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## Press release

Embargoed until 00.01 hours on Thursday 7 October 2004

# Follow up progress report on Fire Service Modernisation in Scotland

**The Accounts Commission's follow up audit report on the Fire Service, published today Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October, found all fire authorities have been making improvements since its earlier report published in March 2004. However modernisation is a long-term project and there is still a significant amount of work to be done before there is real change on the ground. The Commission reports that continued commitment at both local and national levels will be required to see through the changes.**

The national agreement on fire service pay and conditions was finalised on 13 June 2003. It included a condition that:

*"the pay award at stages 2 and 3 are subject to:...verification by the Accounts Commission...that the intended benefits (including savings) of the various national changes are being delivered locally."*

The audit has been carried out in two phases and this latest report relates to the second phase and covers progress over the last six months. The Commission found that overall Strathclyde and Lothian & Borders had made good progress over the six month period, Highlands and Islands and Tayside had made reasonable progress, and some progress had been made by Central Scotland, Dumfries & Galloway, Fife and Grampian.

The progress of each Scottish authority over the six-month period of the report is shown in *exhibit one* (see Notes section below).

Good progress has been made by a number of authorities in developing integrated risk management plans, a key element of modernisation, and also in developing integrated personal development systems. But there is a need for movement in areas where there has been less progress overall, such as overtime and duty systems.

The Commission also recommends that further work is required to assess the level of the savings that are likely to be made as a result of the improvements being introduced across all fire authorities.

The Chair of the Accounts Commission, Alastair MacNish said (if appropriate):

*"In drawing up its future programme of work, the Accounts Commission will consider what further activity it will undertake to examine the impact of the changes currently being implemented in the fire service in Scotland."*

**For further information contact: Beth Hocking, Anne Ryan or Mandy Gallacher on: 0131 624 9974**

### Notes to Editors:

1. The Accounts Commission's report: *The Scottish Fire Services: The Second Verification of the progress of modernisation* will be on the website from 9am on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> October. The earlier report *The Scottish Fire Services: Verification of the progress of modernisation* was published on Wednesday 31 March and is available on the Audit Scotland website: <http://www.audit-scotland.gov.uk/publications/pdf/2004/04pf03ac.pdf>
2. The same methodology for the assessment of the Fire Services was used across Scotland, England, Wales and Northern Ireland, as this relates to a UK pay settlement. This was based on a traffic light scoring system to show the progress of each Fire Authority. However separate arrangements for reporting were made in each nation and the Accounts Commission's report takes account of the different legislative timetable, and separate guidance in Scotland.
3. The Accounts Commission is responsible for securing the audit of 32 Scottish councils and 34 joint boards, including police and fire services. The Commission investigates whether spending bodies achieve the best possible value for

Audit Scotland provides services to the Auditor General for Scotland and the Accounts Commission

money and adhere to the highest standards of financial management. The Accounts Commission is independent and is not subject to the control of the Scottish Executive or Scottish Parliament.

4. Audit Scotland is a statutory body set up in April 2000 under the Public Finance and Accountability (Scotland) Act, 2000. It provides services to the Accounts Commission and the Auditor general for Scotland.
5. The detailed judgements for each fire authority were as follows:

**EXHIBIT ONE: PROGRESS RESULTS FOR THE EIGHT SCOTTISH FIRE AUTHORITIES SINCE FEBRUARY 2004**

Fire authority	Overall assessment	IRMP	Rank to role	IPDS	Overtime	Duty systems	Part time	Modernisation agenda	Financial Diagnostic
Central	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber
Dumfries & Galloway	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber
Fife	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Red
Grampian	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber
Highlands & Islands	Amber Plus	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber
Lothian & Borders	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Red	Amber	Green	Green
Strathclyde	Green	Green	Green	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Green
Tayside	Amber Plus	Green	Amber	Green	Amber	Amber	Amber	Green	Amber

Red = little or no progress  
 Amber plus = reasonable progress  
 (new category to take account of varying progress being made)

Amber = some progress  
 Green = good progress

**EXHIBIT TWO: PROGRESS BEING MADE BY EACH AUTHORITY UP TO FEBRUARY 2004**

Fire authority	Overall	IRMP	Rank to role	IPDS	O/time	Duty systems	Part time	Modernisation agenda
Central	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Red	Red	Amber
Dumfries & Galloway	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Red	Red	Amber
Fife	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Red	Red	Amber
Grampian	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Red	Amber	Amber
Highlands & Islands	Amber	Red	Red	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Amber
Lothian & Borders	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Red	Red	Amber	Amber
Strathclyde	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Red	Red	Red	Amber
Tayside	Amber	Amber	Red	Amber	Red	Red	Red	Amber