

# WALES ARSON REDUCTION STRATEGY



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
De Cymru  
South Wales  
Fire and Rescue Service



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
Canolbarth a Gorllewin Cymru  
Mid and West Wales  
Fire and Rescue Service



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub  
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# Contents

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>4</b>
The Wales Arson Reduction Strategy	4
The Strategic Arson Reduction Board	5
The Joint Arson Group	5
<b>WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?</b>	
Our Vision	6
Our Mission	6
Our Strategic Priorities	6
<b>WHY DOES WALES NEED AN ARSON REDUCTION STRATEGY?</b>	<b>7</b>
The Scale of the Problem	7
The Cost of Arson in Wales	8
Our Political Drivers	8
<b>HOW DO WE PLAN TO DO IT?</b>	
Prevention	9
Protection	9
Response	9
<b>WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>APPENDIX 1</b>	
All Wales Joint Arson Group Delivery Plan 2019/22	11
Priority 1: Protect Our Communities	12
Priority 2: Educating Our Communities both Young and Old	13
Priority 3: Improving Land Management across Wales	14
Priority 4: Share Meaningful and Consistent Information	15
Priority 5: Marketing Our Work and Communicating with Our Communities	16

# FOREWORD



I am proud to present the fourth iteration of the Wales Arson Reduction Strategy which outlines our vision for eradicating arson across Wales.

Over the last decade we have had considerable success in reducing the incidence and impact of deliberate fire setting within our communities. However, I believe that there is more we can achieve.

I recognise the importance of working closely with our partners and our past successes are a direct result of the hard work, innovation and drive of our Joint Arson Group and the dedicated practitioners from all the agencies who have been out there delivering initiatives within our communities. I believe now is the right time for a new strategy. Which will help to re-focus efforts in this area and broaden the responsibility of partners and communities for arson reduction activity in Wales.

I also consider that the formation of the Strategic Arson Reduction Board to provide strategic leadership during challenging financial times and increased community risk will assist us to continue to build upon the successes already achieved.

I am pleased that our new strategy supports and complements the principles contained within the Well-being of Future Generations Act and that it also reflects the expectations placed upon the Fire and Rescue Services in Wales by the Welsh Government in their Fire and Rescue Service National Framework document.

You will see that our vision, mission and strategic priorities continue to pursue a cultural shift across Wales so that arson is seen as socially unacceptable by all of our communities. Our actions will aim to support this positive and lasting cultural change to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future.



**Roger Thomas - Deputy Chief Fire Officer**

Chair of the Strategic Arson Reduction Board

# INTRODUCTION

The Welsh Arson Reduction Strategy lays out our approach to achieve a sustained reduction in the incidence and impact of arson across Wales. It has been developed by the Strategic Arson Reduction Board and it will be delivered by the Joint Arson Group.

## The Wales Arson Reduction Strategy

Our first 'Wales Arson Reduction Strategy' (WARS) was produced in 2007 to provide a real focus for organisations and individuals working in the field of arson reduction. We updated our strategy in 2012 (WARS II) to reflect the changing nature of arson in Wales and to build upon the success we had already achieved and followed this up with a revised Strategy in 2016.

We have had considerable success over this period and we have seen the amount of deliberate fires across Wales fall from around 20,000 in 2006 to approximately 6,500 in 2014. We are very proud of what has been achieved through a great deal of determination and hard work by all the agencies involved.

However, despite our past success, arson across Wales still continues to provide a clear and present danger to our environment, our economy and our communities. Now we feel it's right to further develop our strategy and we have developed the fourth generation of our Wales Arson Reduction Strategy.

Our new strategy builds upon the knowledge and experience we have gained over the last decade. We recognise the value of encouraging communities and individuals to work with us to share responsibility so that we can all eradicate arson within the areas that we live, work and visit.



## The Strategic Arson Reduction Board

In order to continue to drive down the amount of arson across Wales we have set up a Strategic Arson Reduction Board. This group consists of;



and any other interested parties.

The role of our Strategic Arson Reduction Board is to develop our strategy, to allocate the correct resources to assist in the delivery of our strategy and to monitor progress against our strategy.

Our Strategic Arson Reduction Board operates at executive level and is chaired by the Deputy Chief Fire Officer of Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service. It reports to Welsh Government via the Joint Emergency Services Group and the Welsh Resilience Forum and it provides strategic leadership for the continued reduction of the incidence and impact of arson across Wales.

## The Joint Arson Group

The Joint Arson Group was originally formed in 2005 to produce the first Wales Arson Reduction Strategy and it has been a fundamental part of its delivery and success. The group consists of the Officers from the three Welsh Fire and Rescue Services, all four Welsh Police Forces, Natural Resources Wales and other agencies.

The Joint Arson Group is responsible for implementing the delivery plan contained within the Wales Arson Reduction Strategy. The delivery plan lays out the specific actions that we believe will reduce the incidence and impact of arson within our communities. The Joint Arson Group reports its performance against its delivery plan directly into the Strategic Arson Reduction Board.

The Joint Arson Group delivery plan can be found in [appendix 1](#).

# WHAT DO WE WANT TO ACHIEVE?

## **Our Vision**

To eradicate arson across Wales.

## **Our Mission**

To reduce the impact of arson across Wales through a year on year reduction in the number of deliberate fires.

## **Our Strategic Priorities**

### **Priority 1: Protect our communities**

We have seen that arson not only destroys homes and lives but it can devastate the environment around us. Reducing arson helps to protect the quality and viability of the places we live, work, learn and spend our leisure time. We need to work with volunteers, communities and groups across Wales to help them reduce the incidence and impact of arson within their own communities. We want to protect our communities from anti-social behaviour linked to fire setting, such as fly tipping, waste burning and vandalism within schools and colleges. In the last few years we have also seen an increase in the threat of arson arising from domestic abuse and violence in the home and through our collective aims, we will strive to both identify these events through wider awareness of each of the Joint Arson Group Partners to bring such perpetrators to justice while at the same time ensuring an effective response is in place to support victims of such a crime.

We want to deliver a cultural shift across Wales so that communities view arson as socially unacceptable and are active in terms of community resilience.

### **Priority 2: Educating our Communities both young and old**

We know that children, young people and the older generation may become involved in arson for many different reasons. In order to change this we need to engage and connect with them in order to understand their motivation and to ensure they understand the consequences of their actions. Our interventions will be designed to support positive and lasting change.

### **Priority 3: Improving land management across Wales**

We recognise that different land management practices have a significant influence on the number and scale of grass and wildfires. There is a balance that needs to be struck between biodiversity and land manager's requirements, codes of practice and legislation that govern them. Along with a review of how land is physically managed.

#### **Priority 4: Share meaningful and consistent information**

We recognise that sustained arson reduction requires a collaborative approach between all partners and our communities. If we are going to tackle this issue effectively we must ensure that all partners present consistent and accurate information about the size and scale of arson across Wales in order to inform our response.

#### **Priority 5: Marketing our work and communicating with our communities**

We want to have a meaningful communications strategy so that communities are aware of the support we can provide to reduce the incidence and impact of arson within their locality.



## **WHY DOES WALES NEED AN ARSON REDUCTION STRATEGY?**

### **The Scale of the Problem**

In 2003 the 'Up in Flames' report detailed the devastating impact of arson on the Welsh economy and our communities. The incidence of arson are now significantly lower than in 2003 but we have seen a levelling-off in recent years.

The overall reduction in deliberate fires has happened not by chance but by design, the result of considerable investment, much hard work and collaboration. However, the current levels of arson illustrate that this is no time for complacency. The current economic climate is putting significant pressures on businesses and personal income. Evidence has shown that during periods of recession incidence of arson can increase.

Whilst we have achieved considerable success in reducing arson in buildings by over 40% and vehicle arson by 60%, the recent upturn in deliberate fires involving grassland, waste, refuse and bins/skips illustrates that we need to renew our commitment to our innovative approach to arson reduction.

The Welsh Fire and Rescue Services experience widely differing challenges regarding the scale and types of arson that they respond to, therefore we have developed an arson strategy that supports the delivery of appropriate local interventions to address local arson issues.

## The Cost of Arson in Wales

We understand that calculating the true cost of arson is challenging. Historically, calculations have included the costs relating to casualties, property damage, lost business, the emergency response to deal with the incident and any subsequent actions for the criminal justice system. However, there are other costs associated with arson – those costs associated with the wider impact on society (e.g. disruption to infrastructure or loss of an amenity) and the environmental costs incurred (e.g. impact on tourism or loss of habitat).

Considering all of the above, a conservative estimate of the economic cost of arson across Wales is still in excess of £160m each year.

We recognise that the current economic challenges we all face means the cost of arson in Wales is unacceptable and unsustainable. However, the cost of arson across Wales goes beyond the purely financial; arson often ruins lives, devastates whole families, degenerates areas within our communities, upsets delicate eco-systems and ruins wildlife habitats for years to come. We know that money spent reducing arson represents a sound investment for the Welsh economy. If we use deliberate fires in schools and educational buildings as an example; we have worked hard to successfully reduce the number of deliberate fires in schools and college buildings. Unfortunately past experience has taught us that the impact of a school fire is significant and goes far beyond the costs of rebuilding the school.

Societal costs include the irretrievable loss of children's work, the impact of rearranging examinations, the relocation of pupils, the travel disruption to staff and parents as well as the wider community disruption. Reducing deliberate fires at just one school can save the Welsh economy in excess of £10m to reinstate the building and to manage the subsequent wider community impact.

## Our Political Drivers

Our strategy considers several key political, societal and organisational developments, including:

- The Well being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015. This ground breaking legislation is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales. It helps us to create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. Our vision of eradicating arson across Wales supports all of the seven well-being goals outlined within the Act.
- Welsh Government's 'Programme for Government' clearly outlines the steps that the Government is taking to make a real difference to the lives of people in Wales. It includes clear actions which promote healthy living, a more prosperous and innovative economy and safer, more cohesive communities.
- The Fire and Rescue National Framework for Wales references our arson reduction work and clearly highlights the importance of collaborative working in reducing arson. A key theme throughout the framework is Welsh Government's commitment to supporting multi-agency led community engagement in our preventative strategies.

- The 'Fire and Rescue Authorities Strategy for Children and Young People' sets out the Fire and Rescue Service's approach to educating children and young people in order to reduce instances of anti-social fire crime behaviour.
- Under the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (amended by the Police Reform Act 2002) it is a statutory duty for all local authority areas to have a Community Safety Partnership. These partnerships typically involve organisations such as the Police, Fire and Rescue Services, local authorities and community groups. We will continue to work closely with our Community Safety Partnerships to further develop our arson reduction activities.
- The Heather and Grass Burning Code aims to provide guidance for the responsible, well managed burning of land. The Code aims to reduce the risk to property, agricultural land, forestry, wildlife and the wider environment. Our strategy will help support appropriate land management practices and reduce the number and damaging impact of wildfires across Wales.

## HOW DO WE PLAN TO DO IT?



Our strategy for reducing arson incorporates interventions that aim to prevent the act of arson, initiatives to protect potential targets from the effects of arson and an effective emergency response to deal with the consequence of arson. The three key areas of prevention, protection and response form the foundation of our action plan and are interwoven throughout all seven of our strategic priorities.

### **Prevention** of deliberate fires by:

working closely with partners and within communities to help build safer and more cohesive communities; providing targeted information and advice: educating children and young people; intervening early when anti-social behaviour begins; providing diversionary activities and deterring potential offenders; engaging with land owners and managers to help reduce deliberate fires on their land and to consider other methods to reduce fire loading and preserve habitats.

### **Protection** from deliberate fires by:

working closely with partners involved in the design of buildings; collaborating with those responsible for managing arson offenders within all stages of the criminal justice system; raising awareness and providing advice on interventions available to communities; implementing measures to 'target harden' (make buildings more secure) where appropriate.

### **Response** to deliberate fires by:

ensuring that we deliver an effective emergency response to mitigate the impact of arson and working with other agencies to secure detection leading to a suitable form of justice or intervention for those that commit arson across Wales.

# WHAT WILL SUCCESS LOOK LIKE?

We have set ourselves a performance target of reducing all arson year on year across Wales. This is further subdivided into different categories of fire to help us measure our progress and to assist us to understand the risks that we need to address.

We will achieve a consistent approach in identifying accidental and deliberate fires across Wales; by:

- using a range of engagement methods to spread our Arson prevention messages;
- utilising technology to identify areas prone to arson so that appropriate prevention measures can be put into place;
- increasing our engagement with Partners who can assist us to reach all parts of our Community affected by Arson;
- establishing secure and effective means to share data between key partners on the numbers and impact of deliberate fires within Wales;
- sharing the details on the impact arising from deliberate fires with key partners such as the Police in an attempt to identify those responsible.

The community outcome will be a cultural shift across Wales so that arson is seen as socially unacceptable by all our communities. Our actions aim to support positive and lasting change that will eventually eradicate arson across Wales.



## **APPENDIX 1**

# **All Wales Joint Arson Group Delivery Plan 2019 / 22**

# Priority 1

## Protect our Communities

### Why?

We have seen that arson not only destroys homes and lives but it can devastate the environment around us. Reducing arson helps to protect the quality and viability of the places we live, work, learn and spend our leisure time. We need to work with volunteers, communities and groups across Wales to help them reduce the incidence and impact of arson within their own communities. We want to protect our communities from anti-social behaviour linked to fire setting, such as fly tipping, waste burning and vandalism within schools and colleges. In the last few years we have also seen an increase in the threat of arson arising from domestic abuse and violence in the home and through our collective aims, we will strive to both identify these events through wider awareness of each of the Joint Arson Group Partners to bring such perpetrators to justice while at the same time ensuring an effective response is in place to support victims of such a crime. We want to deliver a cultural shift across Wales so that communities view arson as socially unacceptable and are active in terms of community resilience.

### How?

- Working with partnerships and within communities to deliver appropriate, targeted and effective interventions to prevent deliberate fire setting in each of these areas.
- Developing and reviewing a range of 'toolkits' based on recognised good practice, to support practitioners and partnerships working to reduce deliberate fire setting in each of these areas.
- Raising awareness and, where necessary, changing attitudes within communities towards these types of deliberate fire setting.
- Working with partner organisations to take positive action to address insecure, void and derelict buildings which present a risk to both the community and to the Fire and Rescue Service.
- Encouraging the ethos of 'Secured by Design' in the development of new buildings, for example through liaison with Local Authorities.
- Ensuring that identified key members within Local Education Authorities, school staff and school governors are aware of the role that they can take in reducing arson on school premises.

### Measuring Improvement:

We will use indicators such as the following to measure progress:

- Number of deliberately set grass fires and wildfires.
- Number of investigations and prosecutions associated with the act of deliberate fire setting.
- Number of incidents of vehicle crime and vehicle arson.
- Number of deliberately set fires involving waste or litter.
- Number of deliberate fires and incidents of anti-social behaviour in relation to void and derelict buildings.
- Percentage of new buildings that are designed, planned and built in accordance with the principles of 'Secured by Design'.
- Number of incidents of arson in schools.
- Number of incidents of arson in non-domestic buildings.
- Number of Incidents involving the threat of arson in domestic abuse and violence cases;

# Priority 2

## Educating our Communities both Young and Old

### Why?

We know that children and young people may become involved in arson for many different reasons. In order to change this we need to engage and connect with them in order to understand their motivation and to ensure they understand the consequences of their actions. Our interventions will be designed to support positive and lasting change.

### How?

- Work with families, schools and partner agencies to identify at the earliest opportunity children and young people who are displaying signs of fire crime or fire setting.
- Ensuring that interventions are appropriately tailored for the children and young people identified. (For example, in relation to age, ethnicity, or ability).
- Offering children and young people training and initiatives that improve life skills and divert them from fire crime and associated anti-social behaviour.
- Participate in the work of Community Safety Partnerships and other initiatives to tackle youth crime and associated anti-social behaviour.

### Measuring Improvement:

We will use indicators such as the following to measure progress:

- The number of deliberate fires started by children and young people.
- Awareness and understanding amongst partners and agencies of the extent to which children and young people are involved in deliberate fire setting.
- Awareness and understanding amongst key agencies, organisations and communities of the various evaluated programmes and interventions available for children and young people.
- The ease with which partners can access relevant information, including programmes and interventions, in working with children and young people in this area.
- Support the delivery of the specific referenced objectives within the Youth Offending Strategy.

# Priority 3

## Improving land management across Wales

### Why?

We recognise that different land management practices have a significant influence on the number and scale of grass and wildfires. There is a balance that needs to be struck between biodiversity and land manager's requirements, codes of practice and legislation that govern them. Along with a review of how land is physically managed.

### How?

- Review with stakeholders controlled burning legislation and codes of practice and times when burning is allowed.
- Raising awareness and, where necessary, changing attitudes within farming communities towards controlled burning.
- Develop with Welsh Government mechanisms to penalise serious abusers of the burning code.
- Review best land management practice from other areas of the UK to manage vegetation and combat build-up of fuel loads.
- Develop pilot land management trails that reduce deliberately set grass and wildfires and manage fuel loads.
- Develop mechanisms to enable Police to identify land ownership quickly and effectively.
- In conjunction with Welsh Government, utilise the Strategic Arson Reduction Board to both identify and provide support in the development of future farm support arrangements that assist in creating environments that are less susceptible fire.
- Be part of the Wales Wildlife Crime Enforcement Group as well as its sub groups e.g. Habitats in Wales to assure our collective work makes a bigger impact in avoiding damage to our countryside.

### Measuring Improvement:

We will use indicators such as the following to measure progress:

- Revised guidance, legislation on controlled burning.
- Number of uncontrolled 'controlled burns'
- Number of deliberately set fires involving open land.
- Area of land under 'new' management techniques.
- Procedure in place for the Police to identify land ownership.
- Details of enforcement action and convictions for arson.

# Priority 4

## Share Meaningful and Consistent Information

### Why?

We recognise that sustained arson reduction requires a collaborative approach between all partners and our communities. If we are going to tackle this issue effectively we must ensure that all partners present consistent and accurate information about the size and scale of arson across Wales in order to inform our response.

### How?

- Agreeing benchmarks for the collection of expected data by each partner organisation within JAG.
- Working towards the establishment of a common approach to the identification of hot spots – to be recognised by all partners as representing ‘best practice’ for Wales.
- Being really clear about any differences between Police and Fire and Rescue Service statistics, in relation to the recording and reporting of deliberately set fires.
- Understanding how any such differences may affect their own practice and impact upon the communities that they serve.
- Having systems in place to ensure that these differences do not hinder each partner’s arson reduction efforts.
- Raising awareness by presenting relevant arson statistics at Community Safety Partnership meetings.

### Measuring Improvement:

We will use indicators such as the following to measure progress:

- Level of clarity amongst partners about the difference between Police and Fire and Rescue Service statistics/data.
- Level of understanding amongst partners of how any such differences may affect their own practice.
- The establishment of a common approach to the identification of ‘hot-spots’
- The extent to which the collection of data by partners is being undertaken according to this common approach.
- The ease with which partners can access relevant statistical data and other associated information.
- The extent to which partners are sharing relevant data.
- The extent to which partners are using statistical data and other associated information to reduce arson.

# Priority 5

## Marketing our Work and Communicating with our Communities

### Why?

We want to have a meaningful communications strategy so that communities are aware of the support we can provide to reduce the incidence and impact of arson within their locality.

### How?

- Increasing the consistency of arson related information messages and practices as delivered by the Fire and Rescue Services, Police and other agencies across Wales.
- Working to develop consistent, effective and centrally coordinated national messages and campaigns to prevent arson attacks or improve the detection of such attacks.
- Ensuring closer links between JAG partners and the Welsh Fire and Rescue Service Corporate Communications teams.
- Engaging with communities to raise awareness of the extent, risks and costs of arson.

### Measuring Improvement:

We will use indicators such as the following to measure progress:

- Public / community level awareness and understanding of the extent, risks and costs of deliberate fire setting to their community.
- Levels of engagement with and awareness and understanding amongst those who may be harder to reach with conventional information and education delivery methods, for example NEETS. (Not in Education, Employment or Training).
- Measuring the community perceptions and attitudes towards different types of deliberate fire setting experienced locally.
- Levels of consistency of messages, public information and campaigns being delivered across Wales.



**WALES ARSON  
REDUCTION STRATEGY**