

Justice Committee
PE 1511: Closure of Inverness Control Room
Correspondence from the Petitioners

Thank you for forwarding the response from SFRS regarding our correspondence to you dated 11 December 2017. Unfortunately the response from the SFRS is wholly inadequate and has not answered the primary questions in our correspondence. This was relating to the two MSP Freedom of Information Requests (FOIs), the response has also not answered the request by the Justice Committee meeting where the SFRS were tasked with answering the FOI requests.

The FOIs were asked for by two separate MSPs and the SFRS declined to reply to both, on the grounds that the information requested was too difficult to provide. These FOI requests were very simple requests for information that the SFRS could very easily provide. The first request was to provide the dates that the 13 week tests on all Shetland fire appliances were undertaken in the last two years and the dates that emergency equipment was serviced in the Shetland in the last two years; this information is on a SFRS database! The second request was for the SFRS to provide the call handling times and station attendance times for incidents in the Highlands and Islands and Grampian Area for the years up until the closure of Inverness and Aberdeen control rooms and the same area information from the Dundee control room since it took over responsibility, again information from the control database.

This is the third time we have requested this information and indeed the Justice Committee has requested twice now that the SFRS should provide the information requested.

We must assume from this recent correspondence from the SFRS that the failure to provide such a basic request means that the fire appliances and equipment in the Scottish Islands has not been maintained in line with health and safety guidance and road traffic law in Scotland over the last few years. We must also assume that the failure to provide the basic information regarding the new Dundee control rooms performance compared to the closed Inverness and Aberdeen control rooms is so damning that the SFRS are not willing to divulge or admit that the new control room and new control system is failing the public and not fit for purpose.

It is apparent as we are led to believe that the SFRS has completely failed to undertake life safety and legally required maintenance on fire appliances, ladders, cutting equipment and breathing apparatus compressors on Scottish islands since it took over responsibility from the former Highland and Islands and Grampian Fire and Rescue Services. This is a major failure in management by the single Scottish Fire Service and in the governance by the Scottish Fire Board, it is also a failure in law and has put firefighters and the public they serve at an increased risk, from accidents and failed attendance at emergency incidents.

The call handling times and station turn out times were recorded and measured against each other in the eight control rooms across Scotland, these call handling times were measured in seconds and failing control rooms were taken to task by the

HMI to improve their performance. The failure of the SFRS to provide a comparison from the previous control centres and the new control centre would indicate a catastrophic failure in the centralisation of controls across Scotland. This was predicted and has been a concern of the public in the north and north east of Scotland from the initial consultation regarding the centralised controls, the new system was promised to be more efficient and improve public and fire crew safety, it has still to confirm this as the case and increasingly looks like a disaster for the fire service provision across Scotland. The control system mistakes are still occurring, recently Tongue in Sutherland was turned out to Tong in The Western Isles and last week all three emergency services were called out to a serious RTC south of Lerwick which was in fact north of Lerwick this meant the three casualties had an extra 30 minute delay in attendance due to the fire, ambulance and police control rooms all getting it wrong.

The continued failure in our emergency services in Scotland to provide basic health and safety maintenance and timeous control call handling is vindication that the principle managers in each service that said the centralisation was not a good for public safety, means they were all correct in their warning. It is therefore imperative that the Scottish Government act to resolve this matter before there is any margin for loss of life.

Regards

Alexander Kidd
Laura Hansler Ross
20 March 2018