

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

FIRE SERVICE IT PROJECT – GOVERNMENT IS LEAVING A DISASTROUS LEGACY AFTER FRESH DELAYS SET TO BE ANNOUNCED TODAY

IMMEDIATE RELEASE 15 JULY 2009

Attn: National and regional news desks in England. Regional details are at the bottom of the release.

The Fire Brigades Union has accused the Government of leaving a disastrous legacy after fresh delays to the regional FireControl Project are set to be announced by the Department for Communities and Local Government today. The union said the project was like Monty Python's Dead Parrot sketch with everyone knowing it was dead apart from Government which insists it is still alive.

The latest set of delays – the union expects a delay of 10 months – means no fire service would move to the new system until the May 2011 at the earliest. It adds to the 9 months of delays the Government announced last November when it cited serious problems with the technology.

In 2004 the Government promised a state of the art control system would be in place by 2007 and originally estimated the cost at £100 million. It would save so much money, the Government claimed, it would pay for itself within 5 years.

The last business case put the Project costs at £1.4 billion and rising, there will be no savings and no genuine timetable for completion. Many technology problems remain unresolved.

Under the new system all 46 brigade emergency fire controls in England would be closed and replaced by a national network of 9 region-wide control centres. The FBU says the new system is unwanted, unnecessary and is draining money away from frontline services.

These latest delays will push up already spiralling costs even further. A breakdown of the impact region by region is set out below.

So far a total of 72 cross-party MPs have signed Early Day Motion 1800 calling for the Project to be halted.

The delays will leave the Government paying another £15 million in rents to keep the new regional control centres empty for longer. There will be more to pay for the army of consultants, civil servants and project managers needed to try and deliver the project pushing the costs of the delay, the union estimates, above £30 million.

Matt Wrack said: "This is the latest Government IT disaster in a long line of IT disasters. This is a scandalous waste of public money when fire brigades are looking to make major cuts because of a lack of cash.

“Taxpayers are propping up another failing IT project because the Government is too embarrassed to admit how bad things have become. If they want to save money they should shut this Project down before it gets worse.

“These plans are becoming like the Monty Python ‘dead parrot’ sketch. Everyone knows the parrot is dead apart from Government which insists, in the face of all evidence, that it is still alive.

“These latest delays push the Project very firmly to the other side of the General Election. They are leaving a disastrous legacy for a future Government to have to deal with.

“Government continues to be seduced by promises about technology and databases. They have ignored warnings from across the fire service that this project is collapsing.

“It is years late, massively over budget with no completion date in sight. To top it all they can’t get the system to work properly.

“We would have been the first to congratulate the Government if it had ended the project today. Instead they are letting it limp on, doomed in all but name, spending cash that should be going to pay for frontline services.”

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Cost details broken down by region, based on the 10 month delay the union expects to be announced.

South West Regional Control Centre has cost a total of £2,066,107.64 in rent and other building costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 22 August 2007. Rent commencement date: 15 February 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £154,893 from February 2009 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in July 2010.

Based on those costs, the price from February 2009 to July 2010 (now facing a 10 month delay) will be £2,478,288. That is a grand total of £4,544,395 in rents and other costs from completing the building to becoming operational under the old timetable.

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,548,930 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN THE SOUTH WEST.

East Midlands has cost a total of £2,355,080 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 6 June 2007. Rent commencement date: 20 January 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £154,038.

Based on those figures the costs to July 2010 (now facing another 10 month delay) will be £2,464,608. A grand total of £4,819,688 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it was meant to go live in July 2010.

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,540,380 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN THE EAST MIDLANDS

North East has cost a total of £2,077,812,080 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 6 June 2007. Rent commencement date: 13 April 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £148,939.

Based on that figure the costs to July 2010 (now facing a ten month delay) will be £2,383,024. A grand total of £4,460,836 in rents and other building costs from completing the building until the go live date of July 2010 (now facing a delay).

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,489,390 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN THE NORTH EAST

West Midlands has cost a total of £1,229,656 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 31 December 2007. Rent commencement date: 4 October 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £167,824 until October 2010 when it was meant to go live>

Based on that figure the costs to October 2010 (now facing a delay) will be £3,188,656. A grand total of £4,418,312 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it was meant to start operations

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,678,240 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN THE WEST MIDLANDS

South East has cost a total of £954,928 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 12 June 2008. Rent commencement date: 14 November 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £173,668 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in February 2011 (now facing a 10 month delay).

Based on that figure the costs to February 2011 will be £3,994,364. A grand total of £4,949,292 in rents and other costs from completing the building until February 2011 (facing a delay).

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,736,680 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN THE SOUTH EAST

North West has cost a total of £666,730 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 8 July 2008. Rent commencement date: 1 January 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £155,403 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in February 2011 (now facing delay).

Based on that figure the costs to February 2011 will be £3,574,269. A grand total of £4,240,999 in rents and other costs from completing the building until February 2011 (now facing a deal).

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,554,030 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN THE NORTH WEST

Yorkshire and Humberside has cost a total of £422,224 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 8 July 2008. Rent commencement date: 14 April 2009. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £152,662 until the date of the first fire brigade was meant to move into the building in August 2011.

Based on that figure the costs to August 2011 will be £4,427,198. A grand total of £4,849,422 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,526,220 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN YORKSHIRE AND HUMBERSIDE

East of England has cost a total of £313,686 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 8 October 2008. Rent commencement date: 21 April 2009. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £166,064 until the date of the first fire brigade was meant to move into the building in October 2011.

Based on that figure the costs to October 2011 (now facing a delay) will be £4,981,920. A grand total of £5,295,606 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it was meant to go live in October 2011.

A TEN MONTH DELAY WILL ADD ANOTHER £1,660,640 TO THE COST OF THE RCC IN EAST OF ENGLAND

London will cost a total of £118,744 in rent and other costs from the date it is completed until February 2011. Lease commencement date (projected) 26 February 2010. Rent commencement date: 26 November 2010. Assuming practical completion takes place in the next 3 months, 20 months rent until it is due to open in February 2011 will be £2,374,880. This may now be further delayed or brought forward.

This is a grand total – up to the date of the first fire brigade moving in - of £39,953,430 in rents for buildings which will not be operational until late 2010 at the very earliest. Even when the first fire brigade moves in, the buildings will still be under-utilised.

As the Department for Communities and Local Government routinely denies stories about Regional Control Centres, we re-produce below the Parliamentary Answers on which the calculations are based.

Drew - Fire Services (Manpower)
Tue, 31 March 09 | House of Commons - Written Answer

Summary

The following question was answered on 31 March 2009.

Contents

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate she has made of the minimum number of staff required (a) in each regional control centre and (b) to staff the national network of regional control centres to meet the needs of national resilience; on what date each regional control centre was completed; what expenditure has been incurred in respect of each

regional control centre since its completion; what estimate she has made of such costs in the period between completion and cut over for each centre; and what expenditure her Department has incurred on consultants engaged to work on the FiReControl project to date. [267875]

Mr. Khan: Information on staffing is included in the "FiReControl Business Case: the National Case" published in November 2008—a copy of the Business Case is available in the House Library. The actual number of staff to be employed within each regional control centre is a matter for each regional local authority controlled company who will be the employers.

To the end of February 2009 the cost of consultancy services for the FiReControl project totalled £45.3 million and this is taken into account within the overall project implementation costs outlined in the Business Case.

The costs from practical completion of each regional control centre until the end of February are set out in the following table:

	Cost (£)
NE	2,077,812.95
EM	2,355,080.31
SW	2,066,107.64
WM	1,229,656.29
SE	954,928.46
NW	666,730.56
Y&H	422,224.78
EoE	313,686.38

The anticipated costs per month until the current planned cutover dates are:

	Cost (£)
NE	148,939.00
EM	154,038.83
SW	154,893.58
WM	167,824.67
SE	173,668.08
NW	155,403.67
Y&H	152,662.67
EoE	166,064.17
London	118,744.33

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when the lease upon each regional fire control centre commenced; on what date rent started to be paid on each lease; and on what date each centre began operations. [271665]

Mr. Khan: The information requested is set out in the following table, broken down by region.

Region	Lease commencement date	Rent commencement date
North East	6 June 2007	13 April 2008
East Midlands	6 June 2007	20 January 2008
South West	22 August 2007	15 February 2008
West Midlands	31 December 2007	4 October 2008
North West	8 July 2008	1 January 2009
Yorkshire and Humberside	8 July 2008	14 April 2009
East of England	8 October 2008	21 April 2009
South East	12 June 2008	14 November 2008
London (projected)	26 February 2010	26 November 2010

The buildings are undergoing a fit out programme at present to bring them into a fully operational state. No regional control centre has yet begun operation.