

PAC(4) 05-13 - Paper 3

Submission to Select Committee 19/02/2013

The aims and objectives of the North Wales Resilience Forum (NWRF) are an amalgam of those contained within various guidance documents applicable to Civil Contingencies in Wales.

They can be defined more explicitly as follows:

Aims:

- The North Wales Resilience Forum will sit at the apex of local civil protection arrangements for the area covered by North Wales Police
- To ensure that there is an appropriate level of preparedness to enable an effective multi-agency response to incidents which may have an impact upon the communities of North Wales
- To ensure effective delivery of those duties under the Civil Contingencies Act that need to be developed in a multi-agency environment
- Provide support for the preparation of multi-agency plans, protocols and agreements. To support responders develop and implement multi-agency exercises and other training events necessary to address identified or foreseeable local and wider area hazards

Objectives:

- To facilitate integrated emergency and contingency planning across the North Wales area involving Category 1 and 2 responders
- To be a forum for information sharing and co-operation between the organisations on emergency and contingency planning issues
- To implement strategic and policy decisions relating to the North Wales area's preparedness and response, including the ratification of the Community Risk Register
- To ensure the individual approaches, priorities and responsibilities of each organisation complement each other and dovetail with partners' arrangements
- To provide an effective forum for joint consultation and negotiation on issues affecting responders concerning preparedness, response and post actions, relating to:
 - Risk,
 - Planning for serious or major emergencies/incidents,
 - Planning for business continuity,
 - Arrangements to warn and inform the public,
 - Publishing information about risks and plans
- To ensure appropriate resources are made available to working groups to fulfil statutory or task based responsibilities
- To share, where appropriate, lessons learnt from emergencies and exercises both locally and via the National Resilience Extranet (NRE) and take actions forward to improve plans and procedures

- To consider the local implications of legislation, national initiatives and decisions of the Wales Resilience Forum

We face many of the same issues as our colleagues in the other Welsh LRF regions, save that we have both Wylfa and Trawsfynydd nuclear installations within our borders. This will be magnified when the development of the Wylfa B plant goes ahead. However, close working by LRF partners with Magnox and the Nuclear Regulator ensures that plans are in place and are exercised regularly.

The strategic leads of the organisations making up the membership of the LRF will become the Strategic Coordinating Group (Gold) should an emergency-~~occur~~ of any kind occur that requires a multi-agency command and control structure.

The relationships developed through working, planning and training together as part of the LRF help ensure a seamless approach as was demonstrated in the recent Denbighshire floods.

My background:

My background within Social Services involved working for many years with vulnerable adults to help prevent abuse. I feel that there are many transferrable skills in my knowledge, experience and contacts that I have brought to the Coordinators role. Many of the people I work with now were already familiar to me due to the multi-agency training and exercising that takes place. This made for an easier induction into my role and brought with it a smoother transition between the previous Coordinator leaving and my coming into post.

I feel that my background is especially relevant given the increased need for community engagement to promote resilience and to positively highlight the planning work carried out by the resilience community in all areas of Wales. In moving forward to embrace new ways to engage with the

population the resilience profile in this geographical area can be brought to the fore with examples of good practice. This in turn provides some reassurance to the communities and in assessing the localised risks provides a platform to highlight to Welsh Government gaps in resilience that may be beyond our control.

The fact that I have a social services background has created some opportunities for North Wales in that I now represent NWRF on the Wales Resilience Partnership Team, Community Resilience Group, the Social Services and Health Group and the Wales Flood Group. These are groups that I feel I can actively contribute to and that can make a difference to the communities of North Wales. In addition, the four Coordinators come together three times a year to discuss developments, share ideas and highlight any good practice or identified gaps.

NWRF present position and plans – my views

The identification of ‘vulnerable’ people in an incident is the Holy Grail of information – at any given time anyone within a community could be considered vulnerable – mothers with young families, people off work with illnesses or broken limbs, people whose car has broken down in rural areas etc. It defies the classic ‘vulnerable’ definitions of elderly or people with a disability and makes the planning and exercising stages of formulating a response to an incident more challenging and imperative. As yet there is no easy answer to identifying these groups, but through liaison with Social Services, GP surgeries, other health colleagues and the utility companies a cross over list can be obtained at the planning stage of an imminent incident.

Recently a Police colleague and I went into Coleg Menai in Bangor to work with ethnic minority students to explain the concept of emergency planning and to promote community and individual resilience. This was so well received it is a theme that is to be continued with visits to Coleg Llandrillo to work with students on the Welsh Baccalaureate course in the promotion of good citizenship. This would include not only promoting self-resilience and risk assessments but also encourage the students to consider their neighbours – especially those with a disability or who are elderly.

In terms of specific advances made within the North Wales area, I can inform the Committee that there have been advances made in the following areas of interest:

- Accreditation of learning and development opportunities: A number of organisations within the North Wales LRF contribute to a Learning and Developing Fund. This delivers training and exercising across North Wales for all multi-agency partners and there is good integration between Cat1, Cat 2 and the Voluntary Sector

Recently the L&D Committee have investigated accreditation of our learning and development opportunities with the Institute of Civil Protection and Emergency Management (ICPEM). The planning phase is 90% complete with just the evaluation stage of the learning experience to be quantified for delegates

- Warning and Informing – the NWRF now has a presence on Twitter and Facebook with a website in development to compliment both the Wales Resilience website and the NRE. All platforms provide another form of communication both within the resilience network, but more importantly in engaging with the public – especially younger members
- NWRF are also monitoring the progress of a funding application by Conwy County Borough Council to undertake a flood mapping exercise in the Morfa Rhuddlan West area. This is an

area with mainly single storey dwellings housing people on limited incomes, families, the elderly and those with disabilities.

The results of the study will greatly inform our future planning in working with vulnerable groups across North Wales as we work on not only warning and informing, but evacuation/shelter issues through to the phases of recovery

- Liaison with and close working ties with the Welsh Government Liaison Officers (WGLO) based in Llandudno Junction - During the Fuel Dispute planning of 2012 and the Winter Weather planning of 2012/13 close ties were forged with the WGLO team based locally. This is proving to be a valuable link as it promotes a unified approach to contingency planning for this region. NWRP considers itself to be extremely fortunate to have this resource and link as the WGLO team is a great source of advice and contributes most effectively to our planning phases and workgroups
- Integration of national training events within our local calendar is promoting a nationwide approach to resilience planning that dovetails with the plans objective to amalgamate our individual LRF plans into one national one where possible. This would be extremely positive in terms of Warning and Informing, Evacuation/Shelter, Recovery, Humanitarian Assistance and Flooding with appendices showing the localised detail for each area
- Multi-agency, multi-region exercising – in April 2013 Exercise Berwyn will bring together the three Fire and Rescue Services, Royal Air Force Search and Rescue, representatives from Cat 2 and Voluntary Sector responders and the NWRP. It is an Inland Water Rescue Exercise sponsored by Joint Emergency Services Group (JESG).

NWRP is taking part via a Community Engagement Day scheduled for 19th March 2013. This will bring together all participating agencies at Bala Leisure Centre to promote both the exercise, community resilience, business continuity and risk assessments for individuals

- Many staff members from within the resilience community have attended accredited training courses and those with the experience and skills to deliver that training to colleagues within the LRF should be encouraged to do so. This not only ensures that there is a ‘value for money’ aspect to any future training, but that the skill sets within each resilience area can be promoted. Again, this can also ensure that the training can be localised to address not only national issues, but to look at risks pertinent to the LRF area concerned. This has been demonstrated nationally and is now being employed as a tool in addressing the training needs of the Badger Clio Task/Logging System roll out, where the Coordinator for Dyfed Powys will deliver some of the training, whilst the localised training will be delivered by a staff member from North Wales Police
- Forging close ties with other LRF areas has shown to have great value and is something that all four LRF Coordinators feel strongly positive about. It demonstrates a cohesive strategy to integrated emergency planning and promotes mutual aid as well as recognising that in many cases emergencies do not recognise geographical borders. Therefore to have an awareness of each other’s plans, to observe or participate in exercises and to develop joint plans is not only good practice but a valuable conservation of resources.
NWRP not only has close ties with the other three LRF areas in Wales, but works very closely with Cheshire LRF and is forging links with Merseyside LRF and West Mercia LRF

- Prior to me starting in this role, each of the four LRF areas undertook a peer review of each other's plans, resilience and structures. It identified some common themes but also some radical differences in how we are structured and how we formulate our plans. This I feel needs addressing through a rationalisation of the employment terms and duties of the Coordinator and a streamlining of how the work is formulated
- Engagement of the Voluntary Sector is paramount within NWRP and was demonstrated at a Voluntary Services Awareness Day on 19th October 2012. Following on from the Awareness Day, one of the organisations was brought in to and tasked with taking part with the search for April Jones. Voluntary Sector partners not only sit on our work groups and take part in our exercises, if it is felt appropriate they also take the lead in some work – ie Humanitarian Assistance and Recovery. In a practical sense, the links we have made with our Voluntary Sector partners proved invaluable in responding to the Denbighshire flooding incidents in November 2012
- Rationalising the number of sub-groups within each LRF is not only a Wales Resilience Forum priority but one for each LRF area too. Within North Wales, although we have six local authorities, we have one Fire Service, one Police Force and one Health body. Therefore the attendees at meetings seem to be the same ones time after time. I feel there are two distinct issues here –
 - Promoting the message that civil contingency planning is not just an issue for emergency planners but for all organisational staff, therefore widening the pool of attendees and delegates at training
 - Streamlining the number of groups – once they have done their planning, exercising and reviewing, and if they have met all objectives on their annual work plans, then the groups can go into hibernation and be reinstated once a year or as and when necessary to review any developments as a task and finish event. This would allow for any learning points from exercises or incidents to be integrated into plans

To conclude, from my first ten months in post I would comment as follows:

- The resilience community in Wales communicates with each other well and there is much evidence of cross border cooperation and collaboration
- There is always room for improvement and I think that the differing structures of the LRF Secretariats are in part a barrier to a greater degree of success
- Some of our workgroups are awaiting national legislation or guidance that seems to be exceptionally slow in being published. This causes a delay in the group moving forward with their work plan and we are starting to recognise that these groups may need to fall dormant until the national paperwork is finalised. Otherwise there is no point in the group meeting
- Whilst I appreciate the reasons for restricting the position of Chairperson for a workgroup to be from a statutory agency, I feel that to optimise the skill set within all sectors of the resilience community, it should be extensively encouraged for Category 2 or Voluntary Sector personnel to take on this role. This would also further widen the skill set and pool of staff. This I feel requires further promotion within Wales to recognise the valuable contribution from Cat 2 and Voluntary Sector partners

To finish, I wish to thank the Chair and members of the Public Select Committee for this valuable opportunity to share my views.

