

Report to	North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority
Date	19 January 2026
Lead Officer	Anthony Jones, Assistant Chief Fire Officer
Contact Officer	Mike Plant, Head of Planning, Performance and Transformation
Subject	Emergency Cover Review



PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1 To provide Members of the North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) with an update on the work of the Emergency Cover Review (ECR) working group set up in response to the recommendation from the 20 January 2025 meeting for officers to continue to devise and test alternative solutions with representative bodies, within the agreed budget, to address emergency cover in rural locations.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2 Since April 2025, the ECR group has been replaced with the "Collective Agreement Implementation Group" (CAIG) following the completion and sign-off of a collective agreement by the CFO and FBU, at regional and national levels.
- 3 The Collective Agreement pilot went fully live on 1 January 2026. The CAIG continues to exist and to consist of FBU officials and officers from the transformation team but has extended to include personnel from most functions to ensure that the pilot phase is fully supported.
- 4 The CAIG continues to work together to implement the agreement and monitor and review the pilot measures in place to improve the self-resilience within the current duty system across the eight Wholetime/Day Crewed stations allowing a more effective and efficient model of emergency cover across the whole of North Wales.
- 5 The CAIG is now in the monitor and review phase and is gathering data from both 1 September 2025 when daytime rural fire cover was introduced into Porthmadog and Dolgellau, and the 1 January 2026 when the pilot became fully functional. This data will be presented to the Authority in future meetings.

OBSERVATIONS FROM EXECUTIVE PANEL/AUDIT COMMITTEE

- 6 This report has not previously been presented to Executive Panel or Audit Committee.

RECOMMENDATION

- 7 It is recommended that Members:
- i) **Note that officers have continued to work with representative bodies in social partnership to develop a way forward with the ECR.**
 - ii) **Note that the collective agreement pilot signed off by the CFO and the Fire Brigades Union is now in full operation from 1st January 2026**
 - iii) **Note that the collective agreement is being continually monitored and reviewed, and further data will be presented on its performance.**

BACKGROUND

- 8 During the period of July to September 2023 the Authority consulted the public on three viable options for the future delivery on its emergency response to the communities of North Wales. A decision was taken by the Authority in December 2023 not to implement any of the proposals at that time but to continue to work on variations to the proposals. The proposals in the consultation do, however, remain live.
- 9 A Task and Finish Group comprising of 16 colleagues working at various levels, stations, and departments throughout North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (the Service), including representatives of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) met on 12 occasions between February and November 2024, during which time they discussed and researched several emergency response models.
- 10 Several options were scoped by the Task and Finish Group including models for rostering staff differently to release the posts required to base them in additional locations thus supporting the provision of a more efficient and effective emergency cover model. This included how the current rostering arrangements could be more self-resilient. The basis for the Collective Agreement is therefore not a new idea but one that has been revisited by the subgroup before proposals from the public consultation are reconsidered.

- 11 At its meeting on 28 April 2025, the Authority reaffirmed its commitment to providing a more effective and efficient emergency cover model across the whole of North Wales to address the risks identified during the emergency cover review that recognised the challenges of providing emergency cover in rural areas and how the use of resources needed to be adapted with no increase to the budget.

INFORMATION

- 12 The Collective Agreement has amended the start and finish times for all 24hr and Day-Crewed stations. This commenced on 1 September 2025, supported by agreed amendments to leave policies and procedures. The first full 12-month leave year pilot of an 08:00 start with a 10-hour day shift started on 1 January 2026 and will run for 24 months.
- 13 An internal memorandum was sent to all operational personnel in June 2025 detailing the changes to start and finish times in line with social partnership principles to allow personnel as much notice as possible to make any necessary arrangements. A central repository of information and guidance documents including frequently asked questions has been created by the CAIG on the Service Intranet, Hwb, for the benefit of all affected personnel.
- 14 The corporate planning and transformation teams are collating data as described above to present on the performance of the pilot at future Authority meetings. Early indications are that rural fire cover has improved since the partial launch of the pilot on 1 September 2025.
- 15 We have received a number of flexible working requests from individuals since the changes to the start times. These applications are being managed locally in an informal manner wherever possible.
- 16 Members will be pleased to note that risk critical work is already being undertaken by the crews in Porthmadog and Dolgellau, which has been promoted throughout the service by our corporate communications team. This work includes site specific risk information gathering at the Dwyrdd estuary high voltage cable project in Penrhyndeudraeth South Gwynedd, and targeted visits to higher risk individuals for safe and well checks in Dolgellau.

IMPLICATIONS

Well-being Objectives	The ECR outcomes must meet the Authority's obligations under the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015.
Budget	Any solution must be within the approved budget.
Legal	Na
Staffing	The Service has continued to work with staff and their representative bodies and will continue to do so. Regular updates are provided at the JCNC and via the Weekly Brief as well as via visits to stations by officers.
Equalities/Human Rights/ Welsh Language	The Service's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Officer engaged with EDI groups throughout the consultation. The ECR is within the Community Risk Management Implementation Plan (CRMIP) with feedback also gathered on this.
Risks	The ECR and the work of the resultant CAIG seeks to reduce the risks of not being able to respond to emergencies effectively and efficiently in the communities of North Wales.