



STRUCTURED DEBRIEF REPORT

Debrief commissioned by:	North Wales Resilience Forum
Event:	Llantysilio Wildfire
Date of Event:	19 th of July 2018 – 25 th September 2018
Date of Debrief:	14 th of November 2018
Debrief Location:	North Wales Police Headquarters, Colwyn Bay
Debrief Team:	Colm McNelis, North Wales Police , Aled Meredith, North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service
Debrief Participants:	1-David Shiel, Denbighshire County Council 2-Liz Grieve, Denbighshire County Council 3- Bethan Beech, Natural Resources Wales 4- Nick Thomas, Natural Resources Wales 5-Tony Jones, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service 6-Stuart Millington, North Wales Fire and Rescue Service 7-Julian Templeton, North Wales Councils Regional Emergency Planning Service 8-Tim Towers, Denbighshire County Council

	9 -Gwyn Rowlands, The Horseshoe Pass Graziers' Association (by Questionnaire)
	10 - Paul Joyce, North Wales Police (By Questionnaire)

Debrief Summary:

This debrief concerned the Llantysilio mountain fire that occurred near Llangollen, North Wales between 19th July and 25th September 2018.

All participants were given a number for ease of cross referencing comments

The report focuses on areas for improvement and perceptions of what went well; it concludes with a series of recommendations to assist agencies to improve the planning and management of similar future events. The report does not include or comment upon matters identified in other debriefs or post-incident reports.

ITEM	IDENTIFIED BY	REC. No.	Comments
AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT			
Mobilisation and Welfare			
A number of areas had been considered internally by including management of command logs and communication. Welfare facilities for staff became an issue when the Ponderosa Café was closed. Specialist skills such as off road drivers were deployed and demands on them were excessive at times. A review of the fleet and suitability of vehicles is to be undertaken.	6	1	These issues were highlighted in an internal and constructive debrief by NWFRS and will inform the response to future events of this nature. They are primarily single agency in nature but there was crossover in some aspects hence their being summarised here.
Command, Control and Communications			

There was no Tactical Coordination group called during this incident. This caused mixed communications and agencies had to keep calling for updates and clarification of situations as sometimes information was contradictory.	2,3,5,7,9,10	1, 6	This was the key issued identified by multiple participants but it was also acknowledged that the fire was thought to be under control in the early stages and it was not expected to last for the eventual 68 day period.
During the incident there was no multi-agency proactive media strategy put in place and this lead to mixed messages with the public. There were media releases but these tended to be reactive. It was agreed that in future it would be in the interests of all if there was one agreed message updated on an ongoing basis.	2,3,5,7,9,10	1	NWFRS did keep local residents informed and there was communications with Local Councillors but there was a lot of misinformation spread on social media that was ill informed and based on hearsay.
During the incident the access to land was not closed to the public. Decision on whether land can be closed to the public is down to the Fire Risk Index based on Met Office Data. On the 1.8.18 Index this was stating Index showing not dry enough to close access to land. The data and rules applicable did not support the experience of what was being experienced at scene.	3	5	NRW to discuss review of the Index with the other UK Agencies (Natural England and SNH) as well as Welsh Government.
It was identified during the incident that not all agencies reported to the NWFRS incident command unit to receive a safety briefing, or to inform when leaving the incident.	6, 3, 4	4	It was acknowledged that the Fire Service needed to know who was working on site and that they had been accounted for safely prior to departure. Gateway control and a tally system is important in the control of personnel.
As this incident lasted more than a few days, staff would change on a daily basis which meant relationships that were formed were lost and people waiting on an update were forgotten so lines of communication were hard at times.	6,1,3	1, 2	A TCG process may have assisted in continuity of information sharing.

It was identified that recovery discussions did not take place till towards the end of the incident. This could have been commenced during the response phase.	2	1	
It was identified that during the incident there was no clear message whether the smoke was a risk to the public.	2,3,4	1	NWFRS did undertake plume modelling in their Incident Control Vehicle and were directly engaged with persons who may have been affected. Consideration of engagement of Public Health Wales as a partner in the TCG process may have mitigated concerns in this area and assisted in the wider public and responder reassurance.
During the event there was a public funding page to provide food and water to the staff at the incident. This was done without any request from the Service or from our partners. Once this was identified, NWFRS informed the public to donate any money to the firefighters charity.	5,6	1	Unsolicited donations of food, drink and even a social media appeal for money presents a challenge to responders. Although well intentioned it is difficult to manage unsolicited activities.
Interoperability			

<p>The management of the land in the area is a challenge due to the number of land owners and the changes in demography of the farming community in the last 20 years. There are fewer graziers and although DCC and NRW have tried to encourage more active land management this has not proved entirely successful. There has been skills fade in some areas. The effect has been that a fire was more likely to have a greater impact than previously.</p> <p>Land ownership in the area of the fire is complicated and there were 3 or 4 parties involved including Llantysilio Estate. It was further complicated by the SSSI status of the area which is a European level instrument that influences and limits land management. (BB removed and limits)</p>	1,3,4,8	1	<p>It was identified that landowners and graziers should have been contacted at an earlier stage to be involved in the management of the incident.</p> <p>A more structured communication is needed for engagement with graziers. It was the view of most participants in the debrief that there is a risk in other areas of North Wales and elsewhere of more damaging wildfires for the reasons outlined.</p> <p>A meeting is planned for 4th December that may assist in building relationships in this regard.</p>
Resources			
<p>A lack of understanding of what resources and specialist knowledge each agency had which could have been used during the incident. For example firefighting equipment is held by NRW / DCC. DCC also pointed out that there is a very limited capacity within the Council to staff road closures in the Summer period compared to winter.</p>	1,5,8,9	1, 2	<p>A TCG would have supported discussion amongst partners to include equipment and resources.</p>

RECOGNISED GOOD PRACTICE	REC. No.
Collaboration of all agencies at the scene was successful. Three organisations worked together over a protracted period.	
Once in touch with incident commander and other staff, updates were usually comprehensive, helpful and assisted Local Authority response.	
Denbighshire County Councils welfare and humanitarian team responded quickly to mobilise a rest centre and have staff on standby if needed. A local care home was identified as a higher quality location to use.	
Regular JESIP meetings with key partners with agreed actions and a shared situational awareness was achieved at the operational level.	
Use of the NWP drone which was used to gather invaluable information and understanding of the incident scale and progress of operations.	
Provision of water supplies utilising water bowsers provided by water utilities as the result of the water company's automatic emergency cut off system operating was successful in providing sufficient water to the incident ground for the duration of the incident.	
Fire Crews worked tirelessly in very difficult terrain and conditions for a prolonged period of time. There was a substantial impact on NWFRS whose staff are a mixture of full time and retained. It was acknowledged that they had done their utmost to control and extinguish the fire in challenging and exhausting conditions.	
Good communication between NWFRS and DCC to open roads when possible to help with traffic management. NWP provided personnel to assist.	
The development of a regional wildfire plan for North Wales	6

No.	RECOMMENDATIONS	OWNER	COMMENTS
1	<p>Convening of a physical or virtual TCG to promote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Multi agency interoperability • Consistent, proactive and agreed messages to public • Daily updates from agencies • Consideration of recovery issues earlier in response phase • Better understanding of the technical and equipment resources for firefighting across different organisations. • Understanding the stresses and impacts on personnel in the primary (NWFRS) and supporting agencies. 	All	Any Agency can request a TCG.
2	A joint familiarisation session to share knowledge and experience of heathland and grassland fires. This will also gain awareness of available resources and equipment of agencies across North Wales.	DCC, NRW, NWFRS,	
3	More structured engagement with graziers and landowners would assist in encouraging active land management. Consider using the National Strategic Arson Reduction Board (SARB) as a method of achieving wider support and buy in for reduction of wildfire risk.	DCC, NRW, NWFRS, Conservation Land Managers, Farmers, Graziers.	
4	All agencies to review NWFRS gateway control procedures to ensure safety and for the incident command unit to be informed who is present at the scene.	All agencies	
5	NRW to review Fire Risk Index and assess the information being fed into it. Once the index has been reviewed to share with other agencies.	NRW	
6	Develop a regional wildfire plan for North Wales	NRW, NWFRS, LAs	
7	DCC and NRW to consider what further engagement is required to address concerns of Local Councillors and business interests that were affected during the response phase.	DCC, NRW	