

Wyre Forest Emergency Services Hub Station

Consultation on the choice of location

4 July to 9 September 2016



Hereford & Worcester
Fire Authority

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INTRODUCTION

Having approved in principle the proposal to use government funding to create a brand new 'Emergency Services Hub Station' in the Wyre Forest, Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority is now consulting about the best location for the station. The site must be an effective base for our emergency response services while housing important fire, police and other voluntary emergency support services under one roof.

The Fire Authority undertook extensive consultation with the residents, stakeholders and staff about the principle of a hub station and this consultation, about the choice of site, is just as important – so we welcome your participation once more.

No final decisions have been taken yet and the Fire Authority will consider carefully the outcomes of the consultation alongside all the other evidence before making up its mind.

This document explains the issues and the two main site options – so we urge you to read it before completing the questionnaire to let us know your views.



Derek W Prodger MBE
Chairman of the Authority



Nathan Travis
Chief Fire Officer/
Chief Executive



Hereford & Worcester
Fire Authority



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FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

SUMMARY

Through a one-off award of £2.38 million funding from the government, Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority has the opportunity to create an Emergency Services Hub Station for the Wyre Forest to include the fire and rescue service, the police and other voluntary emergency services. The Fire Authority has already agreed in principle that:

- An Emergency Services Hub Station would have important advantages in terms of bringing the resources of each service together on one site, while helping to share costs, local intelligence and training facilities;
- The resources of Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport fire stations could be combined into a new hub station providing a suitable location can be found.

After considering nine possible sites, the Fire Authority has identified only two sites as suitable – namely, Silverwoods Park and Stourpoint 5 (both on Stourport Road). While both sites have many advantages, it is likely that combining the three current fire stations at either site would increase fire engine response times in some parts of the Wyre Forest (based on current average response times), though it would also improve response times in other areas. Of the two sites, Silverwoods Park gave a better overall performance against a number of performance measures than Stourpoint 5.

Therefore, Silverwoods Park is the Fire Authority's preferred site, though Stourpoint 5 would also be satisfactory – but the Authority is consulting the public, partner organisations and its staff about both options before taking a final decision.



THE BACKGROUND

What is a hub station?

The proposed hub station would be a central base for the fire, police and some voluntary emergency services. Instead of being in different locations across the Wyre Forest area, parts of each service would come together on a single site – not to merge their organisations, but to co-operate more closely and effectively. This would not only generate economies of scale for each service but also other benefits as well. The following organisations would be involved:



- **Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service** – for the Wyre Forest whole time and on-call fire engines, crew training and community safety
- **West Mercia Police** – for the Wyre Forest Safer Neighbourhood Policing Teams; but at this time Kidderminster Police Station would remain to accommodate other Wyre Forest policing functions
- **Severn Area Rescue Association** – for specialist water rescue equipment and training for volunteers and community
- **British Red Cross** – for its vehicles, training, victim support and community engagement
- **Other organisations** – there would also be opportunities for other voluntary and community organisations to use the hub station for meetings and training, and to enhance their links with the emergency services

The hub station base would also be suitable for West Midlands Ambulance Service, to support its work in the north of Worcestershire, should the Ambulance Trust wish to take up that option in future.

With the £2.38 million funding from government, the hub station would be designed and built by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service in consultation with the other partners. The funding is tied for the development of a hub station and cannot be used for any other purpose.

THE BACKGROUND

How would the existing fire stations be affected?

Currently, Kidderminster Fire Station has one wholetime (immediate response) and one on-call fire engine while Bewdley and Stourport each have one on-call fire engine. Kidderminster also has specialist equipment and training for flood evacuation and river rescues; Stourport has an environment protection vehicle; and Bewdley has an off-road vehicle.

The Fire Authority has agreed in principle that the creation of the hub station would involve vacating the three current fire stations and relocating their vehicles and crews to a new, purpose-built hub station at a single site. There is no intention to reduce any on-call firefighting crewing levels as a result of the moves.



What are the advantages of a hub station?

In approving a hub station in principle, the Fire Authority recognised that the relocation of the Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport fire stations is a sensitive matter, as people are familiar with their local fire stations and often assume they will always be there. However, the Authority has concluded that a hub station would continue to provide effective fire cover for the Wyre Forest area in a more sustainable and cost-effective way than at present.

Working together

Bringing the 'blue light' emergency services together in a hub station would not only reduce their running costs, but would bring other benefits to the Wyre Forest – for example it would improve:

- Day-to-day communications and joint working at emergency incidents
- Joint emergency services training for serious incidents
- The exchange of local intelligence about vulnerable people and risks to the community
- Co-operation in tackling anti-social behaviour and other problems
- Facilities and space for specialised and joint training programmes
- Coordination with voluntary sector partners
- Community facilities (meeting rooms and demonstration units) for crime and fire prevention campaigns
- Facilities and space for voluntary sector partners to use.

On-call (retained) firefighter availability

The hub station would be able to provide more sustainable on-call (retained) emergency cover than at present. Each fire station maintains a pool of dedicated and valued on-call firefighters, but it can be difficult for them to be available on weekdays when they are working in their primary employment. Because fire engines cannot be deployed with fewer than four

crew members, if only two or three on-call firefighters are available at a station, then their fire engine cannot be deployed.

Across the Service as a whole in 2014-15, on-call fire engines were unavailable (or 'off the run') for 13% of the time during the day (from 8:00 am to 6:00 pm). The corresponding figures for the three fire stations in Wyre Forest in 2014-15 were:

- **Bewdley** on-call fire engine was unavailable for 33% of the time during the day
- **Kidderminster** on-call fire engine was unavailable for 6% of the time during the day
- **Stourport** on-call fire engine was unavailable for 7% of the time during the day.

Combining Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport fire stations into a central hub station would provide a large 'pool' of on-call firefighters from a bigger catchment area – thus improving their availability and the resilience of emergency cover in the Wyre Forest.

Reductions in risks

In the context of large falls in the number of incidents and risk over the years, it is difficult to justify keeping three separate fire stations, which are less than four miles apart (particularly compared with the distribution of resources across the whole of Herefordshire and Worcestershire).

Over the last ten years (2005-15), across the two counties, there has been a 31% reduction in all incidents, including a 45% reduction in fires. In the Wyre Forest area,



THE BACKGROUND

over just five years, there has been a 30% drop in all incidents (from 1,278 attended in 2010-11 to 899 during 2014-15), with a 42% reduction in the number of fires attended. Consequently, each of the Wyre Forest fire stations has seen a big reduction in the number of incidents it attends over the same five year period:

Bewdley – from 146 to 91 incidents per year (38% reduction) with a 47% reduction in fires

Kidderminster – from 861 to 597 incidents per year (31% reduction) with a 44% reduction in fires

Stourport – from 271 to 211 incidents per year (22% reduction) with a 34% reduction in fires.

The three stations together attend fewer incidents each year than does the single fire station at Worcester, and only slightly more than the single fire station in Redditch (both broadly comparable areas). Between 2010-11 and 2014-15, the three Wyre Forest stations attended an average total of 1,088 incidents per year, while Worcester fire crews attended an average total of 1,246 incidents, and Redditch Fire Station attended an average of 992 incidents.

Having reviewed the incident data and other factors, the Fire Authority concluded in principle that a hub station would be safe and effective in providing the Wyre Forest with effective emergency cover, while also strengthening the on-call service.

Financial advantages

A brand new hub station would avoid necessary and expensive refurbishment costs for Bewdley and Stourport, and replacement costs for Kidderminster, in the post-2020 period. While the Fire Authority would receive no special assistance towards those costs, £2.38 million of the cost of the hub station would come from the available government grant (which cannot be used for any other purpose).

Since 2010, there have been substantial reductions in central government funding for fire and rescue services (as well as most other public services), and council tax levels have been curtailed. Indeed, over the last five years central government funding to Hereford & Worcester Fire Authority has reduced by nearly a quarter, and the financial pressures are not over. Current projections (based on likely further reductions in central government funding, limited increases in council tax income and inflation) are that we shall have a budget deficit of £1.6 million by 2018-19, increasing to £2.4 million by 2019-20. We are legally required to achieve a balanced budget each year – so savings must be made while keeping our communities safe.

Across the country fire and rescue services need to transform how they deliver services in the light of reducing risks and shrinking budgets. In this context, the available government grant of £2.38 million is an important opportunity to improve emergency services collaboration and the facilities and working conditions for our firefighters in the Wyre Forest.

SITE OPTIONS FOR THE HUB STATION

Options considered

In the context of the Fire Authority's decision in principle to approve the hub station subject to finding a satisfactory location, nine possible Wyre Forest sites were initially identified and assessed in relation to: land availability and costs, size, planning requirements and restrictions, and impact on neighbouring residential or business areas. On this basis, three sites were selected as possibilities, but one had to be eliminated on the grounds that it contained a Grade 2 listed building. The remaining satisfactory and available sites were also evaluated in relation to:

- The likely attendance times from the new site compared to current performance.
- Their potential for the recruitment of on-call firefighter living within five minutes of the new site.
- The likelihood of simultaneous incidents (including fires in buildings and road traffic collisions (RTCs)) occurring, and the capacity of the hub to respond satisfactorily.
- The proximity of risk sites, like heritage buildings, industrial sites and environmentally sensitive areas.

The two sites that came through the rigorous evaluation, and are considered by the Fire Authority to be suitable locations for the hub station, are at:

- **Stourpoint 5** – on Stourport Road, Kidderminster (former site of Romwire)
- **Silverwoods Park** – on Stourport Road, Kidderminster (former site of British Sugar).

Of these two options, Silverwoods Park is the Fire Authority's preferred site, partly because it would result in less change to the current response times, but Stourpoint 5 is also considered to be satisfactory and feasible.



CHANGES ARISING FROM A HUB STATION

Response times

Independent data analysis specialists have looked at the potential changes that could arise from replacing the three current fires stations with a single hub station. Using the latest available data, they used computer simulation software to model the potential changes to response times in each of the three towns. The data used covered the period 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2015, and this was presented as a two-year average in the latest Fire Authority report on 16 June 2016, which can be found via the consultation page on our website: www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/consultation

Using the modelled data, the two new sites would lengthen the current average response time of the first fire engine to attend incidents. The current average first fire engine response time across all Wyre Forest incidents is 10 minutes and 33 seconds, which would increase by 1 minute and 37 seconds from Silverwoods Park and by 2 minutes and 30 seconds from Stourpoint 5.

The model also showed there would be reductions in the numbers of building fires and road traffic collisions reached within 10 minutes, based on where incidents have occurred in the past. In terms of fires in buildings across the Wyre Forest area, the model shows that the current stations

reached 51 out of 89 fires in buildings within 10 minutes in an average year, and a back-up second fire engine arrived within five minutes of the first at 41.5 out of 57.5 incidents attended. From Silverwoods Park, the corresponding numbers would fall to 38.1 for the first fire engine and 16.8 for the second. At Stourpoint 5, the corresponding numbers would fall to 29.7 and 18.7.

For road traffic collisions across the Wyre Forest area, the model shows that the current stations reached 35 out of 82.5 RTCs within 10 minutes in an average year, and a back-up second fire engine arrived within five minutes of the first at 30 out of 37.5 incidents attended. From Silverwoods Park, the corresponding numbers would fall to 28.7 for the first fire engine and 25.6 for the second. At Stourpoint 5, the corresponding numbers would fall to 23.6 and 21.9.

The potential changes in each of the three towns were also modelled. The figures are set out in the following tables, which uses the locations of previous incidents to help predict how fires in buildings and road traffic collisions would be attended from the two possible locations. The tables also show that the numbers involved are relatively small in Bewdley and Stourport relative to Kidderminster.

Table 1: Bewdley – Modelled average attendance at fires in buildings and road traffic collisions 2013-15

Station location	Fires in buildings 2013-15	Times the first fire engine arrived/would have arrived within 10 minutes	Road traffic collisions 2013-15	Times the first fire engine arrived/would have arrived within 10 minutes
Bewdley Fire Station	13.5	7.0	15.0	5.0
Silverwoods Park		3.8		3.7
Stourpoint 5		3.4		4.0

Table 2: Kidderminster - Modelled average attendance at fires in buildings and road traffic collisions 2013-15

Station location	Fires in buildings 2013-15	Times the first fire engine arrived/would have arrived within 10 minutes	Road traffic collisions 2013-15	Times the first fire engine arrived/would have arrived within 10 minutes
Kidderminster Fire Station	54.0	34.0	48.0	25.0
Silverwoods Park		28.9		20.2
Stourpoint 5		20.7		15.7

Table 3: Stourport - Modelled average attendance at fires in buildings and road traffic collisions 2013-15

Station location	Fires in buildings 2013-15	Times the first fire engine arrived/would have arrived within 10 minutes	Road traffic collisions 2013-15	Times the first fire engine arrived/would have arrived within 10 minutes
Stourport Fire Station	21.5	10.0	19.5	5.0
Silverwoods Park		5.4		5.0
Stourpoint 5		5.3		4.0

Further details of the modelled results can be found in the Fire Authority meeting papers for 16 June 2016 which are available at www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/consultation. If you are unable to access the Service website, you can request a paper version by emailing us at Consultation@hwfire.org.uk or by phoning 0345 122 4454.

CHANGES ARISING FROM A HUB STATION

Safe and feasible

The Fire Authority recognises the particular anxieties in Bewdley and Stourport about the relocation of their local fire engines to a more central Wyre Forest site and the likely general concern about the potential changes to response times. However, in making decisions the Authority has to consider the levels of fire cover needed across the whole of the two counties, in order to balance emergency cover fairly across the whole area while still providing an acceptable level of cover.

The Wyre Forest is a relatively low-risk area and Bewdley and Stourport in particular have few life-risk incidents. For example, over five years (2010-11 to 2014-15) there were 462 building fires and 455 RTCs in the Wyre Forest area as a whole; but 63% of the building fires and 62% of the RTCs were in Kidderminster. In contrast, both Bewdley and Stourport had respectively 12 and 22 building fires and 14 and 20 RTCs per year on average.

On the rare occasions when simultaneous incidents occur (and when wholtime crews may be deployed for extended periods), Fire Control has the discretion to call in on-call crews to provide immediate response standby cover. In fact, though, all of the Wyre Forest fire engines are available for over 90% of the time; and in the year April 2014 to March 2015 there were only two occasions (0.1% of the time) when all four Wyre Forest appliances were assigned to ongoing incidents.

Moreover, with the hub station the whole of the Wyre Forest would receive an immediate, full-time, 24/7 response service rather than the current on-call provision (which can be affected by staff unavailability) in Bewdley and Stourport. This would also result in a more effective use of the full-time crew.

Therefore, the Fire Authority is confident that a hub station could cover the whole of the Wyre Forest area safely and effectively. Of course, it would be reassuring if all areas, no matter how small, could have their own wholtime fire stations, but this is impractical since the Authority has to allocate its resources fairly and to the best effect having considered the level of risk and resources available.

Nonetheless, the Fire Authority is keen to reduce risks even more and there are several factors that compensate for or mitigate the potential for slightly increased response times to some parts of the Wyre Forest area. For example, the Authority will ensure that the hub station co-ordinates more community safety activities; for example, focusing on the more vulnerable members of the community by doing more targeted home fire safety checks.

Financially sound

The Fire Authority's main priority is that any changes to emergency cover are safe, feasible and relevant to the risks, but it also has a legal responsibility to achieve a balanced budget each year and the proposed hub station would make an important contribution. Above all, it would allow the Fire Authority to benefit from the available £2.38 million government funding rather than spending large sums on necessary urgent maintenance and improvement works at the three current stations. Even with such work, Kidderminster Fire Station will need to be replaced completely in the medium term (post-2020), when the current government funding would no longer be available.

The running costs of the new station would be considerably lower than for the three existing stations; and they would also be shared with the police as a partner in the hub station.

The vacated sites from relocating the current fire stations to a new hub could make a valuable contribution to the economic development of Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport, for in all three towns the fire station sites would provide opportunities for regeneration.



THE CONSULTATION PROCESS

What happens next?

The consultation runs from **4 July 2016** to **9 September 2016**, and there are many ways in which you can find out more and take part. The Fire Authority welcomes your views and will meet on 11 October 2016 to consider the two potential sites for the hub station in the context of all the feedback from the public, organisations and staff. If the Fire Authority takes a decision to proceed with the new hub station at a chosen site, the development of the hub station would be implemented over the next few years.

All responses and feedback will be analysed and reported by an independent organisation, and their report will be available on our website after the Fire Authority has considered it.

How can I take part?

You can find out more and tell us what you think by completing a questionnaire or by sending us comments in several ways:

Completing the questionnaire either online at www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/consultation or by requesting a paper copy.

Coming to a public meeting (see next column).

Call us on: 0345 122 4454

Email us at: Consultation@hwfire.org.uk

Visit our website: www.hwfire.org.uk

Write to us at:

Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service
Headquarters
2 Kings Court
Charles Hastings Way
Worcester
WR5 1JR

Contact us on Twitter: @HWFire or by using the hashtag #TellHWFire

Contact us on Facebook: www.facebook.com/HWFire

To request a paper copy of the questionnaire, or a copy in another language, large print, audio or Braille format, please contact Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service at:

Email: Consultation@hwfire.org.uk

Call us on: 0345 122 4454

Public Meetings

In addition to briefings and meetings with staff and stakeholders, there will be regular updates on the Service website, social media pages and through press releases. The consultation will be widely advertised and the document will also be made widely available at public buildings throughout the Wyre Forest area.

We are also holding the two public meetings in Kidderminster:

13 July 2016: Wyre Forest House 7:00 pm

Wyre Forest District Council
Finepoint Way
Kidderminster
DY11 7WF

18 July 2016: Wyre Forest House 7:00 pm

Confidentiality

All completed **questionnaires** will be processed by Opinion Research Services (ORS), a specialist social research organisation appointed to undertake this work. Your views are confidential and no one except ORS will see your questionnaire. **No individuals will be identified in the ORS report of findings, but organisations may be identified.**

Other **written responses** (emails, letters and other submissions) will be summarised by ORS and may be quoted in their report and on our website. Once more, **no individuals will be identified**, but organisations may be identified.

**Have
your say**
#tellHWFire

Wyre Forest Emergency Services Hub Station Location Consultation Questionnaire

This questionnaire is an opportunity to give your views about the choice of the most suitable site for the location of the new Emergency Services Hub Station for the Wyre Forest. Under the proposal, Bewdley, Kidderminster and Stourport fire stations would be replaced by the new, purpose-built station at either Silverwoods Park or Stourpoint 5, both of which are on the Stourport Road south of Kidderminster.

Please read the consultation document and complete the questionnaire. Everyone aged 16 or over that lives or works in Herefordshire or Worcestershire may take part in the consultation, as well as representatives of business, public and voluntary sector organisations.

There is an online version of this questionnaire which we encourage you to complete. Please visit:
www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/consultation

You can also share your views on Twitter **@HWFire** or using the hashtag **#TellHWFire** and on Facebook at **www.facebook.com/HWFire**

All consultation responses will be processed and analysed by Opinion Research Services (ORS), an independent social research organisation. Responses from individuals will be completely anonymous, but views from organisations may be published in full.

All completed questionnaires should be returned by **9 September 2016**.



HEREFORD & WORCESTER
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SECTION A | QUESTIONS

If you have not done so, please read the Consultation Document to find out more before completing the questionnaire.

For the following statements, please tick ✓ the box that matches your view most closely.

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Silverwoods Park is an appropriate location for the new hub station.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tell us your reasons.

	Strongly Agree	Tend to Agree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Tend to Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Stourpoint 5 is an appropriate location for the new hub station.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please tell us your reasons.

SECTION B | INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

What is your full postcode?

This will help us understand views in different areas

If you are responding on behalf of an ORGANISATION, which organisation do you represent?

Please give us the name of the organisation and any specific group or department. Please also tell us who the organisation represents, what area the organisation covers and how you gathered the views of members. PLEASE ANSWER IN THE BOX BELOW AND CONTINUE ON A SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

If you are providing your own PERSONAL RESPONSE, please answer the questions below

We have a duty to promote equality in relation to age, gender, disability, race, and religion and belief. We want to make sure that we include all parts of the community in our consultation, but these questions are optional. We will take all consultation responses fully into account when making decisions, regardless of whether you provide your personal details. PLEASE TICK ONLY ONE BOX FOR EACH QUESTION.

What was your age on your last birthday?

- | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Under 25 | <input type="checkbox"/> 55 to 64 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 25 to 34 | <input type="checkbox"/> 65 to 74 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 35 to 44 | <input type="checkbox"/> 75 to 84 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 45 to 54 | <input type="checkbox"/> 85 or over |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say | |

What is your ethnic group?

- White
- Mixed or multiple ethnic groups
- Asian or Asian British
- Black, African, Caribbean or Black British
- Any other ethnic group
- Prefer not to say

What is your gender?

- Male Prefer not to say
- Female

Are you employed by Hereford & Worcester Fire and Rescue Service?

- Yes Prefer not to say
- No

Do you consider yourself to be disabled?

- Yes Prefer not to say
- No

Thank you very much for your time

Please detach the questionnaire from the information booklet and return to the FREEPOST address below.

Completed questionnaires should be returned by 9 September 2016.

For more detailed information about our plans please visit: www.hwfire.org.uk/your-right-to-know/consultation

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