Minister for Victims and Community Safety
Siobhian Brown MSP

Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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Annabelle Ewing MSP
Cowdenbeath Constituency
253-257 High Street
Cowdenbeath
KY4 9QF

12 June 2025

Dear Annabelle,

Thank you for attending the meeting with myself and Assistant Chief Officer David Farries on 14 May regarding the proposed changes at Lochgelly Community Fire Station.

I understand that your constituents will have genuine concerns regarding these proposals, and I would encourage everyone to participate in the formal public consultation to ensure their voices are heard. I would like to stress that the Service Delivery Review aims to modernise the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) and ensure its buildings, equipment and operating model is fit to meet the challenges of the future.

You raised concerns regarding the make-up of the balanced room event run by SFRS to score and weight the options for change. My officials requested this information from SFRS. Unfortunately, a number of individuals specifically requested that their personal details are not passed on to third parties, including elected members so I am unable to provide you with this level of detail. I have, however, been provided with a list of the categories of participants which is attached for your information.

Following our meeting, I have also sought clarity on the programme for engagement and understand there will be a series of 22 public meetings as well as online and drop-in sessions. Of these 22 meetings, I believe that three are planned for Fife - in Lochgelly, Methil and Glenrothes. In addition, all constituency MSPs will be contacted for 1-1 meetings with senior leaders of SFRS to explore the options in detail.

The consultation is scheduled to launch at the end of June and will run into mid-September. You may be interested to note that I visited the Lochgelly fire station on 10 June and heard the concerns directly from one of the watches there. Whilst there were a number of views expressed and it is clear that the crews there are unhappy with the option to remove an appliance from their fire station along with the rope rescue capability, I was pleased to hear that the crews there are content with the consultation process being undertaken by SFRS.

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I encouraged the crews to play an active part in the consultation and to ensure that any concerned local residents are urged to do the same.

I hope this provides assurance that you and your constituents will have significant opportunity to contribute to the public consultation process.

As set out in our meeting, I support SFRS in conducting a full and meaningful consultation which will be carefully analysed before any decisions are taken by the SFRS Board towards the end of this year. Finally, I would like to reinforce that there are categorically no plans to close Lochgelly fire station and I hope you will ensure this message is shared with the communities you serve.

Yours sincerely,

SIOBHIAN BROWN

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SFRS Public Involvement and Consultation

Balanced Room Attendees
29 April 2025

12 x SFRS staff – including 3 x DACOs, and senior staff from Finance, People Directorate and Operations Control. Also, On-Call and Volunteer firefighters.

8 x members of the public – including 2 from the SFRS Public Participation Group. Sourced from across Scotland, including urban, remote, rural and island areas.

5 x Local authorities – senior managers from the following local authorities: Fife, Dundee City, Glasgow City, Edinburgh City and Highland.

2 x HSCPs – senior managers from two Health and Social Care Partnerships (Perth and Kinross and Highland).

Blue Light Partners – two senior managers from Scottish Ambulance Service; one Police Scotland Inspector.

3 x Other Stakeholder Partner Agencies – one each from SEPA, Road Haulage Association (Scotland) and Scottish Enterprise.

6 x Third sector – including equalities groups, disability rights support group, faith groups and organisations working to alleviate poverty in high SIMD areas.

6 x Rep Bodies – 3 x FBU; 2 x FRSA; 1 x Unison.

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Dear First Minister,

We are writing to you as a cross-party group of MSPs representing constituencies and regions that will be very negatively affected by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's proposals contained in the Service Delivery Review public consultation which closes on the 16th of September.

Whilst we recognise that there are areas of Scotland where a reconfiguration of resources or removal of obsolete and unused buildings may be required, it is our view that proposals to further cut firefighter numbers and increase response times to emergency incidents, either through closing operational fire stations, reducing fire cover and diminishing shift patterns from providing 24/7 cover to weekdays only, will increase the risk to the public, local communities, businesses and the natural environment in the communities we represent.

The facts are:

- Since 2012/13, the year before SFRS was created, to 2024/25 (latest published figures) there has been a reduction of almost 1250 firefighters in Scotland – over a sixth of the total workforce reduced in that time.
- Of those 1250 jobs lost, 721 were wholetime operational firefighters and a further 371 were retained operational firefighters – these are direct cuts to front line services.
- The resource budget set for SFRS in 2025/26 was £332.1 million, over a £56 million real terms cut in the twelve-year period since the SFRS was formed. These figures are from the Scottish Parliaments own SPICe calculator.
- Sustained underinvestment in the SFRS capital budget has led to an over £800 million capital backlog, with many fire stations no longer fit for purpose.

Reduced firefighter numbers and restricted appliance availability have already impacted upon the viability of SFRS as an effective emergency service.

From 2014 to 2024 response times to incidents increased by almost a minute and a half, from 6 minutes 51 seconds, to 8 minutes and 20 seconds.

Median response times to life risk incidents across the whole of Scotland have also continually increased over the last decade, from 7 minutes and 13 seconds to 8 minutes and 42 seconds over the same period.

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The impact of sustained real terms budget cuts to SFRS over the last decade is clear. The Service's own statistics lay bare the reduction of almost 1250 firefighter posts in Scotland since the creation of SFRS.

The maths is simple:

Budget cuts = fewer firefighters = increased response times = increased risk to public safety.

The stations where cuts to services are proposed have served communities well for decades and have the confidence of the local community as can be seen from the large numbers of residents who attended public meetings organised by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, the Fire Brigades Union and local Community Councils. At these meetings the public overwhelmingly rejected the proposals set out by the SRFS in the review, as do we.

We are therefore calling on the Scottish Government to reject any proposals that will further increase response times, increase risk to our communities and pose a greater threat to residents, their homes, businesses and the environment, halt any further reductions in firefighter posts and address the long term funding issues that are fundamental to the future of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service.

Yours,

Alex Rowley MSP

Jackie Baillie MSP

Rachael Hamilton MSP

Bill Kidd MSP

Dr Sam Gosal MSP

Foysol Choudhury MSP

Ben Macpherson MSP
(regarding Marionville Station)

Paul McNeill MSP

Richard Lochhead MSP

Katy Clark MSP

Rt Hon John Swinney MSP
An Fhìor Urr John Swinney BPA
First Minister of Scotland
Am Prìomh Mhinistear

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Scottish Government
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Cross Party Group of MSP's
Alex.Rowley.msp@parliament.scot

8 October 2025

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your letter regarding the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Service Delivery Review.

Like all public services, it is right that SFRS consider how its services are delivered to ensure they are configured in the right way, and how their resources are used in the most effective and efficient way to meet the new and emerging needs of communities they serve. Over the last 10 years there has been a 20% reduction in the number of house fires and the number of overall incidents attended by SFRS continues to fall. While house fires have reduced, other incidents such as flooding and wildfires have increased. That is why the fire service is carefully considering how best to adapt to changing risks to ensure firefighters and appliances are in the right place at the right time to respond to incidents.

I would like to emphasise that the driver for the changes proposed by SFRS is to better align resources to current risks, not to save money. SFRS plans to redeploy resources freed up by any changes they make to provide a greater resource to its prevention and protection function and to boost training provision to ensure firefighters remain fully ready and competent to keep all of us safe from the changing risks they need to respond to. It also aims to ensure investment is going to the fire stations which need it most, for example to tackle RAAC roofs and to enhance facilities for firefighters, including modern decontamination facilities.

The SFRS Service Delivery Review 12 week full public consultation consisted of local engagement with communities as well as individual meetings with the SFRS for those who requested them. I know the Minister for Victims and Community Safety also offered to meet with any MSPs who had concerns. There will now be an independent analysis ahead of SFRS Board decisions towards the end of this year. No decisions have been made, nor will be, until the full analysis has been considered by the Board.

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You raise in your letter the reduction in firefighters since the formation of SFRS in 2013. The reduction in firefighters is primarily as a result of the establishment of the single national service, reducing the duplication of having eight regional services and a fire college. This reduction in firefighter numbers was achieved whilst protecting front line services with the number of fire stations and operational fire appliances remaining largely unchanged between 2013 and 2023. This also delivered significant efficiency savings and allowed SFRS to deliver additional specialist resources, both of which, as you will be aware, were objectives of the major public service reform of our police and fire services introduced in 2013.

In relation to the SFRS capital budget, despite difficult decisions needed on the allocation of capital resources, we have increased the capital budget for SFRS year on year and this year it is a record £47million. Over the past three years SFRS has invested over £24 million in its fleet, reducing the average age of its vehicles, with this investment targeting where it is most needed to support operations.

I note that you also raise concerns over response times. the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service has been clear that it advises against using response times as a meaningful metric for performance and that the focus should be on outcomes. However we are aware that increasing response times are a trend witnessed across the wider UK fire and rescue sector. There are complex and dynamic factors that impact and influence these times, and this varies across wide-ranging and diverse geographical areas. These include rising traffic levels, varying degrees of congestion and unanticipated road works, closures and diversions, as well as an increase in traffic calming measures. The safety and wellbeing of firefighters is of the utmost importance and SFRS has strict Health and Safety policies to protect its staff. For example, firefighters must ensure that they follow correct safety procedures when mobilising to an incident, which again can impact response times.

I can appreciate that changes to the way SFRS delivers its services in your constituency is a matter of concern for communities. However, SFRS has provided assurances that any proposed changes as part of the Service Delivery Review have been assessed through detailed simulation modelling. Any modelled increase in response times has been deemed acceptable and in line with comparisons in other similar geographical areas elsewhere in Scotland, and SFRS would not propose any option for change that could potentially place communities at unacceptable levels of risk. For example, moving to day duty systems or on-call provision are both models of delivery which are already used very successfully across Scotland.

As I have set out, the risks faced have changed over time and continuting to keep everything the same over decades is not an efficient or effective way to respond to that.

The consultation responses to the Service Delivery Review will be carefully considered and any final changes decided upon by the SFRS Board in December will be carefully rolled out over the next five years with full ongoing evaluation of any impacts. The SFRS Chief Officer and his Strategic Leadership Team have expertise in delivering fire and rescue services to keep our communities safe and would also be happy to provide you with further information.

Yours,

JOHN SWINNEY MSP

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Our Ref: BM/DA/SS

The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

22 October 2025

Siobhian Brown MSP
Minister for Victims and Community Safety
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Dear Siobhian,

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) - Service Delivery Review (SDR)
Marionville Fire Station | Marionville Drive, Edinburgh, EH7 6BH

I am writing in my capacity as the constituency MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith, only.

As we have discussed previously, Marionville Fire Station in Edinburgh is currently proposed for potential closure, and this is being consulted on in the SFRS's Service Delivery Review (SDR) process. Marionville Fire Station is the direct catchment station for a large area of my constituency and, importantly, provides regular and impactful support to the whole of Edinburgh, in particular to the area served by McDonald Road Fire Station (which mostly covers much of the rest of my constituency, with support from other stations in Edinburgh).

I am writing to emphasise that, in my capacity as constituency MSP for Edinburgh Northern and Leith, I am opposed to the closure of Marionville Fire Station for a number of reasons.

As you will be aware, the presence of RAAC has been discovered in Marionville Fire Station and, while temporary remedial work has been undertaken to ensure that there is no imminent risk of structural failure, clearly the current building is nearing the end of its lifespan.

Three other stations in the Edinburgh area are being proposed for reprovision due to RAAC – Liberton, Dalkeith and Tranent. I am mindful that the SFRS has finite resources and that it is incumbent on it to achieve best value for money. However, I believe that best outcome is secured in this instance by also reprovisioning Marionville Fire Station, on its current site.

The land that Marionville Fire Station is on should be maintained in the public sector, for the public good, and we should future proof provision for fire service cover in the city, to cater for significant population growth and emerging need (as well as capacity for yet unknown need).

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Our Ref: BM/DA/SS

Edinburgh and its city region is by far the fastest-growing part of Scotland and the population of the country is continuing to shift from the west to the east. Projections suggest Edinburgh's population will grow by a further 6.6% by 2028, compared to just 1.8% for Scotland overall. Much of this growth will occur in the east of the city, where Marionville Fire Station is located. Within a mile of the station, 3,500 new homes are currently planned – and this could increase.

Furthermore, there will be major reindustrialisation of Leith Docks in the years and decades ahead, including creating a world-leading offshore renewables hub, as well as several other likely developments stimulated by the growing Forth Green Freeport. These factors may well increase both residential and industrial fire risk in Marionville Fire Station's current service area and its immediate vicinity. The current site is very well placed to respond to the docks.

The closure of Marionville Fire Station is projected to add 4 to 6 minutes to response times for incidents in its catchment area. As you can appreciate, in emergency situations, such delays can have significant consequences. The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has stated that "in an emergency, four to six minutes is an eternity." I am concerned about risk to my constituents, and property, if wait times increase – SFRS leaders have stated that such wait times are "tolerable" but I remain concerned about this, and also worry that more growth, road changes, traffic volumes, and other factors yet to be envisaged, could add further to these wait times. When a fire or other emergency occurs then a rapid response is obviously in the interests of all involved, and to public safety - to me, and many of those I serve, this is a priority.

Moreover, the proposal to relocate Marionville Fire Station's one appliance to Newcraighall – over 3.5 miles away – could leave densely populated areas such as Easter Road, Leith Links, Lochend and Abbeyhill under-served. Traffic congestion around Newcraighall is well-known to be problematic, and I am not aware of any notable ways in which City of Edinburgh Council are planning to improve this. I am concerned about slower response times from Newcraighall.

Furthermore, the next nearest station to the Marionville site is McDonald Road Fire Station - this is already the third busiest station in Scotland, handling over 3,000 incidents annually. Absorbing much of Marionville Fire Station's additional 1,300 calls per year could make McDonald Road Fire Station the busiest in the country. With no current plans to provide additional engine resource to this significantly growing part of Edinburgh, that I am elected to serve and represent, I am worried about any proposals to reduce the capacity and/or footprint of the SFRS in Northern and Eastern Edinburgh. I believe this area needs more resources.

It is worth noting and considering that Marionville Fire Station has played a vital role in responding to serious incidents in high-risk buildings in recent years in our part of Edinburgh. Its crews were instrumental in tackling fires at Hawkhill Court, where six people were injured, and at Cables Wynd House, where a major blaze required nine appliances and also use of a high-reach vehicle – the quick response prevented this from being a much worse situation, including from Marionville Fire Station whose firefighters were first on site, as I understand. Although Cables Wynd House actually lies within McDonald Road Fire Station's catchment, this incident shows the ability of Marionville Fire Station's appliance to respond swiftly to fires in Leith as well as in the east of Edinburgh, because of its strategically helpful (and I believe, indispensable) location. The Breadalbane Street fire in 2023 is another poignant example, where Marionville Fire Station's support for McDonald Road Fire Station's crews meaningfully helped to contain a major incident and prevent a much worse situation from occurring.

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Our Ref: BM/DA/SS

Additionally, there is widespread public opposition to the proposed closure. A petition to save Marionville Fire Station has gathered over 4,500 signatures, and local community councils have formally objected, citing many of the same reasons as I have outlined above.

You may also be aware that the SFRS's own CRIM data indicates that a location in nearby Duddingston should be sought for a fire station in Edinburgh. While no such site has currently been identified, due to the severe scarcity of urban (and affordable) land in Edinburgh, either extending the lifespan of Marionville Fire Station to its absolute maximum, while such as site is secured, or reprovisioning Marionville Fire Station in situ (as clearly the next best outcome) should be pursued. As a constituency MSP, I am strongly opposed to any loss of public land.

The SFRS, in presenting the SDR, have been clear that the causal factors of their proposals do not lie in a shortage of resources but in utilising resources to best public effect and benefit. For clarity, I do not dispute that the SDR is an important process nationally, and that its national proposals more generally need to be considered given changing risks and demands in modern times. However, in proposing to potentially close, rather than reprovision/rebuild, the strategically placed Marionville Fire Station, I believe that this specific proposal would be unwisely extracting resources and assets from the most rapidly growing part of our country, the most densely populated part of our capital city, and in a place where suitable urban land is sparsely available and very expensive.

Instead, I believe any decisions about Marionville Fire Station should be delayed until we are clearer about what provision will be required in our growing capital city, and there is greater clarity and evidence about the nature of new demands, traffic flows, reindustrialisation of the Port of Leith, and generally a better understanding of what overall provision will be required in this growing part of Scotland in the decades (not just the years) ahead.

In your engagement with the SFRS in the coming months, I would be grateful if you could carefully consider the strategic case for Marionville Fire Station - in the changing context of Edinburgh's growing population needs and the safety of my constituents and their property.

Many thanks for considering this and in advance for your response.

Best regards,

Ben Macpherson MSP

CC:
Local Firefighters
Local Community Councils
SFRS
Forth Ports

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Our Reference: 202500490405
Your Reference: Marionville Fire Station

3 December 2025

Dear Ben,

Many thanks for your letter of 22 October concerning the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Service Delivery Review (SDR) and, specifically regarding Marionville Fire Station and potential changes to the way SFRS delivers its service in the East of Edinburgh.

Like all public services, it is right that SFRS consider how its services are delivered to ensure they are configured in the right way, and how their resources are used in the most effective and efficient way to meet the new and emerging needs of communities they serve. The emergencies SFRS responds to have changed significantly over the years, for example dwelling fires have reduced by over 20% since 2013. The statistics also show a 33% reduction in non-fatal fire casualties between 2009/10 and 2023/24 and a 32% reduction in in fatal fire casualties over the same period. Whilst house fires and casualties have reduced incidents such as flooding and wildfires have increased, which is why it is right that the fire service carefully considers how to adapt to the changing risks to remain effective and efficient, with firefighters in the right place at the right to respond to incidents.

You have pointed out potential changes to housing and other risks in your constituency, and I note from the contents of your letter that changes to the way SFRS delivers its services is a matter of concern for communities.

As you know the SFRS Service Delivery Review consisted of a 12 week full public consultation and over 40 local engagement events with communities as well as individual meetings with the SFRS for those who requested them. I also offered to meet with any MSPs who had concerns when the consultation launched, which I know you took up. There will now be an independent analysis ahead of SFRS Board decisions.

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No decisions have been made, nor will be, until the full analysis has been considered by the Board and any changes that do take place would be over five years.

Yours sincerely

SIOBHIAN BROWN

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