



---

## FIRECONTROL PROJECT

### Full Business Case Volume 1.0 Executive Summary

Release: Version 1.0  
Release Date: June 2007  
Document Ref: RPT0605

---

User Division: FSED  
Created by: Business Case and Benefits Management Workstream  
Approved by: Richard How  
Date Approved: 07 June 2007



---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. The Government is committed to working with the fire and rescue service to implement an integrated network of Regional Control Centres (RCCs). This is essential to improve England's resilience and capability to respond to major incidents and enable Fire and Rescue Services (FRS) to deploy resources more efficiently and effectively. This executive summary answers the following questions:
  - What are the benefits expected from a national RCC network?
  - Why can't the Fire and Rescue Service continue with existing control arrangements?
  - Is the project value for money?
  - Who will pay for it?
  - How are the risks inherent in an endeavour of this scale and complexity being handled?
  - What are the main project activities?
  - How is the project working with its important stakeholders?

### Benefits

2. The scale and nature of incidents that the FRS is called upon to respond to has increased over recent years. Climate change, which leads to extreme weather events, and terrorism are already major threats. Planning for the future must reflect this reality: a strategy for replacing current controls is essential and has an important part to play in building resilience; doing nothing is not an option if the public is to be better protected. Accordingly, the government has taken the lead in achieving this through a collaborative project with the FRS - FiReControl.
3. The FiReControl project will deliver the following benefits:
  - **A more resilient service which supports the FRS in responding to major emergencies (including terrorist incidents, natural disasters and industrial accidents).** The nine Regional Control Centres will form a national network; this will create a resource on a national scale which is able to deal with high levels of calls and enable an RCC to fall back and restore services were they to become unavailable for any reason. The common technology and processes will allow an appliance to be mobilised from anywhere in England if required. Appliances can be applied flexibly across boundaries to respond to need, on a regional or cross regional basis. Calls can be automatically transferred between RCCs ensuring the continuity of quick and effective responses, to help save lives. The solution will exceed current Chief Fire Officers Association (CFOA) call handling standards in any individual RCC, and the ability to transfer calls will further enhance service performance. RCC buildings have resilience and security built into their design.
  - **Enhanced capability which will ensure that all FRSs and their staff have access to the best supporting infrastructure.** All FRSs will have the full range of capability only currently enjoyed by some advanced FRSs. The location of a member of the public calling by telephone (whether mobile or land line) for help will be identified automatically. Satellite positioning equipment will tell the control centre computers which fire appliance(s) is closest to the incident in terms of travel time, with the correct equipment on board. The control centre computer systems will enable the RCC staff to locate the nearest available appropriate resources and mobilise them instantly and automatically, using data-transmission not voice messages. Firefighters mobilised to the incident will have data terminals in their vehicles, giving them a wide range of information in a standard format. This will improve the delivery of safety

information to firefighters and help them to plan and respond more effectively. The working environment for many control staff will also be enhanced.

- **Greater operating efficiencies will be achieved through economies of scale.** Capacity will be better matched to demand within the regional centres. By networking these centres together additional capacity is always on tap to deal with unusual surges in demand – further enhancing operational efficiency and effectiveness. The project will achieve significant efficiency savings which will be kept by Fire and Rescue Services. The amount will vary between FRSs according to their current position and on the arrangements decided for distributing costs within the region. The Department for Communities and Local Government is working with the Fire and Rescue Service to reduce uncertainty about the distribution of costs and savings.

## Disadvantages of current control arrangements

4. At present, FRAs in England operate 46 separate control rooms which rely on a wide range of differing technologies and operational procedures. The gap between the most advanced and the least is stark, with many approaching the end of their useful lives. Moreover, the existing control rooms are stand-alone. They cannot readily step-in for each other when systems fail or in times of high demand. They cannot deploy both specialist resilience equipment and core fire fighting resources flexibly and efficiently across boundaries and over larger areas. It is estimated that any initiative aiming to network the existing control rooms would cost twice as much as FiReControl, but without delivering the same levels of efficiency saving.

## Value for Money

5. It is forecast that the significant, net, incremental benefits outlined above will be achieved for a marginal net incremental cost (Net Present Cost £50m). Once steady-state operating conditions are achieved, the cost of providing control services under the new, regional, resilient, networked arrangements will be some 28 percent (£23m) lower per annum nationally than current operating costs. This equates to a predicted improvement in unit cost of about £450 per 1000 head of population served. These savings represent very significant economies.
6. The figures presented above are informed by prudent assumptions. There continue to be some areas of uncertainty, but these are now within narrower parameters than in previous editions of the Business Case. The London accommodation and facilities management contracts are yet to be awarded, and Communities and Local Government is working with its suppliers and FRS partners to develop detailed delivery plans.

## Funding

7. The roll-out and commissioning phase of the project is being funded by Communities and Local Government (alongside its investment in the new digital radio communications system - Firelink). The total investment by the Department in the RCCs (including new burdens support) is currently forecast to be about £340m<sup>1</sup>, and forms part of its commitment to work in partnership with fire and rescue services in the development and improvement of the service.

---

<sup>1</sup> This figure includes adjustments for best estimates of cost in year and contingency

8. Communities and Local Government is funding all the development and implementation costs for the new ICT infrastructure and financially supporting the transition to the new networked control service.
9. Once operational, the new RCCs outside London will be governed, operated and funded by local authority controlled companies which are wholly owned by the local Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRAs) in their region. The London RCC will be governed, operated and funded by the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA).

## Risk management

10. All projects have a degree of risk which has to be identified and addressed. FiReControl risk arises from three main sources: comprehensive business change; Information and Communication Technology (ICT) infrastructure services; and accommodation. The interfaces between these sources and other projects, such as Firelink, create additional risks. These risks cannot be eliminated but they can be mitigated, managed and controlled. Accordingly, the project management of FiReControl has significant resources focussed on risk management systems and procedures. This will be integral to the implementation of the project.

## Main project activities

11. There are three main strands of project activity:
  - Delivering RCC accommodation and related services;
  - Delivering ICT infrastructure and related services; and
  - Supporting business change.
12. The project has procured eight buildings; all are being constructed; four of which will become available for use this year. Procurement of a building for London is in progress. Communities and Local Government expects to contract with a developer later this year. In addition procurement of Facilities Management services for all nine buildings is underway with the aim of selecting a chosen supplier in the Autumn of 2007.
13. In March 2007, Communities and Local Government signed a contract with the European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company (EADS) for development, delivery, maintenance and support of the new networked control systems. This will include the provision of all necessary hardware - for the new buildings and in fire stations and other FRS buildings. The new systems will be in operational use in October 2009, following an extensive period of testing and evaluation involving the FRS.
14. The new control service represents a major business change for the FRS. The project has established a network of regional business change representatives, seconded from the FRS, to provide a single point of contact in the project for information, feedback and assistance. The provision of high quality communications to support stakeholder engagement is a key strand of project work. In addition, the project actively supports and facilitates each region and FRS to develop and deliver their own individual transition plans.

## Stakeholder engagement

15. Effective stakeholder engagement is central to the successful delivery of FiReControl. The FiReControl project is being delivered in partnership with the wider Fire community: Fire & Rescue Authorities (FRAs), the Local Government Association (LGA) and the Chief Fire Officers' Association (CFOA). The aim is to create the climate for an open and

honest dialogue, ensuring that the project listens to stakeholder views and takes these into account.

16. The Fire and Rescue Service has a unique organisational culture, characterised by the strong commitment of its members, long service and low turnover. Each region is different and the size and working practices of Fire and Rescue Services vary considerably from area to area. These factors are reflected in the project's approach to business change and in the way that it communicates with its stakeholders.
17. The project provides a single point of contact for information, feedback and assistance through the presence of regional business change representatives who are seconded from the Fire and Rescue Service. It also facilitates cross working and sharing of best practice across the regions through regular meeting forums. The project is committed to providing high quality communications which support stakeholder engagement work. Its aim is to ensure that its communications are: relevant and timely; tailored to the audience and delivered through a range of media. The project seeks to constantly evaluate the impact of its communications and engagement work and deliver improvements where needed.

## Structure of the business case

18. In accordance with the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) guidance, the business case is presented in five parts:
  - A **Strategic** Case which sets out the FiReControl vision in terms of the need for modernisation, and assesses the context in which this change will take place;
  - An Economic Case which provides assurance that costs, benefits and risks of investing in regional controls have been identified and suitably balanced;
  - A Commercial Case which provides an overview of the national exercises to procure accommodation and ICT infrastructure, and how value is being generated;
  - A Financial Case which confirms that that project is affordable. It includes an early indication of the beneficial effect on regional budgets; and
  - A Project Management Case which outlines the capability of the delivery organisations and the key approaches to be followed.
19. This Full Business Case will be updated and reissued to include the outcomes of the London accommodation and Facilities Management (FM) procurements, the establishment of RCC companies and detailed planning following the ICT infrastructure services contract award.

## Conclusions

20. The key messages from this business case are:
  - The RCCs are essential to meet critical resilience needs locally, regionally and nationally;
  - The RCCs will provide value for money, and achieve considerable efficiency savings for the fire and rescue service;
  - Doing nothing is not a viable option and the government is right to take the lead and earmark significant funds for investment in the project; and
  - Delivery of the project will be through a collaborative approach leading to governance by local authority control companies which will own and operate the new RCCs.