

Draft Social Partnership Duty

2025-26



Gwasanaeth Tân ac Achub
Fire and Rescue Service



ATAL AMDDIFFYN YMATEB
PREVENTING PROTECTING RESPONDING

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Introduction

The Social Partnership and Public Procurement (Wales) Act 2023, (SPPP Act), which came into force on 01 April 2024, requires public bodies, including North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority, (NWFR), to produce an annual report to evidence how they have complied with The Social Partnership Duty created by the SPPP Act.

The Social Partnership Duty requires North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority to seek consensus or compromise with their recognised trade unions, when

- i. setting their well-being objectives; and
- ii. making decisions of a strategic nature about the reasonable steps they intend to take to deliver those objectives.

Section 16(2) of the Act sets out several specific requirements relating to the Duty, with which NWFR must comply when 'seeking consensus or compromise'.

In order to seek consensus or compromise a public body must include its recognised trade unions or other representatives of its staff in the process of setting objectives or making decisions, by (in particular)—

- a) consulting them at a formative stage of the process, and
- b) otherwise involving them throughout the process by;
 - i. providing sufficient information to enable them to properly consider what is proposed, and
 - ii. providing sufficient time to enable them to adequately consider what is proposed and respond.

Section 18 of the SPPP Act states:

1. A public body must prepare, in respect of each financial year, a report of what it has done to comply with the duty.
2. The report must be agreed with the public body's recognised trade unions or contain a statement explaining why it was not agreed.

3. The public body must publish the report, and submit it to the Social Partnership Council, as soon as reasonably practicable after the end of the financial year.

Background

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority delegates responsibility for certain functions to the Chief Executive/Chief Fire Officer of North Wales Fire and Rescue Service (NWFRS).

In addition to the requirement of the [Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#) to set well-being objectives, there is a separate statutory duty for Fire and Rescue Services in Wales to consult with the public annually on improvement objectives, as required by the [Local Government \(Wales\) Measure 2009](#).

Welsh Government Fire Circular ([W-FRSC\(2024\)06](#), dated 6th April 2024) provides that the “duties under the 2009 Measure and the Wellbeing of Future Generation Act 2015 can be discharged through the publication of a single report.”

NWFRA approved the first [Social Partnership Duty Annual report 2024-25](#) for publication on the 28 April 2025.

How we complied with the Social Partnership Duty

NWFRS has established a Governance Assurance Framework to discharge its responsibilities on behalf of NWFRA. Part of that Framework includes a Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee (JCNC), chaired by a Principal Officer, and whose membership includes representatives from each of the recognised trade unions. Relevant officers from across the Service attend with the Head of Operational Response and Head of Human Resources attending each meeting.

North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority's recognised trade unions are;

- The Fire Brigade Union,
- Fire & Rescue Service Association,
- Fire Officers Association,
- Fire Leaders Association,
- UNISON,
- Unite.

The Committee meets six weekly, and the Social Partnership Duty has been incorporated into the objectives of the Committee and is included as a standing item on the agenda for each meeting.

Throughout 2025-26 the JCNC meetings took place on the following dates:

- 4th April 2025
- 9th May 2025
- 19th June 2025
- 6th August 2025
- 18th September 2025
- 7th November 2025
- 27th January 2026
- 24th February 2026

The Committee's focus is on fostering good working relationships with all representative bodies and discussing matters of relevance to all staff.

Although the Committee is strategic, a broad range of issues are discussed at each meeting; these can include forward looking matters of strategic importance through to more tactical issues.

Notably all policies and procedures are highlighted for consultation prior to approval by the Service Leadership Team, ensuring that matters of note or concern are addressed at the relevant time.

During the course of the year the following matters have been considered and recorded under the social partnership duty:

- **Emergency Cover Review** – a staff led working group to consider future options for improving rural availability
- **Development of a new Training Centre** – regular consultation and updates relating to the development of new training facilities, critical to operational firefighters
- **Improving our culture** – updates and engagement on the action plan and progress made, following the Crest review recommendations
- **Collective agreement implementation** – meaningful engagement with Trade Union representatives in decision-making and implementation of the Collective Agreement
- **Policies** – updates on policy development and publication
- **Retained Duty System Pilot leave** – consulting and providing updates on an initiative to address recommendations following an earlier review of Retained Duty System leave
- **Pensions** – Updates and discussion on pension-related matters
- **Procurement of new Turntable Ladder Platform** – engagement with representative bodies, giving particular consideration to the procurement process, decision making processes, timelines and training.
- **Replacement of Technical Rescue Units** – consultation with Trade Union representatives on the build specification, procurement process,

decision making process and timelines, aligned to the new Turntable Ladder Platform.

- **Budget for 2026-27** – the budget was developed, shared and explained in detail with Trade Union representatives, ensuring transparency and ongoing engagement in key financial decisions.
- **All-Wales Retained Duty System Project** - working collaboratively with Welsh Government, trade unions and partners to shape improvements and share best practice whilst strengthening on-call policies and procedures.

Following Fire and Rescue Authority approval of the [Community Risk Management Plan for 2024-2029](#), throughout 2025-26, work focussed on the development of the 2026-27 improvement and well-being objectives, which were developed in consultation with Trade Unions and following a separate public consultation process, and were approved for publication in the [Community Risk Management Implementation Plan 2026-27](#).

In addition to the above, in order to strengthen the Authority's commitment to Social Partnership, at the Joint Consultation and Negotiation Committee meeting held on 6th April 2025, the Chair led the Committee through the [Social Partnership The Welsh Way](#) handbook, and outlined the importance of the request from Welsh Government for Social partnership Champions, to discuss and promote the effectiveness of Social Partnership. Trade Union representatives supported this, and nominated champions.

Conclusion

This report reflects a year of positive and constructive partnership between North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority and recognised Trade Unions.

The Authority remain committed to fostering good working relationships with Trade Unions and will continue to maintain regular and transparent communication.