industry of additional FRS/Regional Management Board advisors replicated across every region in England. A simpler, and cheaper solution would be a secondment model for control staff, that would be real progress instead of the current uncertainty for staff and close the gold mine for consultants giving HR and legal advice on the employment issues.

14. All RCC Directors have been appointed. The first four appointed had no fire service background, let alone a fire service control background. This was the preferred outcome of CLG.
15. In 2008 there were 130 project risks on the FireControl Risk Register, eight of which were rated “high” or above. On 16 December 2009 in a Parliamentary Answer in response to a question from David Drew, fire minister Shahid Malik said there were 176 project risks, “of which sixteen are rated ‘high’ or ‘very high’.”

16. There are major concerns with the technology.

COMMAND AND CONTROL

17. FireControl was intended to produce a “stripped down” version of our current emergency fire controls. The FireControl concept was based, as we pointed out, on a roadside assistance control model—call-handling, mobilising and limited incident monitoring and support.

18. The lack of a proper command and control role or function in the RCCs started to become more obviously apparent to the wider fire service from 2008 onwards. Command and control is what ensures the safety of firefighters and the public at incidents and goes well beyond basic incident monitoring and support.

19. It is central to fulfilling several statutory duties placed on fire authorities, including ensuring the health and safety of their firefighters. A proper command and control function was not included in the specifications for FireControl.

20. At a FireControl workshop at the BAPCO conference on 22 April 2009 concerns were openly acknowledged. A very senior advisor to EADS on FireControl faced a number of probing questions from FRS control officers who raised the issue of command and control at incidents.

21. EADS made clear the system being provided to RCCs was call-taking and mobilising, with some limited incident monitoring because those were the contract specifications. There is NO command and control function, “it is not part of the specifications”.

22. The contract specifications, he said, meant that at incidents officers would have laptops or MDTs and apart from that they would be “on their own”. The EADS advisor said it was only now that FRSs were starting to realise the lack of a command and control function in the contract specifications for the RCC technology and there needed to be “debate” about what happens.

23. Our clear understanding is that on this point the contractors delivered to the specifications demanded of them. This serious omission was made by those who set out the contract specifications.

24. The issue is not fully resolved and is of grave concern. At the very least, remedial work causing further delays and costs will have to be undertaken and a whole new area of “out of scope” work has been identified.

25. It has significant implications for the staffing model, the technology, cost and delays. In our view this played a very significant role in the further delays which have emerged and at least some of the additional costs which have arisen as a result.

26. The matter of how command and control is maintained in a practical sense with the breaking of the link between local FRSs and their local emergency controls is still not resolved. In answer to a Parliamentary Question from John McDonnell MP, about the transfer of operational command and control arrangements to regional controls the fire minister Shahid Malik replied: “The responsibility for operational command and control will remain, as is now, with local Fire and Rescue Services”.

UNPROVEN TECHNOLOGY, UNDER DEVELOPMENT

27. Until recently the proposed mobilising system from Ericsson—CoordCom—had never been deployed in the UK fire service market. To state that it was proven off the shelf technology was misleading and inaccurate.

28. It is also worth noting that the FireControl Updates contain two items which are “to be costed by EADS” relating to mobilising officers and dynamic mobilising, both standard features in existing suppliers’ systems. This again indicates that the original system specifications would be functionally less than the systems currently in use in some areas.

29. It has now publicly emerged that Ericsson is to be dropped altogether in favour of Intergraph I/CAD as a mobilising system. Intergraph I/CAD has been tried and tested and failed in the UK fire service.

30. In the proposed Cleveland tri-centre tests, Intergraph I/CAD failed. In any event, no system has been tried and tested in a national network of regional fire service controls, as none exists anywhere in the world.

31. We anticipate the FireControl specification may be more demanding than those specified a few years ago and we will need some convincing that a product—albeit an updated version—which failed a lesser test can now succeed in a more demanding one.

32. We anticipate knock on effects including potentially on DCMT1 and DCMT2 which we mention later in this submission. This may lead to further delays.
RESILIENCE

33. Another major feature cited as essential was that of resilience. The choice of nine different systems does not in itself guarantee resilience, neither does 46 systems. The system architecture chosen by CLG for nine Systems is then compromised further by only having three Data Centres, all of which are housed within three of the existing controls.

34. Currently to render the FRS in England inoperable a considerable number of FRS’s would have to fail or be taken out by terrorist attack (as well as their backup facilities). Under the new scheme taking out the three Data Centres will render the whole RCC infrastructure unusable.

35. Without the Data Centres then the Gazetteer options become unusable and dispatching impossible for such large areas. Current localised systems, even without Gazetteers, can mobilise with area knowledge to generate responses to an emergency situation.

36. The call-handling capacity is appallingly low because of very low staffing numbers. As a result individual RCCs will hit spate conditions much more quickly.

37. At times the national network will have very, very low numbers of staff on duty—less than 60. The entire national system could hit spate conditions when several RCCs hit spate conditions at the same time. This would happen during, for example, widespread weather events such as flooding or widespread snowfalls.

DATABASE GENERATION

38. The current proposal is utilising the NLPG dataset. This is meant to be another benefit of the proposed RCCS.

39. This is utilised by many organisations and is a substantial database for mobilising. However it is somewhat different to the databases that FRS currently use. Many FRS have started to switch their existing systems to use the NLPG database and are finding out at first hand the problems it poses.

40. To give some examples: Business Parks that are currently built generally identify the different premises as Unit 1, Unit 2 etc. This is how these buildings appear in the NLPG Database. Once let the Building now has a name and may change hands several times even one year. These names do not appear on the NLPG database for some considerable time—if ever—and the company name provided will result in no match against the gazetteer when searched by the operator at the RCC. Invariably the Unit number will not be given or known and does not form part of the new address. To overcome this each FRS will have to generate an “extra” database containing this information, maintained by them, a not inconsiderable task.

41. Another example is that many towns and cities have areas within them, these areas form part of the address to the local inhabitant. In one FRS there are that nine areas in one town which do not exist in the NLPG database, as such every property in those areas will have to become part of a local database for that FRS to allow matching against the supplied address. The only alternatives are to get the NLPG database amended (only allowed through Local Government request and a lengthy procedure) or to get the residents to change the way they report addresses. It is our belief that it is almost certainly impossible to do either within the timescales involved.

42. There will be many similar examples that will come to light as the Database generation continues and practical use of NLPG emerges, these items should have been known and dealt with at the outset.

43. The transfer of information is time consuming and cumbersome. It also has to be provided by FRSs and is out of scope work.

DCMT1 AND DCMT2

44. These are the toolkits for converting and transferring the FRS’s existing data into a format that EADS can use to link the FRS related data to the NLPG database and also to generate the “extra” databases that contain the entries that do not exist in the NLPG database.

45. Problems with the DCMT1 toolkit became apparent to fire and rescue services in the summer of 2008 and has played a major role in the delays. We understand these problems only became apparent after CLG, as the Project Managers, had signed off the toolkits as meeting the contract specifications and it was then rolled out FRSs.

46. Up to that point CLG at imposed itself as the go-between linking EADS to the FRS. We understand it made a point of ensuring there was little or no direct contact between the contractors and other stakeholders meaning the problems only became apparent after the toolkits had been cleared for release to FRSs.

47. This issue of direct collaboration was addressed—belatedly—in the summer of 2009 with the creation of Solution Establishment Workshops, the first attempt at genuinely collaborative working. But what it highlights is that this was not happening before and only started when the Project ran into serious trouble with delays mounting.

48. The DCMT1 toolkit may now be substantially complete, albeit nearly two years late. Some of the issues have been inexcusable. But in the absence of close contact between EADS and the FRSs—a decision taken by CLG as Project Managers—it was perhaps inevitable.
49. Project Managers should have known that the larger authorities would have enormous data sets and for the initial releases to appear to have problems handling large data sets is ridiculous. The other reported issues shows the poor quality systems at Departmental Project Management level that allowed these to get to the end user.

50. Again the Project Management systems and methodology (Prince 2) should have picked these items up and managed them rather than supplying poor quality tools—albeit to specifications agreed and signed off by CLG—within the project life cycle.

51. Switching the mobilising system from Ericsson to Intergraph/ICAD may produce further problems with the DCMT1 toolkit. That remains to be seen.

52. CLG has consistently under-estimated the amount of work needed to be completed by FRSs to identify, cleanse and capture the data even with the toolkit working perfectly. This is at least three to five years of work.

53. There is limited and reducing capacity within the fire service to deliver this quickly—the ability is there, simply not the number of control personnel needed to carry out the task in addition to their existing workloads.

54. Whilst DCMT1 is used to identify what FRS address data is contained within NLPG, and what is not, it is the more complicated DCMT2 that “binds” this information together. Only time will tell whether similar issues will emerge with DCMT2 as did with DCMT1. It is imperative that mobilising arrangements for a life-saving emergency service such as that for the fire and rescue service aren’t changed without being fully validated and tested beforehand. Testing “in the field” is not a professional option to adopt.

55. It would be surprising, given the complexity of the technical challenges, if they did not. There may also be issues relating to the switch to Intergraph I/CAD as the mobilising system.

56. We are aware, given the delay to the roll out of the DCMT1 toolkit, that many FRS’s have not completed the work and some are only at the early stages of starting the work relating to the use of DCMT1. Without this data it is difficult to conceive how any meaningful testing of the system can take place.

57. Performance of this system will depend on the volume of data searched and a system that works with a small data set may not even work, or work as well, with a large data set if the hardware is not specified correctly.

CURRENT SYSTEM CAPABILITIES IN BUSINESS CASE INACCURATE

58. One of the main reasons cited by numerous Ministers for the Project was that the current systems did not support the latest technology. There were 9 Technology items cited in each Regions Business case Part 1, being:

- MDT’s/VMDS
- Information Available to Fireground
- AVLS
- Status Updates
- Dynamic Mobilising
- EISEC
- GIS (Ctrl Only)
- GIS (Integrated into Service)
- Full Premise based Gazetteer

59. This information is inaccurate, misleading and has never been corrected. Some items are incorrect and others are inaccurate in that the facilities were available but the FRS chose not to purchase them eg Dynamic mobilising, EISEC and Premise based gazetteer.

60. Ministers then used this data to cite one of the reasons for the justification for the project was ensuring all fire controls had the most up to date functions. Had the correct information been established from knowledgeable sources then this justification would have been non-existent.

61. Since the project award all the items listed above are available on all the existing suppliers systems, most as standard items if local fire and rescue services judge them to be important enough to purchase them.

62. The Department could have amended GD92 which sets out requirements for control systems to ensure all systems could have been gradually upgraded in the normal way to meet these requirements. They have not done so, they still could.
How did we get to where we are now?

63. The approach and Project management were flawed from the outset. The entire Project was bundled into a single contract with a Prime Contractor leading a Consortium. Such was the scale of the Project, there were probably no more than a handful of companies worldwide which could have bid for a project of this size with a realistic chance of success.

64. This approach effectively meant that every existing experienced supplier of control systems to the UK fire service market eg Fortek or Remsdaq, would be excluded. They were.

65. It also meant there was a very high likelihood that the Prime Contractor chosen would have no experience in delivering a control system to a fire service in the UK or, possibly, anywhere in the world. This is what transpired.

66. Project Management was supplied by a series of Departments with little historical knowledge of the fire service, informed—if that is not putting it too strongly—by transient civil servants and consultants with no experience of delivering any fire service control system of any size, anywhere. It was overseen by a series of transient ministers.

67. There were some FRS secondees in various numbers at various stages. Of the 60 people assigned to the Project in the first few years, only 12 were from a fire service background. What weight was attached to their work, opinion or views is not known.

68. Once the decision had been taken to “bundle” the contract in such a way—with the inherent flaws we have outlined—the use of a Consortium or Prime Contractor to facilitate such a large and ambitious project is entirely in order.

69. However, the project differed from the fire service norm at that time in that the Prime Contractor (EADS) appears to have largely a supply/install contract only. Central Project Management was and is being carried out by CLG using their own staff along with some seconded FRS staff and consultants.

70. There were clearly major issues with the technical specifications the contractors were asked to deliver too. The Project scope has been changed before, after and since the IT contract was signed. There also appeared to be no “real world” assessment of the true complexity of the project nor of realistic timescales to deliver what was being demanded.

71. The results are clear for everyone to see: no clear and consistent understanding of how emergency fire controls work, lack of leadership, controls, objectives and relevant technical expertise. Even with such a flawed process, a single “Turnkey” contract could have removed some of the issues and led to a clear target to be achieved or penalties to be levied.

72. Instead, CLG FireControl Project managers were a barrier between the contractors EADS tasked with delivering the technology and the end users—fire and rescue services. Direct collaborative working between EADS and the FRS was blocked by CLG until the creation of Solution Establishment Workshops (SEWs) in the summer of 2009.

73. The central point of the creation of the SEWs is not that the process started, but that it took until the Project was on its knees before CLG allowed this method of direct collaborative working to be put in place.

74. Poor CLG Project Management was compounded by what should have been the close relationship between the FireControl and Firelink projects. Delays to the FireLink Project have had a knock-on effect on FireControl and vice-versa.

75. It is clear from our discussion with a number of those involved in both projects that there was a lack of transparency, openness and communication between the two projects for prolonged and critical periods. The responsibility for that lies heavily at Departmental and ultimately ministerial level.

Firelink/FireControl

76. The original timetable to complete FireControl by December 2007 was tied to the completion of FireLink, the new digital radio system, which had a delayed completion date of December 2007. FireLink is providing the vast majority of the benefits claimed for RCCs and is very technically challenging in its own right.

77. While we know FireLink radio technology can work for brigade level controls there has to be a question mark over its capacity to work across several fire services region-wide. There are already genuine question marks about the capacity of Airwave, which is now a private monopoly supplier to the emergency services, given the increasing burdens being placed on it.

78. Delays to FireLink do have a knock-on effect on FireControl. Some of these were set out in a National Project Manager’s Update, FireLink Strategic Snapshot—December 2007. This acknowledged that a number of fire services did not update their existing controls—known as legacy systems—because the new RCCs were meant to be in place by the end of 2007.
79. Delays to both the FireLink and FireControl Projects meant “interim solutions” had to be put in place to cope with the late-running of both Projects. Additional work had to be carried out with for what was described as the “longer extended interim solution”.

80. Problems identified in the FireLink Phase A operational Rollout included: Fit out of eight “pilot vehicles in each FRS: “temporarily stalled in the early regions due to delays by Airwave in providing test scripts.” Issues with training “eg lack of training equipment.”

81. Problems were identified in the Phase B launch date (the fit out of the main vehicle fleets). This was “progressively delayed as a result of….over ambitious forecasting and inadequate groundwork by Airwave….delays in submission of test scripts for Phase A acceptance work….knight-on effects of the (preceding) Police resilience programmes.”

82. These issues meant “Airwave roll out forecasts have been drifting increasingly out of synchronisation with events on the ground since the late summer”. The result was a “realism adjustment”—a euphemism for a further delay. FireLink Project managers reported they had been able “to persuade Airwave fully to reflect the reality of where we are and their track record to date by adding a significant amount of contingency to their forecasting.”

83. This strategic snapshot is also revealing in a number of other points. Concerns about the fitting of aerials to officers cars threw up other concerns about “the evolving FireControl Concept of Operations appears now to be shifting beyond the current FireLink scope of supply based on a wider interpretation of the term “resilience”. Separate work is therefore now in hand…to clarify the FireControl Concept of Operations…”

84. The Concept of Operations would play a major role in setting out the technical specifications for the contract agree with EADS. That it was still evolving at this stage—there was still no fixed Concept of Operations—would make it much more difficult to establish the technical solution.

85. The same report includes part of a letter from Richard How, the senior civil servant heading up the FireControl Project on a day to day basis. This letter, to the FireLink team, reveals there were already concerns about delays for FireControl arising a matter of months after EADS secured the contract.

86. It revealed that Mr How had written to the FireLink team at the end of August 2007 about “concerns that the release dates for a number of products—in particular Convergence and Data Schema—from EADS were later than planned.” Mr How told the FireLink team, operating from within the same Department and upon which FireControl depended, that EADS provided some information but that it would “be counter-productive” to share that with them at that time.

87. By November Mr How could still not share the information. He could say that “Since then we have been working closely with EADS to develop a comprehensive set of robust plans in which we all have confidence….However, EADS is not as far advanced as they and we hoped they would be….this lack of information is preventing the FRS from developing their detailed activity and resources plans….the failure to deliver to date is inevitably creating concerns about the capability to deliver as they have contracted…..the delay in providing information is compressing the time available that that (sic) the FRS have to complete their activities.”

88. It would be unfair to Airwave and EADS not to point out that these documents only set out the views of CLG Project Managers. These comments may be unfair to one or both contractors, may not fully set out the full picture or be self-serving in other ways.

89. What is clear is the Department was not ensuring the proper flow of full information between the key personnel and the key contractors working on two closely related Projects. If anything, the Department was a barrier to the flow of critical information between and within both Projects.

**Overview—Getting it wrong from the start**

90. The project is defined to operate under the Prince 2 project management process. Like all Project management processes these define tasks, timelines, costs, checkpoints/gateways, actions, personnel, risks and should include for contingencies. The documented hierarchy published in the Business cases (Part 1 and Part 2) provides for the accountability.

91. The published delays do not account for the difference in time from the original proposal and the current end date. There must therefore have been significant delays during 2003, 2004, 2005 and 2006 prior to the first re-alignment date. It would not be unreasonable for the Select Committee to request sight of the original Gantt chart (project plan) and the current one.

92. This should show (under Prince 2 guidelines) all of the slippages and the reasons and what corrective action, if any, was taken. All plans should be reviewed at least monthly if not more frequently and reports produced to show progress/issues/corrective action/costs to date. There are timelines in the Business case documents but these contain insufficient detail and were only produced in 2008–09.

93. The FireControl Project was based on a 2003 report from Mott MacDonald, updating an earlier report. It purported to set out how a much better and more resilient system could be completed within four years, would pay for itself and save money. It was clearly flawed.
94. A key part of selling the original decision to proceed with the project was undoubtedly based on the financial information produced in the 2003 Mott McDonald which indicated there would be significant savings (£20 million year on year) to be made on a Project costing £100 million. This produced the claim by then Minister Nick Raynsford that the project would pay for itself within five years.

95. There would be on-going savings, it was asserted, and these would be ploughed back into the fire service. On paper, it was a formidable case—a much better system, delivered in a few years, making massive savings using tried and tested technology.

96. As the Fire Brigades Union repeatedly pointed out, this was obvious nonsense to those with hands on experience of managing significant change in a control room environment. Even a brief consideration of numerous Public Accounts Committee and Select Committee reports would show national Government’s inability to deliver projects that worked, on time and to budget.

97. It is belatedly accepted by Government that no national network of regional fire controls exists anywhere in the world. The technology has never been tried and tested on this scale, if at all, in a fire service environment. The technology is in development during the course of the Project and remains so.

98. The 2003 Mott MacDonald report also aligned FireControl with the Labour Government’s Regional Government Programme. It is only in the context of a regional fire service that a regional control centre could make any sense at all, although there would still be issues of resilience and operational practicality.

99. The original initial capital one off costs, based over 10 years, were estimated as £100 million (Mott McDonald Full Report 2003 page 143) which included new buildings (£25.2 million), systems (£36 million), project management (£12.2 million) and redundancy costs (£27.1 million) with ongoing savings on costs of maintenance (£28.1 million) and ongoing staff savings (£143.3 million).

100. Completion was estimated to be four years after commitment, namely 2007. There is a major error in the Mott McDonald report that calculates the savings to be £70.8 million over 10 years. But they mistakenly had ongoing costs of maintenance as a saving rather than a cost. Taking this into account, the actual estimated savings should have been stated as £14.7 million, not £70.8 million.

101. Although the Government has reconfigured its arguments to be based on assertions—although not evidence—of better resilience, alleged cost savings have always been central to the Business Case for FireControl. This is cynical. Other options were and are being rejected on the basis they could show no savings.

102. The original cost estimates bear no relation to the actuality which has unfolded. While we have some sympathy to claims that further estimates are over different timescales to different specifications, it remains that the Project was originally pitched and sold on the basis of a flawed report.

103. In our view it is not a reasonable excuse that specifications and scope changed and a project was adapted or added to. It is a consistent criticism of how things start to go wrong in major IT projects.

104. Some of the details of the promises on cost savings are set out in the FBU response to Business Case, April 2009 at p11. That document also sets out in some detail our major concerns about the Project which we will not repeat in this submission but attach as requested.

105. We also attach numerous independent reports commissioned from the Institute of Public Finance which detail the progression of the Business Case. These are also attached and we will not re-visit all the detail within those reports.

**What the Government claims the project costs**

106. The Government often uses figures which are different to or selectively chosen from those used in their Business Cases. These also need to be addressed.

107. Given the detailed information they must hold, there is little consistency in the Government claims of what the Project will cost. Figures are quoted over different time scales—some to 2012, others to 2020.

108. The fact that some of the leases, signed in 2007 onwards are over 20 years and some over 25 years extend beyond both dates. There appears to be no co-terminosity in the lease termination dates which are likely to close out between 2027 and 2032.

109. When it suits, and to “prove” alleged savings, staffing costs of running the RCCs are included. At other times they are not.

110. It is an oft quoted comment from Government that critics of the project are not comparing like with like, or using different timescales. The Government appear to do this themselves, making it very difficult to tie down what the full costs are or even details how the costings have changed in the various Business Cases.

111. Differing language is used by Government to describe various costs as “basic initial costs”, or “set up” costs to “estimated full cost of implementing FireControl”. The Business Cases quote a figure of around £1.4 billion, although that does include on-going staffing costs through the life of the Project.

112. These are included by Government—it is their Business Case—because alleged savings were always based on cutting the numbers of emergency fire control staff. We will return to that issue later.
On 22 October 2009 the following question was asked and answered:

Mrs. Spelman: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what recent estimate he has made of the total cost of delivery of the FiReControl project; and what estimates were made in (a) 2004, (b) 2005, (c) 2006, (d) 2007 and (e) 2008. [293319]

Mr. Malik: The current estimated overall cost of delivery of the FiReControl Project for (a) 2004 was £120 million; (b) 2005-£160 million; (c) 2006-£190 million; (d) 2007-£360 million; and (e) 2008-£380 million.

On 2 November 2009 [source] Mr Malik answered in another question: The basic initial costs and timescales of implementing the FiReControl project, as originally estimated in 2004, were £120 million. Following more detailed work, project costs were updated to include funding to fire and rescue authorities for local and regional implementation activity, the costs of the regional control centre building leases and the costs of equipment to be installed in every fire station in England to support improved mobilisation.

The expenditure to date on the project is approximately £190 million. The estimated full cost of implementing FiReControl is £420 million.

113. Even on these figures the cost of the Project has more than tripled.

Why have cost increased?

114. The reasons given in Mr Malik’s reply for some of the increased costs show how ill-thought the original estimates were. Mott MacDonald’s building costs estimates were £25.2 million and even over a ten year period (as opposed to the longer leases) are well short of the reality of the leasehold and other costs relating to the buildings.

115. The fact that Station End Equipment—the “cost of equipment to be installed in every fire station”—were left out of the calculations—beggars belief. It meant the Project was moving along on the basis they had worked out the cost of the equipment needed to send a message, but not the fact there would need to be equipment to receive the message and it would have to be paid for.

116. In a letter dated 13 November in response to concerns raised by a constituent of Rob Marris MP Mr Malik goes further in explaining the cost and time overruns: “the FireControl technical solution has proved to be more complex than originally anticipated, and the development stages have taken much longer than expected.” He asserted that the contract with EADS was signed with them having a full “understanding of the technical solution required…[nor having full] information about the amount of work that would need to be carried out by the individual 46 Fire and Rescue Authorities.”

117. Only once the contract had been signed—which was in 2007—he asserted, did “it become apparent that the Project scope needed to be broadened.” No details of the broadening of the scope are given.

118. The Outline Business Case (OBC) November 2004 sets out in some detail (at Appendix C) why the costings in original Mott MacDonald report were wrong. The OBC identified some key areas of risks the Project would face including that there was a very high risk of total project failure.

119. The OBC uses a Private Developer Scheme (PDS) as its recommended method of supplying new Regional Control Centre buildings. It is an expensive option and the OBC underlines the catastrophic impact on any estimated savings of the buildings being completed more than six months before they are meant to become operational.

120. The OBC heavily flagged up, as a significant risk, the financial impact of the buildings being completed more than six months before they were to start becoming operational. It also pointed out the importance of there being a degree of co-terminosity for leases for the new RCC buildings which would become the national network of regional control centres. That is they would all expire and have to be renewed at approximately the same time or within a reasonable period of each other.

121. The OBC identified that from the signing of the PDS contracts to building completion would take around 18 months. Building in a six month rent-free period from practical completion to becoming operational would deal with the issue of rents being paid for empty buildings and is a sensible recommendation.

122. Having identified these two key traps to be avoided—and the mitigating steps needed to be taken to avoid them—the CLG Project Managers then walked into both traps. On 10 August 2005, without any further Business Case of any kind, CLG announced it was proceeding with the PDS scheme, sites had been identified and the contracts signed with the developers for between 20 years and 25 years and which come to an end between 2027 and 2033.

123. The minister, asked on 16 December in a Parliamentary Question by David Drew to make a statement as to how a national network was to be kept in place after the ending of the first set of leases in 2027 and the ending of the final leases in 2034, simply referred to the Landlord and Tenant Act.

124. The signing of the PDS contracts at such an early stage has been catastrophic. No update of the Outline Business Case was produced before the decision and no more detailed work had been done on costings, timescales or the prospects for the technology.
125. A draft Full Business Case was produced in 2006 and another update in 2007. Another was promised throughout 2008 and eventually appeared. The IPF reports on all of these are attached.

126. The Institute of Public Finance, in an independent report for the FBU, said in its assessment of the Private Developer Scheme PDS scheme—the biggest price “ticket” for the whole project—did not demonstrate value for money. The IPF also identified a £200 million increase in the total project costs in the FireControl Business Case. The overall Project costs did not rise above the £1.4 billion identified in the previous 2007 Draft Business Case because an assumption was made which cut back on staffing costs by a further £200.

127. Having hastily signed the property contracts, the IT contracts then waited for more than 18 months to be signed. There was therefore no chance of the RCC buildings being operational six months after practical completion and rents becoming payable.

128. The IT contract was signed in March 2007 after much delay. As we pointed out earlier, by August 2007 CLG were already complaining about delays to DCMT1 and Convergence work. Why CLG expected such complex work to be completed within a few months has never been explained, but it was from the summer of 2007 that concerns about delays started to emerge.

129. Our own response to the Full National Business Case is also attached. We will not go through that in detail but attach it as requested. It does raise significant questions about resilience, call handling capacity and call filtering by BT and Cable and Wireless Operators.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE—BASIC PRINCIPLES

130. First, a profound reality check is needed. There is little confidence left within the fire service that this Project is going anywhere good and it’s not going anywhere soon.

That is an opportunity to re-think what basic principles should underpin what happens next.

1. There are political limits to how far local democratically controlled fire services are prepared to go towards regionalisation;
2. There are technical limits to what can be achieved at a regional level within a reasonable timescale and budget;
3. You should only be prepared to take great risks and go to great expense if there is evidence—not assertion or mere conviction—that the rewards are so great as to justify the level of risk being taken;
4. There must be clear link between the key strategic priorities of local fire services and any future Project configuration, including agreed measures of success.
5. There must be clear ownership and leadership driven by the needs of local fire services and not by the needs of central Government;
6. There must be an effective engagement with all key stakeholders and a re-building of confidence and co-operation;
7. End-users need to buy in to any future project and not have it used as an opportunity to drive down their working conditions or working environment;
8. Project managers must continue to demonstrate skills and a proven approach to project management and risk management.
9. There must be an agreed and realistic timetable, greater co-operation with all stakeholders including contractors with the aim of achieving a proper collaborative environment and not a return to a blame culture and key players being kept apart;
10. Adequate provision of resources and skills to deliver what is required.

The 10 key principles we set out above should apply to any future configuration of how the benefits required from future systems are delivered. The key is delivering what local fire and rescues say they need going forward, utilising at least some of the work, and possibly some of the RCC buildings if appropriate.

131. Alternatives to FireControl are already being explored with or without the knowledge or co-operation of CLG. Our preferred option, on the basis of speed, cost and confidence in it as a solution is to utilise upgraded existing controls.

132. This not a “do-nothing” option. The union is also prepared to consider any Business Case presented which considers other options. We would urge that under any other options, including RCCs if Government does press ahead.

133. A decision to press ahead regardless does not make success a certainty. The technology may never be made to work in the way required of it.

January 2010
Supplementary memorandum from the Fire Brigades Union (FIRE 27A)

The Fire Brigades Union wishes to place on record, its thanks for being given the opportunity at the hearing of the Select Committee on 8 February 2010, to explain our view that despite the amount of money that has been spent so far, the project should be ended completely, rather than throw further good money after bad.

Specific Examples of End User Requirements not being met by FiReControl

1. Officer Availability and Mobilisation

A major part of mobilising emergency resources to incidents includes the ability of fire controls to mobilise officers to incidents. Currently this is done via a pager system.

Ensuring the correct number of officers to incidents with the correct attributes (or specialisms) is essential for proper command control on the incident ground. To do so, controls must be able to have information readily to hand to know whether these officers are in fact available for duty and their location.

All this at present is done via local fire controls which monitor officer availability and attributes and update this as and when their availability and/or location changes. For example if you require a Fire Investigation Officer or a Hazmat Officer, these are specific attributes (there are many different attributes).

We are informed that FiReControl will now have the facility for officer availability as currently. However, what isn’t clear is how officers will be mobilised.

The original specification was for officers’ cars to have Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) fitted. The FBU understands that this option has now been withdrawn since many Officers cars are actually privately owned or leased. Due to the introduction of Firelink radios and the removal of legacy radio equipment from existing Controls, and all of the above mentioned, local controls are currently mobilising Officers via private pager bureaux or the mobile phone network. Neither of which can be classed as resilient methods.

This was reported in CLG’s FiReControl Newsletter Jan 10—Project Ellipse.

These problems have been recognised by FRSs and finally CLG are having to address them but this was never part of the original specification with EADS. —How is live real time information and updated data transferred from FRS’s to RCCs in a secure and resilient way to ensure it meets their own criteria for resilience. This would include such things as officer availability, officers Rotas, retained availability. The FBU has received PR materials provided to FRSs by private companies offering to address this shortfall to capitalise on the situation. One such company is Infographics offering to supply “middleware” for RCC integration.

The matter of officers status (availability) has been discussed with CLG. CLG have stated that no determination has yet been made on this and that the options under consideration for officers’ status to be notified to RCC network are via:

— Handheld radios, or,
— Two way pagers, or,
— Satellite navigation devices, or,
— Voice

Status changes have to be verified. Currently this is carried out by a fire control officer dedicated to that task. This matter has not been considered in the CLG staffing model as at that time it was widely viewed that officers would use MDTs.

2. Retained Duty System (RDS) mobilising

Background information

Wholetime firefighters work at a fire station and are mobilised by a call to the station by teleprinter which provides written data concerning the incident and which resources are being mobilised. If there is a fault with the system this will be done by telephone). If the crews are not present at the station they will be contacted via the radio in the appliance. At all times the crews are together in one place.

Day crew firefighters work at a fire station during the day and are mobilised by a call to the station by teleprinter which provides written data concerning the incident and which resources are being mobilised. If there is a fault with the system this will be done by telephone). If the crews are not present at the station they will be contacted via the radio in the appliance. At all times the crews are together in one place. They differ from wholetime firefighters in the evening when they are mobilised in the same way as firefighters working the retained duty system (RDS).
Retained Duty System (RDS) firefighters are rarely at the fire station together (other than, for example, on the weekly drill night—for a few hours). This varies across the country but is invariably required to be 5–10 minutes or 1–2 miles travel distance. An RDS firefighter (when available for calls) must be located within a given radius of the fire station whether at home, work or undertaking other activities. An RDS firefighter will invariably be at a separate location when alerted from other members that will form the appliance crew. They are mobilised by multitone pagers (alerters). Once paged the RDS firefighter will promptly attend the fire station and take details of the call there.

RDS firefighters can change their status throughout the course of the day subject to having provided availability for an agreed (minimum) total number of hours for the week.

FBU submission

The FBU is informed that the Station End Equipment fitted into fire stations to mobilise crews will be exactly the same in a retained station as it is in a wholetime duty (or day crewed) station. This means that unless crews are actually on station to hear the turn out system they will not respond. (This is why RDS firefighters have to have a separate alert and mobilising arrangements.)

This has led to CLG having to patch up and rethink how FireControl will cope with turning out (mobilising) RDS fire crews.

We are informed by CLG that it is envisaged that changes to the availability status of RDS crew members will be done by internet or telephone. This pre-supposes that the RDS member will have a telephone and/or internet access.

It is very common if not universal that local controls have one control operator monitoring the availability of RDS personnel at all times including in those control rooms where availability is integrated into the system. This matter has not been considered in the CLG staffing model. We are informed that CLG are now asking EADS to devise a solution to retained availability management systems and that they are writing a programme. This will be similar to some existing systems used now in controls such as the Rappel System or Garton systems.

If it is correct that such systems already exist and if both CLG and EADS had had clear understanding of end user requirements regarding availability and mobilising of Retained Duty System Personnel then why did they not incorporate it into the project initially? What is the additional cost of this work?

3. Matters arising from the Equality Impact Assessment

Terms and Conditions

The FBU can broadly support the recommendations, however not without some qualification. These being:

1. the report concludes (page 9)

   Even if a gender equality impact assessment had been undertaken at the earliest possible stage, it is unlikely that the potential adverse gender impact identified would have altered the course of the project. CLG would have needed to balance the requirement to improve national resilience and enhance the capability of fire control against the potential equality impacts identified.

   The issue of whether FireControl will/could provide improved national resilience and enhanced capability aside, the fact that it is intended that staff will be removed from their current employer (on transfer) and be placed on transferred terms and conditions which are vulnerable to change will mean that these workers—predominantly women—face the prospect of worsening conditions including pay. This was made clear to us by a ex-Chair of the West Midlands LACC who publicised the fact that the intention of the proponents of the RCC project was to slash costs by changing pay rates to those in call centres as soon as is practicably possible—which are approximately 50% less than current salaries. This could be avoided if staff were employed by application of the staff retention model commonly used in the NHS.

2. the report encourages changes to shift patterns. The current shift patterns which should transfer are widely regarded by staff as being satisfactory.

RCC Building Design Specification

In December 2009 CLG published an Equality Impact Assessment for the Project. In relation to the Buildings this highlighted for example: EIA— para 3.7.2 Concludes that an Access Defect Rectification Plan is implemented by CLG. This is in response to the realisation that eight out of nine RCC buildings do not conform to the DDA in relation to access, door switches/swipes and hearing induction loops etc. CLG were given a blank piece of paper at design stage and the Department’s persistent failures in managing the Project included a failure to oversee these points in the first eight buildings blaming contractors for interpreting the act wrongly! Only London RCC escaped as it had not yet been completed.
**RECOMMENDATIONS**

3.7.1. That immediate steps are taken to ensure the required access standards are met first time in the construction of the London Regional Control Centre.

3.7.2. That the access defect rectification plan is implemented by CLG.

3.7.3. That the local authority controlled companies designate the rooms to be used as meeting and training rooms and consider either installing permanent inductive loop systems in those rooms, or purchasing a portable inductive loop and establishing an effective management system for it.

**General**

We believe all that all recommendations in the Equality Impact Assessment should be implemented.

Further we believe that CLG should make the staff retention model (other than in London) mandatory on all FRAs and respective LACCs.

That out-standing EIAs required to be conducted by LACCs should be carried out as a matter of urgency.

**4. Local Risk Management Plans (Integrated Risk Management Plans) and PDAs (Pre Determined Attendances)**

**Fire and Rescue Service control over their own resources**

Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) are currently able to determine the use of their own resources both within their own FRA area and beyond. Similarly, they are able to exercise control over the use the deployment of appliances from another FRA into its fire jurisdiction.

FireControl will remove this control. FireControl will automatically deploy appliances according to location irrespective of tactical decision-making or consideration by the fire and rescue service.

This will have:

— an impact on incident ground operations,
— financial implications (charging for “over the border” attendances),
— an FRA’s “sovereignty” over its resources

It will also have implications for personnel. Personnel are not contracted to work outside of their area. This matter was raised by the national employers seeking an out of area clause in contract, but was subsequently not pursued.

**PDAs**

CLG has always maintained that the FiReControl Concept of Operation would mean that the RCC system would enhance the ability of fire and rescue authorities to deliver their IRMPs and that the RCC network would be able to take account of, each of the 46 Brigades own Pre-Determined Attendances which are set in accordance with those IRMPs. However, since the new contract with Intergraph it has been made clear that work must now be undertaken by Brigades using a pilot version of Intergraphs PDA Builder. In other words making the problem fit the solution This seems to contradict the IRMP process contained within the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

The South East Region are already working on standardising PDAs. Whilst the FBU are supportive of universal attendance times and PDAs it would appear that this is being done to ease the introduction of the RCC in the South-East. It is not conducive to the use of a risk assessment method required by the current legislation.

See latest FiReControl Newsletter, 10 January.

We are not convinced that it will be possible to overlay 46 different standards or to write sequences/scenarios that account for the almost infinite number of permutations of the combinations of circumstances which can and do arise.

**5. CLG Staffing Model and associated staffing matters**

A. Staffing Numbers

CLG’s position from the outset has been that as they are not the employing body nor the service provider that it is the LACCs who will make the decisions on staffing numbers. This is reflected in the Part 1 and Part 2 Final Business Cases.
CLG have though produced baseline staff numbers which are produced according to its staffing model which they have proposed to LACCs. These are contained in the Part 2 Business Cases, and are shown below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Transitional figure</th>
<th>Steady figure</th>
<th>Current figure (all local controls in LACC region)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>West Midlands</td>
<td>?*</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>159</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NE</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yorkshire and Humberside</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>176.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Midlands</td>
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<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>227**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>125 est</td>
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<tr>
<td>NW</td>
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<td>84</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>East of England</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>148**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>636</td>
<td>618</td>
<td>1415.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* No figure given in Part 2 Business Case
** No figure given in Part 2 Business Case, figures provided from other sources—watchbased staff numbers only—managerial and other staff to be added

The FBU believe the numbers of staff on duty across the network is dangerously low and therefore the call handling capacity of RCCs will be much reduced from current levels and are the result of hypothetical modelling.

The project relies heavily on IT and we are constantly told that control operators in any RCC will be able to answer a call from anywhere in the country. However, due to the seriously low indicative staffing numbers suggested by the CLG staffing model the system would reach saturation point very quickly and not be able to cope. Since the IT is only of any use at all when it can be answered quickly and interpreted by a control operator we believe end user requirements will not be met. For example the CLG have no power over the LACCs to set minimum crewing levels thus ensuring resilient staffing numbers across the network.

It will be down to each individual RCC to decide how many staff they wish to have on duty at any one time, they could rely on the rest of the network to answer their calls, but if they all do this then the result will be overload and calls going unanswered.

B. Staffing Numbers—beyond their sell-by date

On 15 July 2009, the Fire Minister announced the latest delay. That same day CLG also announced the introduction of Solution Establishment Workshops in order to discuss end user problems/perspective/requirements:

"The Minister also explained improvements to the project approach. Joint CLG and EADS (the main contractor) teams would be working on a day-to-day basis with the Fire and Rescue Service. A series of Solution Establishment Workshops have started at EADS, involving the CLG team, FRS representatives and EADS."

(Source: FRS Circular 43/2009)

The staffing model was rolled out in April 2008. The staffing numbers were proposed to LACCs in July 2008 [they were included in the Part 2 (regional) Business Cases]. The Solution Establishment Workshops did not commence until August 2009 and are still not finished.

The staffing numbers (and staffing model) will need to be re-visited once the outcomes of the Workshops have been finalised. It is the view of the FBU that CLG should acknowledge this fact and make an announcement to that effect.

C. Audit, assessment and regulation of adequacy of staffing arrangements for national assurance.

CLG maintains that resilience will be assured because of the performance standards that the LACCs will be required to meet and the existence of the contractual requirements of the LACC.

The FBU maintains that simply relying upon accountability arrangements, which by their nature will only be brought into effect after a negative performance has occurred, is an unsatisfactory way of approaching a risk critical activity such as emergency fire mobilising arrangements.

Moreover, there is no body or system to oversee/audit the performance standards from a national assurance perspective.

In the final analysis, there are no sanctions for contract failure other than exhausting remedies through litigation.

There is no body or system which can insist on or implement immediate remedies when failures become apparent resulting from deficiencies arising from such matters as staffing establishment deficiencies.
D. Resilience

At a recent discussion with CLG, the FBU’s fear that the resilience of fire control operation in England in the event of (inevitable) failure of the RCC project has not been properly considered.

CLG acknowledged that the promised resilience/effectiveness of each go-live phase would not be assured until some time after the go live date and the “testing” of the system under real-time “field conditions”.

Similarly, the resilience/effectiveness of the entire network could not be assured until after the entire network had been implemented and been in operation under field conditions.

There are effectively four parts of the network:

- Staff (including numbers of)
- Buildings
- Technology
- Data (including gazetteer)

D.1. Data

If the data is impaired, manual solutions could be substituted or used as a complementary component.

*Therein lies a problem: This would however require more staff. So data problems could only be overcome or patched if staffing was available*

D.2. RCC Buildings

If one of the buildings were deficient or became compromised, the theory is that the network could absorb the workload.

D.3. Technology

If the technology was found to be deficient, a reliable remedy could only be to fall back on the existing legacy equipment.

*Therein lies a problem: There is no signed agreement between CLG and FRAs that existing mobilising equipment will remain in place nor that the existing control rooms would remain available for a specified period up to and for a (reasonable) time beyond the entire network has gone live. A signed agreement by every FRA must be a pre-condition before the first cutover.*

D.4. Staff

At a recent meeting, CLG stated that deficiencies in the staffing model and/or the decision by LACCS on the numbers to be employed can be rectified based on experience.

*Therein lies a problem: CLG have failed to understand that in order to enjoy the protection that the TUPE regulations afford, staff that transfer would have to do so at the time of cut-over. Staff cannot opt to join the LACC workforce after the cutover date without losing the protection of TUPE requirements. In turn that presents a problem to the LACCS (and to the FRAs and effective mobilising) because there will be no experienced or trained staff to be recruited into the regional control room to supplement the number of staff.*

E. FBU proposed solution

E.1 Existing control rooms and mobilising equipment.

CLG must sign agreements with FRAs that existing control rooms and existing mobilising equipment will remain in place and available for a specified period up to and for a (reasonable) time beyond the entire network has gone live. A signed agreement by every FRA must be a pre-condition before the first cutover.

E.2 Staff—retention of employment model.

In order to provide:

- Assurance to emergency fire control staff regarding their, terms and conditions (unless varied by collective agreement) and job-security; and/or
- Resilience in the event of TUPE transfer arrangements not resulting in agreements; and/or
- The loss of staff from FRAs who may leave in anticipation of the regionalisation of controls (which of course may never happen) based on the belief that continued employment is in jeopardy; and/or
- Availability of experienced staff to LACCS to work in the RCCs in the event of staff refusing or not wishing to transfer employment to the LACCS; and/or
— FRAs with available experienced staff to supplement staffing numbers in RCCs in the event of planned staffing levels in LACCs proving deficient; and/or

— FRAs with available experienced staff to crew the local control room should the RCC network fail and/or

— Cost savings to LACCs which will not need to employ HR staff.

... the FBU proposes that the current planning arrangements to transfer employment of staff to the LACCs is brought to an end and replaced by the implementation of the retention of employment model as is common—place in the NHS (eg in ISTCs).

Early agreement between CLG and the FBU on this matter would provide huge benefits for LACCs, CLG, staff, and FRAs in the event of the RCC project proceeding.

More importantly to the FBU and our members (because we do not believe the project will ever come into effect) it would also provide benefits to staff, CLG and FRAs in the event of the RCC project not taking place.

GENERAL CONCERN RE END USER REQUIREMENTS NOT BEING MET BY FiReControl

A. Solution establishment workshops

On 26 November 2008 the Fire Minister at the time, Sadiq Khan, announced a nine month delay to the project stating:

“...a number of difficulties with the ICT and other dimensions of the project were identified. These issues will result in some delay, and the FRS rightly expects us to address these in full.”

On 15 July 2009, the new Fire Minister, Shahid Malik announced a further ten month delay stating that the reasons as being:

“... in recent months it has become clear that technical problems with developing the IT system in a way which will meet all our and FRS requirements mean that further time is needed to complete the project.”

On both occasions the reasons for the delay were said to be the result of technical problems with the I(C)T.

On the occasion of the latter announcement, CLG announced the introduction of Solution Establishment Workshops in order to discuss end user problems/perspective/requirements:

“The Minister also explained improvements to the project approach. Joint CLG and EADS (the main contractor) teams would be working on a day-to-day basis with the Fire and Rescue Service. A series of Solution Establishment Workshops have started at EADS, involving the CLG team, FRS representatives and EADS.” (Source: FRS Circular 43/2009)

We do find it somewhat disconcerting that CLG announced a delay of a specific period (ten months) and then began dialogue with end users the problems and requirements that they have.

The FBU is concerned that the announcement of a delay was one month before the consultation with end users regarding their requirements had started. The conclusion that we draw is that either the consultation is cosmetic or that the 10 month period was plucked out of the air. Either way, we are not confident that the announced timetable and promise of taking the outcomes of the consultations seriously can be assured.

B. Data capture

EADS have been rolling out a presentation regarding the latest developments on data capture. A copy of the presentation is enclosed. EADS have notified stakeholders that DCMT2 will not be available until five months after the relevant Change Notice has been signed, and consequently may be as late as August. They also stated that the Intergraph system is currently only 60–70% compliant with updates not being made until July and September. Because of the very tight timeline to the May 2011 cutover date a further delay is now expected.

C. Plan B

The Regional Control Centre project has been around for some considerable time now. Early promises of introduction in 2007 were wildly optimistic. The current first cutovers are now said to be possible in May 2011.

Throughout that period investment in the local control rooms has been held back.

From a human perspective, the staff have been left on tenterhooks concerning what the future holds for them and their families.
The fire and rescue service, the public and the staff deserve to be informed of what plans are in existence/ preparation for something as significant as the organisation and delivery of their emergency fire service control function.

Despite that, CLG state that they have a “Plan B”. Disgracefully, this is being kept back from the public and staff due to CLG insisting on unnecessary, in appropriate and undemocratic secrecy. CLG did not even declare it to the Select Committee hearing on 8 February 2010.

The FBU believes that if there truly is a Plan B it should be made known. Given the experience of the RCC project (failed targets, inoperable system, weak consultation, exponential growth in costs) it is imperative then it must be declared to see if it is a. viable and b. more robust than the apparent panacea which RCCs were promised to be.

Andy Dark
Assistant General Secretary

February 2010

Memorandum from EADS (FIRE 28)

1. SUMMARY
1.1 The primary programme responsibilities for FiReControl comprise:
   — CLG who is responsible for developing new operational processes, the new organisation, new buildings, and for managing the whole programme of change.
   — EADS DS UK (EADS) who is contracted to deliver the IT infrastructure which forms a part of the overall FiReControl solution.
   — The FRSs and Regional Control Centres (RCCs) who are responsible for implementing the solution.

1.2 Progress has been slower than planned primarily due to:
   — EADS systems supplier issues.
   — Other programme-wide dependencies related to the complexity of developing, implementing and managing new operational processes for the many user organisations.

1.3 EADS remains passionately committed to delivering successfully the IT for a solution that will enhance the FRS’ already high reputation and transform national resilience.

1.4 Fundamental improvements made by CLG and EADS mean that progress is now quickening. A significant proportion of infrastructure is already installed ready for the final build testing to commence in the second half of this year.

1.5 The complex interdependencies of the programme necessitate close collaborative working. EADS has sought to be a genuine partner for customer and users alike.

   FiReControl is complex and challenging, but EADS is committed to success

2. THE TRANSFORMATIONAL CONTEXT
2.1 Context of Supply
2.1.1 CLG’s role is effectively that of prime contractor with overall responsibility for the operational transformation that makes up the FiReControl programme. EADS is the IT contractor with responsibility for integration supported by a range of subcontractors providing components and services.

2.1.2 EADS’ contract with CLG is for the Design, Delivery and on going support of the IT element of the FiReControl Programme. EADS has no contractual relationship with the Local Authority Control Companies (LACC) or with the local Fire and Rescue Services (FRS).

   CLG delivers the FiReControl transformation with EADS as the IT supplier

2.1.3 Completion of the development of the software system build has a fixed milestone date within the contract. The go-live dates for each RCC and FRS are subject to call-off by CLG and currently have no fixed contractual dates.

2.1.4 The primary components of the technical solution to be supplied by EADS are:
   — Resilient telephony—the ICCS (Integrated Communications Control System).
   — Resilient mobilisation system—the MRMS (Mobilisation and Resource Management System).
   — Mobile data systems (including MDT—Mobile Data Terminal software) and related infrastructure (including WAN—Wide Area Network).
— RCC audio-visual systems.
— Service management infrastructure.

2.2 Contributor Orientation

2.2.1 CLG’s objectives are to achieve a national strategic capability through FRSs whilst maintaining best value. For CLG, time is of the essence due to commitments that have to be made and the connected cost impacts.

2.2.2 The objectives of the 45 FRSs are to maintain daily operations whilst taking on the new operational solution at minimum cost and risk to the local service. Their approach is naturally incremental and to get it right, however long it takes.

2.2.3 Under the governance of their LACC, the objective of each RCC is to implement the tools available to deliver a service solution to meet the operational demands of the FRS and government.

2.2.4 EADS’ drivers are reputation and future opportunities derived from delivering to CLG under a viable business model. This means successful delivery. Delays cost us money. FiReControl is critical to EADS’ strategic ambitions in the public security arena where we see significant export opportunities arising from a successful solution.

Success in FiReControl is fundamental to EADS’ global business plan

2.2.5 With CLG as the paying customer and 54 separate organisations as the end-users, this makes for an exceptionally challenging stakeholder environment in which there is no ultimate authority for all matters. Ultimate acceptance for live use will need the buy-in of many parties.

2.2.6 FiReControl in turn needs to be delivered alongside Firelink and New Dimension which complete the Fire and Resilience Programme.

2.3 FiReControl Solution Components

2.3.1 The overall solution for FiReControl comprises the System, the People and the Processes all working with the Data.

The FiReControl SOLUTION = IT Systems + Organisation + Processes + Data

2.3.2 In this build process:
— CLG is responsible for designing, building and delivering the Organisation and operational Processes,
— EADS is responsible for designing, building and delivering the IT Systems and Data infrastructure & services, and
— CLG is responsible for managing the whole Solution build programme and for ensuring buy-in from all stakeholders.

2.4 The FiReControl Journey

2.4.1 In parallel with the overall solution being built, the FRS and RCC daily operations need to be transformed to use the Solution.

2.4.2 This is a journey of transformation for the Solution where:
— CLG, the FRS and LACCs are responsible for transitioning the People and Processes (EADS helps with Training),
— EADS is responsible for deploying and transitioning the System to live operation, including loading the operational data,
— FRSs & CLG are responsible for provision of operational live Data and for transforming their operations to use the Solution, and
— CLG is responsible for managing this whole “business change” journey for stakeholders including ensuring that:
  — The Solution is communicated and understood.
  — The journey to the Implemented Solution is communicated and understood.
  — Hearts and minds are won.
Revised operational approaches are implemented.
— EADS’ contribution is managed within the context of the whole programme.

The Implemented Firecontrol Solution =
Deployed System + Deployed Organisation + Deployed Processes + Live Data

3. EADS Progress and Challenges

3.1 Our Contract

3.1.1 The contract originally let to EADS was for the delivery of the IT elements of FiReControl. During the tender process, the delivery timescales that would be deemed acceptable for system build and go-live were tightly constrained. These timescales have since proved unachievable for many reasons rooted across the whole programme. A delayed announcement to let and start the contract compounded these pressures.

3.1.2 A particular challenge to our own timescales has been the changes requested to the original contractual baseline. As an example, the requirement and the tendered plans were to deploy existing commercial versions of MDT, SEE and the data toolkit. The baseline version of the MDT was delivered in December 2007 (ahead of the contracted milestone date). During testing it was recognised that there were defects inherent in the commercial product, and EADS undertook to address these at its own cost. The final version including further changes was accepted for full deployment in November 2009 and this did result in disruption to other planned activities.

3.1.3 A significant proportion of contract requirements have needed further work since contract award in order to define the details sufficiently for implementation.

3.1.4 We have been working closely with CLG on revisions to the contract to begin to address contractual shortcomings such as this. The ideal contract would need mutual incentives for the development of IT as part of a larger, joint programme of transformation with end users.

3.2 FRS Systems

3.2.1 EADS has had to tackle some internal technical quality issues which did affect early deliverables to FRSs. Improved processes and control are now in place to address these.

3.2.2 The initial versions of the mobile data terminal (MDT) software and station equipment (SEE) for early deployment into FRS are complete.

3.2.3 129 fire stations in six FRS have been successfully fitted with the FiReControl equipment and are using this for live operations with their current mobilisation systems.

3.2.4 1,400 station sites (97%) have been surveyed for station equipment installation.

3.2.5 40 FRS have taken installation of the initial data collection toolkit (DCMT1) and are using it to collect and prepare their gazetteer data for FiReControl.

3.2.6 EADS’ standalone mobile data terminal (MDT) software is being installed into FRS vehicles by Firelink.

3.2.7 The EADS Service Operations Centre is operational and taking support calls from FRSs with deployed equipment.

3.3 RCC Infrastructure and Mobilisation System

3.3.1 As a part of its proactive risk management plan, EADS has now terminated its contract with Ericsson and has appointed Intergraph as its replacement. EADS is confident that this new supplier will be able to deliver to a timetable able to support the revised project schedule. EADS’ contract costs to CLG remain unchanged.

3.3.2 The Intergraph system is already working in its default state. Joint workshops are underway with end users using the running system to refine business process and detailed requirements in line with the product capabilities for function and configuration.

3.3.3 The Intergraph solution has been run and tested to 300 calls per minute using the FiReControl nine-RCC architecture. End-to-end integration completed for key interfaces using Ericsson Coordcom will now be repeated with Intergraph I/CAD, although these interfaces are fewer for the new solution due to the broader product functionality available.

3.3.4 EADS has already (at its own cost) upgraded the system hardware for the transaction servers from HP NonStop to HP Superdome to ensure the best national-scale flexibility and performance.

3.3.5 The telephony system (ICCS) is predominantly complete. The Firelink to ICCS interface is complete.

3.3.6 All furniture and IT infrastructure has been fitted into the first three RCCs, and the fourth is substantially complete.
4. Outlook

4.1 Changes Made Are Bringing Benefits

4.1.1 Both CLG and EADS have appointed new senior personnel who are continuing to develop relations jointly.

4.1.2 A significant part of the CLG team is now based at EADS’ offices in Newport and most project governance is undertaken jointly with CLG, EADS and FRS involvement.

4.1.3 The tripartite solution workshops at EADS in Newport regularly bring all parties together to work through the whole solution from end to end (processes, live system, roles and data).

4.1.4 EADS has also established a dedicated engagement team who work on the ground in FRSs to facilitate relations and openness.

4.1.5 Significant portions of the solution are already deployed and being tested in situ—all reducing the impact and risks of change.

4.2 Supporting Transformation

4.2.1 Significant programme communications initiatives are needed to keep so many end users informed in their transformational journey. The essential aspects of the end-to-end solution, the benefits, and the journey to be made are still not yet universally understood. We are working closely with CLG and FRSs to help with this essential task of winning hearts and minds.

The programme needs to be done with users, not to users

4.2.2 In order to ensure that the arrangements contracted with CLG satisfactorily represent the expectations of the FRS and RCC, these users must be involved at every step of the way. Close tripartite management is essential to enact this.

4.2.3 We applaud the significant changes that CLG and FRS have made to the governance of stakeholder engagement and introduction of collaborative working which is essential to deliver the overall solution into use.

4.2.4 The new operational processes are still being evolved by CLG with the FRS and RCC. Developing the processes alongside the system (as now in the new joint “SEW” workshops) will give a better result, but it does take significantly longer. This collaborative development will improve the chances of success, however, in particular for the FRS and RCC who need to undertake their implementation.

4.3 Flexible Technology

4.3.1 FRSs are continually evolving new ways of working and FiReControl is an agent in that ongoing process of renewal and change. The solution provides opportunities for the FRS to innovate, for example in terms of interagency collaboration.

The benefits and facilities for an FRS are bigger than any FRS could achieve alone

4.3.2 EADS understands this challenge, but must rely on its delivery partners (CLG, FRSs and RCCs) to succeed. We see significant value to the UK in enhanced national security and resilience to deal with man-made threats and natural disasters. Once live, this evolution must continue.

4.3.3 External events may even change the desired usage of the solution before go-live, and both the platforms and the processes need to be designed to be flexible to accommodate this. For its part, EADS is ensuring that the IT platforms will best serve the local FRS needs regardless of any evolution of national or regional structures that may be arise in the future.

4.3.4 We want our systems and services to be flexible and capable of successful provision to other agencies, and to match the changing needs of the future.

4.4 EADS Commitment

4.4.1 EADS is totally committed to success and confident that we can deliver that which is within our control.

4.4.2 We have strived to maintain good relations and to keep channels of communication open with all parties. We understand how good relations can maintain a project through the toughest of challenges.

4.4.3 We understand that big, complex programmes will have many difficulties along the way. We are committed to working beyond the basic terms of our contract to address these and drive through to a successful outcome.

January 2010
Memorandum from Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service (FIRE 29)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

— Cornwall Council became a Unitary Authority on 1st April 2009 with a new elected administration. The new administration wants the best service for its communities that the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) can provide. At the present time the FRA, which is all 123 elected Members, has yet to be convinced that the move to a Regional Centre is in the best interests of the communities of Cornwall. There is little political will to suggest that the FRA will sign up to the regionalisation model. There are a number of areas where greater detail and/or reassurance is needed for the FRA to alter this position (see paragraph 3).

— Over the years CLG has been made aware, by a variety of means, of political, financial and operational concerns of the FRA, but to date these have not been answered in sufficient detail to distil the lack of confidence the FRA has in the Project delivering against its ambition or for the FRA to be supportive of the principle of the FiReControl Project.

— The FRA needs clarity and assurance on a range of issues which we believe to be of fundamental importance if we are to consider committing to the Project.

— CLG needs to recognise that there is a strong “local” political dimension to the Project which seems to have been forgotten, especially around consultation.

— The FRA needs to be assured that it will bear no additional cost as a consequence of transfer FiReControl.

— The FRA will not be expected to sign any of the suite of agreements until the system has passed its User Acceptance Tests to reasonable satisfaction.

— Cutover to the RCC should not occur until both the FRA and the LACC are satisfied that each is fully prepared to operate the new service.

— The FRA will not (directly or indirectly) suffer a financial detriment as a result of any delay in cutting over to the RCC.

— The terms of any agreements will be without prejudice to the FRA’s rights to claim Central Government funding now and in the future, including New Burdens funding.

— FRAs (through their Chief Fire Officers) will be able to continue to exercise effective control over the use of their resources on terms acceptable to them.

— The FRA is unconvinced that functioning of the system will allow the FRA to fully implement its IRMP policies.

— Confidence in the technical solution and on the ability to deliver within the timescales is not high, to this end we ask CLG to consider a Plan B (alternative options) which would be openly consulted upon.

— The FRA has real concerns over the escalating costs and affordability of the Project even though CLG has stated that the Project is now in a financial stable state.

— CLG seems to be unaware of the effect of the delay and lag in the Project on the recruitment and retention of staff and the consequent effect on the morale of staff that still see their futures as uncertain.

INTRODUCTION

1. The headline issue from the Business Case is that FiReControl will provide vastly enhanced capability to the FRS which will benefit the general public, fire fighters and control room staff at no additional cost to the FRA. The FRA does not currently have sufficient information to enable it to justify supporting that proposition. It needs reassurance about important Project issues, technical, political and economic before it can make an informed decision.

2. The FRA however does recognise that the Firelink Radio Project, with the introduction of the new wide area communications system and mobile data terminals on front line appliances, has had and will continue to have, a positive impact on improving public and fire-fighter safety.

FUNDING AND CONTRACTUAL ARRANGEMENTS

3. The FRA is concerned that the Government will not abide by its commitment to the principle that no FRA should be in a financially worse position than it was prior to its move into the RCC by only agreeing to a three year proposal for additional “resilience” payments. Once the new network is established, a significant number of FRAs are expected to make savings as a result of the implementation of FiReControl. The current position for Cornwall FRA is that an additional “resilience” payment of £157,000 per annum is needed year on year. Whilst the Government has pledged to provide “resilience” payments in the region of £8.2 million per annum to cover the increased costs for many of the regional control centres, these payments are only for three years. This raises concern over the prospect that the FRA may have to pick up an additional significant financial burden if the New Burdens payment is reduced, withdrawn or assimilated.
into the revenue support grant without addition to that grant. The FRA would have difficulty in servicing that additional financial demand when taking into account the significant pressures on its budget and the looming proposed cuts to public sector budget.

4. The FRA will not commit to contributing to the costs of funding the RCC or any other part of the Fire Control system until binding commitments have been received, either from all other South West FRAs, or from CLG (if not all other South West FRAs agree to participate) for the financing of the balance of the Regional costs throughout the lifetime of the Fire Control Service.

5. The Business Case assumes an investment of £100,000 per fire and rescue service in interfaces which are in addition to existing planned and funded investments. This is equivalent to interfacing eight back office systems at a cost of £12,500 each. It is further assumed that it will be possible for each fire and rescue service to implement three of these additional interfaces a year, i.e. investment in the new interfaces will occur over a three year period, starting six months before each fire and rescue service cuts over to the new Control arrangements. It is not clear if CLG is going to meet this cost and the other necessary associated costs to integrate legacy back office systems (new “in-scope” and “out of scope” activities) with the FiReControl solution. If CLG does not fund these activities then the FRA sees this as a net imposed unwanted new burden which is contrary to the CLG’s previously stated commitment.

6. The FRA is expected to take a number of important decisions, for example, agreeing the contractual arrangements between LACCs and CLG. Fire Service Circular 73/2009, the formal consultation document on the proposed document, states that the agreements need to be simple, transparent and developed in partnership. The FRA agrees with this in principle, however, we are disappointed that once again a CLG document is short on detail and does not provide us with sufficient information on which to make an informed decision.

DEPENDENCIES

7. A number of critical dependencies can be identified within the FiReControl Project. As the Project moves into the delivery phase, there is increased focus on the successful delivery of early deliverables from the IT supplier that will enable fire and rescue services to progress work. Without receiving these products in a timely manner, fire and rescue services cannot progress the work required of them to deliver FiReControl. There are significant concerns over the ability of EADS and its suppliers in making progress on delivering and installing the new technology infrastructure. In fact much of the technology is becoming obsolete before it has been installed due to delays in the Project and progress in technology. The 10 month delay announced last year, the change of solution provider and rationalisation of the CLG Project Team further erodes the confidence that the new technology infrastructure will be in place to meet the cut over timetable. Are there any real and meaningful guarantees that there will be no further delays in the Project? A by product of any such delay would compromise our ability to not only retain and recruit staff but also to maintain our existing mobilisation system.

CONSIDERATIONS

8. Given that there are significant concerns over the affordability of the FiReControl Project and that there is still no assurance that the information technology will be up to the job, is there an option for building on existing structures, using joint procurement and improving joined up working between fire authorities?

9. The new administration in Scotland cancelled the plans for regionalisation in 2007 yet is still going ahead with the infrastructure improvements, IT and interoperability upgrades which raise the question as to whether regionalisation is needed if new technologies can be adopted to improve resilience. Has this model been explored in detail to establish if this is an option for moving forward bearing in mind the comments made in the previous paragraph?

CONCLUSION

10. The lack of detailed information and effective consultation on the FiReControl Project and a true partnership arrangement approach between CLG and the FRA has had a negative effect on the confidence that this is a joint arrangement which will provide a more effective service to the public through a resilient and supportive network.

11. There are still concerns that clarity on the financial detail and ongoing financial commitment post cut over is needed before the FRA can make any informed decision on whether the Service will migrate to FiReControl.

12. The FRA will require assurance that Chief Fire Officers will still have direct control over the deployment of their resources.

13. There needs to be a far more professional and open relationship between CLG and the FRA. The perception within the FRA is that the FRA is being driven to complying with the Project and asked to make decisions not withstanding the fact that it is in the dark on issues which are of fundamental importance.

January 2010
Memorandum from East Midlands Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd (FIRE 30)

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. The East Midlands Fire and Rescue Control Centre Ltd (“the Company”) was formed by the region’s five fire and rescue authorities (“the FRAs”) (Derbyshire, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, Northamptonshire and Nottinghamshire) as a Local Authority Controlled Company limited by guarantee to establish and operate the East Midlands FiReControl Regional Control Centre (“the RCC”) in November 2006.

B. The first Company Board meeting was held in January 2007 and to date a total of twenty two (22) Board meetings have been held.

C. The region is a leading force in the FiReControl Project having made substantial progress towards project delivery.

D. Collectively the FRAs, the Company and Regional Project Team have embraced the project and delivered progress against key project milestones.

E. Company Directors have progressed decision making to establish the Company adopting robust procedures and policies to operate the RCC. We recognise the immense opportunity the FiReControl Project and RCC gives us to modernise and enhanced the 999 service.

F. Stakeholder engagement within the region has been comprehensive. Visitors to the RCC have commented positively on the facility and the capabilities for service delivery when this has been explained. They have also commented on the lack of awareness and understanding by the wider population on what benefits this project is planned to deliver. Better publicity is needed to develop public confidence.

G. We see this project as delivering superior solutions to 999 emergency call handling and mobilisation of the FRAs’ resources. The standardisation approach to the operation of the RCC will enhance capability not restrict it through the use of technology that is currently widely used but not integrated with all the functionality that FiReControl will deliver.

H. Agency partnering opportunities with Police, Ambulance and other services are to be developed once the RCC is fully operational. We feel this is a substantial resource in times of severe need.

I. The final and most important point is that of resilience offered by the FiReControl Project. No other emergency service will be able to offer such a capability. The networking and mutual back up offered by the FiReControl solution, coupled to the technology deployed in FRA vehicles will establish a standard of capability that is better positioned to meet the challenges being seen and developing in the 21st century.

SUBMISSION DETAIL

1. The Company

1.1 The Company was formed by the FRAs as a local authority controlled company limited by guarantee to establish and operate the RCC in November 2006.

1.2 The first Company Board meeting was held in January 2007 and to date a total of twenty two (22) Board meetings have been held.

1.3 The RCC is now substantially equipped with the IT infrastructure, on site facilities and equipment as one of the “first wave regions”, due to go live in May 2011.

1.4 The Company’s Senior Management Team has been recruited and in place for two years as has a small administrative support function and most recently two staff training positions readying the RCC for full system training.

1.5 During December 2009 and early January 2010 the first tier of RCC Control Room supervisors will be appointed (six in total).

2. Regional progress to date

2.1 Rescheduling by the central project team at CLG has not diverted the efforts of the Company, directors or staff in progressing the requirements of business establishment in readiness for go live, though more timely and open communications when difficult issues arise would be beneficial.

2.2 The Company has embarked on and is being very successful in stakeholder engagement and policy development.

2.3 Key areas where agreement has been achieved is detailed below:

— Relocation and Support
— Reasonableness Criteria
— Senior Management Team remuneration
— Green Travel Plan
— Website*
— Employee Involvement Group
— Board Work Plan
— Recruitment
— Shift Patterns
— Work wear*
— Director Training
— Terms and Conditions for new employees*
— Taking on the lease for the RCC
— Flexible employment
— HR Timeline
— Partnering Activities
— Performance Standards*
— Business Continuity*
— Mapping Services
— Direct Employment
— Internal Governance Arrangements
— Joining the Local Government Pension Scheme
— Union Recognition (FBU, FOA, and UNISON)
— Procurement of Support Services*
— Initial Staff Pool
— Facilities Management Contract
— Company structure
— IT use
— Discipline and grievance

* indicates work in progress

2.4 Stakeholder engagement has included a wide variety of activities, including:
— FRS Control staff seminars at the RCC.
— Hosting visits to the RCC of all regional FRAs.
— Linking with other partner agencies such as the Regional Resilience Forum, Police, and Highways Agency.
— Local Authority visits.
— Overview and Scrutiny Committee visits.
— Voluntary sector agency visits to the RCC.
— Regional newsletters to all FRA Control Staff.
— Regional Brochure mailed to 8,000 agencies and organisations within the region informing them of the project and regional progress.
— Media and MP briefing sessions held at the RCC.

2.5 As the leading region the Company is confident that its activities are well in line with the requirements of the project for “go live”.

2.6 The Company has made strenuous efforts in its stakeholder communication and engagement activity; it has been extremely successful in this area. By taking a pro-active approach to this activity and listening to a wide variety of concerns, the Company has been able to show positively how the FiReControl Project and the East Midlands RCC will benefit the community. Specifically groups and organisations engaged include:
— Regional deaf groups.
— Disabled groups — through the Leicestershire County Council portfolio holder.
— Parish and District councils in Lincolnshire.
— Business Link.
— Regional canal and narrow boat owners

2.7 The Company has achieved all this progress within the allocated budget from CLG as owner of the project.
2.8 Through an entrepreneurial approach, clear focus on objectives by the Company Board and strong regional support, together with over two years of representative body formal engagement the East Midlands region remains at the forefront of project progress and implementation.

3. Service delivery benefits

3.1 Technology integration in one comprehensive call handling, mobilising and communications solution is the key to FiReControl success.

3.2 This is not a pure IT project but an IT integration project, bringing together known already used technologies under a single umbrella and delivering this functionality consistently across all fire and rescue authorities in England.

3.3 Utilising telephony system functionality to identify a caller’s location thereby saving valuable seconds in an emergency is critical to improve service.

3.4 Having the ability to have translation and interpretation services “live on line” with callers whose first language is not English will dramatically aid in speed of response and more importantly quality of response.

3.5 Access to accurate up to date data for Control Room staff and front line fire-fighters will ensure safety and that the most appropriate available resources are sent to an incident.

3.6 Use of “intelligent databases” to monitor repeat and frequent service users will help identify nuisance callers earlier in the cycle of action. This facility will also allow earlier pre-emptive intervention for the FRAs to support vulnerable groups and/or identify where action needs to be taken to avoid misuse of the Fire and Rescue Service.

3.7 Linking of all RCCs to a national network will provide a degree of mutual support not seen before. This facility will allow a seamless transfer of 999 calls and vehicle mobilisation even when calls are taken out of a home region. This must be the key resilience advantage of the FiReControl project.

3.8 The wider service delivery benefits have been articulated by CLG in the recently published national and regional business case.

4. Organisation benefits

4.1 Technology aids organisations immensely in today’s business environment. Fire and Rescue Services use a wide variety of technology within their Control Rooms but the level of use and implementation is not consistent across England.

4.2 Delivering a consistent capability to 999 call handling and resource mobilisation, through the FiReControl project, will deliver the benefits highlighted earlier in this paper.

4.3 Additional benefits will accrue from the availability of more specific data for evidence based decision making and the subsequent improved use of resources and monies for targeted investment.

5. Future potential

5.1 Early indications with other emergency services, local authorities and the voluntary sector indicate a willingness to utilise the RCC and RCC network for incident escalation.

5.2 The RCC facilities position the building well for this use which is on the whole a more resilient option than currently available to most organisations.

5.3 More long term considerations for wider use of the RCCs subject to agreement could be:

- Co-location of a reintroduced 101 non emergency service.
- Acting as a “fall back” option for other emergency services 999 call handling and resource dispatch.
- Hosting Regional “Gold Command” for major incidents.
- Training and major incident simulation

6. Progress with the project so far

6.1 As described above in paragraph 2, regional progress is on target.

6.2 National project progress has been beset with two delays and this has caused concern, but cannot be seen as unusual in such a complicated national project.

6.3 The scope and magnitude of the project has, we believe, been underestimated by both CLG and EADS, the main system contractor. This coupled with numerous staff changes within both organisations and a very slow start to resolving a number of key questions regarding system functionality has negatively impacted on project progress.

6.4 Indications are now that these issues have or have substantially been resolved and that more focused attention to key project milestones, ownership of deliverables and accountability is in place.
7. **Reasons for the cost and time overruns which the project has experienced**

7.1 Some of this detail has been covered in paragraph 6 above.

7.2 Cost overruns on the project have been partly as a result of the two reschedules and the consequent extension of employment for the local, regional and national project teams.

7.3 Further costs have and will be incurred, we believe, as a result of the still emerging specific system and operational requirements that were not sufficiently detailed at the point of contract award. Whilst it is not unusual to add requirements to a project during implementation, it is somewhat surprising at the lack of detail in certain areas of system functionality, governance when operationally live and scope of certain functions that have only recently been or are still to be specified.

7.4 Contract mobilisation by both CLG and EADS was initially slow and then lacked the “ramp up” of momentum usually seen with a project of this size. It appeared that a vacuum occurred after contract award for nearly nine months where little progress was visible to external audiences.

7.5 As a region we have commented that the initial project implementation structure of CLG was not aligned with delivery requirements, it is therefore pleasing to see the recent changes in both CLG and EADS that address this issue.

8. **What, if any changes need to be made to the Government’s plans for proceeding with the project?**

8.1 Some of this comment overlaps with paragraph 7 above.

8.2 The complicated governance arrangements of the FiReControl Project, while trying to recognise and embrace all stakeholders’ input has in itself created a decision making process that is very lengthy, cumbersome and often unclear. Recognising the importance of including all stakeholder views, this facet of the project delivers slow progress and is in need of review.

8.3 Accountability and realism is now better recognised and understood by both CLG and EADS. The disappointing issue is that it has taken nearly three years to achieve this, post contract award.

8.4 As a commercial organisation the contractor, EADS, needs to be held fully accountable for system delivery, irrespective of the challenges and difficulties that arose. Likewise CLG need to become a “tough but fair customer” in the commercial environment we operate in. These attributes need be embedded in both organisations, from top management downwards, and maintained as beacons to be achieved. This while being articulated verbally in many forums has yet to be delivered in action by both sides.

*January 2010*

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Memorandum submitted by the National Audit Office (FIRE 31)

DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT: FIRECONTROL PROJECT

**INTRODUCTION**

1. This memorandum has been prepared by the National Audit Office to help inform the House of Commons Communities and Local Government Committee examination of FiReControl.

2. In particular it examines the Department for Communities and Local Government’s management of its £200 million contract with European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) for the development of the IT systems supporting FiReControl. It does not cover the other elements of the FiReControl project such as the procurement of Regional Control Centre buildings.

3. It is based on information provided by the Department for Communities and Local Government (the Department) and EADS. It also draws on four external reviews commissioned by the Department:
   — Reviews of the Department’s project management by the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) in October 2008 and October 2009;
   — From April to July 2009 Professor Peter Brook of Qinetiq and Gordon Hextall, the former Chief Information Officer of the NHS Programme for IT, undertook a technical review of the development of the IT systems; and
   — An external review of the technical feasibility of the project, the IT Contractor’s ability to deliver and contingency options in November 2009.

4. This memorandum is in three parts:
   — Part 1: Role and Objectives of the project
   — Part 2: Current status of the project
   — Part 3: Departmental management of the project
KEY FACTS

— The FiReControl project aims to replace 46 local Fire and Rescue Service control rooms with a resilient network of nine purpose built Regional Control Centres. These centres will handle emergency 999 calls, mobilise resources and support the management of incidents.

— The IT element of the project involves the development of a call handling, mobilisation and incident handling system to deploy the closest fire engine (or other equipment) to the scene of an incident. This system will run on new IT hardware in Regional Control Centres, local fire stations and fire engines.

— In March 2007 the Department let the prime IT contract worth £200 million to EADS to design, procure, develop and install all elements of the IT system. To date EADS has been paid £39.6 million.

— The Department expects the first Regional Control Centres to become operational in Spring 2011; three years later than in the outline business case and 19 months later than planned when the IT contract was awarded.

— External assessments raise doubts about the current forecast completion date of the IT systems by May 2011.

— Since the prime IT contract was awarded, there have been two major changes to the mobilisation system; one in the technology used and subsequently for the software. EADS chose a new software subcontractor in December 2009, and its contract with the existing subcontractor was terminated.

— The Department has yet to agree a revised delivery plan for the continued development of the mobilisation system with its prime IT contractor.

— The Department believes its prime IT contractor is in breach of contract for failing to meet key contractual milestones, in particular for failure to deliver an acceptable, revised delivery plan. The contractor does not accept that it is in breach of contract. The current contract requires delivery of the IT systems by March 2010 against the Department’s current scheduled system delivery date of October 2010. The Department and EADS have been negotiating to revise the contract to reflect the Department’s current project plan.

— Little real progress was achieved in breaking down the end user requirements until summer 2009 when the Department, EADS and the Fire and Rescue Services agreed to hold joint workshops.

— Over the last 5 years there has been a high turnover rate of senior staff within the Department responsible for the delivery of this project. Over the last 13 months the project team has been restructured and new appointments to key positions have been made within the Department’s and EADS’s project teams.

— The Department has spent £202 million on the project from 2004 to December 2009. The Department expects to spend a further £221 million up to March 2017 on the project, bringing its total investment to £423 million. The Department originally expected the project to realise efficiencies and save costs locally, that would more than pay for the investment in the project. However the Department now expects the overall project to cost £240 million3 more than the local savings forecast, consequently there will be no overall financial savings.

— There is a team of over one hundred people working on the project. The team is a mixture of civil servants, seconded fire service staff, temporary contract staff and consultants.

— Four external reviews of the Department’s project management have recommended strengthening the governance and management of the project which the Department has taken forward.

— In July 2009, the Department relocated approximately 30 members of the project team to EADS’s offices with the aim of increasing its oversight of EADS and strengthening its quality assurance of IT system development.

— Recent external reviews reported that overall project management has got better, however these also express concerns about the capability and capacity of both the Department and its contractor to successfully complete the project.

— Throughout the contract, a number of key meetings between Ministers, the Departmental Permanent Secretary and senior EADS officials have been held, with increased frequency since September 2009, to discuss delivery and reaffirm commitment to the FiReControl project.

— The project has been reviewed by the Departmental Board’s delivery subcommittee five times in the last 18 months.

3 Net present value.
PART 1: ROLE AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

5. Forty Six local Fire and Rescue Authorities are responsible for responding to fires, road traffic accidents and other incidents in England. The Department is investing over £1 billion with the aim of improving their capacity to respond to incidents including large-scale disasters caused by terrorists, accident or nature. The Fire and Resilience programme comprises three separate but interdependent projects (figure 1). This memorandum examines FiReControl, one element of this programme.

Figure 1
THE FIRE AND RESILIENCE PROGRAMME
FiReControl—a £423 million project to provide a resilient network of nine regional control centres in England supporting the mobilisation of Fire and Rescue Service equipment and personnel to incidents.
Firelink—a £350 million project to upgrade each Fire and Rescue Service’s current main radio-communication system to enable them to talk to each other and with ambulance and police services on the same secure network.
New Dimension—a £330 million project to provide specialist equipment and associated training for firefighters to tackle the consequences of terrorist and other large-scale incidents such as flooding.

6. The NAO published a Value for Money report on the Department’s management of the New Dimension project in October 2008. We found that:
— The project had enhanced Fire and Rescue Services’ capacity to respond to terrorist and other large scale incidents, and had already contributed significantly to the handling of a number of major incidents including the Buncefield oil depot fire in December 2005 and the flooding in parts of England in the summer of 2007.
— A lack of project management in the early days of the project and poor financial management led to avoidable costs and delays in the procurement of the equipment, which presented significant risks to value for money.

The FiReControl project

7. Each of the 46 Fire and Rescue Services has its own local control room which handles 999 calls from members of the public. It manages incidents and dispatches fire engines, firefighters and equipment to the incident scene. These control rooms have differing systems, capacity and emergency back-up arrangements. The Department believes that the use of incompatible technology and processes limits Fire and Rescue Authorities’ ability to respond to large-scale emergencies for example regional flooding.

8. The FiReControl project aims to replace local control rooms with a network of nine purpose built regional control centres. The Department believes there will be a number of benefits to the public from these changes (figure 2). The nine networked centres are expected to be able to mobilise the nearest available fire engine (or other equipment) to the scene of an incident, regardless of the particular local service providing it. Calls should be automatically transferred to another control centre if one becomes overloaded.

Figure 2
ANTICIPATED PUBLIC BENEFITS OF FIRECONTROL
The Department has set out to achieve a number of benefits to the public from the FiReControl project:
— greater capacity to meet extremes of demand (arising, for example, from major incidents or high volumes of calls);
— increased levels of security and resilience in terms of buildings and technology to ensure continuity of service in case of natural or man-made disasters, or failures of systems;
— improved effectiveness of control room and front line operations;
— economies of scale and efficiencies in call-handling and incident management; and
— greater partnership working between Fire and Rescue Services through the introduction of common standards.

Source: NAO analysis of current FiReControl business case

4 New Dimension: Enhancing the Fire and Rescue Services’ capacity to respond to terrorist and other large scale incidents, HC 1050 session 2007–08.
The costs and benefits of the project

9. The Department has set out the justification for the project in various business cases since 2004 (figure 3). Some local control rooms have reached the end of their useful lives and local Fire and Rescue Authorities have delayed replacing these in anticipation of availability of FiReControl.

10. Local control rooms will be transferred to new Regional Control Centres in phases over a 20 month period. The Department expects this to enable any faults or deficiencies to be identified and remedied, thereby reducing the risk of operational failure. All nine Regional Control Centres are planned to be operational by the end of 2012. The Department originally set out in the project’s business case that all Regional Control Centres would be operational by the end of 2009. The Department is concerned that the first three Regional Control Centres may not become operational in May 2011 as planned.

11. The Department currently predicts that the total cost of the project will be £423 million. Whilst the Department originally expected the project to realise efficiencies and save costs locally that would be in excess of the costs of the project, the Department now expects the overall project to cost £240 million5 more than the local savings forecast. Not every Fire and Rescue Authority will save costs locally as a result of the project. The Department plans to make annual payments of £8.2 million to these Fire and Rescue Authorities.

Figure 3
DELCIVER TIMETABLE AND ANTICIPATED COSTS/BENEFITS OF FIRECONTROL

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategic outline business case</th>
<th>Outline Business Case</th>
<th>Full Business Case version 1.0</th>
<th>Full Business Case (Parts 1 and 2)</th>
<th>Revised Full Business Case version 1.1</th>
<th>Current forecast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Published</td>
<td>July 2004</td>
<td>June 2007</td>
<td>July 2008</td>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost to the Department</td>
<td>£120 million</td>
<td>£160 million</td>
<td>£340 million</td>
<td>£380 million</td>
<td>£423 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficiency savings per annum for Fire and Rescue Authorities</td>
<td>£22 million</td>
<td>30% (£25 million)</td>
<td>28% (£23 million)</td>
<td>11% (£8 million)</td>
<td>9% (£6 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall project savings (Cost) in NPV</td>
<td>£86 million</td>
<td>£42 million</td>
<td>(£50 million)</td>
<td>£211 million</td>
<td>(£218 million)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IT operational</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>October 2009</td>
<td>July 2009</td>
<td>May 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2011–12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NAO analysis of FiReControl business cases

Note 1: Period under consideration for overall project savings/(cost) is 2004–05 to 2020–21.

Note 2: In addition the Department has a contingency of £17 million.

Note 3: Efficiency saving not provided in percentage terms.

Note 4: These figures exclude any potential royalty income from future sales of FiReControl technology.

12. The Department has organised the FiReControl project into three main work streams:

— Accommodation—to deliver nine purpose built buildings to house the regional control centres.

— Business change—supporting Fire and Rescue Authorities’ business change, including preparing each Fire and Rescue Service for new operational processes and policies, staffing and ways of working for example through training.

— IT—to deliver the computer equipment and systems to handle calls, mobilise fire engines (or other equipment) and manage incidents. A computer network linking each Regional Control Centre provides up to date information needed at an incident, eg hydrant location and vehicle design.

Timeline of key events

May 2004 Department commences procurement of IT contract with a call for interest in the Official Journal of the European Union

November 2004 Strategic outline business case published by the Department.

July 2006 Department invites three short-listed bidders for best and final offers.

March 2007 Department contracts with EADS for FiReControl IT systems.

June 2007 Full business case published by the Department.


5 Net present value.
### Timeline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>05 November 2007</td>
<td>Key milestone for training content for in-cab data displays changed—Incorporated into 1 October 2009 milestone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 January 2008</td>
<td>Key milestone not met—Prototype in-cab data display for Fire and Rescue Service familiarisation (delivered August 2009).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 2008</td>
<td>Department informed by EADS that technology used to develop mobilisation system isn’t working.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2008</td>
<td>Software to enable Fire and Rescue Services to ready their data for the new system—roll-out to seven services.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 October 2008</td>
<td>OGC health check.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>EADS commence assessing mobilisation system fallback options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2008</td>
<td>Hardware and database technology for mobilisation system changed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 November 2008</td>
<td>Ministerial announcement—Go live date for first Regional Control Centres extended by 9 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26 November 2008</td>
<td>Department and EADS agree changes to contract milestones. New milestones and new payment terms agreed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 December 2008</td>
<td>New milestone not met—detailed system design documentation (part 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 March 2009</td>
<td>New milestone not met—full set of detailed system design documentation (part 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2009</td>
<td>EADS selects fallback mobilisation system (Intergraph)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 May 2009</td>
<td>New milestone not met—detailed system design documentation (part 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 July 2009</td>
<td>Department co-locate its technical &amp; assurance team with EADS in Newport.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 July 2009</td>
<td>Ministerial announcement—Go live date for first Regional Control Centres extended by a further 10 months.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 July 2009</td>
<td>Department informed that there are increasing issues with the mobilisation system software</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 August 2009</td>
<td>Gordon Hextall/Peter Brook technical report presented to the Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 September 2009</td>
<td>FiReControl software requirements passed to Intergraph’s USA development team for inclusion in contingency mobilisation system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>01 October 2009</td>
<td>New key milestone not met. Contractor required to supply to the Department an of impact assessment of switch to Intergraph and detailed project plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 October 2009</td>
<td>OGC health check.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2009</td>
<td>External review of project. EADS completed impact analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04 November 2009</td>
<td>Extended deadline for new key milestone not fully met—revised to 21 December.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2009</td>
<td>Contract with existing subcontractor cancelled and switched to Intergraph.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 December 2009</td>
<td>Extended deadline for new key milestone not met—detailed project plan not yet agreed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Planned events

- 1 February 2010: Further extended deadline for new milestone—supply of detailed plan expected by the Department.
- 01 March 2010: Extant contractual date to deliver full IT systems.
- 01 July 2010: First interim release of Intergraph product for preliminary testing and integration into overall IT system by EADS.
- October 2010: Schedule delivery date of IT system from EADS.
- May 2011: Current go live date for first three regional control centres.
- End of 2012: Current plan for all regional control centres to be operational.
PART 2: CURRENT STATUS OF THE IT PROJECT

13. In March 2007 the Department contracted with EADS to design, develop and install the core IT systems (figure 4). The Department has specified high levels of availability and resilience from the system, even during planned maintenance periods.

The project requirements

14. The IT system is required to support call handling, the mobilisation and deployment of the closest appropriate fire engines (or other equipment) to the scene of an incident and management of the incident. The system is expected to have the following key features:

- Caller location—Identify the location of the caller, to aid the confirmation of the location of the incident or identify malicious callers;
- Satellite positioning—Identify the shortest travel time by road to the incident through satellite position of the fire engine (or other equipment) and the incident location; and
- In-cab displays to give up-to-date information, for example route planning, location of nearest hydrants and safety information on how to tackle certain types of incidents, eg vehicle design for road traffic incident.

The contractor

15. The project requires the procurement and installation of IT hardware in nine Regional Control Centres, 46 Fire and Rescue Service headquarters, 1,400 fire stations and 3,400 fire engines (and other equipment). The key system running on this hardware is the mobilisation system. The system will control and coordinate the chain of emergency activities: from taking and identifying an incoming emergency call, to dispatching the right resources to the incident site and keeping them updated with real-time information.

16. The mobilisation system requires use of high volumes of data from the local Fire and Rescue Services, including: locations of fire engines (or other equipment); sites of interest, for example water hydrants; and local procedures, for example locally pre-determined ‘attendances and action plans’ for different types of incident.

17. As well as designing, developing and installing the core resilient IT systems, EADS is required to supply operational support services, including fault repair, maintenance and data back-ups until 2015, with an option for a further three year extension up to 2018.

18. EADS has subcontracted the majority of the work to third parties and its main role is to bring these packages together to form the overall IT systems. The mobilisation system will require the integration and customisation of 50 pre-existing Commercial-Off-The-Shelf (COTS) software packages.

Figure 4

WHAT EADS IS CONTRACTED TO DELIVER

Source: Communities and Local Government
Technical problems in developing the project

19. EADS was contracted by the Department for the development of the mobilisation system. The mobilisation system needs to use particular database and hardware products in order to meet the Department’s demanding system performance requirements including high system availability and large data volume handling.

20. In October 2007 EADS concluded that the system performance requirements specified by the Department could not be met by the originally selected database and hardware products. EADS began considering fall-back options in the second quarter of 2008. EADS then elected to continue with its original system development subcontractor but replace its database and hardware products in the design of the mobilisation system.

21. The project suffered further delays. In May 2009, EADS engaged with Intergraph to develop a fallback option for the mobilisation system.

22. EADS has terminated its contract with its original main subcontractor and in December 2009 let a contract to Intergraph. Intergraph must modify its core (commercially available and ‘off-the-shelf’) software product to meet the needs of the FiReControl project.

23. The development work will be undertaken in Intergraph’s American and Swindon facilities in accordance with its annual product development cycle. This cycle required EADS to confirm its mobilisation system requirements with Intergraph by 1 October 2009. The Department advises that it is engaging collaboratively with Intergraph and Fire and Rescue Service end-users in order to mitigate the risk of escalating cost and delay due to incomplete or misunderstood requirements. In July 2010, an early version of the modified Intergraph product is due to be released to EADS for preliminary testing and integration work. The full and final version of the Intergraph product to EADS is due October 2010.

Part 3: Management of FiReControl

24. The Department’s Fire and Resilience Directorate is responsible for managing the FiReControl project. The Fire and Resilience Directorate is made up of civil servants, consultants, seconded fire service staff and temporary contract staff. Around one hundred full time equivalent members of staff currently work on the project (figure 5). Just under half of these are consultants and temporary contract staff. The Department has a contract with PA Consulting to provide project management and technology expertise.

Project management

25. There has been a significant turnover of senior staff within the project. In the last five years there have been five different Senior Responsible Officers and four different Project Directors. In 2008 an Office of Government Commerce Health Check concluded that management of the project appeared to have grown organically without any analysis of what was needed to manage the project. As a result, the project team has been restructured and the dedicated project management office strengthened. Over the last 13 months new appointments have been made to key positions within both the Department and EADS’ FiReControl project management teams:

— The Department’s project director, November 2008
— The Department’s commercial director, January 2009
— EADS project director, February 2009
— EADS project manager, September 2009

Figure 5
NUMBER OF FULL TIME EQUIVALENT (FTE) MEMBERS OF STAFF WORKING ON THE PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Civil servants (including seconded fire service staff) FTE</th>
<th>Consultants and Temporary Contract FTE</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004–05</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005–06</td>
<td>Not available</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006–07</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>76.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007–08</td>
<td>54.9</td>
<td>49.4</td>
<td>104.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008–09</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>56.9</td>
<td>114.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009–10</td>
<td>66.6</td>
<td>49.8</td>
<td>116.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Communities and Local Government
26. The Department is aspiring to comply with OGC governance standards in delivering the project. The OGC review of October 2008 found that the project governance structure was cumbersome and the project board was not acting as an effective decision-making forum. Lines of responsibility and decision making were not clear and there was a lack of sufficient assurance and robust internal challenge.

27. In response to these findings the Department made a number of changes to the governance of the project. The project’s board now has more representatives from the contractor and the Fire and Rescue Services. The terms of reference have also been strengthened to make explicit that the Senior Responsible Owner is accountable for decision-making, with other Project Board members advising.

28. Four sub-groups of the project board are responsible for focusing on particular areas and are expected to escalate issues to the Project Board as and when necessary (figure 6). A Local and Regional Delivery Group aims to ensure that a workable solution will be delivered that Fire and Rescue Services will take on, and monitor progress of the local and regional work that is required.

Figure 6

GOVERNANCE OF THE PROJECT

- To assure the FiReControl Project remains on track to deliver the required outcomes, including:
  - Monitoring and reviewing progress
  - Ensure continued quality of solution
  - Monitoring strategic finance issues
  - Agreeing resolution of escalated problems

- To promote active targeted stakeholder work, including more Department and EADS senior input
- To improve relations with our stakeholders

- To monitor the progress and quality of national delivery and resolve or escalate issues as appropriate

- To review, monitor and drive EADS delivery
- To manage EADS commercial interface
- To oversee interaction and build positive relationships with EADs

Source: Communities and Local Government

29. The Fire & Resilience Programme reports to the Departmental Board each month using an Integrated Programme Report covering financial and non-financial matters. The Permanent Secretary, chairs a Delivery Sub-committee (DSC) of the main Departmental board which calls on Projects or Programmes to provide additional reporting at key stages or events. Generally the DSC meets twice a month with the agenda based on a review of the issues outlined in the Integrated Performance Report. FiReControl has been discussed at five meetings in the last 18 months.

30. At the Delivery sub-committee meeting of November 2008, a progress report made clear that key improvements were needed to improve relationship and partnership arrangements with EADS and that revised FiReControl project governance and strategic management were also needed. In March 2009 better communications and engagement were reported at all levels, but concerns were noted with the Department’s engagement with EADS’s subcontractors.

31. A number of key meetings between Ministers, the Departmental Permanent Secretary and senior EADS officials have been held from September through December 2009 to discuss delivery and reaffirm commitment to the FiReControl project.

32. In addition to the specific commercial arrangements for FiReControl, the Department has told us that it is working with MoD (and other Government Departments where EADS are a key supplier) in a Strategic Engagement Process. This aims to improve relationships and the effectiveness of EADS’s work across government through a consistent and joined up approach.
Responding to external reviews

33. Whilst the OGC review of October 2009 reported that overall project management had improved, it also expressed concerns about the capability and capacity of both the Department and EADS to successfully complete the project. Similar concerns were expressed by the external review in November 2009.

34. The Department recognises that EADS has and continues to make efforts to strengthen its in-house FiReControl project team. The Department also believes that the relocation of approximately 30 Departmental staff to EADS’s offices, and their close working with EADS and its subcontractors, increases its oversight of EADS and strengthens its quality assurance of the IT system development.

35. The project is subject to a wide and diverse range of stakeholder interests that must be managed and balanced in order to successfully complete the project. Although external reports have recognised the positive steps taken by the Departmental project management team, the external review observed in late November 2009 that stakeholder trust could be at a tipping point.

Contract management

36. The Department’s prime IT contract with EADS sets out a number of milestones against which EADS is required to provide aspects of the IT system in return for payment. In addition there are a number of key milestones which if missed could constitute a breach of contract making EADS liable to pay financial penalties to the Department. The Department makes the majority of payments to EADS once the IT system has been built and tested.

37. The Department specified three key milestones early into system development so that EADS would provide components to allow Fire and Rescue Services to start preparing and training to use the new system. The key milestone were for:

- Software that will enable Fire and Rescue Services to ready their operational data for later input into the new FiReControl systems—due 31 October 2007;
- Training content for the new fire engine in-cab display—due 5 November 2007; and
- Initial version of software for fire engine in-cab display for Fire and Rescue Service familiarisation—due 4 January 2008.

38. Delays in meeting early milestones were, according to the Department, taken into account during more recent contractual and settlement negotiations.

39. The Department believes the original contract conformed to prevailing OGC standards. However, both the external review and the Department concur that in other respects the contract was not well suited to the needs of the FiReControl project. As the contract contains few interim milestones, it does not give the Department an effective basis for holding EADS accountable for its on-going performance by obliging them to deliver components at planned and frequent intervals.

40. In November 2008, as a result of the technical problems outlined above (para 20 and 21), the Department and EADS agreed changes to contract milestones. At that time, new dates were agreed. Based on information provided by the Department, EADS agreed to provide additional non-contracted work and a reduction in some contractual milestone payments, together these are estimated to be worth £10 million.

41. Although not yet reflected in a revised contract, in July 2009 the Department agreed a revised delivery plan and new rewards for results through additional milestones and revised payment terms with EADS. This new delivery plan established that the first three Regional Control Centres would become operational in Spring 2011, a further 10 month delay. EADS agreed to make royalty payments to the Department on any future sales of FiReControl software. Furthermore, the in-service charges Fire and Rescue Authorities are due to pay will be reduced by £17.5 million.

42. In September 2009, to support development of the fallback option,, EADS and the Department agreed interim milestones including a new key milestone that it hoped would assist its control of EAD’s development of the system. This key milestone required EADS to provide a detailed project plan demonstrating how it would deliver the IT system and a detailed impact assessment if EADS were to change subcontractors to Intergraph. In October 2009, the Department formally notified EADS that it was in breach of contract for EADS’s failure to meet this new key milestone. EADS does not accept that it is in breach of contract.

Project plan

43. An initial project plan from EADS in November 2009 indicated a system delivery date later than required in the Department’s project plan. To date, a detailed and fully scoped project plan has yet to be agreed between the Department and EADS. This is contingent on EADS first fulfilling its obligation under a contract milestone to provide a detailed updated plan. The reliability and credibility of the Department’s current published project plan, cost estimates and risk assessments have already been questioned by both the OGC and the external reviews.
44. The current contract is out of date and does not reflect the Department’s current project plan. Whilst, the July 2009 plan is used for project reporting, at present EADS is contracted to provide the IT system by March 2010. EADS and the Department are working to agree a new project plan up to project completion and put this on a contractual basis.

Ensuring the IT system meets Fire and Rescue Services’ Requirements

45. The Department set out approximately 2,000 requirements for the IT system in its contract with EADS. These needed to be broken down further into 8,000 more detailed sub-requirements in consultation with Fire and Rescue Service end users to ensure that the system’s design, development and testing activities are aligned to end-user requirements.

46. Work on breaking down the system’s requirements had been in progress since early 2008 but little real progress was achieved until summer 2009 when the Department agreed with EADS and the Fire and Rescue Services that joint workshops would be held to achieve this.

Project Costs

47. The Department has spent £202 million on the FiReControl project up to the end of December 2009. The Department forecasts spending a further £221 million on the project up to 2017 (figure 7), bringing its total investment to £423 million. In addition, the Department has an additional contingency budget for the project. To date, around 40 per cent of costs (£78 million) relate to staff and consultancy involved in developing and managing the FiReControl project since its inception.

48. Although the contract with EADS is a fixed price contract, the Department estimates that delays to the IT have increased project costs by £40 million.

### Figure 7

**FIRECONTROL COSTS TO DECEMBER 2009 AND FORECAST COSTS TO 2017**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Expenditure</th>
<th>March 2004 to December 2009 Total £m</th>
<th>Jan 2010 to March 2017 Total £m</th>
<th>Overall project Total £m</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National project team costs</td>
<td>£78.20</td>
<td>£45.80</td>
<td>£124.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Control Centre buildings</td>
<td>£21.30</td>
<td>£29.20</td>
<td>£50.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments to Fire and Rescue Services</td>
<td>£62.40</td>
<td>£62.30</td>
<td>£124.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Payments to EADS</td>
<td>£39.60</td>
<td>£83.90</td>
<td>£123.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>£201.50</strong></td>
<td><strong>£221.20</strong></td>
<td><strong>£422.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Communities and Local Government

Note 1: Excludes planned payments to those Fire and Rescue Services who have additional costs as a result of the FiReControl.

Value of the IT contract with EADS

49. The Department’s contract with EADS was originally valued at £200 million. This included £104 million for the design, build, and testing of the IT systems and £96 million for in-service support charges once regional control centres become operational up to 2015. As a result of the delays in development of the IT systems, the contract’s value has decreased to approximately £170 million as there will be less in-service support charges (some of which will be charged to Fire and Rescue Services). In 2015 the Department has an option to extend EADS’ contract for a further 3 years. Beyond this, the Department will need to contract for support services for the Regional Control Centres, including fault repair, maintenance and data back-ups.

The Department’s contingency

50. Since early spring 2009 the Department has been undertaking an exercise to evaluate a number of fall back options for the FiReControl project. These were presented to Ministers in November 2009. This exercise has considered a number of different options ranging from the re-procurement of FiReControl to investment in 46 local standalone centres. To date the Department has spent £202 million on the project. Should the project be unsuccessful the £205 million of future lease payments on FiReControl buildings would transfer to the Department. In addition, the Department estimates that a further £24 million would be spent winding up the project. This expenditure would bring the total cost to the Department of discontinuing with the project to £431 million, £8 million more than the cost of continuing with the FiReControl project. The Department has not yet set out a trigger point for its fall back options.

**February 2010**

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Memorandum submitted by Intergraph (UK) (FIRE 32)

Below is Intergraph (UK) Limited’s submission outlining factual inaccuracies in the FBU’s memorandum (Fire 27).

For the clerk of the department of CLG select committee enquiry into FiReControl

“With respect to paragraph 29 in the Fire Brigade Union’s Memorandum (‘Fire 27’) dated January 2010, Intergraph strongly refutes the second sentence in this statement and requests this inaccurate statement to be retracted and removed from record. For the record, Intergraph I/CAD software has successfully provided fire mobilising services to the Isle of Man fire brigade since 2004 as part of its Tri-Service joint control room. Indeed, the emergency dispatch software has been successfully deployed in the UK by three regional ambulance services (serving more than one in five people in England) and six police forces. Globally, Intergraph fire, police and ambulance dispatch software has successfully demonstrated proven reliability and scalability for decades. In fact, Intergraph public safety solutions now protect one in 12 people in the world.”

“With respect to paragraph 30 in the Fire Brigade Union’s Memorandum (‘Fire 27’) dated January 2010, Intergraph refutes this as factually incorrect and requests the statement to be retracted and removed from record. With specific reference to the claim ‘no system has been tried and tested in a national network of regional fire service controls, as none exists anywhere in the world,’ New Zealand has operated I/CAD for its ‘national network of regional fire service controls’ since 1997. Similarly, I/CAD also provides national mobilisation services around the world including for the German Federal Police and the Belgium National Police as well as for the Royal Automobile Club (RAC) in the UK.”

February 2010

Memorandum submitted by Cllr André Gonzalez de Savage, Portfolio Holder with Responsibility for Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service (FIRE 33)

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service has a control room workforce that is totally dedicated to protecting our community and doing this in a professional and competent manner. They are a credit to the Service, our community and themselves. The Fire and Rescue Authority is very proud of them and their efforts to support the community under what, at times, are very trying circumstances.

The Government, through Ministers, has created a climate within which it is clear that they intend to implement their view of how Fire and Rescue Service control rooms should be organised and function in the future. This has been reinforced by the Minister requesting a commitment from political leaders to do all in their power to work together to implement the Regional Control Centre project. This environmental situation has existed for several years and it is very clear to Fire and Rescue Authorities that the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 gives the Minister the ability to enforce central government’s will upon local government. Government has taken responsibility for organising and implementing the infrastructure of the target operating model and has been forced to delay the project.

Within this climate, Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Authority has taken a pragmatic and practical view towards the future and that has been a two pronged strategy. Firstly to work with the project, as we have no alternative within the political climate explained above, in order to get the best system we can to protect our community. The other strategy has been one of prudence with public and local tax payers’ money. This has led to an investment strategy of maintaining the current mobilising system in functional state, but not making investments in new advances unless they are vital. This situation has existed for many years, due to the long and delayed gestation period of the RCC project.

Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service’s legacy mobilising system, whilst functional, is in urgent need of replacement due to its age and functionality. The system is holding back the level of service that I would wish our Fire and Rescue Service to provide in protecting our community and employees.

I hold the view that the RCC project will provide a better and more resilient mobilising system and so enable us to provide a better service to our community and our employees than we do at the moment which, given the above, will not be difficult to achieve. The local community’s view is, overwhelmingly, that they want their Fire and Rescue Service control room to remain local and within the county. As a locally, democratically elected leader, I support this view.

I think that, whilst real and imminent, the probability and effects of terrorism have been over exaggerated. Our Fire and Rescue Service is already one of the best in the western or developed world and has proved this at incidents such as Buncefield, the flooding in recent years and the current response to the disaster in Haiti. The Service has proved that it has the will and ability to work together in order to meet the effects of such a catastrophic incident. I consider that the RCC project over-engineers a response to this threat in order to meet political ends.
In terms of finance, I accept that Government has committed considerable resources to this project but I feel this could have been better spent in supporting us to deliver a system that met the resilience needs of the country, whilst equally meeting the public’s wish for a local location for its control room. I am also not entirely clear of what the true cost of the RCC project will be on the authority, given the amount of out of scope activity that will have to be reassigned.

Overall, I object to the unwarranted imposition of a central government solution upon local government but, more importantly, the imposition of a system that flies in the face of public opinion.

I hold the view that government should extricate itself from this project and support local authorities to deliver a solution that meets local need and facilitates greater collaboration between all emergency services to these, thankfully very rare, national disasters, as well as meeting the public’s views on how its Fire and Rescue Service should deliver its control room function.

February 2010

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Supplementary memorandum from the Local Government Association FiReControl

Please find below additional information that was requested by the Committee as part of Question 14 of the FiReControl hearing that took place on the 8 February 2010:

“We have listened in your responses to a number of comments regarding your lack of involvement as stakeholders with CLG. Can each of you give me a specific example—I am sure there is more than one—where you feel at different stages you have been completely missed out in the process? Are there certain incidents that stick in your minds where you think, ‘We found out about this after the fact’?”

USE OF EXISTING WIDE AREA NETWORKS (WAN)

A number of brigades have wide area networks in place that meet or exceed the requirements of the FiReControl project. The use of existing networks has been promoted by brigades since the inception of the project but has not been taken on board and is still being considered. Had brigades been fully consulted at an early stage the contract could have provided for the use of some existing elements thus saving time, money and potential future contractual changes.

STATION END EQUIPMENT

Part of the system for mobilising is the equipment at fire stations. FiReControl wish to change out all of this equipment which is a major process requiring individual design proposals for each location, the carrying out of surveys and specialist asbestos surveys. Some FRS have always instigated that all that is required is a change of the Firecoder equipment which is in effect a rack within a cabinet, CLG have either been reluctant to go down this route or have not listened to what the FRS was saying. We are now in a position where the exchange of Firecoder route is unofficially acknowledged as the most practical and least risk approach but CLG are now reluctant to progress as there will be contractual difficulties.

MOBILE DATA TERMINALS

Part of the project is to provide a mobile data terminal onto appliances which amongst other things will provide risk information to front line firefighters. Many brigades already have this capability but CLG seem to be unable to look at the good practice that is already in existence and learn from it. In this case the supplier has, and continues to issue equipment to the FRS that is not fit for purpose. While this may be a supplier problem it is considered that many of the problems could have been overcome if there had been much closer working with the end users.

OPERATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

While CLG now appear to understand the process that take place within an FRS to undertake mobilising they have appeared reluctant to take on board the message that each FRS has specific operational requirements for premises and risks within its own area. Examples are how calls to airports or the London underground are managed. There is a significant risk that the system will not meet these local requirements and will therefore be rejected by Chief Fire Officers leading to further delays and expense.
Staffing Numbers

CLG have developed a staffing model which has been used to determine the staffing numbers upon which the business case is based. Some FRS have continually stated that they do not have confidence in the model due to geographical factors and as such will have to employ additional staff to reduce the risk of not being able to maintain an adequate operational response.

8 February 2010