

BOARD PAPER

Item Number	Item 6 – Paper 3
Title of Paper	Quality Assurance Recommendations Update
Decision or Information	For decision
Date of Meeting	14 th July 2021
Presented by	CPO
Attachments	Appendix A – Response to Quality Assurance Recommendations Appendix B – Fire Standards Development Process Diagram

Summary

This paper summarises the feedback received following the QA exercises carried out on the first Fire Standards approved by the Board.

It summarises the actions taken in response by the Fire Standards Team and makes proposals for Board consideration and decision.

Recommendations and Decisions

The Board is requested to note the contents of the paper and:

- review and confirm, if content, with the QA findings and recommendations summary provided with the actions taken by the Fire Standards Team; and
- consider and approve the amendment to the Fire Standards development process including proposals for commissioning work and agreeing the scope of a Fire Standard.

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Background

An analysis of the QA recommendations has been completed by the Fire Standards Team.

Amendments to improve existing processes that could be changed easily have been done such as clarifying internal filing systems, creating accessible folder for evidence for the QA assessors. These will be applied to all future development work, the changes are summarised in the table in Appendix A.

In summary, the improvement themes and suggestions coming from the recommendations cover the following areas:

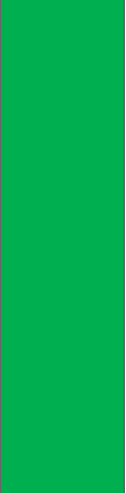
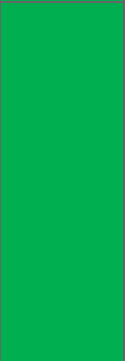
1. Assessor Guidance
2. Roles and Responsibilities
3. Development Process
 - a. Commissioning and scope
 - b. Stakeholder management and communications planning
 - c. Peer review, consultation and standards review process
4. Board decisions evidenced
5. Implementation support
6. Overall evaluation and benefits management

APPENDIX A

Response To Quality Assurance Recommendations

Key:

Completed		In Progress	
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ID	Themes of recommendations	Actions Taken or Proposed	Status
1	<p>Assessor Guidance</p> <p>To establish an assurance specification that defines the approach to assurance and requirements from it for all future QA assessors.</p>	<p>An assessment specification for the QA exercise has been refined and will be used for all future tendering processes for QA.</p> <p>The assessor’s guide has been reviewed and revised based on all feedback received to help those assessing understand what is required of them and where to find information to support the QA exercise.</p> <p>Shared folders using the NFCC SharePoint site provides QA assessors with easier access to evidence for QA.</p>	
2	<p>Roles and Responsibilities</p> <p>A number of recommendations relate to clarifying roles and responsibilities of all those involved in Fire Standards development throughout the stages of the process. This would help ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board expectations are met; • guidelines about how to develop Fire Standards are followed; 	<p>The development process has been reviewed and refined to more clearly outline the stages of the process and who is responsible at each stage.</p> <p>Priority is given to establishing an appropriate NFCC Lead for each Fire Standard, clarifying expectations of them including having dialogue with the Board, as and when, required.</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • everyone involved understands where responsibilities lie and, on whose authority, they can act; • where the Fire Standards Team needs to track progress and direct or re-direct development activities accordingly, and their role and authority to do this is understood and respected; and • the role and responsibilities of the Fire Standards Board overall, but including final approval, to include approval of any supporting materials either developed or to be developed in future. <p>It is proposed this would help at initiation stage and throughout development and will importantly result in Fire Standards both development teams and the Board are happy with.</p> <p><i>Extract from the QA Recommendations</i> <i>The Board may wish to consider strengthening and clarifying the role of the Fire Standards Team in project managing the development, providing them with greater authority over the development team (working group) in ensuring that the guidance and FSB requirements are strictly adhered to.</i></p>	<p>An introductory presentation is now given at all working group initiation sessions for each standard to clarify roles and responsibilities.</p> <p>The FSB Chairs have attended a recent meeting of the NFCC Council Meeting to engage with all Chiefs about Fire Standards, emphasising the importance of NFCC support for development and clarifying the role and responsibilities of an NFCC Lead in the process.</p> <p>Project Management Support is provided through the Fire Standards Team to clarify scope, establish plans and monitor progress against the plans.</p>	

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3a	<p>Development Process - Commissioning</p> <p>Several recommendations were made about the commissioning of work from the Board to clarify expectations of the final standard. This was expressed as the need to issue a Commissioning Brief for every Fire Standard and not make it only where deemed required by the Board or the Fire Standards team.</p> <p>This early engagement and agreement between FSB and relevant NFCC programmes or committees will mean that the Board can ensure it has sufficient oversight and opportunity to influence the development of the Fire Standard from the outset.</p> <p><i>Extracts from the QA Recommendations</i> <i>CRMP</i> <i>The Board may wish to consider strengthening the wording in the process guide to ensure that all future fire standards are required to be initiated by a Commissioning Brief, which clearly sets out the rationale for a new (or revised) standard and maps out expected delivery mechanisms, timescales, and governance arrangements. This early engagement and agreement between FSB and relevant NFCC programmes or committees will mean that the Board can ensure it has</i></p>	<p>The team feel that the commissioning and initiation of work are areas of the process that needed more robust measures in place.</p> <p>Two extracts from the QA exercises have been included for reference.</p> <p>Whilst both call for the Commissioning Brief to help resolve issues, often the scope of the Fire Standard is not easily finalised at Commissioning stage because once discussions with subject matter experts are initiated, other aspects can be identified which affect the scope of the Fire Standard – an example of this is with the Leadership Fire Standards.</p> <p>The Leadership Commissioning Brief was completed once work had started but the working group highlighted some challenges and areas for clarification with the Board as a result of initial scoping work.</p> <p>It is therefore proposed the development process be amended to reflect current practice which now gives clarity to those to whom work is commissioned, whilst allowing the Board some flexibility in approach dependant on the area of work.</p>	

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	<p><i>sufficient oversight and opportunity to influence the development of the Fire Standard from the outset.</i></p> <p>Code of Ethics <i>The agreed procedure between the FSB and the NFCC requires that at the scoping phase, the rationale for Fire Standards development will be confirmed. The guidance then goes on to state that ‘if required’, Board expectations will be outlined in a commissioning brief where the delivery mechanism will be outlined and the timetable for production agreed prior to development work being initiated.</i></p> <p><i>Although, the Board intervened during the drafting phase and provided additional guidance and direction; a clear commissioning brief at the outset would have provided greater clarity over the FSB requirements for all Fire Standards to follow and in particular for the Code of Ethics. The Board would have been able to specify the ground rules for the nature and content of the Fire Standard and its expectation for the Core Code that underpinned it.</i></p>	<p>This process has naturally evolved as each standard has been developed, and may require decisions to be taken in between meetings but this can be managed by email. The proposed timelines allow for this work as part of the early scoping work.</p> <p>The proposal is to make the following refinements to the formal process:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Board approves an area for a Fire Standard to be developed (Phased delivery plans). 2. The NFCC Lead for the area of activity is identified. 3. Via the Fire Standards Team, the Board provides an initial commissioning brief which outlines expectations, clarifies roles and responsibilities, and requires a detailed scope to be developed for the Fire Standard by the NFCC Lead and Fire Standards Team for Board approval. 4. The Fire Standards team liaise with the NFCC Lead to form a working group. 5. The Board expectations, explanations about roles and responsibilities and a discussion about the content of the standard, conducted at an initial workshop. (The working group often help identify guidance or information that may exist or stakeholders that could contribute which informs the standard development.) 6. A proposed scope for the Fire Standard is drafted and shared with the Board for approval 	

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		<p>7. Board approves the scope for the Fire Standard</p> <p>During development, the Fire Standards Team monitor progress against the scope and can direct or re-direct development activities if required to ensure Board expectations are met.</p>	
3b	<p>Development Process - Stakeholders</p> <p>Comments were also made about ensuring the right people were involved in development work through more robust stakeholder identification and communications and engagement planning.</p>	<p>Stakeholder identification is carried out by the Fire Standards Team and Working Group at the initiation stage of each standard.</p> <p>Clarification about the respective priority of stakeholders and their levels of involvement are agreed and documented with all development documentation on the teams SharePoint site from the start.</p>	
3c	<p>Development Process - Peer Review, Consultation and review of existing Fire Standards</p> <p>A suggestion to clarify the expectations and guidelines for both peer review and consultation were made. as well as the need to consider whether the development process would work when reviewing existing published Fire Standards in future.</p>	<p>The Fire Standards team has reviewed the peer review and consultation processes and made some amendments to clarify a number of aspects and establish some standardised approaches.</p> <p>The processes used for consultation and peer review, including the analysis of consultation responses, has been documented and is now followed for all Fire Standards.</p>	

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		<p>The team will be checking whether the development process for creating standards is appropriate for the periodic review of existing standards or whether a separate process is required.</p> <p>This will be confirmed with the Board at the October meeting.</p>	
4	<p>Board decisions evidenced</p> <p>Several recommendations indicated concern that Board decisions had not been logged appropriately, especially where requests were made to sign-off or decide via email.</p> <p>In addition, there were recommendations made about ensuring the Board were appropriately assured about any supporting guidance for the standards, especially if to achieve the standard, services must follow the guidance. This may equally apply where guidance is yet to be finalised or published and how the Board can remain assured that momentum and progress to develop that guidance is being maintained.</p> <p>Examples to underpin these recommendations included the Code of Ethics and Community Risk Management Planning Fire Standards and their underpinning guidance.</p>	<p>The Fire Standards Team has refined the process for decision logging, both those taken at Board meetings and those requested via email. All electronic communications that form part of the evidence that supports QA are now collated more thoroughly.</p> <p>The Board's Actions and Decisions log has been separated from the Board minutes to help bring clarity and provide appropriate audit trails.</p> <p>Follow up meetings between the NFCC Community Risk Programme Executive and the FSB Chairs have been established to continue dialogue about progress.</p> <p>There is ongoing dialogue and liaison within the NFCC team to ensure any new guidance produced is identified and can be appropriately linked to Fire Standards as and where appropriate along with appropriate implementation support.</p>	

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	<p>Extracts from QA Recommendations</p> <p>Code of Ethics</p> <p><i>It is acknowledged that the achievement of the Code of Ethics Fire Standard is wholly dependent on the efficacy of the Core Code of Ethics and its supporting guidance, it would be advisable for the Board to consider the whole suite of documents before signing off the Fire Standard for publication, to assure itself that the right implementation support was being provided.</i></p> <p>CRMP</p> <p><i>Given that the FSB is proposing to launch and publish the CRMP Fire Standard ahead of the provision of the necessary suite of guidance and tools to fully support implementation; it would be advisable to gain greater assurance, to ask the Community Risk Programme Team to report back to the Board at an agreed future meeting to update members on progress with the development; or to confirm that the materials are available, and fire and rescue services are able to access and use them.</i></p>	<p>The NFCC is establishing a QA process for work produced by its programmes which it is proposed will result in similar QA reports as those received for Fire Standards.</p> <p>The Board may wish to review the extracts from the QA Recommendations provided here and discuss if it is in agreement with the approach to underpinning guidance and how it can be assured that guidance is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • already in place; • being developed alongside a standard; or • proposed for the future. 	
5	<p>Implementation support</p> <p>Recommendations were made to optimise digital solutions to provide a level of implementation support for services.</p>	<p>Recruitment for the new NFCC Implementation Support Team has been completed and the full team should be in place by August 2021.</p>	

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	<p>This included supporting services with local implementation plans as well as an ability for them to self-assess their position against any given Fire Standard once published.</p> <p>A comparison to the Strategic Gap Analysis tool for National Operational Guidance was cited as an example.</p>	<p>The Fire Standards team is already liaising with the Implementation Team Manager to develop an implementation strategy for Fire Standards.</p> <p>Some support for implementation has been available over the past nine months through an Engagement Officer working with the Fire Standards team.</p> <p>An online implementation guide was launched in the Spring to support services further with implementing the Operational Response standards.</p> <p>In addition, an implementation tool which acts as a self-assessment checklist for services has been developed for each of the published Fire Standards. The tool is currently being tested by a number of services and once feedback from those tests is received, any amendments necessary will be made. It is envisaged this tool will form the core of the digital based implementation tools made available when a Fire Standard is launched.</p>	
6	<p>Overall evaluation and benefits management</p> <p>A recommendation was made about overall evaluation of the success of Fire Standards and their effectiveness. It was proposed the Board establish an evaluation methodology. This links to the discussion held at the last Board meeting about Benefit Measurement and Realisation.</p>	<p>This is a priority area for the Fire Standards team currently who, in liaison with the NFCC Implementation Team, is working to clarify the data sets available to be able to help measure the benefits of Fire Standards and their effectiveness.</p>	

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		<p>It has been agreed that the Board will be provided with an annual report giving feedback about the Fire Standards published to date. This will seek to clarify the response of services and whether the desired outcomes at the heart of each standard are being achieved.</p> <p>This annual report will also include a benefits realisation report to provide more detail about whether the intended benefits of each standard are being realised.</p>	