

Welcome to the National Fire Chiefs Spring Conference, it is good to see such a sizeable attendance again. I believe these gatherings are a must for information giving and receiving, tight communications and, of course, networking. My challenge for you is the same as previous conferences, that is speak to at least one person you haven't met before in each of the breaks.

It has been said many times but we are working in a time of continuous, and there seems to be an increasing pace of change all round and the Fire and Rescue sector is not immune to this change. Actually, I am standing here as an example of that change; as I have now entered my second year as Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council, giving a speech at my second spring conference, but this time it was planned that way and not a circumstance of change or some unforeseen difficulties. This brings with it continuity and understanding of the challenges, plus, hopefully, a focal point for the ambition and development of the Council. I believe we have achieved an immense amount in our first year and NFCC is well established across the United Kingdom, but with the challenges that come along with Fire being a devolved issue for all UK governments, the changes in governments and 50 different Fire & Rescue Services with their own local challenges. We are in a good place but we must be wary of second season syndrome. For those of you not into football, that's when a new striker comes on to the scene, scores thirty goals in their first season but then can't hit the side of a barn door the next year. We need to keep up the momentum, work together and building the best fire and rescue services we can have.

Facing challenges together is a must. This spring conference covers two of the biggest areas of challenge for us in the last year, and I have no doubt for the immediate future. The tragedy of Grenfell and Health and Well-being, they are linked, but not exclusively. And we are very lucky to have such have excellent speakers for both sessions. For Grenfell, Dame Judith Hackitt herself, widely acclaimed as an excellent choice to chair the Independent Review of Building Regulations and Fire Safety, and Neil Cooper, Chair of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee which will, no doubt, have a major role to play in implementing some of the Hackitt Review recommendations. Our session on wellbeing includes an old friend and colleague of mine, Richard Welch from London Fire Brigade. Richard and I first worked together way back in 2000 and 2001 when Richard was one of the leading lights helping to introduce the LiFE scheme into East London. My job as a SDO (Area Manager for you youngsters) at the time, was to shield Richard and colleagues from the legal, communications and insurance buzzards from Brigade HQ who didn't want the

risk of dis-affect young people running around a fire station with all the liabilities that might bring, to happen. Last June Richard was a forward commander at Grenfell and I know he was deeply affected by the events of that night. Richard will be joined by Clark Carlisle, known by many as an ex-professional footballer, but more importantly for us, a renowned speaker on the challenges of looking after your own mental health.

But we start the conference by having a look at the challenges facing the National Fire Chiefs Council and how we continue to structure ourselves through strategy, planning and engagement to best support professional Fire and Rescue Services in the United Kingdom. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland ...

The challenges in England are just as significant if we only consider a few, most of which appear in the NFCC Plan in some form or other. I do not intend to go into much detail as Susan (if she is here on time) and Neil will be providing more detail soon, but the Inspectorate, Standards, Fire & Rescue Finance and core business are all inter-related themes. We have had excellent engagement with Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue in developing their methodology, it will be good to see Zoe and Laura here over the two days, I am sure they are on another intelligence gathering exercise. And now we have a published framework that ensures every Service in England knows what is expected of them and when. I think it is fair to say it has been as much a learning curve for the Inspectorate as anyone, I think HMICFRS colleagues now understand when we say we are different from the Police, we do things a bit differently and our governance structures are definitely different. As a reminder the themes for the first rounds of inspection are –

- how effective each fire and rescue service is at preventing, protecting against and responding to incidents, and whether the service understands where future risks lie;
- whether the service provides value for money; and
- the ability of the service to train staff, embrace diversity and develop a positive working culture to reflect the level of public and professional interest.

I know that as NFCC and Fire and Rescue Services we have welcomed the return of the Inspectorate and will welcome them into our Services. But part of me does wonder how things will develop over the coming months once the first reports start coming in. What will our reaction be if this fresh pair of eyes tells us we are not as good as we like to think we are?

One of the challenges for the inspection regime has been deciding what good looks like, after 15 years of localism in Fire and Rescue I believe good can only be judged against the local integrated risk management plan unless there happens to be a national standard for comparison, such as national operational guidance or the JESIP principles. Good looks like comparison to the local IRMP and the methodology for producing that IRMP. But we haven't even got a standard for producing IRMPs, hence the Community Risk Programme being one of our foundation projects alongside the Workforce programme, which in itself is leading and closely align to the Inspectorate's people focussed third theme.

Talking of standards, we also have significant progress in this area. After many months of hard work, we are now developing a solution that links much of the NFCC's work plan to a standards regime that will be managed through the National Fire Chiefs Council Central Programme Office. Much of what we have agreed in our strategy and subsequent work plan will de facto be standards already, leadership framework, Community Risk Programme, Business Continuity and even competency standards for inspecting officers, linked to our extant framework and the Hackitt review. By adding an independently chaired Standards board and identifying some possible gaps, for instance, does Safe and Well visit mean the same to everyone, should it mean the same, should it have a national Standard? By the way, I know I keep saying national here, but I am of course referring to England, but hopefully there will be real measurable benefit for our colleagues in Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland. Another area of focus that is both UK wide and English centric at the same time is finance. We are 99% certain there will be a Comprehensive Spending Review in 2019 and we are developing a NFCC position on this through Phil Hales and the Finance committee, supported by many other NFCC work-strands. There is a real Home Office focus on this and both the English Minister, Nick Hurd and Home Office Permanent Secretary Sir Philip Rutnam have been good to the word and Home Office officials are working with us to develop an evidence base for future funding of English Fire & Rescue Services. What we are not demanding straight away is an increase in funding, we will base this on evidence, as a start it would be pretty good to have no further reductions as we are a sector that has had no protection from Austerity and with a 21% drop in wholetime firefighters we need to ensure we don't hit a crisis point before having to re-invest at pace. Whilst talking finance, it is true that discussions around funding in the past have tended to focus on demand versus risk. This is understandable as previous funding decisions for Fire appear to be based on a linear relationship between the number of fires and

the need for resources, whereas we know that is risk that drives our planning and we then fit resources within the available finances. But we are trying to be much more sophisticated than this for the CSR, we know demand is a component of risk, in simplistic terms, risk equals frequency x consequence; we also know that risk reduction reduces demand; but we also know that when risk has the ability to bring significant consequence we need to be ready and able to respond, the Arena car park in Merseyside, wide area flooding and Grenfell itself, are significant examples of the consequence of a significant risk realised. In fact the whole national resilience programme, USAR, HVP and particularly CBRNe response is based on risk, not just demand, so we already have a perfect example of risk based funding in Fire and Rescue.

Phil Hales is having a busy time in the finance world as other significant workstreams include the English Funding Formula and the work on the Reserves statement for standalone fire authorities.

One theme that comes through all this work and my discussions with colleagues in the Home Office and Inspectorate is the need for us, first and foremost, to be excellent in our core responsibilities of Prevention, Protection and Response; that is what we will be measured against first. I believe as strongly as anyone that our expertise and engagement with communities brings fantastic added value. Safe and Well, fitness, nutrition, slips, trips and falls, emergency medical response, in short: Fire as a Health Asset brings great benefit. But it is clear that these need to be built on the excellence of our core responsibilities and then developed where we might have some discretionary capacity to make a difference. It might be an extreme example for me to make a point but you only have to look at the Kerslake report and be subject to a couple of the media interviews that I was, and I know Dawn Docx was, to know that it might take decades to build a reputation that opens doors for us; mostly built on excellent operational response; but it only takes a few bad reports, even if it is only a perceived failure, to damage that reputation.

On the subject of Kerslake, through Dan Stephens' Operations committee we are reviewing the outcomes and recommendations in order to understand what might have to change and be developed to ensure we are not subject to that type of report in future. Procedures, operational discretion, national organisational learning, joint operating procedures are all up for consideration and review. I have also offered NFCC support to Greater Manchester if required, one of the main reasons for NFCC to exist is to support colleagues whenever that is required.

Support to colleagues and Fire and Rescue Authorities as a whole is important as is working as one and in a consistent manner for the benefit of all in line with the operating procedures. I think the NFCC response to the aftermath of the Grenfell tragedy has been a perfect example, central co-ordination of visits and audits in the early days, drawing on Protection expertise across the country and utilising Peer support for any Service that might have had a particular question or difficult building to work with. We will hear from Dame Judith herself tomorrow and two NFCC colleagues who, along with many others have worked hard to provide a forward thinking and well developed response to the issues that continue to raise themselves through this whole process. When we developed our response to the Hackitt review call for evidence it involved experts from many Fire and Rescue Services and I remember extremely well my first telephone conversation with Dame Judith very early on, thanking NFCC for the clarity and structure of the letter that was sure to help shape the direction of the review. That has proved to be the case and if any of you were at the LGA Fire conference where I shared a platform with Dame Judith you will have seen just how much we agreed on. That is no real surprise given our initial thoughts and our input since. In fact NFCC is the only organisation that is represented on all six of the review workstreams and having attend a workstream Chairs' meeting that outlined some draft recommendations we are already working on what we think are the priority areas to help shape the work following Dame Judith's final report.

One thing I will say about being in such a good position is that it does bring with it some envious eyes and occasionally barbed comments from organisations who do feel like they are being listened to enough. Actually, this is a general theme I wanted to cover, maintaining a unity within National Fire Chiefs Council, whether it is joining the procurement work or helping to develop a national position statement on finance, our strength comes from a consistent position. Our debates can be, and are, had amongst ourselves at Council and other places, but once a position is agreed that needs to be our position. There is room for derogation if that is what you really want to do. I think our ability to develop and provide position and advice on a whole range of matters is a great strength, from sprinklers to pay, from Stay Put to MTFAs, we have national positions that help make us the trusted advisers National Fire Chiefs Council has become. But with that comes responsibility, it is not enough to insist people join your pet project then not support another or even worse try to keep a pet project separate from NFCC structures, as someone once said unity is strength. This is particularly important as we develop the sustainability project, NFCC is named throughout the new English Framework, to be

published soon, the Chair has taken on the role of the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser, working together brings consistency, efficiency and the standards we all aspire to. But at the moment we are still paying for the Chair's position from reserves and still the work we could lead and develop outweighs our resources. So showing the value we bring for every UK government and every Fire authority, no matter whether they are County, Met, PCC, CFA, Mayor or corporation sole is paramount.

My last word for today links to the one session I have not really covered so far and that is wellbeing. We all need to look after ourselves and each other. I know we react to different situations in different ways but it is how we cope and are supported that matters. It might sound odd but that includes considering the impact of our own actions on others, social media keyboard warriors are a classic example of people taking action with either a lack of knowledge of the possible impact or a lack of caring. People in senior positions have a certain personal resilience otherwise they would not be in those positions, but votes of no confidence, personal vilification in the press or even posters asking for someone to be sacked are not acceptable, they have an effect, sometimes small, sometimes disproportionate, depending on who is at the receiving end. So in everything we do, in every action we take, consider who is on the other side and be nice to people on the way up as you never know who you might meet on the way down.