

# **Electronic Service Delivery Plan 2005-2010**

**Buckinghamshire and Milton Keynes  
Fire Authority**

**November 2005**

<b>Contents</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Executive summary .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Electronic services – our vision .....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Electronic services – our plans .....</b>	<b>7</b>
• <b>Telecommunications .....</b>	<b>7</b>
• <b>Information technology .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Delivering our plans .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	
• <b>Appendix A – ESD action plan</b>	

# **1 Executive summary**

## **1.1 Introduction**

ICT, or Information and Communications Technology, already plays a key role in helping the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) deliver efficient and effective services.

Over the next five years, this role looks set to increase, with ICT underpinning important areas of our work, like integrated risk management planning and performance management, as well as our response to legislation.

So it's crucial that we plan the development of electronic service delivery carefully, to make sure we, and our stakeholders, get the best out of the technology that's available. BFRS is also required by the government to show how it is supporting national work on ICT, specifically the e-Fire project.

This plan sets out what BFRS is doing and what we hope to do over the next five years. It's not set in stone, but will be reviewed annually, to take account of technological developments and shifting priorities within BFRS and beyond.

## **1.2 Electronic service delivery – our vision**

We want to use ICT to help us become a more modern and efficient organisation. That's the bottom line, but there are also some very specific goals we want to achieve on behalf of our different groups of stakeholders, like our residents, members, employees and partner organisations.

When it comes to residents and partners, we want them to be able to access the information or services they need, in the way that's easiest for them, from a location of their choice and at a time that suits them.

For members and employees, it's about giving them the information and skills they need to make decisions and do their jobs.

The plan sets out in detail our specific aims for each stakeholder group.

## **1.3 Electronic service delivery – our plans**

Our plans for electronic service delivery cover two main areas – information technology and communications. The plan explains the projects that are already underway, and those in the pipeline for wide area radio communications, incident ground communications, telephony, mobile telephony, Vodafone paging, data communications, hardware, software, information security, web-based services and training and resources.

Key projects already underway include preparing for the national Firelink and FiReControl initiatives. Looking ahead, BFRS is planning a range of other

pilots and research exercises, including for example work to assess how the organisation could use Voice Over Internet Protocols, testing a mobile data system and looking at the use of new Personal Data Assistants.

## **1.4 Delivering our plans**

When it comes to delivering the plan there are a number of factors to take into account. Over the next five years, national and local priorities will change, new legislation could be introduced, and new applications will certainly be launched. BFRS will need to be flexible when it comes to deciding how electronic service delivery should develop.

However, we have identified some guiding principles for our ICT work, as well as the action we'll need to take to make our vision a reality. This includes putting the right infrastructure and resources in place to support new ICT systems, introducing robust policies on information security and e-mail and web usage, and improving our employees' ICT knowledge and skills.

We've also identified five critical success factors – elements that will need to be in place if we are to put the plan into practice.

An action plan, attached as Appendix C sets out in more detail how we will achieve our vision, and the impact this work will have on other key corporate projects.

Authority Medium Term Financial Planning has been factored to include the outcomes and will be reviewed on an annual basis to reflect this.

## 2 Introduction

Whether we love it or loathe it, none of us can escape the impact of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) – at work or at home.

Across the Buckinghamshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS), ICT, in the shape of computers, personal organisers and mobile phones to name just three examples, is already helping deliver a range of initiatives and programmes aimed at making us more modern and efficient.

This is only set to continue. ICT touches every area of our work, from integrated risk management planning, consultation and human resources to procurement, performance management and governance. It's at the heart of our plans for responding to legislation like the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000). And the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) says ICT has a key role to play in achieving efficiency savings.

Although BFRS has not always invested heavily in new technology, this has changed in recent years, with developments like the Wide Area Network (WAN), remote access solutions, including Firepass and Blackberry, and an upgrade of telecommunications systems and equipment.

Looking ahead we're taking part in initiatives such as Firelink<sup>1</sup>, the national radio replacement project, and the development of the FiReControl regional control centre. Our own ICT projects currently include piloting an in-cab PC system for appliances (MODAS), as well as introducing new document library (Trove), financial (SAP), and human resources (Snowdrop) systems.

The government's Implementing Electronic Government (IEG) process initially required fire and rescue services to report annually on their progress towards Best Value Performance Indicator 157 – 100 per cent electronic service delivery by December 2005 (see BMKFA IEG 3 statement).

However, since the process was amended in 2004/05, fire and rescue services are no longer subject to the IEG regime, but must instead show our progress towards supporting the national e-Fire<sup>2</sup> project (see FRS circular 26-2005).

This plan sets out that progress and our plans for the future. But while our vision is clear, the pace of change is rapid. So this plan is a living document, which we'll review every year, updating it in consultation with key stakeholders inside and outside BFRS to reflect new initiatives or changing priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.firelink.org.uk](http://www.firelink.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> [www.e-fire.gov.uk](http://www.e-fire.gov.uk)

### **3 Electronic services – our vision**

BFRS aims to use ICT to become more modern and efficient, bringing widespread and significant benefits for local people as well as other key stakeholders like elected members, employees and partners.

Our vision is that local people will:

- Have easy access to the information they need about our services, and know how to request or book those services.
- Have easy access to any information we may hold about them, and be confident this will not be mislaid or abused.
- Have a safer environment to live and work in.
- Feel their council tax is being spent wisely.

Elected members will:

- Be able to access the information they need to make key decisions, identifying, understanding and responding to the needs of residents.
- Have access to the information they need to monitor BFRS services.

Employees will:

- Have the information they need to resolve all enquiries.
- Rely less on paper and be more skilled at using electronic systems.
- Communicate with stakeholders more effectively.
- Control budgets efficiently, linking activity and financial data.
- Where necessary, have access to relevant, accurate and up to date information on members of staff.
- Be able to access BFRS systems from any location.
- Use efficient and modern telecommunications systems and equipment.
- Be confident that systems and information are secure.

Our partners will:

- Be able to exchange information with BFRS securely, and have access to the information they need, when they need it.

- Be able to work more effectively with BFRS on joint projects.

## **4 Electronic services – our plans**

### **4.1 Telecommunications**

#### **4.1.1 Wide area radio communications**

BFRS is part of the Firelink project to procure, deliver and install a national radio system. The aim of the project is to meet the needs of fire and rescue services in England, Scotland and Wales, and to fulfil an agreement between the professional associations of the primary emergency services to work more closely together.

The Firelink contract is due to be awarded in the autumn of 2005. Following this, BFRS will set up a dedicated team to manage the rollout of the project, including installing new equipment into appliances and the control room. The team will also help train BFRS employees in the use of the new system, working with the central training department.

As well as digital radio equipment, Firelink will also provide equipment to allow employees to access data on the move, either in appliances or cars. Any software will be provided as part of the parallel FiReControl project.

While core elements of the Firelink project, including infrastructure and training, will be funded centrally, BFRS will need to fund any extras. However these costs are expected to be low, around £5,000. Revenue costs are still uncertain but we hope to get a clearer picture of the financial impact of the project once the contract has been awarded.

#### **4.1.2 Incident ground communications**

In 2003, BFRS carried out a comprehensive review of its incident ground radio communications, standardising equipment and frequencies.

The future of incident ground communications is now bound up in the Firelink project, and a Chief Fire Officers' Association review team set up to look at this area is on hold pending the outcome.

#### **4.1.3 Telephony**

Over the past few years, all our telephone systems have been upgraded and improved, particularly those at day-crewed and whole time stations.

However, we believe we can make further efficiency savings – around £10,000 per year, according to a review of telephone circuits carried out at the

beginning of 2005. And we're saving even more by consolidating our invoicing for all BT circuits and circuit management.

One new area of technology that has attracted our attention is the so-called Voice Over Internet Protocol (VOIP). VOIP is a way of converting voice telephone calls into data and sending this across data networks, including via the Internet. In 2006, BFRS will carry out further research into VOIP, with a view to running trials and implementing it across the organisation in 2007.

#### **4.1.4 Mobile telephony**

Mobile telephones have proved their value to BFRS at both operational and managerial level. They're also a valuable tool in helping us to support lone workers. While we can't now see any reason to change the way we use mobile telephones, BFRS will assess new developments in the technology as they occur, and adopt them where they look likely to bring benefits.

#### **4.1.5 Vodafone paging**

BFRS is the only fire and rescue service in the UK currently using a public wide area paging network (Vodapage) to mobilise retained fire fighters.

Whether or not the FiReControl project requires us to switch to another system, we will continue to use Vodapage to pass routine operational messages to on-duty officers. However, given the amount of communications equipment an officer already carries, we'll assess the practicality of using a combined device.

### **4.2 Information technology**

#### **4.2.1 Data communications**

BFRS has a WAN linking all sites and stations, enabling employees to access centrally held data, the Internet, and e-mail. The network uses ADSL or broadband technology, to securely link all our sites. Current data speeds range from 512kb/s at retained stations to 2mb/s elsewhere. As our use of the WAN increases, we will need to increase these speeds (or bandwidth) to make sure data can still be transferred quickly and smoothly.

Once it's up and running, FiReControl will give our employees full access both to BFRS data and information held at regional level. This will be key to the future development of the service, so we need to make sure we have the right data links and systems in place to get the best out of the new system

At the moment, there are many different ways of sending and receiving data on the move – from a mobile telephone with Internet access to computers in vehicles. The new Firelink and FiReControl projects will introduce a standard mobile data system for all fire and rescue services, including hardware and software.

To prepare for this, BFRS plans to pilot a mobile data system, to familiarise employees with how they work and what they can do, and develop the right back office systems and interfaces.

In recent years BFRS has also begun using the handheld Blackberry device, giving employees remote access to e-mail and a calendar. While this has worked well, especially for managers working away from headquarters, technology has moved on. We will run a series of pilot projects to test out what benefits new, more user-friendly, systems might bring.

We also plan to enhance our remote access system Firepass. Over the last twelve months Firepass has worked well, giving employees not just access to e-mail and calendar functions, but also allowing them to share centrally held files and directories. In fact with Internet access, BFRS staff can use Firepass anywhere in the world. As we develop our other ICT systems, including document libraries (Trove), we'll update Firepass, so it can access these too.

Although video conferencing has long been heralded as a more efficient alternative to face-to-face meetings, in practice, video conferencing technology has been limited and often unreliable. That's changing, with better picture quality and shorter time lags, and BFRS believes it is now worth investing in video conferencing facilities – including possibly links between key stations and headquarters.

#### **4.2.2 Hardware**

BFRS currently replaces desktop PCs and workstations every five years and plans to stick to this cycle. We don't tie ourselves to one hardware manufacturer, giving us greater flexibility when it comes to achieving value for money. The next cycle of PC replacement is due in the next two years and BFRS will implement a full procurement process.

We have recently updated our back office servers, which play a crucial role in ensuring the smooth running of our service. Because of this, BFRS has chosen the Hewlett Packard range, known for its reliability, ease of set up and smooth integration with other systems on the WAN.

As flexible working becomes more common across the organisation, it's important we provide employees with the right tools to do their jobs. For ease of maintenance, reliability and robustness, BFRS plans to standardise its laptops and notebook computers, using the COMPAQ range.

BFRS is investigating the use of PDAs, or Personal Digital Assistants and similar devices. As mobile e-mail technology develops, there's no need for a bespoke system, like the Blackberry for example. Instead, PDAs can be used not just to access e-mail but other functions too, like satellite navigation and chemical risk software. What's more, a PDA is significantly cheaper than a full laptop, making it a more economical choice for some members of staff. BFRS will carry out research into the possible use of PDAs, as part of its work to look at new e-mail and calendar software.

As for other hardware, like printers, we'll continue to procure this according to best value principles, while at the same time taking advantage of any new technology that we believe can improve our service.

### **4.2.3 Software**

BFRS has been and will remain a Microsoft-based organisation. As the most commonly available and widely used software around, our employees are generally familiar with Microsoft products, and proficient in their use. While open source software is becoming more popular across the public sector as a whole, BFRS believes the retraining and ongoing development costs associated with making a switch currently outweigh any potential benefits.

What's more, the national e-Fire project is Microsoft based. Since integration with e-Fire is compulsory, we believe sticking with Microsoft will help simplify this process, thanks to common systems and services.

BFRS will need to upgrade some of its back office systems and servers, however, as part of the e-Fire integration. In preparation, the organisation has signed up to the latest Microsoft Master Enterprise Agreement negotiated by the Home Office on behalf of the public sector. This will give us access to the latest Microsoft software, technical support and discounts, and make sure we are complying with licensing requirements.

With effective new applications coming to the market so frequently, predicting what software we will need in the future, and at the same time making efficiency savings, is a complicated business. There's a high risk of getting it wrong – for example getting tied up in complex or costly technical projects or purchasing equipment that won't actually improve our service.

However, BFRS has identified some specific areas where growth will bring clear benefits. They are: Trove, the document library system; safety software; the Intranet; performance management applications; and Snowdrop, the human resources system. BFRS has already started work on some of these, while others it has identified as potential areas for investment.

### **4.2.4 Information security**

Legislation like the Data Protection Act (1998) and the Freedom of Information Act (2000) have placed extra responsibilities on BFRS in terms of both keeping information secure and making it more easily accessible. In 2005, we carried out a risk assessment of information security, with a view to achieving the ISO17799 standard.

As well as improving the way we manage information, we need to store and archive it more effectively too. In 2006, BFRS will review the way it stores and archives data, with a view to putting improvements in place in 2007.

#### **4.2.5 Web-based services**

Web- or browser-based applications are often a great alternative to installing software on individual PCs, workstations or laptops, as has been demonstrated with the Trove and Snowdrop systems. Wherever possible, BFRS will look for ways to give employees web- or browser-based access.

#### **4.2.6 Training and support**

As technology moves on, it's vital that our employees have the skills they need to get the best out of BFRS systems, and our training department is currently developing an IT training and awareness strategy. Technical staff also needs to be kept up to date with the latest developments – a programme of technical training is ongoing, giving these employees the right knowledge and qualifications to provide the services BFRS needs, and develop their careers.

The Society for Information Technology Managers (SOCITM) estimates that the ideal ratio between the number of devices supported and the number of support staff is 100:1. At BFRS it is currently over 180:1. To monitor and improve the performance of the IT Services department, the organisation is gradually implementing a help desk approach.

As the Firelink and FiReControl projects and others move forward, the IT Services team will have additional responsibilities. It is likely that additional resources will be required to support its role in 2006 and beyond.

## 5 Delivering our plans

Electronic service delivery cannot be developed in isolation and this plan has been influenced by many factors. It must be flexible enough to respond to changing government demands, as well as shifting priorities within BFRS. It must fit in with other corporate and national initiatives, like best value or integrated risk management planning. And it must allow BFRS to take account of new technologies and applications that could help it deliver a better service.

We will review the plan annually, producing a detailed report on the activities scheduled for the coming year and the direction of ICT development.

Two general principles will underpin the way we deliver our plans for electronic service delivery. First, wherever practical, we will buy 'off the shelf' packages rather than commissioning bespoke systems, to get maximum value for money. However, we will consider tailoring packages to suit the needs of the organisation, providing this can be done efficiently. Second, new services or functions will, as far as possible, use existing ICT systems, rather than buying or developing new ones.

To deliver our vision over the next five years, BFRS will:

- Make sure the organisation has the business systems it needs to deliver services.
- Develop the website and telephone system to improve access to services.
- Use the website to provide information on how we work and make decisions, and to consult with key stakeholders.
- Look at ways to use technology to 'join up' information across departments and our external partners.
- Look at ways to use technology to improve the way we report on progress, so residents, elected members and employees can check how we are doing.
- Put the right infrastructure and resources in place to support effective ICT systems.
- Develop robust policies on information security, e-mail, web and computer usage, telecommunications, and our response to the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts – to make sure we comply with legislation, manage our information securely and effectively, and that the public can access it where appropriate.
- Make sure any technical systems introduced as part of key projects, including integrated risk management planning, are fit for purpose.

- Facilitate a smooth transition to the new Firelink and FiReControl systems.
- Put in place technical systems to support structured filing systems, so information is rationalised and classified.
- Improve back office systems to make sure they are fully integrated with the FireBuy and e-Fire projects.
- Improve employees' awareness of and familiarity with technology.
- Identify technical systems to enable BFRS to support the ODPM's efficiency review.
- Make sure it has access to the technical advice and services it needs when expanding into new premises.

Finally, we have identified five key factors that will be crucial to our success in implementing this plan. To deliver our vision for electronic service delivery between now and 2010 we will need:

- To have clearly demonstrated a business case and the costs involved.
- The active involvement and commitment of our employees and members.
- Collaborative working, both within BFRS and with partners.
- Sufficient resources, now and for the long-term.
- A responsive, efficient and transparent process for introducing new ICT systems.

Appendix A is an action plan giving more detail on how we will deliver our vision. As well as identifying indicative costs, it also sets out how our plans for ICT impact on other key BFRS plans and areas of work.

### Appendix A – Action Plan

ESD Plan Reference No.	Project, Task or Action	BFRS Governance Reference (KTA, CPA)	Description	Expected Start Date	Expected Completion Date	Status
ESD 001	IS Department capacity improvement	KTA 16/05	Recruit additional staff; 1 x IT technician, 1 x support technician, implement software enabling improved support and maintenance solutions, programme of continual development for existing staff	April 2006	April 2007	Partially completed. 1 x IT Technician recruited May 2006. Support Technician commences April 2007. Job description review exercise to be complete by December 2006.
ESD 002	Flexible and mobile working	KTA 16/05	Replacement of Blackberry solution for officers and key staff, improvement and wider distribution of remote access solution	April 2006	June 2007	Complete. Further enhancements such as SatNav and use as voice communications to be part of ongoing improvements.
ESD 003	Back office productivity improvement	KTA 16/05	Upgrade of server hardware and software, increase data storage capacity, backup and recovery	October 2005	Ongoing	Continuous cycle of improvements in progress
ESD 004	Brigade Intranet	CPA Para 38, KTA 16/05	Improve and enhance information and system access through a fully developed Brigade Intranet	April 2006	Ongoing	To be reviewed as part of Budget planning process for 2007-08
ESD 004	e-Fire		Procurement of software to support Prevention and Protection activities and manage workloads, providing integration to Silver level with e-Fire project	April 2006	Ongoing	Upgrade of existing software project commences Sept 2006. e-Fire in testing phase until December 2006.
ESD 006	Information Security	KTA 16/05	IS Department to achieve ISO17799 accreditation	December 2005	Ongoing	ISO17799 Standard has been amended and a further risk assessment to be carried out prior to Apr 2007.

ESD 007	Web based services		Develop of current and future applications to be browser based for users. Trove, Snowdrop and PB Views	Started	Ongoing	Partially complete. Trove and PB Views in testing and rollout phase to be completed Dec 2006. Snowdrop upgrade project initiated August 2006.
ESD 009	Brigade website	KTA 16/05	Continual development of Brigade website to improve interaction capability, provision of greater information and act as access portal for external users (members and partners) into Brigade systems and information	Started	Ongoing	Completed. Continuous cycle of improvements and enhancements ongoing.
ESD 010	Firelink		Upgrade of Brigade wide area radio communications network to national radio scheme, installation of equipment into appliances, training of users, 1 <sup>st</sup> line management and maintenance	Started	Not yet known (expected Dec 2007)	Project now in build phase, installations into Brigade vehicles commences August 2007.
ESD 011	FireControl		Replacement of existing Brigade control function with regional control centre, development of Brigade integration for access to and delivery of operational and support information	Stared	Not yet known (expected Dec 2009)	Preparation for transition to commence Sept 2006.
ESD 012	Rappel	Efficiency strategy	Retained availability reporting system, integration with control systems, improved management of retained availability and appliances	August 2005	April 2006	Testing and acceptance complete. Rollout on hold pending software version release from Fortek. Expected Sept 2006.
ESD 013	IT Hardware		Continual refresh of workstations and laptop computers according to a determined life cycle (4 year cycle)	Started	Ongoing	Complete. Continuous cycle of refresh in progress

ESD 014	IT Software		Adoption of MS Enterprise Licensing Agreement under Home Office terms in order to maintain compliance and improved support, future proofing, availability of software and integration with other applications	October 2005	October 2008 (potential to extend for further 3 years)	Complete, agreement signed and software now procured through agreement. Review to take place Feb 2009 with view to resign contract.
ESD 015	Operational Mobile Data	Firelink, FireControl, Operational Assurance	Pilot of mobile data units in operational vehicles in order to develop Brigade back office systems and processes in preparation for mobile data provided centrally from ODPM for Firelink and FireControl projects	September 2005	Ongoing	Ongoing, back office database in development by CIU. Front end software and hardware reliant on FiReControl and Firelink project deliverables.
ESD 016	Voice Over IP (VOIP)	Efficiency strategy	An assessment and review of VOIP and its potential suitability as an application for the Brigade, with a view to implement during 2007/08	April 2006	April 2008	On target for review report to be published Apr 2007.
ESD 018	e-Procurement	Firebuy, Efficiency Strategy	Firebuy will require Brigades to implement systems for e-Procurement processes from tendering through to purchase and supply	Not yet known	Not yet known	Implications for ICT procurement still unknown.
ESD 019	Asset management	Efficiency strategy, Firebuy KTA?	Implementation of a Brigade wide asset management system to manage the full life cycle of assets including replacement cycles, maintenance and testing routine and compliance with legislation	September 2006	December 2007	Project Phase 1 complete, phase 2 to be completed by October 2006.
ESD 020	Information management	Information strategy, Improvement plan	Development of CIU requires enhanced information and knowledge management tools with improved facilities for GIS systems and adoption of FSEC tools			Software tools deployed to assist CIU (PB Views, FRS etc) Further improvements and upgrades to toolsets to be determined by CIU requirements.
ESD 021	Electronic forms and workflow	Efficiency strategy	Implementation of online and electronic forms solution coupled with workflow processes. Supports Trove document library system	April 2005	Ongoing	No progress outside of existing projects. Project lead to be determined as part of 2007-08 Budget cycle.

ESD 022	Electronic document library	Efficiency strategy, FOIA	Upgrade of Trove to a Brigade wide browser based system supporting document version control and access to information	September 2005	September 2006	On target for completion and rollout during Sept 2006.
ESD 023	Video conferencing	Efficiency strategy	Procurement and implementation of a video conferencing solution, initially to support regional and national meetings and conferences, potential to establish internal video conferencing solution	April 2007	April 2008	To be commenced
ESD 024	IS Department Helpdesk	Efficiency strategy, KTA 16/05	Procurement and implementation of a software based helpdesk solution and process	April 2006	April 2007	Review of software packages complete and in-house system now in development, to be complete Oct 2006.
ESD 025	ITIL Implementation		ITIL is the government recognised framework for best practice in managing ICT Services. Processes implementation as best fit for the brigade	August 2006	March 2008	ICT Staff undergoing training and qualifications prior to process implementation.
ESD 026	ITIL Based Policies		Review and re-draft all ICT policies to match ITIL Best Practice Framework	July 2006	December 2006	Ongoing