

11th & 17th February

From Derek & Marlene Simpson
Llandudno

11th Feb – sent to NWFRS Complaints e-mail address. Due to living in 5th floor flat Mr & Mrs Simpson are concerned about news reports that the ALP is being removed from Llandudno Fire Station.

17th Feb – via e-mail. Thank you for your e-mail. We are aware that no decision has yet been made concerning plans to axe Llandudno's vital aerial platform ladder and whilst we are grateful that our correspondence and concerns will be put before the meeting on the 19th March, we would be grateful if you would also put them before your Chief Fire Officer, to whom our concerns are primarily addressed.

Your Chief Fire Officer has said that he puts people first, yet here he seems to be putting cost saving before people's safety. It is important to remember that, as I said in my previous e-mail, Llandudno is the biggest resort in Wales, with the highest bed occupancy, with most hotels being over three stories (sic) high, as are a number of blocks of flats. We live on the 5th floor, so our lives, as well as the lives of many others, will be put at greater risk if there is a fire in one of the many high rise buildings in the town, and the Ladder isn't immediately available, as at present, due solely to the proposed cost cutting exercise. Given the vagaries of travel on the A55 the half hour journey from Rhyl of (sic) Bangor could, as you will appreciate, sometimes take far longer.

We also need to remember this ladder also serves the many high rise multi occupancy buildings in Colwyn Bay and, at present, the ladder could easily be there within 10 minutes.

I end with this question for your Chief Fire Officer, are we going to put the safety of people first or are we going to cost cut, in this way, and put many peoples lives at significantly greater risk? It would be very upsetting for all concerned if anyone is killed or injured and it was found that an aerial ladder could have prevented it. There have, I understand, been several instances where the use the aerial ladder has saved lives.

Thank You for your time,

9th February

From Mr & Mrs Stewart
Llanrhos

We are writing to you about axing the life saving ladder, we think it is a really stupid idea, it is very, very useful for your young men. They must be mad to think about it, what other way would you be able to rescue people plus the poor animals as well.

Anything to do with people's safety shouldn't be axed. You all do a very good job saving people in so many ways.

So we are supporting you and hope things go alright for you and all your workers.

The only thing is we can't do a copy because we are not into that kind of thing otherwise we would do it with pleasure.

We will keep everything crossed for you.

Good luck in the campaign.

13th February

From Irene Webster
Llandudno

Note This letter was also sent to the Weekly News and published.

The mind boggles at the idiocy of some proposals made by organisations. This latest one by the Fire Service to axe the aerial platform ladder comes into that category.

When a fire breaks out in a building immediacy is the watchword. How can this be if equipment has to come all the way from either Rhyl or Bangor?

Please Fire Service think again before you have deaths on your hands for the sake of saving a few pounds.

14th FebruaryFrom David S Smith
Llandudno

With regard to the removal of the aerial ladder platform from Llandudno and its stationing in Rhyl I would be pleased if the Fire Authority would clarify a number of points:-

- 1 In winter conditions could an aerial platform (in ice/hazardous weather conditions) reach Llandudno from Rhyl (or Bangor) in thirty minutes?
 - (a) I appreciate fire precautions in Hotels and public buildings have greatly improved in recent years, but fire and non fire emergencies requiring such a vehicle will remain.
 - (b) When the Gwynedd Fire Service was formed the new Chief Fire Officer (formerly of Anglesey) Mr Edwards is reported to have said that he could not understand why Llandudno had never had a high reach ladder. Consequently Llandudno had a 100ft ladder. (Dodge A914 KJC). When this ladder was to be withdrawn the present vehicle was purchased. However when the Bangor high reach ladder was to be replaced it was again attempted to place the Llandudno aerial platform in its place and leave Llandudno without such a vehicle. Financial considerations were again given as the reason for this proposed action. Subsequently Bangor had a new aerial ladder to replace their high reach ladder (Dodge E166 XJC).
- 2 If the aerial ladders were reduced to three and stationed at Wrexham, Rhyl and Bangor, what would occur if one of them were 'off the run', especially for any length of time? If for instance Bangor high reach ladder were not available and an incident occurred on Anglesey (i.e. Wylfa) it would take a long time to get the Rhyl vehicle to the scene. Similarly if the Rhyl ladder was 'off the run' how long would it take for Bangor or Wrexham to attend in the Rhyl district? Wrexham could at least call upon Cheshire.
3. Llandudno has many high buildings and the population swells during the summer months. Llandudno is the largest resort in Wales. Hoteliers and owners of properties in multiple occupation are required to adhere to stringent (and costly) fire precaution regulations. Colwyn Bay should also be remembered when aerial ladder protection is considered.

Thus an aerial ladder based in Llandudno is essential.

4. Why should a new aerial ladder for Rhyl be required?
 - a) Is the vehicle mechanically no longer fit for purpose? Is the vehicle age (I assume it is about twenty years old) the reason for it to be replaced?
 - b) If this is the case is this a Home Office rule? If this (b) is the case, then representation should be made to the Home Office for this rule to be relaxed until such time as finance is available to purchase a new machine.
 - c) Although these vehicles are massively expensive they are used reasonably infrequently compared to other appliances. Therefore could the Rhyl aerial ladder be retained for longer and if necessary overhauled?

The people of Llandudno and surrounding towns need proper fire cover, an aerial ladder based in Llandudno is an essential part of this cover.

15th February

From Philip Kirsopp GradlFE
Great Sutton
Cheshire

Note This letter was also sent to the Weekly News and published.

Besides having a holiday home in North Wales and knowing the geographical area, I have just been perusing the lead story in last week's "North Wales Weekly News" (9-2-12).

As a short pre-amble, I am a former senior fire officer in a large busy metropolitan city Fire and Rescue service (30 years service).

My position is very clear, I fully support the resorts mayor and the hospitality association, in keeping and retaining the ariel (sic) ladder based in Llandudno.

I refer to comments made by A.C.F.O. Paul Claydon in the aforementioned press article.

- a) Ref factors:- it makes no difference how often this appliance (sic) being used over the last 18 months it only needs to be used once, and it is the only Fire Engine that can do the job it is built and designed for, i.e. for high buildings etc.
- b) Last Saturday my wife and (sic) stayed at the large Grand Hotel by the pier, we were on the 4th floor. To my knowledge Llandudno has the highest diversity of large hotels than anywhere else.

The sleeping and life risk especially if at night does not bear thinking about. Bearing in mind elderly guests staying at these hotels (evacuation delays).

- c) The back up ariel (sic) appliances from Bangor and Rhyl are too far away, especially with the grid lock on the A55 and Coast Road in the summer.
- d) A.C.F.O. Claydon mentions "legal responsibilitys" (sic) with the establishment owners in his closing comments. I would respectfully remind this Fire Officer, to jog his memory of what happened in a hotel down South over 5 years ago. There where (sic) several fatalities in a large fire at the said hotel. This hotel had the usual fire precautions and adhered to the then fire legislation and yet still life was lost.

More importantly, the local ariel (sic) fire appliance was out of commission and the supporting ariel (sic) appliance was delayed due to the distance in miles it had to travel.

To conclude, the first duty of a Firefighter (no matter what rank) is to save life. But you need the right equipment to execute this task. By removing the ariel (sic) fire engine from Llandudno will only put more pressure on officer in charges (sic) and their crews, also our sister Emergency Services (Police and Ambulance). For info (sic) my son is a serving Police Officer.

I refer back to A.C.F.O. Claydon, unfortunately with arson and terrorist attacks, the hotel owner, no matter what fire legislation, has no control over the safety of the building. Only a swift response from the Emergency Services saves the day. (P.S. I have attended the above incidents especially arson on numerous occasions involving loss of life).

I could carry on, for example I was in charge of appliances and equipment in my Brigade with a large capital and revenue budget etc etc.

I hope Fire Authority Councillors take note of my input.

10th February

From David T Williams
Chairman
Llandudno Hospitality Association

I am disappointed to learn that there is a recommendation going forward that the High Level Turntable ladder should be withdrawn from Llandudno and the town will be served by an appliance from either Bangor or Rhyl. As the largest resort in Wales, with more bed spaces than any other areas, this should surely merit the continued presence of the ladder in this town.

We have a large number of high rise buildings in Llandudno which could be under threat if there are delays on the A55, which as you are aware does not have an enviable reputation as far as delays are concerned.

Statistically there may have been more callouts to properties in Rhyl which has many HMOs, however some of the large hotels in Llandudno will have over 100 guests in their properties and whilst the responsibility for fire precautions lie with the owners, we can never be certain that there will not be a case of arson by a disgruntled member of staff or guest.

I trust you will give the matter of the siting of the turntable your further consideration.

14th February

From Cllr Janet Finch-Saunders AM/AC
Assembly Member for Aberconwy
National Assembly for Wales

I am writing to you to express my deep concern and regret regarding the recommendation that the High Level Turntable ladder should be withdrawn from Llandudno.

There are many reasons why I believe that this facility should be retained in Llandudno and I am sure that you have received many representations expressing similar sentiments.

Llandudno is the primary tourist town along the north (sic) Wales coastal strip whose population escalates considerably during the season. Tourism, notwithstanding, Llandudno has a considerable amount of high rise buildings with the inherent risks that this entails.

I would be grateful if you would give further consideration to this recommendation whilst considering the possible tragic consequences which could ensue if this facility is, indeed, withdrawn from Llandudno.

15th February

From G Newson
Chair
Llandudno Development Partnership

Re: High level turntable ladder provision in Llandudno

I am writing to you on behalf of the Llandudno Development Partnership which includes key private, public and voluntary sector representatives.

We would like to express our serious concern re the current proposals to withdraw the above facility from the town, and service Llandudno from Rhyl/Bangor.

We feel that this would pose an unacceptable increased risk due to potential delays in bringing a ladder along the A55 where there are often delays.

Our town is key to tourism in North Wales and has many multi storey Victorian buildings. We have more bed spaces than Cardiff; much of which is now filled throughout most of the year.

The risk is also potentially increased due to the age profile of our visitors, and indeed also by the number of high rise retirement apartments we have.

We recognise the difficulties both the Fire Service and other public sector groups have in the present economic time but would ask that the proposal be given further consideration in the interests of everyone.

21st February

From Guto Bebb MP
Member of Parliament – Aberconwy

High Level Turntable – Llandudno

I was concerned to learn that there has been a recommendation that the High Level Turntable ladder currently situated in Llandudno is to be removed and any requirement for this equipment will be serviced from either Bangor or Rhyl. I am surprised at this decision in view of the fact that there are no listed Victorian Buildings in either Bangor or Rhyl which can accommodate up to 150 guests.

You may recall that when we had our first meeting this subject was raised and I understood that some negotiations were going to take place with Chester Fire Service over the possibility of some coverage for Wrexham from them. What was the result of these discussions?

I have had a substantial number of representations on this matter from many hoteliers in Llandudno and whilst understanding that the responsibility for fire precautions lies with the individual owners, share their concerns about the High Level Turntable being relocated.

23rd February

From Greg J T Robbins
Mayor of Llandudno &
Llandudno Town Council

RE: Retention of Ariel (sic) Ladder Platform at Llandudno Fire Station

I write further to the Town Council's letter of December 2010, as Mayor of Llandudno and also on behalf of Llandudno Town Council, in support of the retention of the aerial ladder platform, a vital piece of safety equipment in Llandudno.

Not only does the town have a population that trebles in the summer to over 60,000 people, a large number of which stay in the upper floors of hotels and holiday apartments, but there are a considerable number of residents who would be put at risk if the nearest platform is in Rhyl.

As anyone with knowledge of the area knows, all it takes is a single broken down vehicle on the A55 to cause a tailback that can take over an hour to get through. Even with sirens this would cause considerable delay and added to the normal travel time could potentially mean the difference between life and death in an incident.

Unfortunately on the first day of this year we have already had an incident on the third story (sic) of a building in Llandudno and to remove the platform from the town would be breach of the Duty of Care that the Fire Service has to residents and visitors.

People should not be put at risk due to financial constraints. I appreciate that savings have to be made but it is simply not acceptable to reduce the level of service provided, and other avenues should be explored by the authority.

5th March

From Councillor Mrs Brenda Taylor
Chairman
Conwy County Borough Council

To Carl Sargeant AS/AM, Minister for Local Government & Communities, Welsh Government
Cheryl Gillan MP, Secretary of State for Wales
Chief Fire Officer Simon Smith – NWFRS
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Paul Claydon – NWFRS
David Jones MP – Clwyd West
Guto Bebb MP - Aberconwy

I write following a firm Resolution of the Council on 23rd February 2012 to express the concerns of Conwy County Borough Council in relation to the North Wales Fire Authority's proposals to withdraw the Aerial Ladder Platform from Llandudno Fire Station.

We acknowledge that apparatus stationed in Rhyl, Bangor and Wrexham could be utilised to service the Conwy area however it is considered that this arrangement would not permit adequate coverage, leading to increased risks.

We consider that further serious deliberation on this matter is essential specifically given the nature of the Conwy area as a popular tourist destination with the inherent increase of seasonal populations. In addition, consideration should be given to the significant number of large, tall properties in the area, which includes hotels, houses in multiple occupation and the Assembly's Regional Offices in Llandudno Junction. The Aerial Ladder Platform is utilised to permit fire fighters to tackle blazes in tall / large buildings safely from above, rather than further risking lives by entering burning buildings; the ability to tackle blazes in this way would be severely curtailed.

Deploying an Aerial Ladder Platform from a different location will add vital time to dealing with fires in key locations and the risk and time delay of travelling along the A55, particularly during the busy summer months should be taken into account.

Given the nature of the Aerial Ladder Platform as a specialist piece of equipment and therefore prone to mechanical and electrical failure, as well as planned routine maintenance, we are concerned that there will be significant periods of time when one of the remaining three Aerial Ladder Platforms in North Wales will be unavailable, resulting in a large geographical area between Bangor and Wrexham being potentially covered by only two Platforms.

The Council is concerned that the recommendation made by the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority has been motivated by purely financial considerations and therefore not necessarily determined by the best interests, health, and safety of the community.

We trust that the objections referred to above will be given great weight by the North Wales Fire & Rescue Authority in reaching their decision on the future of the Aerial Ladder Platform.