

Welcome to our Annual Service Report for 2024-25

Last year we set out to deliver a series of improvements, innovations, and investments intended to provide the best possible services for the people of Lancashire.

I am pleased to report the ways in which we have achieved our ambitions across the full range of our services.

Preventing fires and other emergencies is one of our key priorities and the most effective way to make Lancashire safer. It is pleasing that we saw a reduction in the number of accidental house fires of more than double the national average, reflecting dedicated prevention services that provide safety interventions in homes, educate people in our fire safety campaigns, and teach children fire safety in schools.

Supporting businesses, employers, and landlords to meet their legal duties and keep people safe in their buildings amid changes to fire safety legislation remained an area of focus. Our business fire safety check service delivered more interventions than ever before and when those responsible for fire safety failed to comply, we took enforcement action.

Last year a supported living care provider was prosecuted for fires safety breaches in a case believed to be the first of its kind, and in which tragically someone lost their life. We will always work with those willing to address fire safety issues however we will not hesitate to act when necessary.

Firefighters responded to 17,000 incidents across Lancashire during the year, including complex, challenging, and protracted emergencies demanding expert operational skills and, in some cases, exceptional dedication and bravery.

Investment in two new water towers strengthened firefighting capabilities in tall buildings. These innovative fire engines can penetrate buildings at height to inject water, simultaneously minimising damage to homes and businesses and improving firefighter safety. We now have four water towers providing greater cover across Lancashire.

As part of our work to improve the sustainability of our on-call fire engines, we invested in research into recruitment and retention challenges and opportunities. In a first for the fire and rescue service nationally, this led to the development of an innovative online tool which provides local leaders with data and insight to support their stations and maximise fire engine availability.

Our people are central to everything we achieve and investment in their training, equipment, wellbeing, and safety is a long-held priority. Last year this focussed on supporting mental health alongside investment in body worn cameras to improve firefighter safety and operational learning.

We also created a wider range of opportunities for people in our Service to develop their careers and take their next step, be that through specialist skills, different roles or promotion. The way we deliver training changed from a fixed model in a central location to flexible provision, using technology or taking training to fire stations.

I am proud of the contribution everyone in the Service makes every day, on the frontline and supporting behind the scenes. There is an unwavering determination to achieve our goals, respond positively to challenges, and make a difference in our communities.

Jon Charters

Chief Fire Officer

Valuing our people so they can focus on making Lancashire safer

Create an organisational culture where diversity is encouraged and valued

Our STRIVE values and the national Core Code of Ethics guide the professional behaviours of all our staff. We are proud of our culture in Lancashire and the high levels of trust the public have in our Service. However, we remain focussed on building a more inclusive service where diversity is nurtured and valued.

Achievements:

- Recruited at all levels of operational rank from firefighter to chief fire officer alongside service support roles, drawing talented people from inside and outside the organisation.
- Delivered incident command workshops on International Women's Day aimed at attracting women in the Service into leadership roles.
- Took positive action in communities to encourage people who may not traditionally have considered joining the fire service to think of firefighting as a career option through 'Have a Go' events.
- Opened up more pathways to becoming an on-call firefighter including: support service employees being able to work on-call alongside their existing role; on-call firefighters being able to undertake their primary employment from a fire station; and wholtime firefighters being able to work on-call on an ad-hoc basis.
- Created a job swap opportunity for firefighters in functional roles such as training and fire safety to spend time working as operational firefighters.
- Implemented learning from values and culture reports related to the fire and rescue service to ensure we maintain the highest standards and levels of public trust. This included conducting criminal records checks for all members of staff and establishing a professional standards function to give additional scrutiny to the investigation of concerns raised within or about the Service. A case management system was also introduced to record all disciplinary and grievance cases.
- Embedded our approach to undertaking equality impact assessments through regular monitoring and quality assurance.

Deliver tailored learning and development opportunities

We are committed to providing learning and development that supports people to reach their full potential and equips them with the skills, knowledge, and resilience to achieve the Service's ambitions and face future challenges.

Achievements:

- Delivered leadership development events for all leaders focused on developing their ability to deliver change successfully.
- Collaborated with North West Ambulance Service and Lancashire Police to deliver leadership development events on health and wellbeing and crisis communications.
- Developed more flexible models of training to meet the needs of on-call firefighters including: increased opportunities for incident command training; reduced the amount of time required between initial breathing apparatus (BA) training and BA team leader training; and delivered training locally on stations instead of at our Learning and Development Centre.
- Introduced flexible models of assessment to demonstrate leadership competency, such as the use of area training hubs for incident command.
- Introduced new digital crew and watch manager development handbooks creating a single, streamlined e-portfolio.
- Streamlined all development handbooks and created more ways for evidence to be captured.
- Delivered project management training to a range of staff providing the skills to effectively lead a project from start to closure.

Encourage and listen to employee voice

We recognise the positive influence on both our employees' wellbeing and organisational success when people at all levels can contribute their views, expertise, and ideas.

Our firefighting tactics staff group is in place and reviewing policies, practices, and equipment to support operational excellence. The group instigated a change to wider hose reels and flow meters on fire engines providing increased water flow and faster fire suppression.

All the new appliances have 22mm hose reels and flow meters. Looking at the ordered vehicles - these will also be on all new deliveries and inlets. All the new appliances will have also 1800l tanks and lighting masts.

The staff focus group, formed by volunteers, was consulted to inform Service activity and our staff engagement programme expanded to create more ways for people to voice their views:

- 95 station visits were carried out by principal officers, directors, and area managers.
- 12 in-person staff events were held with service delivery managers and 10 online events with operational crews.
- 176 wellbeing interactions were completed such as station visits, workshops, and support dog visits.

- 12 On the Menu digital events took place for staff on various topics ranging from the benefits of new water rescue equipment to taking the next step in your career.

Staff feedback leads to Service improvements

The results of our staff survey in 2023, along with feedback from other staff engagement events, has been used to shape improvements and new initiatives across the Service.

Theme: Training, learning and development

Suggested improvement: "Information on how to further improve yourself: courses to better your operational ability, steps and process on promotion, steps to get into fire safety and other departments."

- New guide produced to explain leadership and development pathways supported by promotional events.
- Changes made to the Safe to Command development programme to remove barriers and speed up the process.
- Faster route to breathing apparatus and team leader skills for on-call firefighters.
- New, streamlined digital crew and watch manager development handbooks.
- Incident command workshops delivered locally to on-call crews.
- Virtual classrooms delivered training on area.

Theme: Digital and ICT improvements

Suggested improvement: "A single system rather than using different systems to produce reports."

- Quick and easy data now compiled in Power BI dashboards.
- Faster network speed and better wi-fi connectivity.
- More user-testing of systems and devices.
- Appraisal system reduced to just two stages.
- Only one password to remember across systems and devices.

Theme: Recognition and communication

Suggested improvement: "It would be good if we could have a dedicated on-call bulletin that just has the points relevant to us."

- Dedicated On-Call News introduced in print and digital formats.
- Appreciation events to thank on-call staff, their families and employers for their service and contribution.
- All staff Star Award winners receive an extra day's leave and colleagues can be nominated all year round.

Theme: Facilities and equipment

Suggested improvement: "Better fitness equipment on station."

- New functional fitness kit in all station gyms.
- Programme to replace cardio equipment underway.

Theme: health and wellbeing

Suggested improvement: "Training on mental health especially for managers."

- Training for responding to incidents where a person is in crisis.
- New members of staff attend a programme delivered in conjunction with the Firefighters Charity on responding to trauma and emotions.
- Trauma support task and finish group established to inform post traumatic incident support.
- Employee Assistance Programme app launched offering hints and tips to help build good mental health routines as part of daily life.

Invest in training and technology to improve health and safety

A new procedure and training package was developed to support firefighters dealing with challenging operational incidents which involve people in crisis. Raising awareness of how to approach these incidents safely for both responders and the person in difficulty continues to be a focus of wellbeing activities for operational staff.

A trial of 32 body worn cameras has started, with evaluation to follow in 2025-26, to enhance operational learning, improve firefighter safety, and provide increased transparency during incidents. The cameras were successfully used during the Bonfire Night period in November 2024 and they have also been used in a high-rise building exercise.

The Service invested in additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to provide firefighters with extra protection from injury caused by anti-social behaviour or direct attacks. This PPE also strengthened their safety when responding to hazardous and unpredictable types of incidents, such as those involving public disorder.

Service headquarters and leadership and development centre masterplan

Outline planning permission was submitted for a masterplan to redevelop our Leadership and Development Centre in Chorley, to include the relocation of Service headquarters, new and improved training props, and modernised learning and office space. This was supported by surveys and reports, an independent analysis of space, and stakeholder engagement. An outcome on planning permission is expected in 2025.

Upgrade fire station facilities

Work to improve the rest and welfare facilities at Blackpool Fire Station began and is expected to finish in summer 2025. The investment is part of our commitment to ensuring our people have the best facilities to support their health and wellbeing by providing a safe and positive working environment.

A celebration of our people

In November 2024, Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service marked the exceptional contributions of some of its most dedicated and talented people at a celebration event.

More than 70 people were honoured with a range of awards.

Long Service Good Conduct Awards were given to those who have given exemplary service to Lancashire's communities for 20, 30, and 40 years.

The highest standards of operational response at complex and challenging emergencies were recognised with chief fire officer commendations and bravery awards.

Our Star Awards recognise members of staff nominated by their peers for exemplifying the Service's STRIVE values and the national code of ethics for fire and rescue services. They were presented to the people making a real difference to their communities and their colleagues.

We also celebrated people who had demonstrated outstanding commitment to personal development through academic achievements alongside demanding job roles.

At the event, the Lord Lieutenant of Lancashire presented the retiring chief fire officer, Justin Johnston, with a long service good conduct award for 30 years' service.

The event was a special moment to shine a light on some of our most talented and dedicated people and acknowledge their contribution to keeping the people of Lancashire safe.

Honours and awards

Deputy Chief Fire Officer awarded King's Fire Service Medal

Deputy Chief Fire Officer, Steve Healey, was awarded the King's Fire Service Medal in the New Year's Honours List in recognition of over 28 years' service and leadership.

Steve joined Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service as the deputy chief fire officer in 2021 having previously served in Cumbria for 24 years. As director of strategy and planning he is responsible for the strategic leadership and management of the Service.

He is the chair of the Lancashire Resilience Forum and a member of the Institute of Fire Engineers and the National Fire Chiefs Council, where he is the national lead for on-call firefighters.

Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service was proud to announce it had received the Defence Employer Recognition Scheme Gold Award.

The scheme involves pledging, demonstrating or advocating support to defence and the armed forces community. The Service had already signed the Armed Forces Covenant in 2023 as part of a journey towards receiving bronze, silver, and finally gold awards.

There are veterans from the Army, Royal Navy, and Royal Air Force within the Service, along with family members of veterans and several reservists.

A second remembrance-themed fire engine was also introduced to our fleet to demonstrate support for all members of Lancashire's armed forces community both past and present. The fire engine features the image of four soldiers stood within a poppy field paying their respects.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service receives national recognition

Dean Keary, an apprentice firefighter based at Blackpool Fire Station, was shortlisted for Apprentice Firefighter of the Year in the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) Apprenticeship Awards. Dean was nominated for his hard work, dedication, and outstanding performance during a breathing apparatus team leader assessment.

The Service was also recognised in the NFCC Digital Data and Technology Awards, with the digital, data and technology team shortlisted in several categories. Sophie Ryder, Digital Service Delivery Manager, and Jack Johnston, Technology Service Delivery Manager, were both shortlisted in the Inspirational Leader category.

Community Safety Team Leader Kelly McHugh was shortlisted for Equality Role Model of the Year in the Asian Fire Service Association Awards for her prevention work in central Lancashire's communities.

Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa.

Overall staff engagement (Staff Survey 2023)

- Staff engagement index score: 74%
- Survey response rate: 49%
- 94% feel that their work contributes to making Lancashire safer

Workforce diversity

- 23% female
- 4% diverse ethnicity
- 5% LGBT
- 3% class themselves as disabled

Workforce diversity recruited

- 32% female
- 4% diverse ethnicity
- 6% LGBT
- 5% class themselves as disabled

Recruitment

- 17 wholetime firefighters recruited
- 43 on-call firefighters recruited

Staff absence

- Wholetime - cumulative total number of shifts lost: 8.284
- On-call - cumulative absence (as % of available hours of cover): 1.27%
- Green book - cumulative total number of shifts lost: 7.221

Preventing fires and other emergencies from happening

Lancashire leads the way in reducing accidental house fires

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service has reduced the number of accidental house fires across the county, cutting them by more than twice the national average.

Figures revealed that between 2021 and 2024, Lancashire recorded 2,217 accidental house fires, averaging 739 per year, or 62 per month. This reflected a 15% drop compared to the average of the previous two years - more than double the 4.5% reduction seen across the UK.

The fall in fires is due to fire prevention work, which includes delivering our home fire safety check service, fire safety campaigns, teaching young people about fire safety, and holding station open days and community events to share fire safety advice.

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Samantha Pink said: "This drop in house fires shows the hard work of our firefighters, support staff, and community partners. Fire prevention is a key part of our service, and these figures prove that taking action before a fire happens makes a real difference.

"Having a working smoke alarm is one of the best ways to stay safe, as it reduces the risk of fatalities in a fire by eight times. We urge all residents to check their alarms regularly and take simple steps to prevent fires in their homes."

Invest in improvements to our home fire safety check service

Bringing about positive change in behaviours within people's homes is central to improving community safety. Our core offer is the home fire safety check (HFSC) service targeted to those most at risk, as identified in local risk profiles.

Achievements:

- Made improvements to our contact centre to better support partner agencies when referring individuals to our home fire safety check service. This includes an out-of-hours referral trial, a more streamlined referral pathway, and partner training to showcase the referral process and refresh their fire safety awareness.
- Worked to improve our website including development of a new online referral form for self-referrals and referring family and friends.
- Analysed data and intelligence in-Service and regionally to identify trends in fires across Lancashire and beyond, and respond appropriately.
- Evaluated fire prevention activity strategically before commissioning new developments.

Deliver targeted fire prevention activity

Evaluation of prevention activities is ongoing to give the Service greater understanding of which activities and interventions are most successful. Local evaluation took place to ensure alignment with district plans, which are delivered in communities by local teams.

Internal training and communications were delivered to inform and skill our staff in effectively evaluating prevention activity.

Fire engines display prevention messages

Wildfire prevention and e-charging safety were the themes chosen for two fire engines selected to display graphic designs relating to fire safety campaigns.

Darwen's fire engine depicts wildfire prevention imagery and key messages.

Blackburn with Darwen is one of the most affected areas for wildfire incidents and two of the county's risk sites are located within the borough. Darwen Moor was also the site of a large fire in 2020 which burnt across 5km of moorland. It was caused by a spark from a barbeque which members of the public could not extinguish.

The area is now protected by a public space protection order which bans the use of barbecues, campfires, stoves, fireworks, and paper lanterns.

Blackpool has an e-charging themed fire engine as part of our campaign on the risks associated with rechargeable batteries.

There has been a year-on-year rise in battery related fires in Lancashire, with Blackpool experiencing more than other areas, and most incidents involve a charger.

In Lancaster, 43 bin wagons also display the same messages following a collaboration with Lancaster City Council.

Our vehicles provide a good opportunity to share important messages in our communities. We also have remembrance, LGBTQ+, and on-call recruitment themed fire engines.

Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa.

Critical fire risk map score: 30,750

Accidental dwelling fires (ADFs): 686

ADFs - extent of damage: 85% prevented from spreading from room of origin

Casualties from ADFs: 39 including 6 people who tragically lost their lives

Home fire safety checks delivered: 23,533

Other prevention activities delivered:

- 69,466 children and young people received prevention education
- 14 Fire Cadets programmes delivered to young people
- 24 Prince's Trust courses delivered to young people
- 32,549 people took part in road safety education

Core education package delivered in schools

- 93.5% of schools received Child Safe
- 99% teachers thought Child Safe would positively influence children's behaviour
- 100% children knew that smoke alarms must be tested after the sessions

Protecting people and property when fires happen

Supported living care provider prosecuted for fire safety breaches

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service became the first service to successfully prosecute a supported living care provider for failing to comply with the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005.

The case related to an incident of arson at a supported living property in Colne in 2019. Sadly, one of the three residents of the property passed away due to the fire. Another resident suffered smoke inhalation and was admitted to hospital for two weeks.

Our inspecting officers identified serious fire safety deficiencies within the premises including deficiencies with protected escape routes, the automatic fire alarm system, management of the premises, and the presence of a suitable and sufficient fire risk assessment.

These breaches posed a serious threat to the life and safety of the residents, staff and anyone else who visited the premises.

The care provider, Potensial Limited, pleaded guilty to two fire safety breaches in September 2024. Sentencing took place in January 2025 and resulted in a fine of £135,000 plus costs and victim surcharge.

Those responsible for fire safety in business or other non-domestic premises have a legal duty to ensure that people who use their premises are provided with a safe environment.

While this prosecution serves as a reminder to anyone with responsibility for fire safety to ensure the standards of their properties are kept within the requirements of the law, our thoughts remain with those affected by this tragic incident.

Transform fire protection and business safety

Investment in and development of our protection services has continued to ensure the Service remains well-placed to support those responsible for fire safety in buildings. This follows significant changes to fire safety and building control standards which have changed the way fire and rescue services and our partners work.

Digital improvements were made to streamline the working practises of our fire safety inspectors and improve the flow of information with partner organisations. A document management store was created and our system for managing business fire safety data was developed. A digital form and system to enable contemporaneous notes to be collated, stored and shared were also created.

We invested in mobile devices for our fire safety teams and implemented digital forms to support remote working and generate more efficient working practices.

Strengthen our fire safety inspection programme to meet evolving standards

We take a risk-based approach to inspecting businesses to make sure they are complying with fire safety laws. Fire safety inspectors focus their activity on complex high-risk premises and operational crews check lower risk premises such as schools, shops, and offices.

59 virtual built environment training sessions were delivered to all wholetime and on-call firefighters, flexi duty officers and prevention staff, strengthening the connection between fire protection and frontline service delivery and ensuring that every contact counts.

We also undertook a soft market exercise for the procurement of a new software product which will provide greater flexibility and functionality for staff when delivering out business fire safety check service.

Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at www.lancsfirerecue.org.uk/cfa.

Accidental building fires (ABFs) (commercial premises): 253

ABF (non-commercial premises): 721

Deliberate fires total – 1,928

Deliberate fires – dwellings – 86

Deliberate fires – commercial premises – 140

Deliberate fires – other (rubbish, grassland etc) – 1,702

Fire safety enforcement:

- 3,637 business fire safety checks delivered
- 1,999 fire safety inspections carried out
- 176 fire safety enforcement notices issued
- 17 businesses prohibited from operating following serious breaches of the Fire Safety Order

Building regulation consultations: 97.1% were responded to within the required 15-day period.

The Service was active in 10 arson convictions including one case where there more than one individual was responsible.

Responding to fires and other emergencies quickly and competently

Implement our emergency cover review

Periodically we review the locations, numbers and types of fire stations and appliances against community risks and incident levels across the county. We then propose ways to improve how we respond to emergencies and ensure that we are well equipped to respond to future challenges.

Following an emergency cover review (ECR) in 2022, several improvements are being implemented during the period 2023-2026. The changes strengthened resilience by increasing the number of wholetime firefighters in the Service by eight, and at the same time achieved more effective and efficient use of resources.

1. Introduce more resilient crewing arrangements

A number of changes to crewing arrangements were implemented following the ECR designed to provide greater resilience across the Service.

The impact of the changes and benefits realised following these changes were evaluated. Stations that changed from the day crewing plus duty system to wholetime 2/2/4 saw an increase in capacity for prevention and protection services, with 20% more home and business fire safety checks delivered on average.

Specialist training courses were delivered to support the duty system changes and ensure special appliances and capabilities were maintained. This included training related to the operation of boats, water towers, and aerial ladder platforms plus large animal rescues, incident command, and driving.

2. Review emergency cover in Preston

Preston Fire Station has been identified for long-term redevelopment and we intend to create a new, modern station either in the same place or another location that services both our staff and the local community well.

An extensive survey of potential sites was carried out without a feasible option being identified for relocation, so work continues to explore options to replace the station. In the short-term we are making improvements so it remains fit for purpose with improvements to welfare facilities and structural repairs.

This work forms part of a review of emergency cover across the Preston area to ensure fire engines are situated and staffed in ways that provide the best response to local risks and emergencies. Stakeholder engagement will take place as the review progresses.

3. Optimise emergency cover through dynamic cover software

Dynamic cover software is now established at North West Fire Control, following successful implementation within Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service, to deploy resources more effectively and efficiently. This innovative software provides operators with visual data on community risks and emergency cover in real-time to inform decision-making on how best to deploy resources.

4. Strengthen firefighting and rescue capabilities in high-rise and commercial buildings

In response to the tragic Grenfell Tower fire and the increasing numbers of high-rise buildings in Lancashire, we have been working to strengthen our response to tall building risk.

We have four aerial ladder platforms (ALPs) with hydraulic ladders capable of extending 32 metres in height from which water can be deployed onto a fire.

A new 45 metre ALP has been procured to replace an existing appliance at Preston and provide our highest reach aerial capability to date. The vehicle is being built and is expected to join our fleet in 2025.

Two new water towers join the Service fleet

In addition to the 45 metre ALP, two additional water towers with reach of 20 metres have joined our fleet, based at Lancaster and St Annes fire stations.

Water towers can penetrate slates, tiles, and other building materials at height to inject large volumes of water onto a fire within a building, thanks to a hydraulically-powered piercing tool mounted on the articulated boom of the appliance.

They serve as regular fire engines to transport and equip firefighters to deal with house fires, road traffic collisions and the full range of emergencies we respond to but with this additional capability to spray water at height.

Water towers enhance both firefighter safety and firefighting capability, while at the same time minimising fire damage to businesses and homes.

The appliances join two existing 16 metre water towers in Skelmersdale and Blackburn, providing greater cover across the county.

Smaller in size and weight than ALPs, water towers can more easily access incident grounds and work on gradients. Together, these appliances strengthen firefighting and rescue capabilities in high-rise and commercial buildings.

5. Broaden on-call firefighting capabilities to strengthen operational response

Lancashire has 32 fire appliances crewed by on-call firefighters, who often have another job outside Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service. They are trained to deal with a wide range of incidents and work alongside wholetime firefighters, responding to emergencies in their communities from home or work.

We achieved:

- On-call firefighters were trained to operate special appliances to increase levels of resilience during periods of high demand. Crews at Hyndburn operate an aerial ladder platform, Bolton-le-Sands and Hornby crew a command support unit, and Bamber Bridge and Tarleton crews are trained in operating a water bowser.
- A data-driven recruitment and skills-based strategy is being developed to inform recruitment of on-call firefighters.

Lancashire's new on-call planning tool is a UK first

As part of our programme to improve sustainability of on-call fire engine availability, the Service commissioned a research project to help address the recruitment and retention challenges facing the fire and rescue service nationally.

Using availability, skills, and local population data for each station, the widest possible pool of recruits has been mapped, impacts of increasing turn-in times have been modelled, and optimum skills levels and training priorities were identified.

An online tool was also created using the research which allows the data analysis and modelling to be available to local and strategic leaders, quickly and easily.

This online tool is a first for the fire and rescue service nationally and provides the relevant station information to support local leaders in making evidence-based decisions. It is also used for long-term, strategic workforce planning.

The tool is now in use across the Service to identify optimum skill levels, prioritise training, monitor contractual performance, and inform recruitment needs.

6. Strengthen our response to climate change emergencies

Our climate change operational response plan aims to address the increasing threat of flooding and wildfires, lessen the impacts on communities and public services, and improve firefighter safety when dealing with these emergencies.

Achievements:

- Delivered education and training to key partners and volunteers in Lancashire's wildfire arena including Lancashire Police Rural Task Forces, United Utilities, The Woodland Trust and Natural England. A multi-agency exercise was also carried out.
- Led partnership working through the Lancashire Fire Operations Group bringing together the fire and rescue service, local authorities, Natural England, water companies and other landowners to tackle moorland fires.
- Collaborated with partners to manage and evaluate the public space protection order that bans activities on moorland which carry a risk of causing wildfires across parts of Chorley, Darwen and Bolton.
- Continued to scope and procure two smaller fire engines suitable for off-road travel and a specification was produced. These vehicles will give better access to rural areas in the event of flooding and wildfires. The plan is to trial their use in areas of the county at high risk of these types of emergencies.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service tests drones for wildfire prevention

In June 2024, the Service tested a swarm of self-coordinating drones for firefighting, as part of an effort to develop cost-effective early mitigation strategies for wildfires.

The idea is that the earlier we respond to fires, the less harm they pose to firefighters, communities, infrastructure and the environment.

The project brought Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service together with Windracers, the British developer of self-flying cargo aircraft, and some of the country's most respected AI and robotics scientists based at the University of Bristol and the University of Sheffield.

Together they developed unique technology for autonomously detecting and suppressing fires before they spread into uncontrollable wildfires.

It is a key milestone in the development of wildfire prevention technology which could be deployed by firefighters in the coming years pending regulatory approval.

The project was funded by The Future Flight challenge at UK Research and Innovation, delivered by Innovate UK.

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service leads nationally on the use of drones in fire and rescue.

Invest in our Learning and Development Centre

Outline planning permission was submitted for a masterplan for the redevelopment of our Leadership and Development Centre in Chorley to include the relocation of Service headquarters, new and improved training props, and modernised learning and office space. Stakeholder engagement on the training props is ongoing. An outcome on planning permission is expected in 2025.

Work to improve our working at height rope and rescue training prop progressed with procurement completed and designs developed with stakeholders to ensure the facility is fit for purpose.

Drill tower replacement programme

A change to our service-wide programme to replace drill towers at fire stations meant work to replace drills towers at nine stations is underway: Clitheroe, Garstang, Great Harwood, Haslingden, Longridge, Lytham, Ormskirk, Padiham, and Wesham.

Procurement of a main contractor was completed and feasibility works are in progress including design, site investigations and planning applications.

The programme delivers new steel drill towers with total capital investment of approximately £2.6m over the next five years.

Invest in our fleet and operational equipment

The Service conducts extensive research and development to ensure we continue to invest in appliances and equipment with superior technology and systems, that will lead to a more effective response to emergencies and increased firefighter safety.

Achievements:

- Introduced two new technical rescue units to our fleet, based at Preston and Chorley fire stations. These appliances are the same as regular fire engines but carry extra heavy rescue equipment including winches and lighting masts.
- Introduced a second new incident command unit at Blackburn Fire Station joining the first, which is based at Fulwood. These units help firefighters to more effectively manage complex and large-scale emergencies with Starlink satellite, 4G/5G connection, and a FreeSat TV system which provides the ability to broadcast from other devices. They also a camera system that helps maintain situational awareness and gives feedback to the crews on the incident ground about the size and location of a fire. The vehicles replaced existing units and attend protracted incidents across the whole county.
- Trialled and evaluated a firefighting robot resulting in plans to purchase the robot in 2025. It is an innovative multi-functional crawler vehicle which can be deployed in places that are too dangerous for people, therefore reducing the risk to firefighters.
- Supported a comprehensive procurement process for the implementation of a new mobilising system at North West Fire Control working with Cumbria, Cheshire and Greater Manchester fire and rescue services.
- Evaluated our underwater drone which has since been upgraded to use the latest sonar technology. This piece of equipment is a remotely operated vehicle that can search underwater while being operated from land. It has been used successfully in Lancashire and has been deployed nationally,

assisting other fire and rescue services and police forces to search for missing people.

Lancashire firefighter delivers international flood rescue training in Malawi

A representative from Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service joined a group of UK firefighters on a two-week deployment in Malawi, delivering vital flood response training to emergency service partners.

Twelve members from the UK International Search and Rescue (UKISAR) capability team delivered the training on behalf of the UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office as part of an international capacity-building programme.

Watch Manager Wayne Ward from Lancashire was selected to be involved due to his advanced power boat skills, as well as his specialist knowledge and experience in flood rescue operations.

The training took place on Lake Malawi, in the Monkey Bay area, and was delivered to 40 members of Malawi's national search and rescue cluster.

The visit followed UKISAR's first deployment to Malawi in 2023 to help with rescue efforts during Cyclone Freddy, one of the worst weather events the country has faced in recent years.

Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at www.lancsfirecue.org.uk/cfa.

Overall activity

- 16,963 incidents attended
- 4,723 fires attended
- 678 road traffic collisions attended
- 85 missing person searches
- 948 gaining entry to property incidents in support of North West Ambulance Service

Average attendance time

- Overall - 8 minutes 20 seconds
- Critical fire response – first fire engine attendance – 7 mins 38 seconds
- Critical special service response – first fire engine attendance – 8 minutes 46 seconds

Total availability of the first fire engine at each of our 39 fire stations - 87.97%

Delivering value for money in how we use our resources

We aim to use our resources efficiently to provide the best possible fire and rescue service for the people of Lancashire and to ensure the Service is affordable, now and in the future.

Create a new rota management team

A new, dedicated rota management team was established to manage the range of duty systems in operation across the Service more effectively and drive more efficient use of our resources. The rota system was also upgraded and new technology created efficiencies in the way rotas and time are managed.

Review productivity and efficiency

A productivity and efficiency plan for 2024-25 was produced, setting out our direction of travel towards delivering cashable and non-cashable efficiencies. We achieved national productivity and efficiency targets and delivered these across several areas of the Service including premises, transport, supplies and services. Future productivity and efficiency intentions are set out in a plan for 2025-26, which is available to view on our website.

All our sites were reviewed prior to specialist surveys which will help us understand opportunities for environmental improvements to our buildings including options for carbon reduction. A procurement exercise was carried out and on-site work to physically examine the performance our buildings will begin in 2025.

Drive efficiencies through digitisation

Building on our digital first culture, we continued to empower our people to access information and data easily on a range of systems and devices, and driven efficiencies through digitisation.

We achieved:

- An alternative fleet management software system was procured to digitise on-station daily vehicle and equipment checks. The system will be implemented in 2025.
- A process for scrutinising procurement requests for systems, applications, and data related solutions was implemented and supporting documentation published. The objective is to ensure value for money and identify economies of scale by using fewer solutions to service an increased portfolio of requirements.

- All fire engines are now fitted with new front and rear mobile data terminals to maximise productivity when crews are away from fire stations and working within communities. Incident command and command support units have also been equipped with new front terminals.

Introduce Microsoft Power BI dashboards

Microsoft Power BI offers an opportunity to collate and interrogate performance data via a single platform which can be developed specifically to the user or department's needs through dashboards.

We achieved:

- Work to expand the information in our data warehouse increased our use of Power BI dashboards for performance reporting.
- Training sessions were delivered on station to upskill staff to use the Power BI dashboards to improve performance management.
- We are working with external providers to develop additional local performance dashboards tailored to meet department requirements.

Collaborate with other public services

Through our Blue Light Collaboration Board with Lancashire Constabulary and North West Ambulance Service, and by working jointly with other partners, we aim to collectively improve services to the public.

We achieved:

- Collaboration with other fire and rescue services across the North West on procurement delivered savings and efficiencies to the region. This includes procuring goods and services such as breathing apparatus, which Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service is leading on, hose reels, and body worn cameras.
- Blue light collaboration projects are being developed in the following areas: missing person searches, Community First Responders, leadership and development, wellbeing, mental health and welfare, and recruitment initiatives.
- An estates sub-group also operates to identify opportunities for collaboration in this area.

Community First Responder collaboration saves lives

In a collaboration with North West Ambulance Service (NWAS), members of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service volunteer as community first responders, providing life-saving first aid in Lancashire's communities.

13 volunteers from both operational and support service roles currently respond to life-threatening emergencies in their communities from the workplace and administer first aid in the initial vital minutes before NWAS staff arrive.

Our volunteers responded to 238 incidents in 2024 and we plan to expand the initiative by involving more people.

Measuring progress

Our Service performance is reported quarterly to the Lancashire Combined Fire Authority. This year's reports can be accessed at www.lancsfirerecue.org.uk/cfa.

Progress against allocated budget: £0.6m over budget

Partnership collaboration:

- Received 132 drone requests from Lancashire Constabulary, mostly missing person searches.
- 13 members of staff in role of community first responders working with North West Ambulance Service.
- Property reviews underway to identify blue light collaboration opportunities over next 5-10 years.
- Two joint leadership events arranged for fire, police, and ambulance middle managers.

Overall public satisfaction – 98.68%

Significant incidents

Commercial property fire in Blackpool

7 June 2024

On the evening of 7 June 2024, a fire broke out at a vast, disused commercial building on Warbreck Hill Road in Blackpool, sending plumes of smoke billowing into the sky and prompting a large-scale emergency response. The structure, spanning an enormous 36,000 square metres, quickly became the focus of intense firefighting efforts.

Ten fire engines and a fleet of specialist appliances, including aerial ladder platforms and water towers, responded to the incident. Firefighters battled the blaze tirelessly over several days, working in challenging conditions to contain the fire and prevent it from spreading further. Thanks to their swift and coordinated efforts, only a portion of the massive building was affected.

The incident triggered a multi-agency response, with Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service working closely alongside Lancashire Police, Blackpool Council, and other key partners to manage the situation and ensure public safety. No injuries were reported.

Commercial building fire in Samlesbury

31 July 2024

A significant fire broke out in the early hours of the morning on 31 July 2024 at a farm on Preston New Road in Samlesbury, drawing a large-scale emergency response from across Lancashire. Ten fire engines, supported by two aerial ladder platforms and a range of specialist units, were swiftly deployed to tackle the blaze.

Firefighters worked determinedly to bring the fire under control, navigating complex conditions to protect nearby properties and infrastructure. The coordinated efforts of Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service and its partner agencies kept disruption to the local community to a minimum. No injuries were reported.

House explosion in Longridge

1 September 2024

An explosion on Wheatley Drive in Longridge resulted in eight fire engines and specialist units, including the urban search and rescue team, being mobilised to the scene of a devastating house blast.

The force of the explosion tore through the property, sending debris flying across the residential street. Crews worked swiftly and tirelessly, navigating through the

wreckage to locate and assist victims. Tragically, one individual sustained serious injuries and later died in hospital.

As a precaution, nearby homes were evacuated, with residents ushered to safety while firefighters assessed the structural integrity of surrounding buildings. Residents were only allowed to return once the area was declared safe.

Commercial building fire in Blackburn

31 March 2025

A huge fire surrounded a warehouse on Sett End Road West in Blackburn, prompting an emergency response involving ten fire engines and a fleet of specialist appliances.

The fire, which broke out in a facility storing plastics, unleashed a plume of smoke over the local area, which was visible for miles.

Firefighters battled the intense flames with cutting-edge equipment, including two aerial ladder platforms, a high-powered water tower, a high-volume pump, and a state-of-the-art firefighting robot. Overhead, the drone team provided real-time aerial surveillance, guiding crews on the ground through the smoke and heat.

The fire posed a significant challenge due to the volatile materials involved, but thanks to the coordinated efforts of firefighters, the fire was eventually brought under control.

Residents and businesses in the vicinity were urged to keep windows and doors closed as the smoke plume drifted across the area. Traffic in the area was affected by hoses running across a major road during rush hour but firefighters worked with the police and local authority to mitigate the effects of the fire.