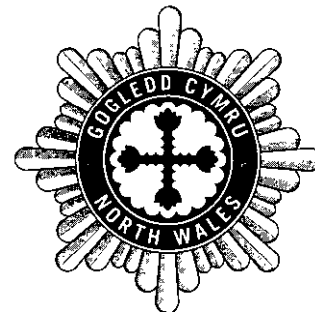


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31st October 2005

Roger Chaffey
Clerk
Social Justice and Regeneration Committee
National Assembly for Wales
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1NA



**Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service**

Simon A Smith
Prif Swyddog Tân / Chief Fire Officer

Dear Roger,

**SOCIAL JUSTICE AND REGENERATION COMMITTEE
Restructuring of Constabulary**

Thank you for your letter of 28th September 2005 inviting the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority to comment on the Home Secretary's proposals for police restructuring. I am pleased to advise you that the matter was considered by the Executive Panel of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) at its meeting on 26th October and the following represents Members' views.

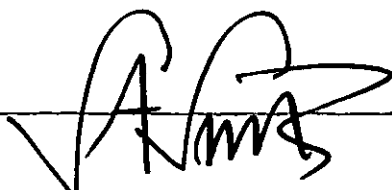
1. The FRA would urge that due recognition is given to the existing boundaries of North Wales, which have a long history and are clearly understood by the people who live within those boundaries. The fire and rescue service in North Wales is the only one of the three that has a co-terminous boundary with its police force and this has resulted in innovation and efficiency through collaboration. Prime examples of this would be the development of a tri-service control arrangement and a tri-service estates management project, both of which (as the name implies) have ambulance service involvement as well. The FRA would not wish to see the effectiveness and operational benefits from the large scale collaborative projects currently underway being reduced or removed by police restructure. In addition, there have been local initiatives such as the Community Safety Partnerships which have proven records of success.

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2. The ability of the fire and rescue service in North Wales to operate efficiently depends on effective joint working with the police service. The FRA would not wish to see any diminution of that ability through police restructuring. This includes work at all levels, up to and including Chief Fire Officer/Chief Constable, where the close working relationship between senior managers has been crucial to the projects mentioned in paragraph 1.
3. The Home Secretary's proposals advocate forces of no less than 4000 police officers. This clearly leads, in a Welsh context, to either one or two police forces for Wales. Whilst it is understood that the numbers referred to are considered to be optimum numbers for effective policing, it cannot be correct that the number of officers is the sole criteria for change. There must be consideration of local links, the existing relationships with other agencies such as fire and rescue and the local authorities, the culture of North Wales and the significant issue of the Welsh language. Additionally, the geography of Wales must surely mean that the comparatively poor communications and travel links between South and North have to be a factor.
4. The Minister for Social Justice and Regeneration has committed to the retention of three fire and rescue authorities for Wales, a view shared by the North Wales FRA. It should not necessarily follow that a restructure of police force boundaries in Wales results in a corresponding change to fire and rescue boundaries.

Please feel free to contact me if you need further clarification.

Yours sincerely



Simon A Smith
CHIEF FIRE OFFICER

cc Ian Miller, Clerk to North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority