

HM FIRE SERVICE INSPECTORATE IN SCOTLAND
THE CHIEF INSPECTOR'S PLAN 2021-24



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We aim to deliver our programme in line with our core values of

Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

The Chief Inspector's three year plan outlines how HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI) will meet its statutory purpose to inquire into the efficiency and effectiveness of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) to assist in its continuous improvement.

This Plan describes the role and function of the Inspectorate, along with our strategy and priorities for the inspection of the SFRS.

The Plan has been prepared to meet the requirements of section 43F of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 (the Act), which is reproduced at the back of this document. The Plan contains information on priorities for inquiries to be carried out by Inspectors, and information on how they will be conducted, in a proportionate, accountable and transparent way.

Within our programme of work, we focus on two main types of inspections. Firstly, we undertake Local Area Inspections, which concentrate on assessing the SFRS's provision of its responsibilities to local communities, to ensure robust delivery of service to those it serves. The second type of inspection covers more specifically focused service-wide assessment on nationally identified key themes of SFRS business. In addition, the Inspectorate may from time to time respond to investigate unplanned events under the description of 'significant incidents' or otherwise. These can be either self-directed by the Chief Inspector

or where Scottish Ministers have directed the Chief Inspector to carry out an Inquiry.

HMFSI will keep this Chief Inspector's Plan under review and adapt it, as necessary, over the course of the three years' to meet any changing or pressing requirements identified or placed on the SFRS.

We have consulted with our key partners regarding this Plan and, will further consult should any changes during the course of the three years be proposed.

HMFSI is committed in delivering against its statutory purpose, as defined by the Act, and looks forward to supporting the SFRS as it goes about its duty of protecting the communities of Scotland and continuing on its transformation journey.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

This plan cannot be presented without recognising that we are operating in challenging and unprecedented times. In March 2020, HMFSI, in line with Scottish Government guidance, suspended non-essential external activities in order to protect SFRS staff, the Inspectorate staff and the community we operate within. As we moved through 2020-21, we saw various changes to the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19, and we recognise that the situation remains fluid and changeable. While this Chief Inspector's Plan 2021-24 sets out



our intent, we recognise that the response to the pandemic may pose challenges to some areas of our inspection programme, and we may need to further adapt areas of inspection throughout the period of the plan.

In accepting the evolving impact we face during the pandemic, and acknowledging the possibility of slippage to our programme, we remain committed to delivering this three year Chief Inspector's Plan to fulfil our statutory duty and to support the SFRS as it works to ensure the safety and well-being of the people of Scotland.

Robert D Scott QFSM

HM Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service



Our purpose

HM Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI) exists to provide independent, risk-based and proportionate professional inspection of the SFRS. Its purpose is to give assurance to the public and to Scottish Ministers that the SFRS is working in an efficient and effective way, and to promote improvement in the SFRS. We also provide independent, professional advice to Scottish Ministers and have functions in relation to non-domestic fire safety.

The statutory basis for the Inspectorate is derived from sections 43A to 43G of the Act. HM Chief Inspector is appointed by an Order in Council and operates independently of Scottish Ministers and the SFRS. Assistant Inspectors are appointed under Ministerial powers contained in the Act, and are equally expected to act independently.

We have a statutory duty to co-operate and co-ordinate with the Auditor General. We also work with other Inspectorates and agencies across the public sector to share specific expertise and contribute to shared outcomes. We co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.

The SFRS is the UK's largest fire and rescue service and one of the largest of its kind in the world. The Service was formed on 1 April 2013 when the eight legacy services that had existed in Scotland since 1975 were amalgamated. The SFRS has 356 fire stations. 79% of these are crewed predominately by firefighters working either the Retained Duty System or the Volunteer Duty System. The remaining 21% are Wholetime crewed [this includes 23 Wholetime fire stations which also have a Retained capability]. As at 31 March 2020 the SFRS had a total workforce of 7,930; of these 3,636 are Wholetime firefighters with 2,937 Retained firefighters making up the next largest group.

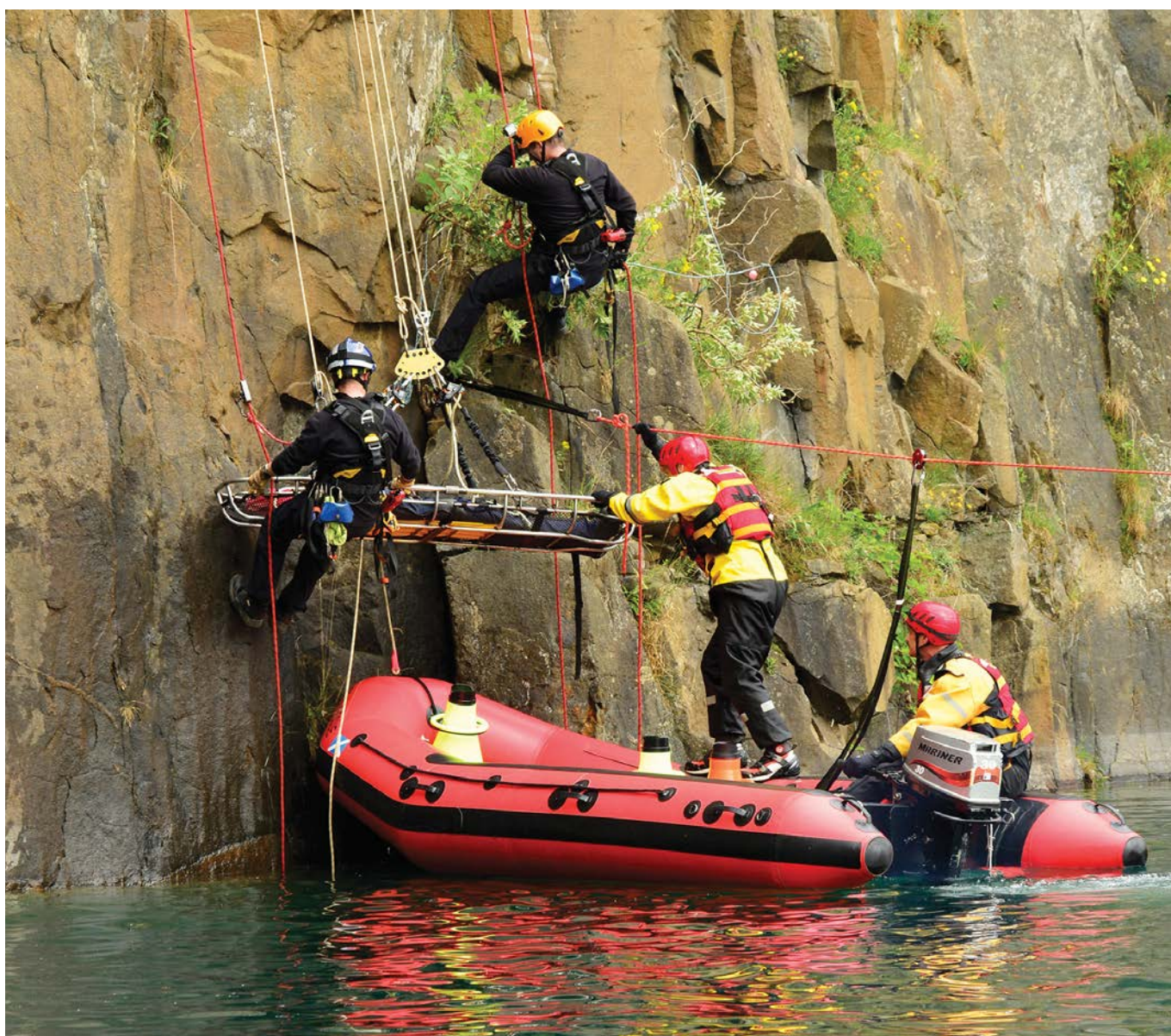
The legislation that led to the creation of the SFRS, the **Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012**, also enabled the change to the scrutiny role of HMFSI to provide independent, risk-based and proportionate professional inspection of the SFRS. Unlike the equivalent organisation for England, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS), HMFSI has an exclusive focus on fire service matters in Scotland. There is a separate scrutiny body for police matters, HM Inspectorate for Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS).

HM FIRE SERVICE INSPECTORATE IN SCOTLAND

THE CHIEF INSPECTOR'S PLAN 2021–24

Since its formation, the SFRS has made significant progress in the harmonisation of working practices, policies and staff terms and conditions and this work is continuing. However, further progress of its developed plans for the next phase of transformation is being affected by continuing UK national discussions regarding

any expansion of the role of firefighters with employee representative bodies. HMFSI will continue to support the Service and Scottish Government, and will offer independent advice and scrutiny relative to transformation, as well as continuing with our programme of Thematic and Local Area Inspections.



Inspectorate Establishment and Budget

The Inspectorate staffing is made up of the Chief Inspector, four Assistant Inspectors, one Inspection Manager and two administrative staff.

In addition to this core team of eight staff, HMFSI offers opportunities for members of SFRS to join the Inspectorate on secondment. On occasions, the Inspectorate calls upon subject matter experts to assist in thematic inspections.

Budget

HMFSI's budget allocation is determined by Scottish Government. HMFSI also uses IT, Procurement and HR functions of the Scottish Government. As the main function of the Inspectorate is the scrutiny of the SFRS, our spend is based around providing the appropriate staffing and other resources needed to facilitate the inspections set out in our Inspection Plan. Our staffing roles are filled by both full-time and part-time workers. Under normal operating conditions the budget is usually split on an 80:20 basis [staff/running costs].

Values

Our stated values are:

Integrity, Objectivity and Fairness.

- **Integrity** – putting the obligations of public service above the personal interests of inspections;
- **Objectivity** – basing our inspection conclusions and recommendations on rigorous, unbiased analysis of evidence;
- **Fairness** – in conducting our inspections, when interacting with employees and members of the SFRS, we do so in a way that would be considered reasonable and will not impose an unwarranted burden or adversely affect individuals.

In addition to our **Values**, our guiding principles are that our inspection work is proportionate, accountable and transparent. We will always act independently and publish impartial and objective reports. We will be accountable for what we do and will justify our actions and reports by evidence. We will ensure our scrutiny is proportionate and that, we only inspect what is necessary to achieve our statutory purpose.

Our guiding principles are that our inspection work is proportionate, accountable and transparent.

How the inspections are carried out

Under section 43F of the 2005 Act, the Chief Inspector must prepare a Plan setting out:

- (a) priorities for Inquiries to be carried out; and
- (b) information on how Inquiries will be carried out in a way which is proportionate, accountable and transparent.

In line with that requirement, this Chief Inspector's Plan outlines our intended priorities and scrutiny activities for the 2021-24 period. The Plan was developed through discussion with the SFRS, other Scrutiny Bodies, targeted stakeholder engagement, and on our previously identified areas of interest, including our knowledge of issues identified through our existing inspection programme.

We keep this Plan under review and make such changes as we determine necessary to enable us to both respond to risk and discharge our statutory obligations.

As mentioned above in the **Our Purpose** section, there is a complementary relationship between the Inspectorate and the Auditor General [supported by a Memorandum of Understanding with Audit Scotland], and with other Inspectorates and agencies across the public sector to share specific expertise or, where appropriate, jointly examine important areas where the SFRS works in partnership and contributes to shared outcomes.

Both organisations are members of the Strategic Scrutiny Group (SSG) which is chaired by the Accounts Commission. The SSG is comprised of Scotland's main public sector scrutiny bodies, and seeks to support the delivery of better coordinated, more proportionate and risk-based scrutiny, predominately at a local authority level.





The diagram opposite, offers a visual representation of the relationship between audit – which is primarily a matter for the Auditor General – and inspection – which is principally for the Inspectorate. HMFSI and Audit Scotland work in Partnership to ensure a complementary relationship exists between audit and inspection. The diagram below indicates areas where the two bodies will operate mostly exclusively and those areas where we will have a shared interest.

| Audit Scotland on behalf of the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission | Areas of shared interest | Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service |
|--|---|---|
| Financial audit | Proportionate and risk-based best value audit and inspection activity covering: | Operational inspection, including: |
| Value for money | Outcomes | Policies and practices |
| Performance audit | Service performance | Operational guidance |
| | Continuous improvement | Safety |
| | Partnership working | Staff learning and development |
| | Performance management | Legislative fire safety enforcement |
| | Use of resources | Community safety engagement |
| | Governance and accountability | |
| | Community planning | |



Inspection process

We use the Scottish Fire and Rescue Framework, currently the 2016 edition, as a guide to how we measure the effectiveness of the SFRS. HMFSI will consider any future changes to the national Framework and their associated impact on our plans. By referencing the Framework we are able to assess how the SFRS considers the following chapter headings:

1. Protecting Communities: Risk, Prevention and Response

- Performance Measures
- Safety, Well-being and Prevention
- Response and Resilience

2. Evolving Role of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service

3. Governance, Accountability and Performance of the SFRS

The Framework defines priorities for the Service covering the following specific areas.

- Performance Measures
- Safety, Well-being and Prevention
- Response and Resilience
- Partnership
- Service Transformation
- Modernising Response
- Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS)
- Effective Governance and Performance
- People

The Chief Inspector gives as much notice of an inspection as is reasonably practicable to the SFRS. From time to time the Inspectorate may carry out unannounced visits as part of an inspection programme. The Inspectorate has an agreed communication and feedback protocol with the SFRS which sets out how we take feedback into consideration.

When we conduct our inspection activity, the SFRS must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require to carry out our functions, and must comply with any reasonable request that we make. When we publish a report, the SFRS must give consideration to the findings and take such measures, if any, as it thinks fit.

Local area inspections

The 2005 Act requires the SFRS to appoint a Local Senior Officer (LSO) and develop a Local Plan for each local authority area in Scotland. The Local Fire and Rescue Plan sets out the SFRS's priorities and objectives for that local area. Inspections of the SFRS service delivery within local authority areas aim to examine the development and delivery of Local Fire and Rescue Plans.

Since 2014, HMFSI has carried out a programme of inspections of the SFRS local service delivery across some of the local authority areas of Scotland. It is our intention that this programme will continue during the lifespan of this Chief Inspector's Plan. This programme of inspections reflects the clear intent of the Fire and Rescue Framework that there should be strengthened connection between the SFRS and communities.

By undertaking inspections of SFRS service delivery within local authority areas, HMFSI can:

- provide assurance to Scottish Ministers and the public that the SFRS is making adequate provision for local service delivery;
- scrutinise the nature and quality of service provision, including working with partner organisations within local areas, and promote good practice;
- where appropriate, co-operate with other scrutiny bodies to provide collaborative, place-based scrutiny;

- maintain a good level of awareness of the Service's functions; and
- gather intelligence that will inform more strategic, thematic inspections of the SFRS.

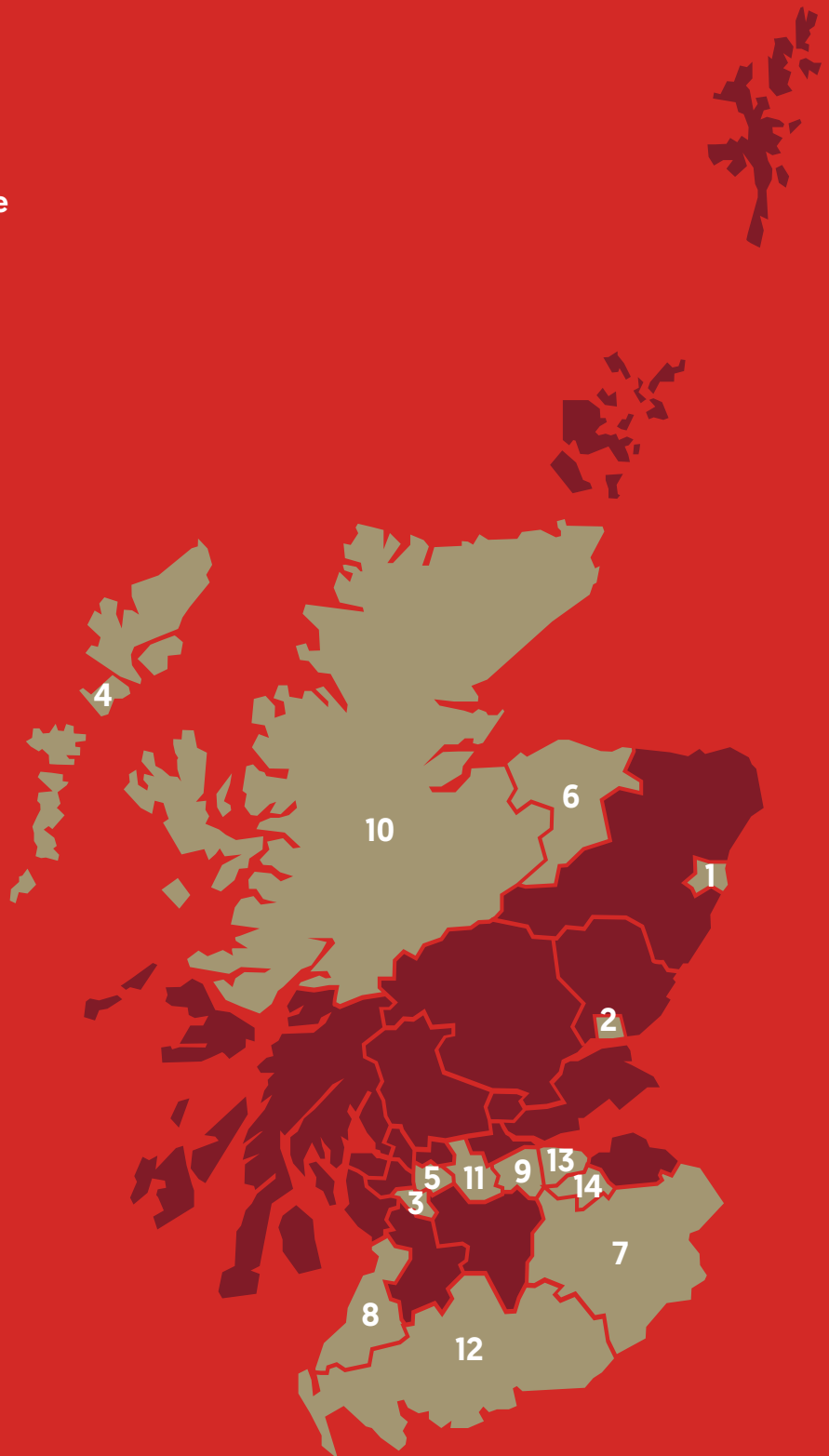
Our local area inspections are managed in consultation with the SFRS LSO for the area under review. Since the commencement of this programme of activity, we have completed inspections in fourteen local authority areas.

An inspection does not end with the publication of a report. It is important that we ensure that our work adds value, and assists in driving improvement. We proactively monitor the recommendations made, and assess the extent to which they have been implemented. We therefore routinely carry out a follow-up review, usually six months after the publication of our local area inspections reports. The purpose of these reviews is to gain an understanding of actions taken by the LSO to address the issues raised in our report, and the impact of any changes made. These reviews are conducted with the LSO and the Deputy Assistant Chief Officer who has overview for that Service Delivery Area.

In our previous Scrutiny Plan we outlined our programme of activity. The Annual Report, published on our website, gives details of the Local Area and Thematic Inspections conducted since our last Plan.

Inspections undertaken to date

1. Aberdeen City
2. Dundee City
3. East Renfrewshire
4. Na h'Eileanan Siar
5. Glasgow City
6. Moray
7. Scottish Borders
8. South Ayrshire
9. West Lothian
10. Highland
11. North Lanarkshire
12. Dumfries and Galloway
13. Edinburgh City
14. Midlothian





Thematic inspections

Our Thematic Inspections are an examination of a particular service-wide theme, and generally seek to understand how the Service as a whole is managing the subject under scrutiny. The inspection reports are laid before the Scottish Parliament.

For our Thematic Inspection reports, we have implemented a similar post-publication review process as outlined for Local Area Inspections, but for these reports the Review is carried out after a suitable period of time, approximately a year after publication. The Reviews are conducted with the relevant lead officer appointed by the Service for the subject under scrutiny.

The SFRS has an internal process for considering our reports, both Local Area and Thematic, and any recommendations or observations contained within. Officers of the Service compile an action plan for each report we produce, and these action plans are submitted to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee of the SFRS Board for consideration and scrutiny.

All inspection reports are published on our website and can be viewed at: www.gov.scot/about/public-bodies/HMFSI/Reports-Publications

Figures 1 and 2 show the elements we consider in arriving at the themes for our forthcoming thematic inspections which we may conduct during the lifespan of this Plan.

Figure 1: Safe Firefighter Concept



Figure 2: Governance



Inspection activity 2021-22

Due to the significant impact of Covid-19 restrictions in 2020, our programme of inspection of SFRS service delivery across local authority areas was restricted, and we were unable to complete our work within Argyll and Bute. When we are in a position to recommence fire station visits, we will conclude this inspection. In addition to the Argyll and Bute Inspection, the following Local Area and Thematic inspections will be undertaken during 2021-22.



Local Area Inspection

During the next phase of our Local Area Inspections we intend to undertake inspections in the following locations.

Table 1

| | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Argyll and Bute | Continuation in Quarter 1 2021–22 |
| Angus | Commencing in Quarter 3 2021–22 |

Thematic Inspections

Early work on an inspection regarding Operational and Protective Equipment commenced during late 2020-21 and will continue. The other Thematic Inspections planned are set out in the table below, with further narrative of the intended outcome of this activity.

Table 2

| | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Health and Safety – An Operational Focus | Commenced in Quarter 4 2020–21 |
| Firefighting in High Rise Buildings | Commencing in Quarter 1 2021–22 |
| Review of Operational and Protective Equipment | Recommencing in Quarter 3 of 2021-22 |

Health and Safety – An Operational Focus

We will look at the organisational culture in relation to Health, Safety and Welfare. We will consider how Health and Safety is centred on firefighter safety, and, confirm that operational staff understand and can demonstrate how the ‘firefighter safety maxim’ is being applied in the SFRS. We will also consider how the Service is using national learning, data and other information to reduce risk and improve the overall safety and welfare of its staff.

The aim of this inspection is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service’s Health, Safety and Welfare arrangements with an operational focus. We will consider the governance and management, policy and planning, training and recording arrangements.

Firefighting in High Rise Buildings

We intend to conduct an inspection of the SFRS arrangements by examining how the Service prepares for, and carries out, firefighting in high rise buildings. In line with building standards, we use 18 metres as the threshold for high rise. While the main thrust of our inspection will be high rise domestic buildings due to the life risk, we will also examine high rise commercial buildings.

It is proposed that this inspection shall consider:

- pre-planning and information gathering;
- operational procedures;
- training and awareness of staff;
- Operations Control procedures, including fire survival guidance;
- building checks and familiarisation visits by the Service;
- how the SFRS dealt with or is dealing with the recommendations from the Phase 1 Report of the Grenfell Inquiry; and
- how the SFRS is adapting to developments in high rise fire safety.

Review of Operational and Protective Equipment

The aim of this inspection is to assess the effectiveness and efficiency of the Service’s governance, procurement policy, management, training, routine testing, maintenance and disposal of its operational and protective equipment.

The Inspection has a wide scope and, in particular, we will consider the processes which the SFRS applies to:

- the identification of need and rationale associated with the choice of equipment and the overall procurement package selected;
- the design of and implementation of the operational and protective equipment Management Strategy; and
- the relationship between equipment manufacturers, suppliers and the SFRS’s management strategy.

Other activity 2021-22

Preparedness of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for the 2021 UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26)

We will conduct an inspection into the SFRS by examining how the Service prepares for the UN Climate Change Conference in Glasgow in November 2021.

It is proposed that this Inspection shall consider:

- planning arrangements and assumptions, including those for a concurrent major incident, for meeting the extra demands placed on the SFRS by the conference whilst maintaining business as usual;
- the SFRS's own risk assessment for the conference and areas it has identified as requiring special focus;
- leadership and incident command capacity during the conference, both in terms of personnel and command locations;
- planning for legislative fire safety enforcement activities relevant to the influx of visitors expected, including to conference events outside of Glasgow; and
- training and exercising with key stakeholders in relation to risks around the hosting of the conference.



Potential future activity up to 2024

The thematic activity which we shall undertake beyond 2021-22 during the course of this Plan, will depend on the issues that influence our inspection work but may include some of the following areas of interest:

- climate change and Service preparedness (wildfires, flooding etc);
- the Service's planning and preparations for a response to a Marauding Terrorist Act;
- the state of the provision of specialist resources (specialist appliances, equipment and staff, including usage and training);
- recognising and embedding organisational learning;
- fire cover – distribution, modelling and standards;
- HR/workforce planning – recruitment, attrition and skills (all duty systems); support to LSO areas;
- organisational culture, diversity and gender balance;
- administration and use of technology;
- Operations Control;
- RVDS duty system.

The Local Area Inspection activity which we shall undertake beyond 2021-22, during the course of this Plan, is projected in the table below. Its timetabling will be influenced by other inspection work and any dynamic events going forward.

Table 3

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------|
| Fife | Projected 2022–23 |
| Shetland | Projected 2022–23 |
| South Lanarkshire | Projected 2023-24 |
| Inverclyde | Projected 2023-24 |

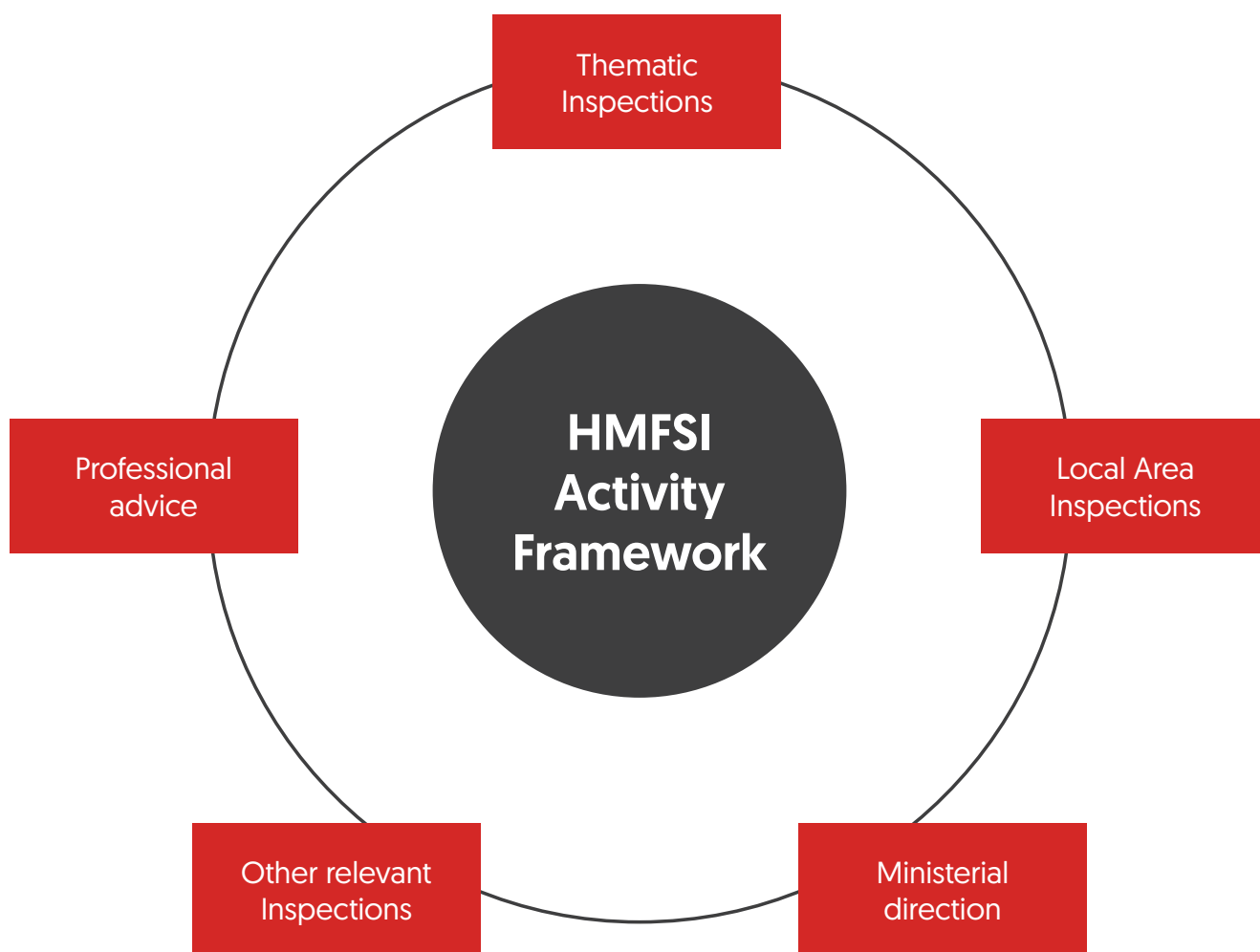
Significant Incidents and Unplanned Events

We have a policy that details our procedure for inquiring into significant incidents, that is, incidents the circumstances or outcomes of which are likely to attract public interest or concern. Generally speaking, we will not commence an Inquiry into a significant incident where this would substantially duplicate work being done by other bodies. We reserve the right, however, to undertake our own Inquiry where this would bring benefits that would not be realised by other investigations. We will always consult with bodies holding statutory responsibility for investigating the circumstances, before deciding to carry out a significant incident inquiry.

From time to time, the Inspectorate expects to respond to unplanned events whether under the description of 'significant incident' or otherwise (this may include instances where Scottish Ministers direct the Chief Inspector to carry out an Inquiry). The Inspectorate may be in a position to deal with such an inquiry with existing staff and resources, or may need to take on additional support for the duration of the work. In any case, the staffing and work of the Inspectorate is intended to be sufficiently flexible to allow for an appropriate response.



The diagram below illustrates the activity framework covered by HMFSI through its inspection programme.





Equality

The Inspectorate's scrutiny role includes the performance of the SFRS in relation to equal opportunities. The Equality Act 2010 (Specific Duties) (Scotland) Regulations 2012 set out the requirement for certain public bodies, including the SFRS, to take steps to mainstream equality across all of its functional areas. The Equality and Human Rights Commission is the body responsible for scrutinising overall compliance with equality legislation. Nevertheless, the Inspectorate will take an interest in relevant equality issues within the function under inspection and consider the extent to which any associated equality obligations have been met.

In addition, the Inspectorate has equality responsibilities of its own. We are committed to ensuring that equality issues are considered across all of our activities, including corporate decision-making, the accessibility of materials, the accessibility of the Inspectorate as part of the requirement for service user involvement, the workplace culture of the unit, the decisions we make in relation to inspection activity and by assessing the performance of the SFRS in meeting the needs of the communities served.

Excerpts from the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005 as amended

43B Inquiries by Inspectors

- [1] An Inspector may inquire into a matter mentioned in subsection [3].
- [2] If directed to do so by the Scottish Ministers, an Inspector must inquire into a matter mentioned in subsection [3].
- [3] The matters are—
 - [a] the state and efficiency of SFRS,
 - [b] whether in carrying out its functions SFRS is complying with its duty under section 39A to make arrangements which secure best value,
 - [c] the manner in which SFRS is carrying out any of its functions.
- [4] In carrying out an inquiry under this section an Inspector may—
 - [a] require SFRS to provide any information or documents relating to the functions of SFRS that the Inspector may require,
 - [b] enter and inspect any premises which are used by SFRS,
 - [c] inspect any equipment which is used by SFRS.
- [5] If an Inspector exercises a power of entry by virtue of subsection [4][b], the Inspector may—
 - [a] take onto the premises
 - [i] such other persons, and
 - [ii] such equipment,as the Inspector considers necessary,
 - [b] require any person present on the premises to provide the Inspector with any information or documents that the Inspector may reasonably request.

- [6] An Inspector may not under subsection [4][b)—
 - [a] enter or inspect premises occupied as a private dwelling,
 - [b] enter premises by force.
- [7] SFRS must provide such facilities, assistance and co-operation as an Inspector may reasonably request for the purposes of, or in connection with, an inquiry under this section.

43F Chief Inspector's plan

- [1] The Chief Inspector must prepare a plan setting out—
 - [a] priorities for inquiries to be carried out by Inspectors, and
 - [b] information on how inquiries will be carried out in a way which is proportionate, accountable and transparent.
- [2] The Chief Inspector—
 - [a] must keep the plan under review, and
 - [b] may from time to time revise the plan.
- [3] The Chief Inspector must, in preparing a plan (and any revised plan), consult such persons as the Chief Inspector considers appropriate.
- [4] The Chief Inspector must publish the plan (and any revised plan) in such manner as the Chief Inspector thinks fit.



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