

Thank you Chloe, it is always good to hear a clear and consistent message from Government departments. I am really pleased to say we have a good working relationship with the Home Office and you may find parts of my speech familiar.

Can I also say how fantastic it is to see so many of you here for this spring conference; this conference really is the final transition between CFOA and the National Fire Chiefs Council.

I am equally pleased to see representatives from all four nations of the United Kingdom here and would like to thank their representatives for providing us with an insight into their thoughts and policy perspectives for Fire and Rescue across the UK. Thank you again to John, Martin and Gillian, it was good to hear the similar aspects, Fire as a Health Asset, financial restrictions and reducing number of fires.

I believe this a first for any CFOA conference, and starts to meet one of my personal objectives; working across the United Kingdom on Fire and Rescue professional and technical matters is something I want to maintain as Chair of the National Fire Chiefs Council.

But before I go into the main body of my speech there are a number of thank yous and acknowledgements I really want to make.

Firstly, the last CFOA Presidential team, you heard from Dave Etheridge this morning, he, along with Paul Hancock and Andy Fry have shown leadership, foresight, tenacity, perseverance, and at times the patience of a Saint to get us to where we are now as an organisation. I want to thank them for all the hard work they have all contributed over the last 18 months, we are on the verge of the most significant new chapter in our history. Dave, Andy and Paul, thank you.

Similarly and I know he is not here, but I would also like to thank John Beckerleg who did as much as anyone to develop the National Fire Chiefs Council. His expertise in governance and organisations, along with a quiet, understated way of challenge has helped us, as the professional leaders of the Fire and Rescue Service in the UK to be in a great place. Thank you John.

The staff at CFOA headquarters also deserve our thanks and recognition. This has not been an easy time for them. It is a time of significant change and diminishing resources as we have looked to start NFCC with a balanced budget. Every one of them deserves our praise, their work ethic and commitment to maintaining CFOA structures and helping the transition to NFCC has been exemplary. Just think of where we are today, and the work that goes into staging such a conference. They have been, and are pressures, but most of us have not even notice a change in step. So thank you all at HQ.

Thank you too to you, the CFOA membership who have support this change.

Now moving to the future; this is a time of great change in Fire and Rescue with the new Policing and Crime Act, lead Authority for Resilience, calls for workforce Reform, the NFCC itself. National Fire Chiefs Council is so much more than just a name change. For the first time we will have a full time Chair elected with the mandate to represent and talk on behalf of the Fire and Rescue Service at a national and international level following debate and agreement in Council. For the first time we will not be changing President every year, allowing time for relationships to develop and grow; we also have the operating principles that cover an agreed approach to how we will work together. So far all but 4 Services have signed up to the operating principles, mostly down to logistics. **By the way** these operating principles are not secret, they are open to everyone to read on the website; and they are certainly not there to undermine any other organisation. They are about how the professional and technical leaders in Fire and Rescue will work together for continuous improvement. For many years we have said that the demands on a part time President who is also running a Fire and Rescue Service are too great and something needed to change; any new president very soon became the outgoing President, it became a bit of a running joke at CFOA Board, so we have bitten the bullet, and here I am. And very proud and pleased I am to be here.

National Fire Chiefs Council provides collective responsibility for professional and technical matters for Fire and Rescue in the UK, gone are the days of CFOA Board where, although there was a great deal of excellent work completed through the Presidential team and Directors and,

here I site my own 6 years as Director of Operations, I know it could sometimes feel to the membership that it was 'them' making decisions and progressing issues. Now with every FRS attending Council and having the ability to comment, raise issues, debate and agree policy there will be a collective responsibility and buy in on professional positions and the way forward. There will, of course, be times when I am sat in front of the Minister (English), and I will be asked for a view or an opinion, which I will give on behalf of National Fire Chiefs Council, but this will be from a well informed position. Obviously I cannot do this alone and I am really pleased that we were not short of volunteers for the vice chairs and chairs of the co-ordination committees. The Chairs are listed in your programme and I am sure they would be more than happy to talk to you about the work of the committees. The committees are not closed meaning that only our members can attend, from the Local Government Association to blue light colleagues and academia, where a person or organisation will add value they will be invited to the committee. Along with the new structure we want to have subject matter experts that can talk in the media on behalf of NFCC, very much like the senior Police Officers you see represent the National Police Chiefs Council. What is really great is the calibre of the chairs and the vice chairs, Huw Jakeway and Phil Loach, my particular thanks to Phil and Huw as they will probably have to listen to me drone on more than anyone, except possibly our interim Chief of Staff, Steven Adams.

Another significant change will be the way we do business, CFOA was the professional voice of the Fire Service, it led the way on many issues and working with partners achieved some great things; Safe and Well visits, Fire as a Health Asset, Fire Professional Framework, joint Procurement, Research and Development, National Operational Guidance, and JESIP to name but a few. National Fire Chiefs Council will have an annual plan supported by committee plans and linked together by programme and project management based on and aligned to the National Operational Guidance Programme. It will be on the delivery of this plan along with the way I represent NFCC and work with stakeholders across the sector and beyond that I will be judged. Although NFCC is where collective decisions will be made it is not just about the Chiefs and senior professionals that attend National Fire Chiefs Council, the rest of the membership, the regions and working groups are really important. This is where most of the networking, learning and innovation

takes place and we do not want to stifle that. My only plea is that the issues discussed and developed link to at least one of the committees and that you all recognise the importance of our plan. In an ideal world we would have a vision, strategy and plan developed in that order, but things are not always ideal and we can't stop the world to get things in the correct order so the work on strategy being led by Phil Loach tomorrow will help shape our direction for years to come whilst the annual plan being developed at the moment will see us through the first year of working. The plan will be established to show the value National Fire Chiefs Council will bring to the sector as a whole and to those who provide the finance in particular. This work, led by Phil, is a bridge from the CFOA strategy, 'making the difference needed' to a strategy that positions NFCC as the organisation that partners trust for advice and direction on national issues. This needs to be a multi year strategy linked to our financial planning.

The work must also include a digital element that :

- Helps a national service to collaborate on projects efficiently
- Helps us to promote our messages to communities effectively
- Helps our staff to work more productively - and
- Improves operations

I know digital is high on the government agenda, particularly linked to 'nudge' theory, that is, if digital communications can slightly change behaviour around personal safety, driving, drinking, smoking and many other areas it can reduce demand on services and save money. Something we need to consider in our prevention activities.

It is my view that following the national dispute and Bain review in 2002-2003 the loss or closure of many institutions and standards led to Fire and Rescue Services becoming more competitive, this was linked to tables seen after comprehensive assessment and led us all to want to be the best, not in itself a bad thing, but when it leads to saying we are better than other Services or worse still, not accepting an innovation if it wasn't invented here, competition goes too far. I do think we have moved on somewhat in recent years and Peer Review has certainly helped, but I want us to

further, I want us to be less competitive and more supportive, I want us to learn from each other, I want us to do things once not many times, I want us to provide excellent services, provide value for money and continue to be a valued partner; whether its national governments, the Local Government Association, local authorities, bluelight partners, Fire Protection Association, Health, social care, we cannot achieve all we want to achieve alone, our excellence at partnership working needs to stay.

This brings me nicely on to service delivery. For many years we have talked about the balance of our work, often described as a three legged stool of Prevention, Protection and Response. This balance still holds true and each leg of that stool is important. But for a little while I want to concentrate on operational response. It is excellent response that originally built the reputation of Fire and Rescue, it is the part of our service that helped opened doors so we can carry out the excellent prevention activities we are all so familiar with. Response is the area that carries most risk for us, it is where; unfortunately occasionally a colleague loses their life. As we have seen in the last week or so with the horrific recent events in Westminster and the gas explosion in Mersey there will always be incidents to respond to. As fires decrease we actually need to train more to ensure our people are as safe as they can be. Whilst I am on the matter of operational response I would like to address the direct correlation that some people see between the number of fires and the resources we require, some see a direct correlation so that fewer fires mean we need fewer firefighters. To an extent this may be true, but to a greater extent the finances available dictate the resources we have available. But Fire has always been resourced on risk not demand. For instance, if a town had 100 compartment fires a year 10 years ago but now only has 50 such fires a year that doesn't mean that town no longer requires an operational response. Which brings me on to one of my pet hates, Latent Capacity, that makes it sound like we all have firefighters sitting around doing nothing waiting for a call. We know that is not true, they are training, testing equipment, completing community or statutory safety activity, we ensure they are working and adding value. It is true that fire calls have drop allowing a focus elsewhere, but I like to refer to this as discretionary capacity.

Please don't get me wrong, I am not saying response is the be all and end all of our services. Let me say this clearly, Prevention **is** better than cure, our work with vulnerable people across the spectrum is inspiring, Fire as a health asset makes sense and saves UK PLC money, Business and Road safety are imperative. It is the balance I am advocating alongside the maintenance of operational expertise. It is what we know as Integrated Risk Management Planning and I support a consistent approach to IRMP methodology. Not a methodology that stifles innovation, flexibility and a local approach, but a standard practice that can be measured.

Talk of standards leads me directly to the Fire Reform agenda. Or should I say in this company, the Home Office Fire reform agenda for England. This is yet another reason why operational and technical consistency and expertise across the UK is imperative and the Chief Officer's responsibility for leading professional and technical matters should not be overlooked. I fully recognise the political leadership that is so important in setting strategy at a national and local level. I would like to see a clear definition of what operational and technical leadership in order to help support and deliver political priorities. It is our job as professional leaders to advise policy makers and then implement the decisions. Who could argue with the three pillars of reform outlined many times by the English Minister and Home Office, Efficiency and Collaboration, Openness and Transparency and Workforce Reform. We have established a Fire Reform Board with the Local Government Association, Home Office and National Fire Chiefs Council sitting members to review progress. We all know finances are still tight and will be for the foreseeable future, we know collaboration can provide benefits and value for money , which is something we all strive for. Why wouldn't we want to do things once rather than 40 plus times? Why wouldn't we want to take good practice, learn from it and implement locally? Ann Millington's work on procurement through Chris Strickland's Sector Resources committee is a prime example of working together for a better product at a cost effective price. This coupled with the R&D work led by Tom Capeling and Geoff Howsego can only benefit us all.

Similarly the People Strategy agreed in principle at the shadow National Fire Chiefs Council in February will benefit us all as we implement locally to meet our local needs. One particular

important aspect is Diversity and Inclusion; we do not have to wait for mass recruitment to work hard on this agenda. Inclusion, retention, progression and succession are all just as important. We are fortunate to have some excellent woman role models at the very top of our organisations, Dany Cotton, Ann Millington, Becki Bryant, Dawn Whittaker, Dawn Docx and Sally Chapman to name a few, all showing important leadership. We need to be in the same place with other under represented groups and make the Fire and Rescue Service a job of choice for everyone.

Transparency and openness is another important aspect, we are public servants and need to be accountable for our decisions and the money we spend. In my new role I am independent from any Fire Authority, I take my authority and mandate from Council and I pledge to lead the way on openness and transparency, whether it is expenses, hospitality or any possible conflicts of interest they will be detailed on the website and open for scrutiny.

There are of course other reforms ongoing, including in England the new Policing and Crime Act that enables Police and Crime Commissioners to be the Fire Authorities in their area whilst bestowing the status of corporation sole on the Commissioner of London. We also have the prospect of Metro Mayors in places such as Manchester where plans are well advanced. There are consistent matters we would like to see protected through all this change, operational and technical consistency, intra and interoperability needs to be maintained with JESIP being followed and embedded. We must also be precious about our Fire and Rescue Service brand through this change, it helps us do so much good and needs to be closely guarded.

In moving forward in this changing agenda the revision of the English framework for Fire will be pivotal, we would like to see National Fire Chiefs Council fully recognised as the go to organisation for professional and technical advice for Fire authorities in all their current and future forms, we would also like the framework to recognise the professional and technical leadership of Chief Officers who then advice and support the political leadership. The framework must recognise the new National Co-ordination and Advisory Framework, NCAF, which recognises the role of the Chair of NFCC in advising government on Fire and Rescue matters during a national event.

Alongside the work toward a Professional Standards Body in England assisting the continued professionalisation of Fire and Rescue we welcome the reintroduction of a Fire Inspectorate for England. NFCC would like to see that inspection is proportionate, linked to improvement and has senior Fire expertise as part of its organisation. The work to move forward on professional standards now has a project initiation document that lays out the need to identify what standards already exist, what new ones may be required and how a standards body may operate. It is not to pre-empt the outcome although we do understand that the College of Policing does have an infrastructure that may help provide a solution.

But once again I seem to have fallen into the trap about talking through English reform, let me reassure you that I am very aware that this cannot be the only focus for the Chair of the United Kingdom National Fire Chiefs Council. For instance Scotland already has an Inspectorate and the Scottish Government recognition of Fire and Rescue as a clear Health asset as demonstrated in their Out of Hospital Cardiac Arrest Strategy, a top down rather than the bottom up approach we see in England around Emergency Medical Response. And of course we have the difference in legislation that can be seen in the statutory fire safety arena. Anyone whom has attended Fire safety courses at the Fire Service College can testify to those differences!

Similarly Wales has its own Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser; has a statutory duty for Flooding arriving to put them on the same footing as Scotland and already has a performance framework by which to measure performance so take on interested but cautious approach to English Standards and Inspection.

The difference of approach is repeated in Northern Ireland where the Fire and Rescue Service sits in the Department of Health in the Public Safety Unit. Once again demonstrating clear government leadership for fire as a Health Asset in addition to its emergency response duties.

Yet despite these differing approaches I still see the professional and technical responsibilities and leadership right across our three legged stool as the thing that unites National Fire Chiefs Council as a UK organisation.

Ensuring National Fire Chiefs Council remains a UK organisation and remains relevant to all four governments is one of my own personal objectives. My other priorities and are –

National Fire Chiefs Council to be the professional leaders who are the go to organisation for advice on professional and technical matters, with identified subject matter experts.

Maintaining a professional Fire and Rescue Service through all the change we are and will experience.

Remain the valued partner we are now

Be bold and ambitious whilst still being collective and supportive

And finally that there will be a second Chair, if I am the only one I will have failed.

One of my favourite clichés is that Change is the only constant, we are in for an exciting and invigorating journey. I believe we are in a really good pace to be bold and ambitious, to move forward together, to support each other, to work with stakeholders and show the worth of Fire and Rescue as we balance prevention, protection and response. I truly believe we have a great future together.

Thank you