

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

IMMEDIATE RELEASE, 21 JUNE

Attn: Regional news desks in England. **Regional** details are at the bottom of the release

FIRE SERVICE IT PROJECT – MORE DELAYS WILL PUSH UP COSTS EVEN FURTHER

The Fire Brigades Union is warning that fresh delays to the Government IT project for the fire service will push up already spiralling costs even further. The Department for Communities and Local Government is considering announcing a fresh set of delays of at least 10 months.

A national network of nine regional fire control centres were meant to replace the 46 existing emergency control rooms. The controversial £1.4 billion project was meant to be finished by 2007 and save so much money it would pay for itself in 5 years.

A series of delays followed by further major technical problems has seen the completion date pushed back. 2012 Olympic host city London may not have its new regional control in time for the games, leaving it isolated and out of the national network while the games are taking place.

Other regions may see some brigade controls in the network by then, but some will still be relying on the current system. A breakdown of the impact region by region is set out further down.

The delays will leave the Government paying another £15 million in rents to keep the new regional control centres empty for longer. But there will be another 10 months 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.

An initial six month “rent holiday” was set aside to cover the period between the buildings being completed, a fit out programme and the first fire brigades moving in. Further delays would mean none of the new buildings will become operational until 2011 at the earliest.

Matt Wrack, FBU General Secretary said: “The project is in meltdown and may not be properly tested and in place for the 2012 Olympics, even if they can make it work. Fire services needed the entire national network to be bedded down and tested by summer 2011 and that will not happen.

“The options being looked at are farcical. They appear to be the last gasp of civil servants desperate to justify their previous recommendations.

“The new ministers need to take the opportunity to look at this project afresh and end it now to give the fire service certainty and end the anxiety being caused to control room

staff. The only real option is keeping and upgrading our existing fire controls and getting the new digital radio system in place.

“We were told first of all this would be finished by the end of 2007, so many fire authorities put off upgrading their own systems. If the Government had not intervened with this plan all fire services would have had their own newer systems in place long before the Olympics.

“The project is already years late, massively over-budget and Government remain unable to convince the fire service they can make it work properly. To continue with these plans in this state is entirely irresponsible.”

“This is a scandalous waste of public money and more delays will make it worse. This is at a time when fire brigades are looking at major cuts because of a lack of cash.

“The buildings were completed on time but rental payments were delayed to give Government time to fit out the interiors and install the IT. But a host of other delays have put the project years behind schedule and left the buildings non-operational.

“The fault lies at the door of Government. No local fire authority is responsible in anyway for anything which has happened up to now.

“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.”

South West Regional Control Centre 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 was meant to move 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 was first meant to go live.

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

East of England 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 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. 20 months rent until it was due to open in February 2011 will be £2,374,880. This may now be further delayed until the end of 2012.

A DELAY OF 18 MONTHS WOULD COST ANOTHER £2,137,392 FOR LONDON ALONE.

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. Confirmation of the delays is also available.

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.

Media contacts: If you do not know your regional FBU contact please call 0208 541 1765 and ask to speak to the press office.