

## Press Release

### Date

Release date 5 May 2014

### Closer collaboration needed to reduce arson

Insurers, police and fire services and the crown prosecution service need to work much more closely together if we are to reduce the £1.7 billion annual cost of arson to the United Kingdom, a report has found.

Lee Howell, Independent Chairman of the Arson Prevention Forum, said: "Arson costs UK plc over £1.7 billion each year and, perhaps surprisingly, 45% of all fires attended are deliberate.

"Whilst the long term trend is positive in terms of declining numbers of deliberate fires, it still remains a significant issue and more could and should be done to address this complex problem.

"The Arson Prevention Forum is calling on each and every agency with an interest in or responsibility for arson to consider what more it could do to prevent arson and its negative impact on individuals, confidence of communities and society as a whole."

Speaking during Arson Awareness Week (3-9 May), Mr Howell focused on the key findings of the forum's Arson: a call to action report.

According to recently published fire statistics, in England alone arson incidents accounted for 68,900 fires, 45% of all fires attended. Whilst the number of deliberate fires is reducing, the cost to business, the government, the public and the insurance industry is not. Mr Howell added: "This clearly emphasises that more needs to be done. Collaboration is the key. Working together to improve the effectiveness of prevention, protection, investigation and diversion activities will help reduce the incidence of fires and the associated cost.

"The approach towards arson reduction is not as joined up as it could be, and the level of investment directed towards tackling arson is limited, to say the least." The report recommends that all the agencies involved need to work better together, sharing resources, funding as well as expertise and knowledge.

The report is intended to be the catalyst to inspire an increased focus on arson, help raise awareness of the issue, improve public safety and reduce costs to insurers and policy holders. Further information on the Arson Prevention Forum along with resources and examples of notable practice can be found at [www.stoparsonuk.org](http://www.stoparsonuk.org).

### Notes to editors:

The Arson Prevention Forum is a strategic platform for sharing good practice, information and approaches with the intention of reducing the frequency and impact of arson with the corresponding reduction of deaths, injuries and cost to business, insurers and society as a whole. Lee Howell is the Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser/Inspector for Wales, the Chief Fire Officer for Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service and a former President (2011/12) of the UK Chief Fire

Officers Association. He was awarded the Queen's Fire Service Medal for distinguished service in the New Year 2014 Honours List.

The Arson: a call to action report is available here:

<http://www.stoparsonuk.org/documents/resources/DS2014-1156ArsonReportandappendix.pdf>

The Arson Prevention Forum has made a series of recommendations which are listed here:

#### Recommendations

These recommendations will assist all the involved agencies and organisations to work together to tackle arson.

The insurance industry to play a leading role in arson reduction interventions

- The insurance industry to invest in prevention, working with police and fire and rescue services, utilising partnerships with other agencies, to see what this would look like and how this would work.
- The insurance industry to commission research to enable a better understanding of the risks and victim profiles.
- The Association of British Insurers to collate good practice with respect to arson reduction arrangements within the insurance industry and share with the Arson Prevention Forum for wider dissemination.
- Data and trends identified to be presented by the Association of British Insurers to the Arson Prevention Forum to allow other organisations to contribute to reducing the costs of arson and associated impact on society.
- The Fire Protection Association, through their RISC Authority group, working with the Association of British Insurers, to ensure that data required to inform the scale of the problem is presented to the Arson Prevention Forum on an annual basis.
- The insurance industry to report on what has worked previously to drive down claims.
- A figure is captured for the cost of arson as this is currently not separately recorded from the total cost of fire.
- The insurance industry consider the role sprinklers may play as a means of protecting properties and reducing the impact of arson and how their inclusion within buildings might reduce the fire element of insurance premiums.

The police (including Home Office and Police & Crime Commissioners)

- The commitment to reducing crime should extend to arson with greater visibility, commitment and drive to further reduce this crime and associated anti-social behaviour.
- Leadership by the Home Office, police and crime commissioners and Chief Officers will ensure arson is reduced, supported by working relationships with partners at a tactical level. Build on partnership working, especially between fire and rescue services and the police (via CFOA and ACPO), supported by the Local Government Association (LGA) and Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC)
- Ensure respective Presidents of the Association of Chief Police Officers and Chief Fire Officers Association meet to demonstrate professional leadership at the highest level and encourage greater joint working.
- Ensure the Chairman of the Fire Service Management Committee and the Chairman of the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners meet to demonstrate political leadership at the highest level and encourage greater joint working.
- The APF to extend its reach into voluntary organisations to increase awareness of the issue and mitigation strategies (e.g. Crimestoppers, MIND, Prince's Trust, Young Minds, Nacro (the crime reduction charity), education).

The Arson Prevention Forum to coordinate learning from local arson reduction programmes

- Members of the Arson Prevention Forum to submit robust and evaluated examples of good practice to be shared.
- The Arson Prevention Forum to establish a Memorandum of Understanding to provide clarity as to what can be expected by police and fire and rescue services and the processes to be followed to ensure evidence is properly secured at the scene.
- Consider what is working and why and source evaluated case studies which demonstrate how activity led to a reduction in deliberate fires.
- Identify gaps in knowledge or approaches, utilising process mapping, and consider how best to rectify.

The Crown Prosecution Service to share lessons learnt from successful and unsuccessful prosecutions

- The Crown Prosecution Service to share data on prosecutions with the Association of Chief Police Officers to determine what could be done to improve prosecution rates.  
Encourage discussions at Central Government level to enable greater emphasis and awareness on arson reduction arrangements to be put in place at local level.
- Discussions to take place between the Department for Communities and Local Government, the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice with respect to arson in order to ensure all that can be done from a police perspective is being done which would dovetail into the drive for greater blue light collaboration and integration where appropriate.
- Raise the issue with the All Party Insurance Group, the All Party Policing Group and the All Party Fire and Rescue Service Group.
- DCLG and Home Office Government to consider how the National Framework for Fire and Rescue Services and National Policing Plan may be used to drive this agenda.

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