



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

**Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) Meeting, 19 October  
2017**

**AGENDA ITEM: 5.5**

<b>Title of paper:</b>	<b>Emergency/Disaster Response</b>
<b>Purpose of paper:</b>	To inform the committee of the risks and challenges facing the Welsh Government in maintaining its capability to fulfil its corporate role in planning for, responding to and recovering from sustained emergencies in or affecting Wales.
<b>Action required by the Audit and Risk Committee:</b>	No decision needed. The paper is for the information of the Audit and Risk Committee only.
<b>Relevance of paper to the ARC:</b>	This item relates to ARC responsibilities as per paragraphs iv and xxiii of section 3 of the Terms of Reference document.
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**1. Background**

- 1.1 Although civil contingencies, as a discrete function, is not devolved there is a public expectation and a Ministerial determination that the Welsh Government will provide political leadership during an emergency.
- 1.2 When major incidents occur, Welsh Ministers represent Wales at COBR meetings. This is augmented by special briefings to the First Minister by the National Security Adviser and other, more routine, briefings from Wales Extremism and Counter Terrorism Unit (WECTU) to make sure Ministers have the necessary background information on events and threats.

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- 1.3 Ministers are also actively engaged in civil contingency planning through the Wales Resilience Forum (WRF) which has a clear governance structure including partners to encourage and embed local planning and to co-ordinate and strengthen local capabilities. Additionally, under the Pan-Wales Response Plan<sup>1</sup>, the Welsh Government plays a central role in co-ordinating the response to emergencies and linking to the wider UK cross-government framework through the Emergency Co-ordination Centre (Wales). Through the delivery of devolved programmes and devolved Welsh public services, Welsh Government activity is key to recovery and financially dealing with the consequences of emergencies.
- 1.4 The Welsh Government Resilience Team co-ordinates resilience activity at the all Wales level and establishes the links required between local responders and Whitehall. The team also co-ordinates internal cross-Departmental planning through the Civil Contingencies Group and Resilience Steering Group as well as leading on the corporate response planning and the operation of the ECC(W).
- 1.5 The First Minister has recently agreed to the transfer of executive functions supporting Part 1 of the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 (CCA). In exercising these functions, Welsh Ministers will be able to play a more influential role in setting the direction and delivery of civil contingencies in Wales. This includes developing policy which is more appropriate to Wales as well as providing support to the devolved agencies delivering those services. However, while the First Minister has accepted the transfer, discussions are continuing on whether the UK Government will meet the staffing cost of servicing the additional functions. As the work would effectively be supporting reserved activities such as counter-terrorism and cyber resilience, this request seems reasonable.

## **2. Issues for consideration**

- 2.1 In continuing to strengthen our resilience and to support the further development of civil contingencies there are a number of risks and challenges to Welsh Government in fulfilling its role effectively and which the committee is requested to consider:

### *Exercising Executive Functions*

- i. At a time where the threat of terrorism remains high, cyber attacks are becoming more frequent and the impact of climate change is expected to increase the risk of flooding and other natural hazards it is critical that Welsh Ministers exercise their new powers to shape how Wales prepares to deal with these risks.
- ii. The new CCA functions create new work to monitor compliance of devolved services against the duties of the Act; develop and maintain policies and guidance relevant to Wales; assist local

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<sup>1</sup> Pan Wales Response Plan can be found  
<http://walesresilience.gov.uk/behindthescenes/walesresilience/panwalesresponseplan/?lang=en>

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delivery through more direct engagement with Local Resilience Fora (LRFs) and co-ordinate training and exercising at a national level in Wales. This is a new function with estimated costs at around £360k per annum. Should the UK Government refuse any transfer of funding, it will be necessary to identify support from elsewhere or risk not exercising these functions effectively. The equivalent complement in Scottish Government is 73 staff (including cyber resilience).

- iii. The transfer of these functions comes at a time when the workload of the Resilience Team is focused on the terrorist threat and other smaller scale incidents in Wales (31 in the last year). The team performs an important corporate role to coordinate other significant events such as our Grenfell Tower response (See list of key priorities at Annex). There is a risk that the quality and scale of activity is not sustainable with the existing team. Also, given the specialist nature of the roles there is also a risk around developing and resourcing a succession plan.

### *Corporate Response*

- iv. The UEFA Champion's League Final (UCL) held in Cardiff this summer illustrated the demands on Welsh Government to maintain a fully-staffed ECC(W) to fulfil its co-ordinating role for the safety and security of major events. In the same way, Exercise Red Kite, the major counter-terrorist exercise held in Wales in June 2016, demonstrated the ability of the team to operate ECC(W) to work effectively in a fast-moving, highly-pressurised situation. However, there is a disproportionate reliance on a small cohort of experienced staff.
- v. The Resilience Team relies on the voluntary contribution of colleagues to run the ECC(W). If ECC(W) has to be stood up for a protracted period (ie, pandemic flu or animal disease outbreak) or to be fully-operational on a 24/7 basis, this represents a risk to the team and the lead policy department in that the Welsh Government may not be able to fulfil its expected co-ordinating role.
- vi. There is no corporate obligation on staff outside of the Resilience Team or lead policy Departments to contribute to a corporate response to emergencies. We have initiated a compulsory SCS rota for the Director role and have been successful in recruiting staff to support specific, planned events as the NATO Summit and the UCL. However, there is a risk that such support may be difficult to sustain or mobilise for rapidly emerging events, such as the Parsons Green tube bomb. There is a need to support contributing staff with training and that senior staff in Departments maintain their commitment to release staff for up to 5 days a year to receive this training; and are prepared to release staff at short notice. Building upon the lessons learnt from the UCL the Resilience Team is developing a model to reduce the number of volunteers required by

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focusing on smaller, more highly trained staff who train and operate in dedicated teams.

### **3. Risks and Assurance: Risk Management, Governance and Control**

- 3.1 Welsh Government has a good record of effectively fulfilling its safety and security co-ordination role for such events as the Olympics, the NATO Summit and UCL as well as its support to major incidents such as the Gleision Colliery tragedy, the Chevron explosion and numerous flooding events. However, the partnership working, planning and response of the Welsh Government is conducted by a small team which is very reliant on the commitment of volunteer staff to assist in operating the ECC(W) and acting as liaison teams with local multi-agency groups. Its ability to deal corporately with major emergencies is predicated on the availability of an appropriately-trained cadre of volunteer staff which will fluctuate at various times and, at worst, will be unstable or non-existent. To mitigate this risk we are reducing the staffing needs of the ECC(W) by developing generalist training for dedicated teams of volunteers in order to provide a better skilled, more agile workforce which can deal more flexibly with the changing demands of the Centre. For this to be successful we need the support of all Departments in allowing their staff the opportunities to develop their skills in the roles they are required to play.
- 3.2 In comparison with the Scottish and UK Governments, the Welsh Government has only a small team co-ordinating the work on civil contingencies and counter-terrorism. With the workload of the team likely to increase in the current climate and with the transfer of functions bringing more responsibility there is a risk that the team will not be adequately resourced to meet all expectations of it or be able to cover all aspects of planning with the kind of intensity provided by other Governments. In particular, any emergency requiring a sustained response from the team will bring a number of pressures and additional support will be required. We are addressing this concern by supporting the First Minister in seeking a transfer of funding from the UK Government to allow Welsh Government to exercise these functions appropriately. Should no transfer of funding be forthcoming we will pursue internally to what extent the additional functions can be resourced.
- 3.3 Additionally, there is a further risk that without a clear maintenance strategy and ownership of the ECC(W) the facility will not keep pace with technology and communications advances. Whilst ECC(W) is a corporate facility, the Resilience Team takes responsibility for running the Centre and it seems reasonable that the Team also takes ownership for its upkeep. Work is underway to identify a recurrent budget of around £50k to upgrade the equipment and begin a rolling programme of maintenance and upgrade.

*12 September 2017*