

<b>Item Number</b>	<b>Item 6 – Paper 2</b>
<b>Title of Paper</b>	<b>General Progress Update</b>
<b>Decision or Information</b>	For information
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	20 <sup>th</sup> December 2023
<b>Presented by</b>	Fire Standards Team
<b>Attachments</b>	Appendix A – Communications and Engagement Strategy

## Summary

This paper provides the Board with a summary of general activity relating to the Board and Fire Standards, and includes content about communications and engagement activity and proposals. This includes:

- Chairs' past and future meetings and engagements
- Communications and engagement strategy and reporting for 2024

## Recommendations and decisions required

The Board is asked to note the contents of this paper. In particular, the Board is asked to discuss what information it feels it would find useful to receive to keep it sufficiently informed on communications and engagement activity.

## Communications and Engagement

### Chairs' Meeting and Engagements

Since the last Board meeting, the Chairs have attended various meetings, conferences and events with stakeholders including:

- NFCC Autumn Conference - 11<sup>th</sup> Oct
- Service visit - South Yorkshire FRS - 19<sup>th</sup> Oct
- Service visit - Humberside FRS - 20<sup>th</sup> Oct
- Meeting with Alex Norris Shadow Fire Minister - 31<sup>st</sup> October
- HMICFRS chiefs and Chairs event – 1<sup>st</sup> November
- HMICFRS Team Away Day – 2<sup>nd</sup> November
- Service visit - Leicestershire FRS – 3<sup>rd</sup> November
- Meeting Roy Wilsher HMICFRS – 5<sup>th</sup> December
- Meeting Alix Barlett HMICFRS – 7<sup>th</sup> December

Future engagement planned by the Chairs are listed below, also attending may be FST members:

- West Sussex – January 2024 (exact date tbc)
- Service Visit - Cheshire FRS
- LGA Fire Conference – 12<sup>th</sup> & 13<sup>th</sup> March 2024

### New FSB Videos

Cornwall FRS kindly shared a video interview conducted with the Chief Fire Officer discussing the impact of Fire Standards within that service and how they are approaching embedding them. Unfortunately, the technical standard of the video was not sufficient to be included with the wider suite of FSB communications and engagement videos and instead the FST intends to use the material in an article, which can be shared through written media instead. This is being led by the NFCC Comms and Engagement team on behalf of the FSB.

## Communication and Engagement Reporting – Proposal for 2024 onwards

The Board will recall that it approved a Communications and Engagement Strategy in 2023, see Appendix A.

To accompany this, the Fire Standards Team (FST) developed and have been following a communications and engagement schedule which was primarily focussed on the Chairs' engagements (as detailed above) alongside producing news articles for the website and social media content generally aligned to progress with Fire Standards development.

## **Social Media and Website Activity**

Support for our online communications activity is provided through the NFCC Communications Team.

When communications activity takes place, traffic to the FSB website and engagements on social media as would be expected increases. For example, the two most recent events generating interest were:

- October – launch of the new FSB videos.
- November – opening of the consultation on the Internal Governance and Assurance Fire Standard.

We continue to build a following on “X” (formerly known as Twitter) with currently 1,693 followers.

Engagement with services, especially our Fire Standards Single Points of Contact (SPOCs), is generally via direct email or through the NFCC Workplace website site.

## **Future Reporting Proposals**

At each Board meeting, we have routinely provided reporting on levels of engagement with the FSB website and our presence on social media in chart form. However, this only provides a very limited insight into the work being done to engage with services about Fire Standards.

Given the closer alignment between Fire Standards production and engagement with services via the NFCC Implementation Team, it is suggested that reporting on communications and engagement activity is revisited to provide more meaningful future updates.

It is therefore proposed that the FST liaise with the FSB Chairs in January 2024 to discuss such reporting further. They will then advise the Board at its March meeting of the outcome of those discussions which may lead to a refreshed approach for communications and engagement reporting.

Considering that proposal, the Chairs and the FST would find it helpful if the Board, at this meeting, could identify what information they feel it would be useful to receive, enabling it to understand and be updated about ongoing communications and engagement activity.



# **Communications and Engagement Strategy 2023-24**

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## Introduction

The purpose of Fire Standards is to **achieve better outcomes for communities through improving consistency in approach, driving continuous improvement in service delivery, and improving professionalism**. It is anticipated that the full suite of Fire Standards as originally envisaged, will be published by Spring 2024.

The Fire Standards Board (FSB or Board) from the start has actively listened to views and been consultative in its approach to developing Fire Standards. This communications and engagement strategy has as its focus supporting services in achieving Fire Standards and embedding them across services.

The strategy is supported by a “live” communications and engagement plan and schedule which details planned activities or events and show when these may take place. Whilst some activities are known and planned for in advance, the plan will continually evolve as opportunities to communicate and engage emerge.

The content of the strategy has been influenced by the challenges the Fire Standards Team and the Chairs have identified in their engagements with services, particularly through the impact assessment engagement work.

It has also been informed by the work of the NFCC Implementation Support Team. They have undertaken a range of engagement activities with services to support them as each Fire Standard has been published and continue to do so. Much of their work is connecting services and directing them to those who are further ahead with implementation and achievement of Fire Standards.

Whilst the Fire Standards are primarily for services in England, the Board positively encourages the Devolved Administrations’ ambition to adopt, at least in principle, the Fire Standards.

# The Fire Standards Board's Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Vision

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Effective communication and stakeholder engagement with services and other stakeholders about the Fire Standards that improves awareness, understanding and prompts action.

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## Communications And Engagement Aims

This communications and engagement strategy aims to:

- promote and broaden awareness of the Fire Standards and their role and purpose in achieving better outcomes for communities and improve professionalism within services through consistency of approach and driving continuous improvement in service delivery;
- help clarify and build understanding about the connection between Fire Standards and inspection;
- continue to raise awareness of the published Fire Standards and support the publication of new or revised Fire Standards; and
- explore and introduce new methods and enhance current methods of supporting services in their work to embed and achieve Fire Standards.

## Communication objectives

Our communications and engagement planning will focus on delivering against these objectives:

- 1) To maximise opportunities to communicate and engage with services to support the successful achievement of Fire Standards by England's fire and rescue services including:
  - a) finding new ways to promote Fire Standards through communicating to services their value and benefit;
  - b) identifying or establishing creative and innovative ways services may approach achieving Fire Standards by supporting them and encouraging them to share and learn from each other.
- 2) To establish and utilise key messages or lines to take, aligned to our stakeholder groups.
- 3) To continue to use and build on existing communication methods and platforms, such as social media channels, publishing engaging and accessible content to help raise awareness and understanding and ensure our website provides what our stakeholders need, working to grow our number of followers.

- 4) To support effective stakeholder engagement, ensuring that the right audiences are reached using the most appropriate channels in a timely way, enabling inclusion opportunities for all through peer review and open consultation as part of the development and review of Fire Standards.

## **Approach to Communications and Engagement**

The approach presented in this strategy is to provide direction and clarity to the level, tone, frequency and quality of communications and stakeholder engagement activity undertaken in relation to Fire Standards by the Fire Standards Board.

Engaging with the right people, at the right time, via the right channels, is crucial.

The strategy will help the Board and those who support it to:

- Ensure that our voice is consistent and professional in its tone
- Provide a structure for communication
- Identify key audiences and stakeholders and how best to engage and communicate with them
- Help to regulate the content and frequency of communications
- Closely align our messaging with our communication objectives so that we are in a better position to evaluate success

While the strategy does not aim to be prescriptive in its approach, all communications should be of a high quality being:

- Professional yet friendly in tone, style and level of authority
- Open, honest and accurate
- Clear, accessible and understandable, appropriate to the audience
- Consistent and with agreed messaging and objectives
- Monitored and reviewed regularly

## Stakeholders and audiences

The Board's communications and engagement activity is directed at both transmitting and receiving information. It recognises that there is a broad range of stakeholders who have varying levels of interest in, and influence over, Fire Standards.

The Board's Stakeholder Register contains all of the Board's potential stakeholders and is referenced to identify relevant stakeholders at the development stage of a Fire Standard or when a Fire Standard is being reviewed. The register is reviewed and maintained by the Fire Standard Team each time work on a new standard is initiated.

The figure below shows how we group the stakeholders in the register:

Fire & Rescue Services	Local Governance	Central Government	Professional Bodies & Associations	Academic and research institutions	Fire Industry and General Public
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chief Officers</li><li>• Senior Leaders</li><li>• Single Points of Contact (SPOCs)</li><li>• NFCC Lead Officers and Subject matter experts</li><li>• All employees</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Governing bodies</li><li>• Local Resilience Forums</li><li>• Other Responder Agencies Cat 1 + 2</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Departments, Agencies, Projects, Inquiry Teams</li><li>• Devolved Administrations</li><li>• Assurance / Inspecting Bodies</li><li>• Other National Projects / Boards</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Employers</li><li>• Trade Unions</li><li>• Other fire related bodies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Universities and education establishments</li><li>• Research bodies</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Private sector fire services</li><li>• Suppliers</li><li>• Insurers</li><li>• Trade Journals</li><li>• General public</li><li>• National media</li></ul>

## Priority Stakeholders

The priority stakeholders for the Fire Standards Board remain those to whom they specifically apply – the fire and rescue services. However, the Board's stakeholders can broadly be split into three categories:

- **Fire and Rescue Services**, including those of the Devolved Administrations. Within services there are different stakeholders, for example, Chiefs Officers, Senior Leadership Teams, Single Points of Contact for Fire Standards and subject matter experts.
- **Governing bodies**, those representing fire and rescue service governance and who are the employers.
- **Internal stakeholders**, colleagues working within and for the NFCC who are frequently involved in development of Fire Standards and supporting guidance and tools.
- **External stakeholders**, including central government departments, agencies and national projects or programme teams, professional bodies and associations, assurance and inspecting bodies, other responder agencies (cat 1 +2), representative bodies, education centres, academic institutions, suppliers, trade press and the general public.

We aim to ensure the methods and channels of communication and engagement we use are most appropriate for the stakeholders with whom we need to communicate.



The Fire Standards Team will work with the NFCC Communications and Implementation Support Teams in identifying the most effective and appropriate way of communicating and engaging with our range of stakeholders, utilising the range of tools, platforms and methods available.

Working with others in the NFCC is also important to ensure alignment of the Fire Standards with the guidance, tools and support they provide and combining communications and engagement activity where it will be effective to do so. This will inform our more detailed communications plan and schedule.

We will evaluate effectiveness through feedback to continually improve our approach.

## **Fire Standards and Inspection**

A requirement within the Fire and Rescue National Framework for England states that “HMICFRS will have regard to Fire Standards” as part of its inspections. Therefore, a service is expected to demonstrate how they are achieving, aligning to, or are working towards aligning to, the published Fire Standards.

The Fire Standards Board and Team will seek to work with HMICFRS to jointly communicate and bring clarity to services about the role and purpose of Fire Standards and their relationship with inspection.

The existing Memorandum of Understanding between the two bodies may require review and revision as part of developing and maturing the understanding about Fire Standards, their implementation and their relationship with inspection going forward.