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Foreword

The Government is committed to tackling crime in all its forms. This includes arson which is still the largest single cause of major fires in the UK and costs the economy around £2.8 billion per year. The human cost is equally high with over a thousand deaths and some 27,000 injuries resulting from deliberate firesetting in the last decade.

This year we have an outstanding achievement to celebrate. In the year ending December 2004, deliberate fires causing death, injury or damage to property in the UK fell by 21% to 75,800. This figure which included a decrease of 25% in the number of deliberate vehicle fires to 46,400. This is 19% better than our baseline target of achieving a 10% reduction in the overall number of deliberate fires by 2010. But we must not rest on our laurels.

Our challenge now is to maintain this momentum and tackle some of the more complex factors behind deliberate firesetting, especially where children and young people are involved. Fire and rescue service personnel and others involved in working with children and young people have shown tremendous commitment, imagination and success, but there is still a great deal more that can be done.

The Forum is therefore focusing on the role of youth diversion and youth intervention initiatives, building on the fine work that is already being carried out. I believe that the Forum has a unique contribution to make in this challenging area and I attach a high priority to it.

Jim Fitzpatrick MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister
Arson – the facts

Arson is the largest single cause of major fires in England and Wales. It is a complex and serious crime and has a wide variety of causes ranging from revenge, fraud and crime concealment through mental illness to simple vandalism and fire-play.

In the last decade there have been around 2.3 million deliberate fires\(^1\). These fires have resulted in around 27,000 injuries and over 1,000 deaths. It is estimated that in 2003, arson in England and Wales cost the economy over £2.8 billion.

Between 1998 and 2001, the number of deliberate fires rose sharply to reach a peak of nearly 110,000. Since 2001 such fires have been decreasing, with 75,800 being recorded in the year ending December 2004, 21% fewer than in the previous year.

As the graph below shows, both the sharp increases in deliberate fires in the late 1990s and the recent falls have been largely due to the changes in the number of deliberate vehicle fires, which rose by 65% between 1998 and 2001 but fell by 25% in the year ending December 2004.

The number of deliberate fires in other locations have been less volatile over the last decade. There were about 9,300 deliberate fires in dwellings in the year ending December 2004 (compared with 10,900 in the previous year), with the number of deliberate fires in other buildings falling gradually from 18,700 in 1994 to 13,300 in 2004.

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**Arson fact**

- In an average week in 2004 arson resulted in:
  - 2,000 deliberately set primary fires;
  - 50 injuries;
  - 2 deaths;
  - and a cost to society of at least £55 million.

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\(^{1}\) These are malicious or deliberate fires attended by the fire and rescue service and include those fires recorded as “doubtful” ignition or where deliberate ignition is merely suspected. The total of 2.3 million relates to both property fires and those outdoor fires where no property was involved.
Deliberate primary fires in England and Wales 1994 to 2003

- **Number of deliberate fires**
  - 1994: 20,000
  - 1995: 40,000
  - 1996: 60,000
  - 1997: 80,000
  - 1998: 100,000
  - 1999: 120,000
  - 2000: 140,000
  - 2001: 160,000
  - 2002: 180,000
  - 2003: 200,000

- **Categories**
  - Other outdoors
  - Road vehicles
  - Other buildings
  - Dwellings

- **Graph showing trend from 1993 to 2003**
Opening remarks by André Baker QPM LLB (Hons) AKC – Commander, Metropolitan Police Service and Chairman of the Arson Control Forum

I am pleased to present the fourth annual report of the Arson Control Forum which highlights the work we have carried out during 2004/5, and outlines our priorities for the future.

I am delighted with the huge fall in the number of deliberate fires recorded last year. I am particularly pleased that the hard work put in on the ground by arson task forces and car clear schemes funded by the Forum is paying such excellent dividends. It is estimated that these initiatives have resulted in a net saving to society of at least £20 million in terms of reduced fires. I would like to express our appreciation to all those involved in these projects who provided valuable good practice advice and who contributed greatly to the overall arson reduction strategy.

Although final decisions have yet to be made about funding for the Forum post March 2006, it is likely that it will be for partnerships to determine how to develop their local arson reduction initiatives after this date. These initiatives can be developed in line with the local priorities set out in local Crime and Disorder Reduction strategies and Integrated Risk Management Plans. We hope that given the proven success of such initiatives, supported by the latest statistics, local authorities will have the necessary incentive to ensure that resources are channelled in this direction.

The proven success of the local projects provided the theme of the Forum’s First National Conference held in May 2004. The Conference offered an ideal opportunity to promote good practice and for practitioners to share their experiences of working together to tackle arson. The event was regarded as a great success and elsewhere in this report we have described the day’s proceedings in more detail.
Sound training in fire investigation methodology and techniques is crucial to the long-term prospects of reducing fires, regardless of cause. National Occupational Standards in Fire Investigation have therefore been developed under the auspices of the Forum and these were published in April 2005. We shall be following this up with guidance on the procedures to be followed in the investigation of suspicious fires.

Research continues to play a vital role in informing policy decisions and during the year we published an evaluation of the effectiveness of the local arson prevention projects funded by the Forum. We also published research exploring the rise in deliberate vehicle fires and its relationship to other aspects of vehicle crime. We also published an evaluation of fire and rescue service interventions with young firesetters.

In terms of its future work, the Forum can make a fundamental contribution to tackling the arson problem by assisting in the development of a new national Strategy for Children and Young People and underpinning it with the necessary guidance and research. Elsewhere in this report we set out this new strategy in more detail.

I look forward to another productive year for the Forum and would like to thank everyone who has contributed to its success.

André Baker QPM LLB (Hons) AKC,
Commander, Metropolitan Police Service
and Chairman of the Arson Control Forum
The Forum’s Aims, Objectives and Achievements

The Arson Control Forum was launched in April 2001 to bring together the various public and private agencies to develop and introduce a programme of work to prevent arson.

Our aim

We aim to reduce deliberate fires by 10% by 31st March 2010 from the 2001/02 baseline figure of 104,500.

Our objectives

Within our aim, we have six broad objectives. These are explained in the following paragraphs, with progress we have made towards achieving them.

Objective 1 – to reduce the number of deliberate fires and the related deaths, injuries and damage.

- Youth Strategy – we have developed a Fire and Rescue Service strategy for children and young people. This has now been approved and will be included in the National Framework for 2006/07, subject to public consultation.
- Nuisance Vehicles Strategy – we contributed to the development of the national strategy, launched in November 2004, which aims to reduce the numbers of abandoned vehicles by 25% by 2008.

Objective 2 – to oversee all matters relating to preventing and investigating arson.

- Fire Investigation – we have assisted in the development of National Occupational Standards for Fire Investigation and we are developing supporting Protocols that set out the procedures to be followed when investigating suspicious fires.

Objective 3 – to develop, monitor and support initiatives aimed at preventing and detecting arson more effectively and making people aware of issues relating to preventing and investigating arson.

- Car crime and deliberate fires – we published research looking at the relationship between car crime and deliberate fires in motor vehicles.
- Juvenile Firesetter Intervention – we recently published research looking at the range of firesetting intervention schemes for children and young persons currently undertaken by the fire and rescue service and other agencies.
- School Security – we have contributed to the development of a dedicated school security area on TeacherNet which is anticipated to be available to headteachers shortly. This includes advice on arson prevention.

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2 Safer Schools Matters – www.teachernet.gov.uk
Objective 4 – to promote partnership and working together in order to allow all interested people to contribute to developing a policy on preventing and investigating arson.

- Local investment – local initiatives to control arson have received grants to invest in schemes to reduce arson. Over the three year period to March 2006 we will be funding or part-funding 66 such schemes. This represents a total investment of about £1 million in 2003/2004, rising to just over £4.3 million in 2004/2005 and £4.1 million in 2005/2006.
- Local initiatives – we published the independent evaluation of the pilot schemes funded by the Forum, focussing on the key process building issues associated with the implementation of local projects and examining their impact and cost-effectiveness as a means of addressing arson.
- We contributed to the Clean Neighbourhoods initiative which seeks to bring about improvements to all aspects of public space. This will enable us to address the persistent low-level firesetting involving rubbish, skips and so on, which blight neighbourhoods.

Objective 5 – to monitor and contribute to improvements in recording and detecting arson in the United Kingdom.

- We have contributed to consultation on the way in which the fire and rescue service collects data via the FDR1 fire data report form.

Objective 6 – to monitor and contribute to the work European and International agencies carry out to prevent and investigate arson.

- We have established links with the United Kingdom Chapter of the International Association of Arson Investigators (IAAI)

Example 1 – arson initiative

In Staffordshire, the ‘Xtinguish’ programme has helped young people who had been convicted at youth courts for arson-related incidents. Fire and Rescue Service personnel have been specially trained to deliver the programme and undertake a structured series of one-to-one sessions with participants. The sessions help offenders to understand the consequences of their actions and bring about a change in attitude towards crime. The success of the ‘Xtinguish’ programme is apparent – not one of those referred to it has re-offended and there is evidence that the participants’ general attitude and behaviour has improved – illustrating how the increasing community role of the Fire and Rescue Service can have a real impact on people’s lives. The ‘Xtinguish’ programme has received international recognition at the Third International Juvenile Identification and Intervention Conference and was funded by the Arson Control Forum until March 2006.
Good Practice Conference

On 13 May 2004 we held our first good practice conference at the Royal Institute of Civil Engineering in London.

The aim of the conference was to promote good practice in arson prevention, drawing on the findings of the pilot projects we had funded as part of our ‘New Projects’ initiative and to highlight the advantages of working together in arson control.

The conference attracted over 250 delegates from the police, the fire and rescue service, the insurance industry, central and local government and academia. Ministerial support was provided by Phil Hope MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State with responsibility for fire safety. He gave the keynote address and explained how our work formed part of the national strategy to improve fire safety and enhance the quality of life in communities across the country. Hazel Blears MP, Minister of State at the Home Office also wrote endorsing the underlying objectives of the conference.

The morning session included a series of presentations about the research projects we have undertaken in support of the pilot projects. One of the emerging themes was that by taking the initiative and engaging with key partners, a real difference could be made to reducing arson, thereby saving lives as well as precious resources. The conference heard that the evaluation of our New Projects initiative had achieved a remarkable degree of success with recorded deliberate fires nearly 30% down where projects were run, compared with the figures in control areas. The projects proved to be highly cost effective; it was estimated that for every £1 invested, we saved about £16 thorough reduced fires.
The conference also heard about a number of individual projects covering issues as diverse as derelict and abandoned vehicles; working with young people who were in danger of social exclusion; the detailed work of a dedicated arson task force and the regional fire investigation team approach.

These individual projects and many others were also the subject of an exhibition that we sponsored as part of the conference and which gave delegates the opportunity to meet and discuss matters of common interest.

The afternoon session was given over to a series of workshops, addressing various aspects of arson control. The workshops resulted in a series of recommendations and conclusions which will assist us and others to work together more effectively to tackle the arson problem.

The conference was regarded as a tremendous success and many valuable lessons were learned and contacts made. A more in-depth report of the conference can be seen at our Website: www.arsoncontrofforum.gov.uk. A similar conference was held in June 2005 on the general theme of ‘Working with Young People’ which reflected our new emphasis on the role of the fire and rescue service and other agencies in working with young firesetters and those in danger of exclusion. We shall report on that in our next Annual Report.
Future work

In common with other types of crime and anti-social behaviour, most arson appears to be committed by a minority of prolific offenders, many of whom are under 18 and also commit other offences.

Most fire and rescue services now include some form of firesetting intervention scheme for children and adolescents in their current work programmes. There is a tremendous amount of commitment, pockets of good practice but no overarching framework for development.

We have therefore developed a medium to long term high-level strategy for 2005–2010 which will set the direction and framework for the Fire and Rescue Service in partnership with the Police Service, the Youth Justice Board and other key stakeholders. The strategy is intended to guide fire and rescue services in drawing up their Integrated Risk Management Plans, developing local partnerships and contributing to local youth and crime strategies and local Public Service Agreements. Beyond the Fire and Rescue Service, the strategy is aimed at everyone concerned with the safety, education and wellbeing of children and young people, and with reducing the impact of fire crime. The intention is not in any way to stifle creativity or to provide a comprehensive list of possibilities.

Example 2 – arson initiative

In Bristol, a ‘Car Clear Partnership’ was established in 2001 to reduce vehicle arson and improve the life for local communities. With financial support from the Arson Control Forum the partnership was expanded in 2002 to cover the whole of Avon. The strategy of the ‘Car Clear Partnership’ is simple and involves community involvement providing a 24-hour hot-line for the public to report vandalised derelict vehicles; targeting potential offenders by delivering a one-hour interactive presentation to all 14-year olds in the area showing the consequences of vehicle arson; cutting off the supply of vehicles by establishing protocols with car auctions and motor dealers to prevent vulnerable vehicles entering the market; and immediate targeted vehicle removal with vehicles being removed within 30 minutes of identification and crushed within 24 hours.

The Partnership has been an outstanding success, with vehicle arson figures reduced by 40% in three years but by far the biggest achievement is the difference it has made to the quality of life in local communities: estates no longer have the stigma of vandalised cars which become the focal point of arson attacks and other anti-social behaviour. Such is the success of the ‘Avon Car Clear Partnership’ that the local authorities, along with Avon and Somerset Police and Avon Fire and Rescue Service now fully fund the project themselves to ensure that this good work continues.
We will underpin the youth strategy with annual action plans which will set out the detail of actions to be undertaken by ODPM and partners in each year. The plans will provide additional guidance for fire and rescue services and partners and will form the basis of monitoring from year to year. We will review the strategy each year and advise Ministers on progress, in consultation with other key stakeholders.
Arson Control Forum Implementation Fund

One of the key levers in achieving a reduction in deliberate fires has been our Implementation Fund, the outcome of which we announced in January 2004. Sixty-six projects are receiving funding amounting to £9.4 million over the three years to March 2006. The successful projects cover a wide geographical spread from Wales to Kent and from the southwest to the northeast of England. They also range widely in terms of their target areas, from the inner cities to more rural areas, and reflect those areas with a high incidence of arson. The successful projects include 27 car clearance schemes and 30 arson task forces as well as a number of other, more innovative, projects including a pilot regional fire investigation team in the northeast. This latter project is in line with the proposal for specialist regional teams set out in the National Framework and we will continue to monitor it closely. We have also funded a small number of youth intervention/youth diversion schemes and we intend to build on these in the future in line with our new strategy to address some of the wider anti-social behaviour problems associated with disaffected youth.

We are therefore now embarking upon the final year of funding and we are seeing the benefits of the local partnership approach to arson control which we have highlighted throughout this report.

On 1 January 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government assumed responsibility for the grant payments made to the three projects in the Principality that had previously been supported by the Arson Control Forum. This was in consequence of the full devolution to the Welsh Assembly Government of responsibility for the Fire and Rescue Service following the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004.

Example 3 – arson initiative

In Kent, some 7,000 secondary school students have benefited from a ground-breaking new programme to make them aware of the consequences of arson. Using funding provided by the Arson Control Forum the course is one of the first to use interactive learning techniques to help teenagers understand the consequences of fire. A critical aspect of the programme, which is aimed at 13 to 14 year-olds, was making sure that it fitted squarely into the National Curriculum with links into ‘Citizenship/PSHE’ and community involvement. With the help of former Ofsted staff, six themes have been developed for the programme highlighting arson and reducing anti-social behaviour. In contrast to many established presentation-based primary schools programmes, active learning is the key to the new initiative. This follows established good practice that students only remember 10% of information given in the form of a lecture but, if they are actively involved, the percentage rises to about 75%.

3 Personal, Social & Health Education.
The Prevention and Investigation of Arson

Historically, a lack of collaboration between the many agencies involved in tackling arson has prevented effective measures being put in place to address the causes and effects of arson. However, the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 gave Fire and Rescue Services the power to investigate fires and has given added emphasis to two inter-related pieces of work which are now coming to completion. The first of these was the development of *Fire Investigation Protocols* which set out the procedures to be followed by agencies when investigating fires. The protocols dictate the level of investigation that is required for different situations, from relatively minor fires, where the fire crew attending may be able to establish sufficiently the cause of a fire – through to more serious incidents where a specialist forensic investigator will be required. The second piece of work was the development of *National Occupational Standards (NOS)* which relate to the skills and training required for different personnel to perform the tasks laid out in the Protocols. Both of these pieces of work have recently been completed and we will be issuing fresh guidance to those agencies involved in investigating fires shortly.

**Example 4 – arson initiative**

The Luton Arson Task Force is a multi-agency partnership consisting of a range of organisations, including the Police and Fire and Rescue Services, the local authority; the Youth Offending Team and the DVLA. Information is shared on a daily basis between partner organisations and this means that reports of abandoned vehicles and fly-tipped rubbish can be dealt with quickly. The Task Force also co-ordinates multi-agency Environmental Action Days, in which “hot-spot” areas are targeted for systematic clean up. This includes the removal of abandoned vehicles and refuse, securing derelict buildings and checks on pavements and street lamps. Local schools and businesses are also offered fire safety advice and risk assessments.
Research

Our research programme looks at issues surrounding the collection and dissemination of information about deliberate fires. It also helps to identify the most effective ways to reduce arson.

Important achievements

We have completed research on:

- deliberate fires in vehicles and the relationship with other vehicle crime;
- how arson relates to social issues such as poverty, unemployment and poor housing;
- terms to use when referring to arson;
- action aimed at deterring convicted arsonists and young people who start fires;
- a full evaluation of local arson-reduction initiatives;

We have also published two reports summarising the ‘good practice’ found by evaluating local arson-reduction schemes funded by us – see Appendix B for full details. These reports are also available on our website: www.arsoncontrolforum.gov.uk.

Our current and future work depends on the budget available, but it is likely to include:

- carrying out research on how people use arson to kill or seriously injure people;
- further monitoring and evaluating arson reduction programmes funded by the Forum’s Implementation Fund;
- survey of arson of non-domestic property including schools, commercial businesses;
- monitoring and evaluation of the fire service’s work with children and young people;
- evaluation of assessment frameworks for children at risk.

Example 5 – arson initiative

The Northumberland Arson Initiative Scoping Study is an example of thorough scanning and analysis of arson problems. This is a multi-agency exercise involving representatives from the Police and Fire and Rescue Services, local authorities and local Youth Offending Teams. The resulting report, which was based largely on analysis of fire data, produced a number of important findings, including those indicating:

- Northumberland had a higher rate of arson than the national average.
- The south-east corner of the county was experiencing the highest increases in malicious fires.
- Motor vehicles were most likely to be the target of deliberate fires.
- The peak times for deliberate vehicle fires were between 23.00 and midnight.
- The highest proportion of deliberate secondary fires was for undergrowth fires. There were also a high number of rubbish fires, bonfires, bin and skip fires. These increased at school holiday times and in the run up to bonfire night.

The report resulted in a number of recommendations for ways to address the problem and these were used to develop a strategy for reducing arson. Funding was subsequently obtained from the Arson Control Forum in order that an Arson Task Force could be established to address these issues.
Appendix A

Implementation Fund: Summary of successful bids: 2004/05 to 2005/06

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## Implementation Fund: Summary of successful bids: 2004/05 to 2005/06

### England

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### Implementation Fund: Summary of successful bids: 2004/05 to 2005/06

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<td><strong>£4,062,200</strong></td>
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</table>

**Note**

When interpreting the table, remember that we fully fund few projects – most also use resources committed by partnership agencies. Some of the projects will also extend past the current funding period, either through partnerships using resources from other work within their annual budgets or from other sources of funding.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Type of project</th>
<th>Lead authority</th>
<th>Amount awarded in 2004/05</th>
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<td>Wales (Bid 1)</td>
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<td><strong>Totals</strong></td>
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4 On 1 January 2005, the Welsh Assembly Government assumed responsibility for grant payments to the three projects in the Principality that had previously been supported by the Forum. The Forum therefore funded these projects for three quarters of 2004/5.
Appendix B

Published Reports

The Arson Control Forum has published the following guidance documents and research reports:

Research Reports


Research Bulletins


Best Practice Guides


Annual Reports


Copies of all publications are available free from: ODPM Publications, PO Box 236, Wetherby, West Yorkshire, LS23 7NB

Tel: 0870 1226 236.
Fax: 0870 1226 237.
Textphone: 0870 1207 405.
Email: odpm@twoten.press.net