



3rd December 2015

William Powell AC/AM
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 Mr Powell

Thank you for your email of 26 November 2015 to Chief Fire Officer Simon Smith regarding large animal rescue services. Mr Smith has asked me, as head of Operational Response, to respond on his behalf.

In 2014 North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority (FRA) undertook a budget-setting process that involved balancing possible efficiencies and savings against risks for the purpose of setting an affordable 2015-16 budget. As part of this budget setting process, a decision was taken to cease performing some non-statutory duties in order to maintain current Service provision allowing us to continue to deliver our statutory services to the same level.

Large animal rescue was one of these non-statutory duties. Decisions to withdraw a service are taken with great reluctance, but the FRA has a responsibility to its statutory duties over other non-statutory duties.

The concerns identified in the petition include:

- the suggestion that more animals would be put down due to NWFRS not responding to such calls - to date in this financial year, NWFRS has received 10 calls to incidents from individuals wanting assistance to rescue an animal, NWFRS is not aware of any animal being put down.
- People will try to be heroes – of the 10 calls received as described, one caller identified that a person was at risk – NWFRS responded with a fire engine and a water rescue crew – when they attended it was found that there was no person trapped or in danger.
- Who will help now? - our communication strategy around this decision identified that in the first instance a vet must be called to advise on the welfare of the animal. NWFRS also advised owners to contact the RSPCA.

- In almost all the cases when NWFRS has attended large animal rescues over the last few years the requirement has been for heavy lifting equipment. NWFRS had no heavy lifting equipment and therefore in the majority of cases assistance was sourced by the owner.

In response to the comments made by the RSPCA:

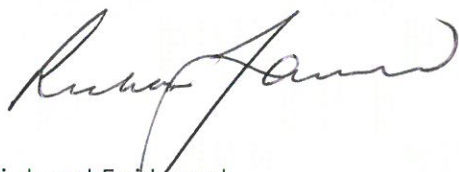
- Across the UK there are a variety of ways FRS's respond to large animal rescue. Some do not respond at all, some respond with no specialist equipment and some respond with specialist equipment. NWFRS not responding to large animal rescue is different from the two other FRS's in Wales although Mid and West Wales FRS does not respond with any specialist equipment.
- NWFRS has not routinely undertaken small animal rescues for approximately 10 years.
- As described previously, the majority of times owners of animals require the use of heavy lifting equipment to rescue their animals. This is no different from what has happened in the past and this assistance came from local landowners and farmers.

I can reassure you that our response to fires or road traffic incidents which involve large animals will continue, as will our response to events where persons are trapped or human lives are in danger.

As with all our activities, we believe that prevention is better than cure and have been working with our partners to enhance the prevention and safety messages around this issue. We have worked with the RSCPA, Countryside Council for Wales and local groups to improve our safety message and provide specialist guidance to owners of large animals.

The decision to withdraw large animal rescue response will be reviewed by the FRA at the end of the 2015/16 financial year.

Yours sincerely



Richard Fairhead
Assistant Chief Fire Officer

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