

LEISURE AND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTATION SCHEDULE

1	RECEIVED FROM	TITLE	SUBMISSION BY
	NORTHERN IRELAND FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE	CONSULTATION ON PROPOSALS TO REALIGN DISTRICT STRUCTURES TO THOSE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES	28 MARCH 2022
<p>The Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service (NIFRS) has launched a Consultation on realigning the District Structures to those of Local Authorities. NIFRS propose this in order to enhance relationships with partner agencies through community planning arrangements, with a view to NIFRS being at the centre of delivery of initiatives to Save, Protect and Improve lives.</p> <p>Changing the structures provides an immediate change to enable each Council to have a single dedicated point of contact and ensure NIFRS can be fully involved in the development and implementation of local Community Risk Management Plans. This realignment will allow NIFRS to enhance collaboration at a local level, better identify those most at risk and work more effectively in partnership to enhance public safety, whilst signposting those in need to the most appropriate support available.</p> <p>NIFRS are keen to obtain the views of stakeholders in relation to this proposal. Also, as part of their Statutory Equality Duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, they are particularly interested in identifying equality impacts arising from realignment of the District Structures.</p> <p>The Consultation document, including electronic questionnaire is available on their website using the following link; http://www.nifrs.org/home/about-us/consultations/</p> <p>A copy is also included should you wish to return via email using the following address; consultation@nifrs.org</p> <p>The closing date for receipt of comments is 28th March 2022.</p> <p>A summary of responses plus details of any further revision as a result of this consultation will be available on the NIFRS website from April 2022.</p>			



Consultation on
Realignment of NIFF



**Northern Ireland
Fire & Rescue Service**

**A Consultation on the Realignment of Northern
Ireland Fire & Rescue Service District Structures to
those of Local Government Authorities**

January 2022



*Safer
Together*

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Foreword

Thank you for your interest in this consultation on our proposal to realign our District Structures to those of the Local Government Authorities (LGA), referred to as 'Councils' throughout the remainder of this document.

Making a positive difference to people's lives, protecting them and keeping them safe is what we do. We strongly believe that a realignment of our structures to Council boundaries will significantly strengthen the great work that already takes place with local Councils and partner agencies.

NIFRS has a proud tradition and history of serving the community with distinction. As with all public sector organisations, and in common with other Fire & Rescue Services throughout the rest of the UK, NIFRS needs to modernise to ensure that we deliver the best possible Fire and Rescue Service for the people that we serve.

Following the appointment of our new Chief Fire & Rescue Officer (CFRO) Peter O'Reilly in September 2021, a number of internal reviews have commenced with a view to challenge how we deliver our services. A rationalisation of the NIFRS Executive Leadership Team has already been progressed, with the realignment of duties and responsibilities, and the recruitment of a number of strategic positions.

A full review of Community Risk is underway; this will inform the development of a new Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) which will detail a 3/5 year roadmap for change. Once finalised, the CRMP will undergo full Public Consultation, Section 75 Screening and a Rural Impact Assessment. A key principle of the CRMP will be the development of local Community Risk Plans, informed by those local communities to meet their needs and enhance community wellbeing.

Changing our structures to align with those of local Council boundaries provides an immediate change to enable us to make sure each Council has a single dedicated point of contact and ensure NIFRS can be fully involved in the development and implementation of local Community Risk Management Plans. This realignment will allow NIFRS to enhance collaboration at a local level, better identify those most at risk and more effectively work in partnership to enhance public safety, whilst signposting to the most appropriate support available. This is the reason why we are

consulting on this specific change to our operational District structure in the first instance.

We wish to engage and consult with you, our stakeholders, on the proposals for our new District structures. The proposed changes will align our current District boundaries to those of Local Councils. This document has been written to enable you to;

- Understand how this alignment will provide better outcomes to all stakeholders
- Provide us with feedback, comments or any questions that you may have about the proposed change.

I strongly encourage you to participate in this consultation and share your views on how we can improve how we support our local community.

Carmel McKinney OBE
Chairperson
NIFRS Board

About Us – What we do

NIFRS protects and serves the entire population of Northern Ireland, an area of over 5,500 square miles and with a population of 1.8 million, providing them with a range of fire and rescue services.



We believe better safety outcomes for the community can be achieved through effective partnership collaboration and successfully targeting our main areas of work based on our community risk assessment;

Prevention - educating the community on how to reduce risk and keep people safe from the dangers of fire and other types of incidents through community engagement initiatives such as; home fire safety checks, school education programmes, youth engagement, safety talks and demonstrations.

Protection - providing safer public spaces within the built environment, fire safety inspections and enforcement.

Emergency Response - sending fire engines and firefighters to emergency incidents such as fires, road traffic collisions and specialist rescue incidents including flooding, chemical incidents, collapsed buildings and other types of emergencies.

We also have a dedicated Regional Control Centre where all fire and rescue 999 emergency calls for Northern Ireland are answered and fire crews are mobilised to respond.

Our Current Operational Structure

At present we have 4 operational Area Commands – Northern, Southern, Eastern and Western. Area Commanders, each responsible for one of the 4 Area Commands, manage operational activity on a day-to-day basis.



Our 4 Area Commands are currently supported by 13 Districts; it is this District structure which we want to realign to Council boundaries across Northern Ireland to enhance our community focus and better target our activities to local need. District Commanders are responsible for the Fire Stations in their District.

There are 68 Fire Stations across Northern Ireland, each serving their local community.

Our Headquarters (including our Regional Control Centre) is situated in Lisburn, our Learning & Development Centres are in Cookstown and Boucher Crescent (Belfast), and our Service Support Centre is also located in Boucher Crescent.

NIFRS has a historical establishment of 856 Wholetime Firefighters who work together with 994 On-Call Firefighters across Northern Ireland to protect the community.

Our Proposals

NIFRS propose to align our District structure to the Council boundaries; to enhance relationships with partner agencies through community planning arrangements, with a view to NIFRS being at the centre of delivery of initiatives to Save, Protect and Improve lives.

The NIFRS Board, under the Fire & Rescue Service Order 2006, has a statutory responsibility to provide a Fire and Rescue Service within Northern Ireland. We discharge this responsibility through strategically placing resources and staff across Northern Ireland. The Local Government Act (NI) 2014 places a statutory responsibility on NIFRS to engage through the Community Planning Structures.

Understanding communities and recognising their different needs is essential to delivering services in their local area; services that build relationships, tackle the right problems and increase public confidence. It is therefore important to give people a voice so that they feel they are being heard and are confident to engage with their Fire and Rescue Service. The new proposed arrangements will improve the opportunities for people to get more involved through shaping priorities and services, volunteering, scrutinising the service and helping to solve problems within their community.

The issues affecting individuals, families and communities are often complex and rarely solved by one organisation alone; by bringing organisations together through Community Risk Management and Planning we can prevent problems from escalating and protect people from harm. This means sharing resources and knowledge and aligning services to deliver more efficient and comprehensive solutions. Enhanced collaboration between partners including Councils, other blue light services, Health Authorities, Public Bodies, businesses and the voluntary sector is essential. Through our proposed new District Structures we will

Northern Ireland Audit Office noted in 2019 that effective partnerships need to work together across all of Government. They state how;

“Support Hubs are a good example of how a collaborative approach can produce successful outcomes which cannot necessarily be achieved through one public service body.”

work with communities to address their local safety concerns and ensure that partners have the skills to intervene early, recognise and address vulnerability.

By aligning to Council boundaries, NIFRS District Commanders will undertake the role of NIFRS Community Risk Manager and be the assigned primary point of contact for all aspects of Community Risk Management Planning, in line with statutory requirements under The Local Government Act (NI) 2014. District Commanders, with their supporting Officers, will align to and become embedded in the Community Risk Management work of each Council, enabling each to work collaboratively with other partner agencies to develop bespoke and locally informed Community Risk Management Plans.

The change will realign the current NIFRS District model, which has been in place since 1999, to current Council Boundaries introduced through the reform of Local Government in April 2015.

Currently, the lack of alignment often results in ineffective collaboration with multiple NIFRS Officers attending meetings across a number of Councils. Reconfiguring the structure, functional roles and accountability lines will enhance and optimise collaborative working with partner agencies and improve outcomes for local communities.

The proposed changes to the new NIFRS District structures will not affect existing arrangements regarding the processing of Fire Safety Protection work streams; including statutory Fire Safety duties such as enforcement and consultation.

Planning, Building Control and Licensing consultations will continue to be processed within the existing NIFRS Protection structures, in line with long standing agreed procedures.

The proposal will require local management structures to be reconfigured, with District Commanders taking overall responsibility for all aspects of local Community Risk Management Planning, and associated NIFRS work, within the Council boundary.

NIFRS Districts will be renamed to mirror Local Councils, as illustrated below, and each Council will be advised of their nominated District Commander.



The proposed reconfiguration will largely apply to administrative duties and will not have a direct impact on frontline fire engine response.

In summary, NIFRS propose to realign our District structures to Council boundaries to support the identification and management of risk and to deliver better outcomes for our communities. Improved collective and collaborative working will enhance risk reduction leading to a safer communities and increased wellbeing. This change will provide the following benefits:

- Enhance arrangements for identifying and managing local risk and delivering improved outcomes for local communities.
- Enhance partnership working in existing forums, such as Police Community Safety Partnerships (PCSP), Multi Agency Support Hubs (MASH), Community Planning, Emergency Preparedness Groups.
- Improve internal reporting and accountability lines, optimise collaboration with partner agencies and reduce duplication of roles across NIFRS Districts.
- Enable local officers to better manage local stations, enabling crews to further build relationship and focus our service on the needs of the local community.

Our Questions

Thank you for your interest in this consultation on our proposal to realign our District Structures to those of the Local Government Authorities (Councils).

We are committed to our Statutory Equality Duties under Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998. We are keen for all of our stakeholders to consider the proposed change to our District structure to provide us with consultative feedback.

All opinions and information on the potential equality impact of the proposed changes are welcome. Your feedback will help finalise our equality screening and further inform decision making on implementing the changes. We believe these proposals provide a significant opportunity to reshape and improve our services and we want to hear from you.

We now encourage you to participate in this consultation by answering the following questions and sharing your views on how we can improve how we support our local community.

1. Do you agree that NIFRS should realign its District structures to Local Government Authority (Council) Boundaries? (Yes/No)

Have you any comments about the realignment, or alternative views?

2. Are there any stakeholder considerations for equality or rural needs at a local level that NIFRS should consider in any realignment of its District structures to those of the Councils? (Yes/No)

What are these considerations?

3. Do you agree that NIFRS should have a nominated District Commander linked to each Council with responsibility for the development of local Community Risk Management Plans, in consultation with partner agencies? (Yes/No)

Have you any comments regarding District Commanders undertaking this responsibility, or alternative views?

Have Your Say

This consultation exercise commenced on the 17th January 2022. Your comments are welcomed using the consultation questionnaire at Appendix A of this document; these should be forwarded to Group Commander Dermot McPoland, whose details are outlined below. Alternatively, you can access the following link or visit the NIFRS website: **www.nifrs.org**:

<https://www.nifrs.org/home/about-us/consultations/>

If you require further clarification on the proposed changes to our District structure, meetings with the Lead Officer can be arranged or telephone discussions facilitated on request. The closing date for receipt of comments is 28th March 2022.

Group Commander Dermot McPoland

Fire & Rescue Service Headquarters

1 Seymour Street

Lisburn

BT27 4SX

Tel: 02892 664221 ext 2385

Email: consultation@nifrs.org

A summary of responses and details of any mitigation to the proposal as a result of this consultation will be made available on the NIFRS website from April 2022.

This document may be made available in alternative formats, where reasonable and upon request, e.g. easy read, electronic version, Braille, computer disc, audio-cassette, large font, and DAISY. This document will also be and in other languages.

Following the closure of this consultation, the results will be analysed along with other sources of evidence including Section 75 Screening and Rural Impact Assessment and a report will be provided to the NIFRS Board and Health Minister for consideration.

Confidentiality of Consultations

NIFRS will publish a summary of responses following completion of the consultation process. Your response, and all other responses to the consultation, may be disclosed on request. NIFRS can only refuse to disclose information in exceptional circumstances. Before you submit your response, please read the paragraphs below on the confidentiality of consultations and they will give you guidance on the legal position about any information given by you in response to this consultation.

The Freedom of Information Act gives the public a right of access to any information held by a public authority, namely, NIFRS in this case. This right of access to information includes information provided in response to a consultation. NIFRS cannot automatically consider as confidential information supplied to it in response to a consultation. However, it does have the responsibility to decide whether any information provided by you in response to this consultation, including information about your identity should be made public or be treated as confidential. If you do not wish information about your identity to be made public, please include an explanation in your response.

This means that information provided by you in response to the consultation is unlikely to be treated as confidential, except in very particular circumstances. The Secretary of State for Constitutional Affairs' Code of Practice on the Freedom of Information Act provides that:

- NIFRS should only accept information from third parties in confidence if it is necessary to obtain that information in connection with the exercise of any of NIFRS' functions and it would not otherwise be provided;
- NIFRS should not agree to hold information received from third parties "in confidence" which is not confidential in nature;
- acceptance by NIFRS of confidentiality provisions must be for good reasons, capable of being justified to the Information Commissioner.

For further information about confidentiality of responses please contact the Information Commissioner's Office (or see web site at: <http://www.ico.org.uk>)

Consultation Privacy Notice

Data Controller Name: Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service

Address: Headquarters, 1 Seymour Street, Lisburn BT27 4SX

Email: informationunit@nifrs.org

Telephone: 02892 664221

Being transparent and providing accessible information to individuals about how we may use personal data is a key element of the Data Protection Act (DPA) and the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR). NIFRS is committed to building trust and confidence in our ability to process your personal information and protect your privacy.

Purpose for processing

We are encouraging organisations to respond to the consultation. We will process personal data provided in response to consultations for the purpose of informing the realignment of NIFRS structure. We will publish a summary of the consultation responses and, in some cases, the responses themselves but these will not contain any personal data. We will not publish the names or contact details of respondents, but will include the names of organisations responding.

For the purpose of this consultation the only data we will process is the information provided by the individual when they respond to the consultation, as follows:

Name

Email address

Name of organisation (if responding on behalf of an organisation)

Lawful basis for processing

The lawful basis we are relying on to process your personal data is Article 6(1)(e) of the UK GDPR, which allows us to process personal data when this is necessary for the performance of our public tasks in our capacity.

How will your information be used and shared

We process the information internally for the above stated purpose. We don't intend to share your personal data with any third party. Any specific requests from a third party for us to share your personal data with them will be dealt with in accordance the provisions of the data protection laws.

How long will we keep your information

We will retain consultation response information until our work on the subject matter of the consultation is complete, and in line with the approved Retention and Disposal Schedule Good Management, Good Records (GMGR).

What are your rights?

You have the right to obtain confirmation that your data is being processed, and access to your personal data

You are entitled to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete

You have a right to have personal data erased and to prevent processing, in specific circumstances

You have the right to 'block' or suppress processing of personal data, in specific circumstances

You have the right to data portability, in specific circumstances

You have the right to object to the processing, in specific circumstances

You have rights in relation to automated decision making and profiling.

How to complain if you are not happy with how we process your personal information

If you wish to request access, object or raise a complaint about how we have handled your data, you can contact our Data Protection Officer using the details above.

If you are not satisfied with our response or believe we are not processing your personal data in accordance with the law, you can complain to the Information Commissioner at:

The Information Commissioner's Office – Northern Ireland

3rd Floor

14 Cromac Place,

Belfast

BT7 2JB

Telephone: 0303 123 1114

Email: ni@ico.org.uk

Appendix A

We now encourage you to participate in this consultation by answering the following questions and sharing your views on how we can improve how we support our local community.

1. Do you agree that NIFRS should realign its District structures to Local Government Authority (Council) Boundaries? (Yes/No)

Have you any comments about the realignment, or alternative views?

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What are these considerations?

3. Do you agree that NIFRS should have a nominated District Commander linked to each Council with responsibility for the development of local Community Risk Management Plans, in consultation with partner agencies? (Yes/No)

Have you any comments regarding District Commanders undertaking this responsibility, or alternative views?

I am providing feedback as:	
Member of public	Y/N
On Behalf of an organisation	Y/N
Name of the organisation	
Full Name (block capitals	
Postal Address	
Email address	
Contact telephone number	

Connect with us



028 92 664221



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