

Appendix D

Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme Update February 2018

To provide context to this update this should be read in conjunction with the recently issued ESMCP note to users and letter from Philip Rutnam to Meg Hillier, chair of PAC

On 21st February the Programme appeared at a recall hearing of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC). In the scheme of things this was a brief hearing where the Programme provided an update of the replanning exercise and questions around Airwave sustainability, extension and funding were posed. Clearly PAC would have liked to have received a more detailed set of dates, but these were not available as described below. It is clear that ESMCP is very much on the RADAR of PAC and Government and will be subject to further appearances into the future.

Following the appointment of Sir Philip Rutnam as Permanent Secretary to the Home Office last year he appointed an independent senior advisor, Simon Ricketts, to look into ESMCP. Simon who brings considerable knowledge and experience of leading complex Programmes recommended a Programme reset to identify a better way forward. This reset essentially consists of 3 main elements:-

- The production of a realistic integrated plan that combines the aspects of suppliers and Authority (Programme) led elements
- A revision to the full business case (FBC)
- A different way of doing business (the 'soft skills' part)

When first mooted it was hoped that a revised plan would be available for the end of 2017, however the reality is somewhat different and we have now revised expectations to Easter for the first version of this. Experience has shown that this may require some reworking and subsequent revision and a more credible version is now expected in the spring of 2018.

ESMCP is a complex Programme involving cutting edge technology, much of which is a world first. As identified in recent communications some of the technology for ESMCP has been developed and demonstrated, for example a successful demonstration of press to talk functionality (PTT) over a live public mobile network

<https://www.gov.uk/government/news/emergency-services-network-reaches-new-milestone> . Other elements are proving themselves much harder to deliver and as a result the Programme will not meet currently published milestones for the first transition off Airwave and onto the Emergency Services Network (ESN). With the current ESMCP FBC standing at around £5 billion over a 15 year lifespan the FBC revision will need to include all options going forward including:-

- Plan A the big bang approach of all items being delivered before any aspect of ESN can be used. This is the approach currently in the published Programme plan and FRS transition plans

- Plan B an incremental approach of using relevant aspects of ESN when they become available before transitioning off Airwave when all required ESN elements are delivered
- Contingencies

Incremental approach options and commercial aspects are being worked up by a dedicated Programme team at present under the banner of 'Project Pegasus' with NFCC having representation in the transition area of this. It is envisaged that the incremental approach will culminate in a small number of propositions for FRS's to consider. This will range from data or data and internet only through to whatever ESN voice capability may be deployed and available at a specific time pending full ESN maturity replicating all Airwave functionality. Although a full set of information is not currently available it is likely that the adoption of an incremental approach will entail considerable re-planning at local and regional level. Certainly accommodating a new set of dates will involve resource to revise existing plans and integrate with other programmes and works ongoing in FRS's.

The period during any replanning will also afford good opportunities to scope out and undertake further work to realise the business benefits of ESN. Whilst many Services are examining benefits of integrating some technologies there exists the potential for second order benefits through the development and use of applications using the secure and resilient mobile broadband data capability, some of which could be considered on a collaborative or even national basis.

The drivers that precipitated the current regional approach to transition have now been superseded and the NFCC ESMCP team supported by Programme colleagues will shortly be engaging with FRS's in a series of workshops looking to explore alternative models for transition. These workshops will incorporate the latest thinking on the incremental approach to provide as fuller picture as possible, but it is recognised that this will evolve and be refined during 2018.

In all of the above there will be an undisputed need to extend the Firelink / Airwave contracts and this is being considered by the Programme commercially. A Working group is forming to look into Firelink [Airwave] sustainability for the Fire and Rescue sector and will consider what may need to be replaced, upgraded or refreshed to continue to use Airwave, along with risk appetite and what we may wish to have in terms of a managed service post 2019 and financial aspects. This group will report into Fire Customer Group chaired by CFO Darryl Keen and will include representation from each region along with FRS's in the devolved administrations and Government Department. The Programme is working on the core / network aspects Airwave sustainability and commercial elements.

Ministers and the Programme have been unequivocal in the message that Airwave will remain in place until it is no longer required, and the programme is working with Motorola to ensure that the service continues to meet operational needs for this extended period of time. The financial and funding implications of any Airwave extension will need to be worked through with Government bodies once greater clarity is forthcoming.

In November 2017 Roy Wilsher wrote to Sir Philip Rutnam outlining the concerns of the FRS sector with regards to the progress of ESMCP, subsequent financial concerns and their

impacts upon individual Services and Authorities. In his response the Permanent Secretary offered a meeting to understand our concerns and start to work through them and this is scheduled for late May. NFCC will ensure appropriate representation and feedback as this progresses

Given the likely delay and uncertainty around Airwave the financial risk is seen as high and engagement is taking place with Finance Committee representatives to ensure that funding and financial aspects are captured in any future spending review submission. The NFCC team is working with Government department on many of the English funding aspects, however it is unlikely to have definitive answers before the FBC is signed off in the autumn. Colleagues from Wales and Scotland are similarly working with their respective Devolved Administrations.

A submission is currently working its way through the machinery of Government with the intention of providing any remaining funding required to enable the upgrading of Control Rooms to accept ESN. Subject to approval it is hoped that this will be paid into accounts by means of sec. 31 grant before the end of this financial year. Discussions are ongoing with Government Department to ascertain if any funding may be available prior to the FBC sign off.

On 22nd February it was announced that Gordon Shipley, the Programme Director for ESMCP, will shortly be moving on from the Programme following 5 years in post. A new Programme Director is in the process of being appointed by Government but details have yet to be confirmed. Gordon Shipley's departure will undoubtedly cause some turbulence, however with two other senior Civil Servants at director level working on the Programme and 5 full time Business Change Leads from the Emergency Services and Devolved Administrations working closely with the Programme and able to support the new incumbent the risks associated with a change of leader should be minimised.

Last, but by no means least, as it currently stands there are somewhere in the region of 350 people working on ESMCP in a variety of roles. Unfortunately very few have experience or knowledge of the emergency services or Fire and Rescue Service in particular. Clearly some insight of how we work, in particular in relation to operational communications, will be invaluable in delivering ESMCP. Therefore the NFCC team working on ESMCP will be organising further familiarisation visits to Services to help ESMCP staff plug this knowledge gap. The continued support and cooperation of Services in facilitating these would be greatly appreciated.