

6th September 2012

Guto Bebb MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

COPY



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

Simon A Smith
Prif Swyddog Tân / Chief Fire Officer

Dear Mr Bebb

Re Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP)

The Chief Fire Officer, Simon Smith has asked me as the Head of Operational Service Delivery to respond to your letter of the 4th September 2012 on his behalf.

I note the concerns of your constituents and locally elected representatives. You may recall my letter to you of 22nd March 2012 where I outlined the extensive discussions undertaken by the Fire and Rescue Authority and the deliberations on the various submissions the Authority received before resolving to adopt a 30 minute attendance standard and reduce the provision of ALPs from four to three. The three ALPs to be located at Bangor, Rhyl and Wrexham.

I recognise that on occasions our resources may not achieve an attendance standard and it would be foolhardy to make promises and provide guarantees on the ability of the Service achieving attendances within expectations when road conditions and traffic is congested as well as the many other variables that could impact attendance times. This is true of any of the Service's resources.

What I can assure your constituents of is that a 30 minute attendance time is achievable and the incident you have quoted has proved that in practice in an emergency situation. I can also assure you that every effort is made to attend emergency incidents with the appropriate resources in the timeliest way on every single occasion.

It may be of interest to note that the ALP was mobilised as part of a pre-determined attendance as a planned contingency given the height of the premises. Once in attendance the ALP was never used and there were no lives at risk. The appropriate local fire crews were in attendance and as a consequence there was no delay in fighting the fire, which was as the result of arson.

Please contact me should you wish to discuss this incident further or clarify any of the information.

Paul Claydon
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

2nd November 2012

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Ms Wildermoth
Town Clerk & Financial Officer
Llandudno Town Council
Town Hall
Lloyd Street
Llandudno
LL30 2UP



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

Simon A Smith
Prif Swyddog Tân / Chief Fire Officer

Dear Ms Wildermoth

Re Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP)

Thank you for your letter of the 4th October 2012 which was received on the 8th.

I note the concerns of the Town Council and they will be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) at the next available opportunity which is the meeting of the FRAs Executive Panel on the 19th November 2012.

You may recall from my attendance with the Chair of the FRA at the Town Council meeting on the 13th March 2012 that I outlined the extensive discussions undertaken by the FRA and the subsequent deliberations on the various submissions the Authority received, including that of the Town Council, before resolving to adopt a 30 minute attendance standard and reduce the provision of ALPs from four to three located at Bangor, Rhyl and Wrexham.

Following that meeting I also sent a clarifying response to a letter from the Mayor. My response is dated 15th March 2012 (a copy of which I have attached). I recognise that on occasions our resources may not meet an attendance standard and it would be foolhardy to make promises and provide guarantees on the ability of the Service achieving attendances within expectations when there are many variables that could impact attendance times. But this is true of any of the Service's resources at any time.

What I can assure the Town Council of is that a 30 minute attendance time is achievable and the incident you have quoted has proved that in practice in an emergency situation. I can also assure you that every effort is made to attend emergency incidents with the appropriate resources in the timeliest way on every single occasion.

It may be of interest to note that the ALP was mobilised as part of a pre-determined attendance as a planned contingency given the height of the premises involved. Once in attendance the ALP was never used and there were no lives at risk. The appropriate local fire crews from Llandudno were in attendance and as a consequence there was no delay in fighting the fire, which was as the result of arson.

Continued.....

Your letter states that deployment, or assembly as it has been termed would take 30 minutes. I would refute such an assertion. I can only conclude that the Town Council has either been poorly or mischievously informed using what from my experience can only be an extreme example if factual at all. My own expectation would be deployment within a few minutes at most.

I would also suggest that the information the Town Council has received about the Rhyl incident is also misleading. The ALP was available from Rhyl until fire crews at that station became fully committed to an incident. This can and does happen on occasions across North Wales and in such circumstances the next nearest resource is identified for mobilisation. For example, fire crews from Llandudno may be fully committed to an incident in Penrhyn Bay when a further incident develops on West Shore, in such circumstance the next available resource would be mobilised. This may come from Colwyn Bay, Conwy, Llanrwst or Llanfairfechan depending on availability at that time. In the same way we have mutual aid agreements with our colleagues across our borders so that should Wrexham's ALP not be available we may be able to utilise resources from Cheshire and vice versa.

I note from your letter that the Town Council feels it has a responsibility for the safety of residents and visitors. Can I assure the Council that the Fire and Rescue Authority has a statutory duty under legislation in relation to fire safety, fire-fighting, road traffic accidents and emergencies amongst other duties and powers. All of which are at the forefront of all operational decision making and not as suggested purely financial considerations.

Please contact me should you wish to discuss further or clarify any of the information.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'P' followed by a horizontal line that ends in a small vertical stroke.

Paul Claydon
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

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Our ref: PC/blw

15th March 2012

Cllr Greg Robbins
Mayor of Llandudno
The Mayor's Parlour
Town Hall
Llandudno
LL30 2UP

Dear Cllr Robbins

Re: The Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) based at Llandudno

Thank you for your letter of 14th March 2012 and the warm welcome you and the town council gave me and Cllr Sharon Frobisher, Chair of the Fire and Rescue Authority, on Tuesday evening.

As promised both your letter and the petition you handed me on Tuesday evening have been made available to the Fire and Rescue Authority to assist them in making their decision over the future location of ALPs at the next meeting of the Authority on 19th March at Caernarfon.

This reply has also been made available as I wished to respond to some of the points made in your letter that do not correspond with either my recollection of the meeting or the notes my support officer took as a record of our attendance.

Firstly I would like to acknowledge the strength of feeling of you and your fellow Councillors on this issue at the meeting which goes without saying.

Secondly, in relation to the software you mention for running journey timings from and to varying locations I would like to make an observation. The software utilised by the Service is not bound by certain traffic regulations in exactly the same way as the Service is not bound by certain traffic regulations, which includes speed restrictions, when mobile to an emergency incident. Most commercial software packages have the restrictions built in as a default to the mapping programme and although they can be adjusted this is usually only down from the designated maximum speed limit, not up.

Finally in relation to the statement made by Cllr Philip Evans on the approximate down time for an ALP equivalent to one vehicle for six months I categorically did not agree with this figure and in fact when drawn on this issue was not prepared to speculate on any figures that I did not have to hand. I believe it would have been extremely unhelpful of me to mislead Councillors by plucking figures out of thin air.

Yours sincerely

Paul Claydon
Assistant Chief Fire Officer



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

Simon A Smith
Prif Swyddog Tân / Chief Fire Officer

2nd November 2012

Mrs S Phillips
Clerk to Barmouth Town Council
Flat 2D Seaview Terrace
Dinas Oleau Road
Barmouth
LL42 1BA

Dear Mrs Phillips

Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP) – Marine Gardens, Barmouth

The Chief Fire Officer, Simon Smith has asked me as the Head of Operational Service Delivery to respond on his behalf to your recent letter which was received on 12th October 2012.

I will endeavour to answer all of the Council's questions, but initially I would like to address some of the factual inaccuracies within the letter surrounding the overall scenario of the fire at Marine Gardens.

Firstly the Incident Commander did not request the ALP (referred to in your letter as the high level platform) on arrival at the scene. This appliance was not requested until 35 minutes after our initial attendance at the incident. There are also no circumstances in which the Incident Commander can stipulate where a resource is mobilised from. This is a matter for our Control room as they have the overall picture of resource availability across the region. Our records also confirm that the Incident Commander did not stipulate that the ALP should be dispatched from Bangor. Secondly the ALP was in attendance 1 hour and 49 minutes after being mobilised and not in excess of 3 hours after the request as stated in your letter.

I have been able to verify these matters as the Service has advanced DAT (Digital Audio Taping) which is accurately time stamped as a record of all incidents the Service attends. In addition to the recordings Control operators type each individual action at an incident directly into the mobilising system as a record.

In relation to the Council's queries both the questions and responses are listed as follows:

1. At what level was the decision made to recall the Bangor Appliance?

The decision was made at Area Manager level in consultation with the Control room. The decision was based on the Service's overarching aim to always send the closest most appropriate resource in the quickest possible time to the incident being dealt with.

2. What was the justification to recall the appliance?

Information from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service indicated that the ALP from Aberystwyth would be quicker to this incident.

Continued.....

3. Was it required to attend another active incident?

No

4. If there was another incident, how do the decision makers decide which incident the appliance is sent to?

The Service deals with incidents as they are received and on that basis resources are allocated. However, if a subsequent incident requires resourcing and information is available that there may be lives involved then resources can be diverted. I must stress this was not the case with the incident at Marine Gardens. Resourcing was based on a pragmatic decision about the speed of response. This was covered in the answer to question 2.

5. If there was no other incident at the time, what was the reason to recall the appliance?

Again this was covered in the answer to question 2.

6. Is it true that the appliance from Aberystwyth "got lost" and went several (or more) miles out of its way, so aggravating the late arrival in Barmouth?

The Aberystwyth appliance was not lost but took a route to the incident which was not that expected by the Service and as a consequence took longer than expected. Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service are aware of this occurrence and reviewing the circumstances surrounding this.

7. How can the residents of Barmouth (and South Meirionnydd) have confidence that there is adequate fire and rescue cover being provided for this part of the North Wales area?

The provision of fire and rescue cover has not changed for the area. On this occasion the Service had an unintended consequence of allocating an ALP, a specialist appliance, to the incident from another Service. However the resources that attended the initial call were local fire crews. Those fire crews had the equipment available to them to reach all floors of the premises and extinguish the fire.

8. Can you refute the allegation that Llandudno takes priority over Barmouth in the provision of high reach cover?

Yes I can refute the allegation as explained in the answer to question 4. The Service deals with the incident at hand. Provision for locating ALPs is based on the higher risk profile along the A55 corridor and major towns such as Wrexham.

As a consequence of this incident a number of lessons have been learned to ensure that North Wales Fire and Rescue Service continues to provide the high levels of service our communities have a right to expect. I trust I have been able to address the Council's concerns but should you wish to discuss these issues further or clarify any of the information provided please feel free to contact me directly.

Yours sincerely



Paul Claydon
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

2nd November 2012

Mr Iwan Davies
Chief Executive
Conwy County Borough Council
Bodlondeb
Conwy
LL32 8DU

JOPM



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service

Simon A Smith
Prif Swyddog Tân / Chief Fire Officer

Dear

Iwan

Re Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP)

Thank you for your recent letter which was received on the 15th October 2012 in relation to the concerns of Llandudno Town Council regarding the relocation of the ALP.

I note the concerns of both Llandudno Town Council and the County Borough Council and they will be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) at the next available opportunity which is the meeting of the FRAs Executive Panel on the 19th November 2012.

I have enclosed a copy of the letter I have sent to the Town Council for your information. Please contact me should you wish to discuss further or clarify any of the details.

Yours sincerely

Paul Claydon

Paul Claydon
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

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**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

Simon A Smith
Prif Swyddog Tân / Chief Fire Officer

2nd November 2012

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Mr Robert Robinson
North Wales Association of
Town & Larger Community Councils
Triangle House
Union Street
Welshpool, SY21 7PG

Dear Mr Robinson

Aerial Ladder Platform (ALP)

Thank you for your letter of the 22nd October which I received on the 25th in relation to the provision and location of ALPs.

I note the concerns of the Association and they will be reported to the Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) at the next available opportunity which is the meeting of the FRAs Executive Panel on the 19th November 2012.

Your suggestion to locate the ALP at Colwyn Bay was part of the considerations and extensive discussions undertaken by the FRA. The subsequent deliberations took account of the various submissions the Authority received before resolving to adopt a 30 minute attendance standard and reduce the provision of ALPs from four to three located at Bangor, Rhyl and Wrexham.

In brief difficulties with locating an ALP at Colwyn Bay included:

- Building costs to both station and its environs to accommodate an ALP
- Training costs for operational personnel and crewing implications
- Relocating other specialist appliances to accommodate an ALP and consequential training costs at other stations.

All the reports to the Authority over a number of years on this issue are available on the FRAs website <http://www.nwales-fireservice.org.uk/fire-and-rescue-authority.aspx?lang=en> these will provide the detail behind the rationale for the FRA making the resolution.

I trust I have been able to reassure the Association that the issues they have raised have been fully discussed and assessed. Please contact me should you require any further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely

Paul Claydon
Assistant Chief Fire Officer