



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
De Cymru
South Wales
Fire and Rescue Service

10 July 2024

Jenny Rathbone MS
Chair of the Equality and Social Justice Committee
Welsh Parliament
Cardiff Bay
Cardiff
CF99 1SN

Sent via email: SeneddEquality@Senedd.Wales

Dear Chair,

Appointment of new Chief Fire Officer

Following a rigorous recruitment process, the Commissioners are pleased to inform you of the appointment of Air Vice-Marshal Fin Monahan OBE DFC PhD as the new Chief Fire Officer for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

Throughout the recruitment process, the Commissioners have been acutely aware of the importance of finding an exceptional leader to guide the Service through the cultural and organisational changes it faces.

The Morris Review published in January and the Equality and Social Justice Committee's own inquiry called on the Service to broaden its approach to recruitment for senior level posts, which is why we extended the search outside the fire and rescue sector.

We worked with an executive search consultancy called GatenbySanderson to ensure the openness and independence of the process. At the end of five days of exercises, staff and stakeholder panels, and interviews, Fin Monahan stood out as the best and right person for the role, and we are delighted that he has accepted the invitation to join and lead the Service.

Air Vice-Marshal Monahan joins us from a distinguished and decorated career as a fast jet fighter pilot and senior leader in the Royal Air Force and MOD. He is currently director of 'Defence Futures', the MOD's think tank at Defence Academy Shrivenham.

He holds Masters degrees from both University of Nottingham and University of Madras, and was awarded a Doctorate PhD on Organisational Culture from University of Birmingham in 2018. He is a published writer and has extensively researched culture and how to build courage, morale, respect and cohesion in uniformed organisations.

He will take up his post as Chief Fire Officer after all the necessary background and security checks have been completed.

Comisiynwyr ar gyfer Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru

Pencadlys Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub De Cymru,
Parc Busnes Forest View, Llantrisant, Pont-y-clun, CF72 8LX.

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Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth yn y gymraeg a'r saesneg - byddwn yn ymateb yn gyfartal i'r ddau ac yn ateb yn eich dewis iaith heb oedi.

Commissioners for South Wales Fire and Rescue Service

South Wales Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters,
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We welcome correspondence in Welsh and English - we will respond equally to both and will reply in your language of choice without delay.

In the meantime, Stuart Millington has agreed to continue as interim Chief Fire Officer to ensure a smooth handover process with Air Vice-Marshal Monahan. The Commissioners have met with CFO Millington to thank him for his ongoing commitment and to express their confidence in him as he continues to lead the Service on an interim basis.

The Commissioners and Air Vice- Marshal Monahan will be in close contact from now on and begin the process of appointing a permanent Executive Leadership Team.

Please contact me at commissioners@southwales-fire.gov.uk if you have any questions.

Cofion cynnes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Carl Foulkes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Carl Foulkes
Commissioner and Chair, Appointment Panel
On behalf of the Commissioners for South Wales Fire and Rescue Authority

About Air Vice-Marshal Doctor Fin Monahan OBE, DFC, PhD

Air Vice-Marshal Doctor Fin Monahan OBE, DFC, PhD is a senior Royal Air Force officer. After training as a fast jet pilot, serving in active squadrons and exchange postings, he was appointed as commandant of the Central Flying School at RAF Cranwell, with the Red Arrows coming under his command. He has trained with several non-UK militaries, and currently serves as the Director of Defence Futures, also known as the MOD think tank.

Fin Monahan was born in Liverpool. He joined the Royal Air Force in September 1991, after serving with the East Lowlands Universities Air Squadron. On graduation from pilot training, he was posted to No. 4 Squadron flying the Harrier jump jet at RAF Laarbruch in Germany, during which he flew missions over Bosnia and Kosovo.

After Germany, he was posted to RAF Valley in North Wales, and then served in an exchange role with the Royal New Zealand Air Force, flying Skyhawk aircraft from RNZAF Base Ohakea.

While later serving as a pilot with No.1 Squadron in Afghanistan, he was called upon to run a mission at very short notice in support of embattled ground troops. He went on the mission alone and was later awarded a Distinguished Flying Cross (DFC) for gallantry on operations in 2006.

In 2007, he took command of Cambridge University Air Squadron. He then spent a year training at the Defence Services Staff College in India and, on returning to the UK, took up a post in charge of operations at RAF Leeming in North Yorkshire. He was responsible for military aid to the civil authority for aircraft crash response and disaster relief for the North of England, Southern Scotland, and the Isle of Man.

In that role, he maintained 24/7 readiness with a rapid response team, a mountain rescue team, and on call aircraft assets that supported local emergency services. He also had a fire station under his command. While not a fire fighter, he underwent basic fire-fighting and breathing apparatus training in preparation for deployment on aircraft carrier operations.

Fin Monahan was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) in the 2014 New Year Honours for building a NATO rapid response unit during 2013.

Between 2016 and 2018, he was the Commandant of the Central Flying School at RAF Cranwell. He was promoted to Air Commodore in December 2019 as "Head Doctrine (Air, Space and Cyber) in the Development, Concepts and Doctrine Centre" at the Defence Academy at Shrivenham. He was promoted to Air Vice-Marshal on 10 October 2022, on appointment as Director of the centre which has now been renamed as 'Defence Futures'.

He holds Masters degrees from both University of Nottingham and University of Madras, and awarded a Doctorate PhD from University of Birmingham on organisational culture.

His military career has seen him lead many organisations on operations, but also through organisational and cultural change.

About the Recruitment Process

1. Application deadline – 27 May
 - Ten people submitted applications from across the UK. Five were shortlisted.
2. Media and presentation assessment
3. Psychometric testing
4. Staff panel
 - The staff panel was drawn from across the Service to bring together a mix of male and female operational and support colleagues.
 - Each shortlisted candidate in turn met with the panel over two days, and were invited to discuss a topic.
 - A facilitator from GatenbySanderson supported the session and gathered feedback.
5. Stakeholder panel
 - The stakeholder panel comprised representatives from trade unions, the Welsh Local Government Association, blue light partners, academia, and FRS Speak Up (Crimestoppers).
6. Formal competency-based interview
 - All four Commissioners, supported by director of people services, Assistant Chief Alison Reed and an independent recruitment consultant from GatenbySanderson, conduct a detailed competency-based interview with each of the candidates.
 - Feedback from both panels, together with the results of preliminary interviews, psychometric testing, and media and presentation exercises was shared with the interview panel.