



Dorset Fire Authority

MEETING	Dorset Fire Authority
DATE OF MEETING	24 September 2014
OFFICER	Chief Fire Officer
SUBJECT OF THE REPORT	Co-Responder Scheme
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	<p>The co-responder teams in Lyme Regis and Beaminster continue to deliver a valuable service to their respective communities. This paper provides an assessment of the financial liability of adopting the new Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) proposed by South West Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST).</p> <p>Current co-responder performance is good, although some further improvement can be made.</p> <p>In terms of cost, it may be possible to adopt the new MoU on a cost-neutral basis but the margins are very slight and DFRS risks incurring some cost at times. Members may consider weighing this against the benefits delivered to the wider community and internally for Dorset Fire and Rescue Service (DFRS).</p> <p>SWAST has indicated that new schemes could operate from several DFRS locations and extending the scheme is subject to signing up to the new MoU.</p> <p>New stations will be individually assessed in detail for suitability by both SWAST and DFRS before a full commitment is made.</p>
RISK ASSESSMENT	Financial risk but community benefits and positive influence on recruitment and retention.
COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT	<p>A positive benefit to communities in areas where the scheme currently operates and potentially in those areas where new schemes are proposed.</p> <p><i>Note: If the matrix indicates negative impacts on the community or staff, an equality impact assessment (EIA) will need to be completed.</i></p>
BUDGET IMPLICATIONS	None for the purposes of this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS	It is recommended that Members approve that: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. DFRS should sign the new MoU, allowing the scheme to be introduced initially on a pilot basis in other areas of Dorset.2. The scheme should be closely monitored to promote early intervention if performance deteriorates or costs escalate.3. New co-responder schemes at DFRS stations should be assessed by both SWAST and DFRS on a case by case basis. Those schemes should then operate on a pilot basis until the operational activity and cost effectiveness can be quantified.4. A reserve of £10k should be established and review on an annual basis to smooth in year operating costs.
BACKGROUND PAPERS	None
APPENDICES	A: Co-Responder performance maps B: Co-responder cost tables
REPORT ORIGINATOR AND CONTACT	Steve Waller - Deputy Area Commander, Dorset Area Tel: (01305) 252620

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Currently two fire stations in DFRS operate a co-responder scheme under the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between DFRS and South West Ambulance Service Trust (SWAST). Teams have operated in Lyme Regis and Beaminster since 2005 and 2009 respectively.
- 1.2 Recently, SWAST proposed a new MoU which sought to incentivise performance through a revised payment mechanism. The implications of this new MoU could not be reliably predicted and DFRS was cautious about signing until further investigation had been undertaken. Several protective changes have now been made to the MoU and additional work has been undertaken in an attempt to forecast the financial impact.
- 1.3 SWAST has indicated that there is potential to open new schemes at other locations in Dorset. This is, however, subject to DFRS signing the new MoU.
- 1.4 A hard copy of the new MoU is being prepared by SWAST and will be available to sign before the end of September 2014.

2. Community Benefits

- 2.1 The co-responder scheme contributes to the wider Safer Communities agenda and is an integral part of DFRS's Community Safety Plan.
- 2.2 Lyme Regis and Beaminster co-responder teams currently attend around 470 calls per year between them and, although calls can be re-categorised before the arrival of the teams, these are initially all considered to be life-threatening calls when DFRS are first dispatched.
- 2.3 Regular letters of compliment are received from people who have needed this service. On occasion, families will call in to stations in person to thank those who have attended the scene and this is sometimes an emotional, but positive encounter.

3. Internal Benefits for Dorset Fire and Rescue Service

- 3.1 Many RDS stations in DFRS are currently finding it a challenge to recruit to their full establishment. Co-responding could provide additional motivation for potential recruits by bringing a greater breadth to the response work they would be involved in and also increase individual income.
- 3.2 Additionally, many RDS stations find staff retention difficult where call rates are low or dropping significantly, therefore, any increase in operational activity can further engage staff. As an example, last year Lyme Regis fire station crews were alerted to 75 fire and rescue incidents, but were alerted to almost 350 co-responder calls. The equivalent figures for Beaminster are 83 fire and rescue incidents and 150 co-responder calls.
- 3.3 The improved training of our staff through co-responding will help to deliver enhanced safety for DFRS on the incident ground. Co-responder teams can often add realism and improve the quality of exercises and training events, playing the role of medical staff.

4. New Co-responder Memorandum of Understanding

- 4.1 The current MoU provides a fee to DFRS of £55 per call irrespective of performance, location or whether teams are stood down once alerted. However, the new MoU that has been proposed by SWAST is performance-related.
- 4.2 The NHS standard response time for 'red' category emergency calls in the UK is that responders must reach the patient within eight minutes of the call ringing in the ambulance control room on at least 75% of occasions.
- 4.3 The overall performance of the co-responder scheme in DFRS is currently close to 75%. SWAST is working with DFRS to produce a suitable, regular report for assurance purposes.
- 4.4 The new MoU attempts to incentivise performance and minimise the cost to SWAST by making the following revisions:
- ◆ A full fee of £55 paid when the performance standard is achieved inside the agreed turnout area.
 - ◆ A full fee of £55 paid where co-responders are required to respond outside of the agreed turnout area.
 - ◆ A reduced fee of £30 paid where a stand down occurs.
 - ◆ No payment is made where the performance standard is not achieved inside the agreed turnout area.
- 4.5 The effect of this mechanism is to create a local performance requirement of 100% of attendances within eight minutes of the call ringing in the ambulance control room. This, in turn, contributes to SWAST meeting its overall target for its area.

5. What are the Financial Risks?

- 5.1 Figures 1 and 2 in appendix A provide an indication of how a five minute drive time would compare to the three mile drive route that is expected by SWAST.
- 5.2 The red areas show the range of the co-responder team achieving peak performance. The blue stars represent incidents that have been attended in the last two years. The red stars have been placed on the map to illustrate the three mile road distance from the station on main roads. Most of the areas outside of both main towns consist of remote rural areas which are sparsely populated for the most part.
- 5.3 The exceptions are Mosterton and Broadwindsor, which are areas that have historically seen a number of incidents but remain difficult to reach. SWAST are looking to help provide an integrated response to these areas through the recruitment of community responders, but reaching these areas will be challenging.

- 5.4 Data for a 23-month period has been provided by SWAST. This data has been analysed in order to try and assess the impact and risk of signing up to the new MoU by retrospectively applying the mechanisms of the new MoU to the data.
- 5.5 It is worth noting that the data provided pre-dates the agreed change to use a three mile road distance to measure performance. The data is based on a three mile 'as the crow flies' principle and therefore presents a slightly pessimistic summary of performance.
- 5.6 There are four main areas of financial risk in respect of performance:
- ◆ Failure to attend an incident (within eight minutes of call ringing) inside the agreed response area.
 - ◆ Receiving a stand-down payment instead of a full fee.
 - ◆ Failure to qualify for a stand-down payment.
 - ◆ The call duration exceeds one hour.
- 5.7 **Failure to attend the incident (within eight minutes of call ringing) inside the agreed response area**
- 5.7.1 The performance standard requires co-responders to reach an incident within eight minutes of the emergency call ringing in the SWAST control room. On average, the call handling time in the control room is 90 seconds. In the remaining six and 30 seconds, responders have to be alerted, mobilise the vehicle and travel to the incident.
- 5.7.2 The proposed turnout area in the new MoU is three miles road travel distance from the respective fire station.
- 5.7.3 The logistics of this arrangement present a challenging target for DFRS and SWAST and some of the outlying areas furthest from the station remain hard to reach. All opportunities to improve performance are being considered including mobilisation methods and integrating risk cover with existing community responders in these areas.
- 5.8 **Receiving a stand down payment instead of a full fee**
- 5.8.1 The way in which calls are handled and triaged in the SWAST control room means that some emergencies are re-categorised before the crews reach the scene. This may be either before the vehicle is mobile or during the drive to the incident. Where this occurs, DFRS would receive a payment of £30 from SWAST (stand-down fee).
- 5.8.2 The cost incurred by DFRS to pay staff for this mobilisation would be approximately £35 (this is an average hourly rate across all rates of pay and includes the disturbance fee).
- 5.8.3 The SWAST data indicates that this would have cost DFRS £234 annually (804 calls were attended in this data period).

5.9 Failure to qualify for stand down payment

5.9.1 The definition used by SWAST in the new MoU is that a stand down payment will apply in the period between crews acknowledging the alert and the point at which they book in attendance at the incident. Therefore, SWAST will make a stand down payment if crews are stood down en-route to the station to collect the vehicle.

5.9.2 DFRS incur a cost that will not be met by SWAST where crews are stood down before they acknowledge receipt of the call on the Airwave pager. Technically, this would be classed as the 'disturbance' fee only (£3.80 per person). This is a highly unlikely occurrence.

5.10 The call duration exceeds one hour

5.10.1 The majority of co-responder calls are less than one hour in duration. By definition, co-responders attend ahead of another SWAST resource and should hand over as soon as it arrives. Occasionally DFRS assistance is required for longer than expected.

5.10.2 DFRS statistics indicate that this occurs, on average around 20 times per year. Based upon this figure the annual cost projection is £700.

5.10.3 The combined effect of these four performance-related elements of risk is shown in Appendix b (table 1).

6. Risk Control - Minimising Performance Risk

6.1 The following principles of operation are recommended to minimise performance-related financial risk:

- ◆ Negotiate with SWAST to provide payment for calls which exceed one hour.
- ◆ Negotiate with SWAST an increase in the stand down payment from £30 to £35 to cover DFRS salary costs fully.
- ◆ Mobilise the vehicle from home addresses where possible.
- ◆ Promote the concept of solo responding.
- ◆ Adopt the use of Airwave pager for direct mobilising.
- ◆ Increase the number of emergency response drivers (ERD).

6.2 There would appear to be further scope to negotiate further changes to the cost mechanism applied to the new scheme, however, a number of concessions have already been made by SWAST in order to meet DFRS concerns. Further negotiations are possible.

6.3 Key changes to negotiate would be the provision of additional payment where calls exceed one hour (current annual cost to DFRS £988) and an increase in the stand down fee from £30 to £35 to cover the average team salary cost where two responders are used.

- 6.4 Mobilisation of the co-responder vehicle from home addresses has been unpopular with staff mainly due to parking restrictions, inconvenience and security concerns. In any case, this arrangement is only possible during the evenings and at some weekend times due to the need for many staff to operate a trade vehicle for their primary employment. This way of working will improve performance and should be adopted where possible.
- 6.5 A strong team working culture remains at both stations and there is still reluctance to work alone as co-responders. Concerns centre mainly on complaints rather than the confidence to perform clinically. Both DFRS and SWAST are working to change this culture, mindful that the role is one which staff volunteer to carry out.
- 6.6 SWAST does not intend to insist that solo responding is compulsory at this time, recognising the current position is delicate.
- 6.7 The issue of an Airwave pager system represents a significant investment by SWAST. Previous trials of direct mobilisation by Airwave radio and SWAST mobile phones have not been successful. Airwave pagers will be on trial at Beaminster from late September 2014 and will be extended to Lyme Regis soon afterwards.
- 6.8 Airwave pagers will allow co-responder teams to appear directly on the SWAST dispatch mobilising screen and to be selected as a resource in the same way as an ambulance or rapid response vehicle. This will speed up dispatch and improve mobilising times.
- 6.9 The number of ERD drivers is currently adequate. This number will increase naturally at both existing stations as new staff progress through driver training to meet the normal ERD driver formula. There may be a need to train some individuals who have bypassed the ERD qualification due to early promotion or where a driver's qualification has lapsed. The need for additional training should be considered on a case by case basis.
- 6.10 As a guide, the cost of providing this training is £500 per day and includes trainer and student fees. Initial courses are four days in duration. Refresher courses are two days in duration.
- 6.11 Staff who maintain their ERD qualification through driving a fire appliance do not need to be included in additional ERD training for co-responding.

7. Other Costs

7.1 Vehicle Operating Costs

- 7.1.1 The schemes at Lyme Regis and Beaminster operate with vehicles provided by SWAST. This arrangement is unique and the new MoU proposes that the provision of vehicles is reviewed annually. Currently, all vehicle operating costs are met by SWAST.
- 7.1.2 Any new schemes will require vehicles to be provided by DFRS and the future provision vehicles at Lyme Regis and Beaminster cannot be guaranteed.
- 7.1.3 Three options have been considered as a way of providing co-responder vehicles:

- ◆ Provide vehicles from the existing DFRS fleet. This could involve cars or land rovers on stations.
- ◆ Seek sponsorship as a means of providing vehicles either locally or county-wide.
- ◆ Accept the offer from SWAST to provide vehicles with a commensurately reduced co-responder call fee (reduced to approximately £30).

7.1.4 Using vehicles from the existing DFRS fleet is recommended. This is easier to manage and is a more reliable alternative to sponsorship. It is less expensive per call than the proposal of SWAST providing the vehicles where the maximum call fee is reduced from £55 to around £30. Adding vehicles to the existing fleet through sponsorship or through outright purchase may require additional garaging depending on the existing arrangements at each station.

7.1.5 Sponsorship of vehicles should still be explored as an option.

7.2 Co Responder Training Costs

7.2.1 Recent discussions with SWAST have identified opportunities to reduce the cost of training co-responders in terms of both initial training and maintenance of competence.

7.2.2 SWAST has accepted that the standard of first aid training now being delivered by DFRS satisfies their requirement for 'first responder on scene' standard and that DFRS defibrillator training is sufficient, requiring only an annual competence assessment by a SWAST trainer. Maintenance of skills training and assessment will be reduced to one session per year.

7.2.3 A cross-mapping exercise is being carried out to map the remaining training requirements in the MoU and create a co-responder conversion module. This will effectively 'upgrade' DFRS staff with casualty care qualifications to co-responder standard.

7.2.4 Once this module has been developed, new co-responders can be upgraded with one additional half-day training session. This could be delivered in one RDS training night.

7.2.5 The final requirement for initial training is to gain experience through working with front-line ambulance staff for one shift. This is a requirement of the MoU and will need to be factored in when new responders join existing teams and when new teams are set up.

7.3 Work-wear and PPE

7.3.1 A set up cost will be incurred for any new co-responder scheme. DFRS are required to provide the one-piece fire responder overalls and safety shoes. The maintenance cost of PPE over the life of the two existing schemes has so far been minimal.

8. New Schemes and Locations

8.1 Starting a co-responder team at any new location is subject to adoption of the new MoU. SWAST has indicated that new schemes could operate from several DFRS locations.

- 8.2 The start-up costs for a new scheme is around £5,000 for a one-pump station and £10,000 for a two-pump station depending on how many staff choose to undertake co-responder duties.
- 8.3 Each of these proposed new locations will require individual assessment by both SWAST and DFRS to judge its suitability.
- 8.4 The assessment will need to include:
- ◆ A detailed analysis of predicted call rates by SWAST.
 - ◆ An assessment of the impact on current crewing arrangements.
 - ◆ An assessment of the number of personnel likely to undertake responder duties.
 - ◆ The existing provision of ERD drivers.
 - ◆ The suitability of any existing vehicles to carry out co-responder duties.
 - ◆ The garaging/parking facilities at the station and at responder addresses.
- 8.5 Those schemes should then operate on a pilot basis until the operational activity and cost effectiveness can be quantified.
- 8.6 An outline capital cost of setting up a new scheme for a one pump station is shown in table 2 of Appendix B.
- 8.7 The function of DFRS lead officer for co-responding should also be considered when the scheme becomes more widespread. Currently, the support naturally aligns to the District Commander - West Dorset, but consideration should be given to centralising the lead officer function with territorial District Commanders managing the day to day issues of co-responder teams in their districts as necessary.
- 8.8 The following fire stations have been identified as suitable for further assessment and pilot:
- ◆ Bere Regis
 - ◆ Wareham
 - ◆ Swanage
 - ◆ Wimborne
 - ◆ Dorchester
 - ◆ Weymouth

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The co-responder teams in Lyme Regis and Beaminster continue to deliver a valuable service to their respective communities and performance is at a good level (75% attendance times met).

- 9.2 It appears viable to sign up to the new MoU, although some financial risk is evident. In order to mitigate this risk, it would be possible to set up a small reserve from salary underspends and review this provision and overall costs on an annual basis.
- 9.3 Financially, operating a two-person responder team under the new MoU will be more challenging.
- 9.4 A number of changes have been made to the existing working practices and a number of technological alterations have been tried with varying degrees of success.
- 9.5 Additional changes are pending, including the issue of an Airwave pager system which has been a significant capital purchase by SWAST.
- 9.6 If further negotiations to change the cost model are successful, it would be possible to operate within the expected income.
- 9.7 Where a new scheme is initiated with solo responding from the outset, the Service will need to look at where co-responder reinvestment can be delivered.
- 9.8 New schemes will need to be considered on a case by case basis and a review of lead officer responsibilities should be carried out.
- 9.9 Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service operates a co-responder scheme in partnership with SWAST and will be required to sign the new MoU at some point. WFRS currently operates with different crewing arrangements and work is underway to compare the schemes to look for a way forward jointly.

DARRAN GUNTER

Chief Fire Officer

17 September 2014

Appendix A

Figure 1 - Lyme Regis co-responder incidents overlaid with optimum performance range

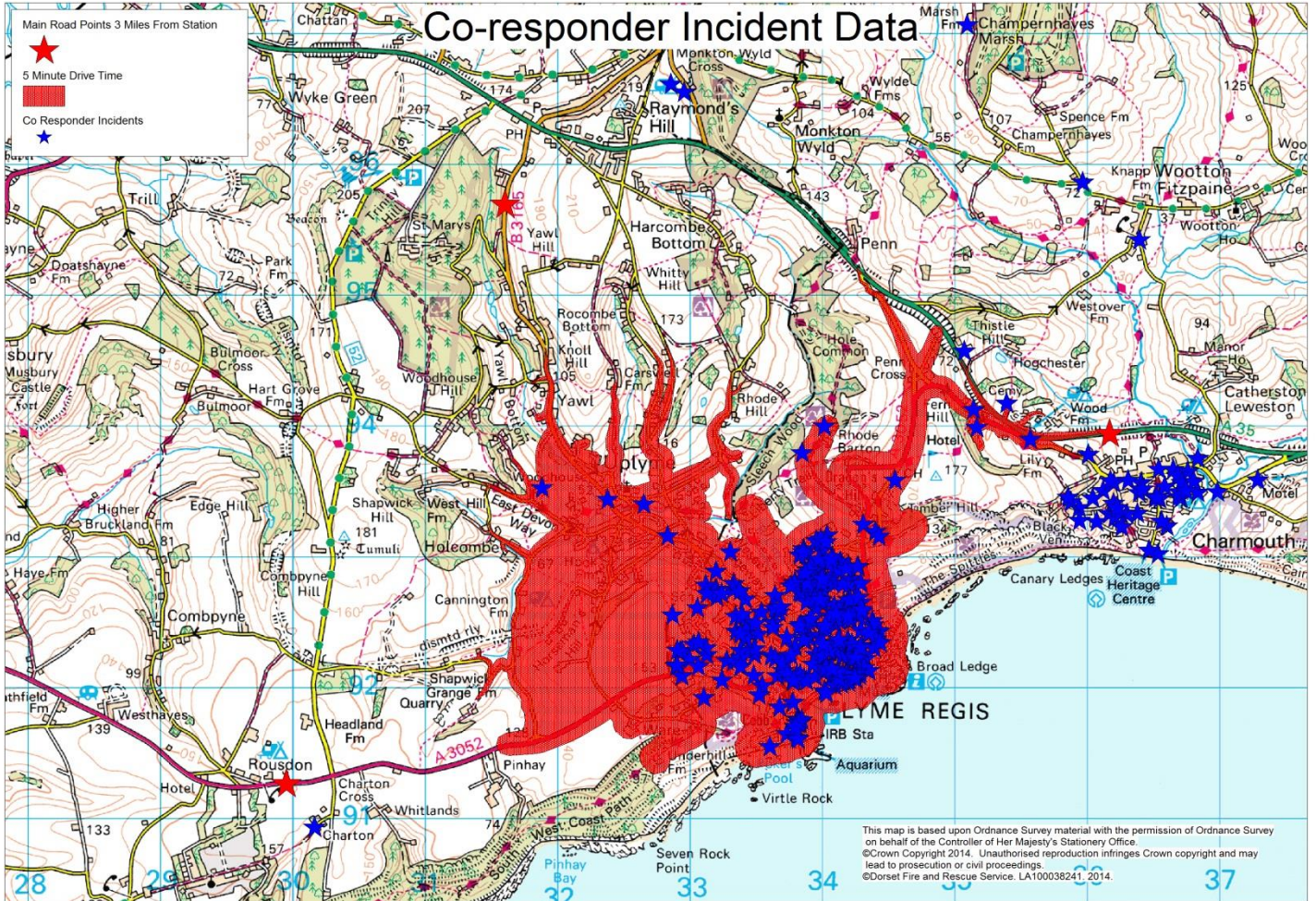
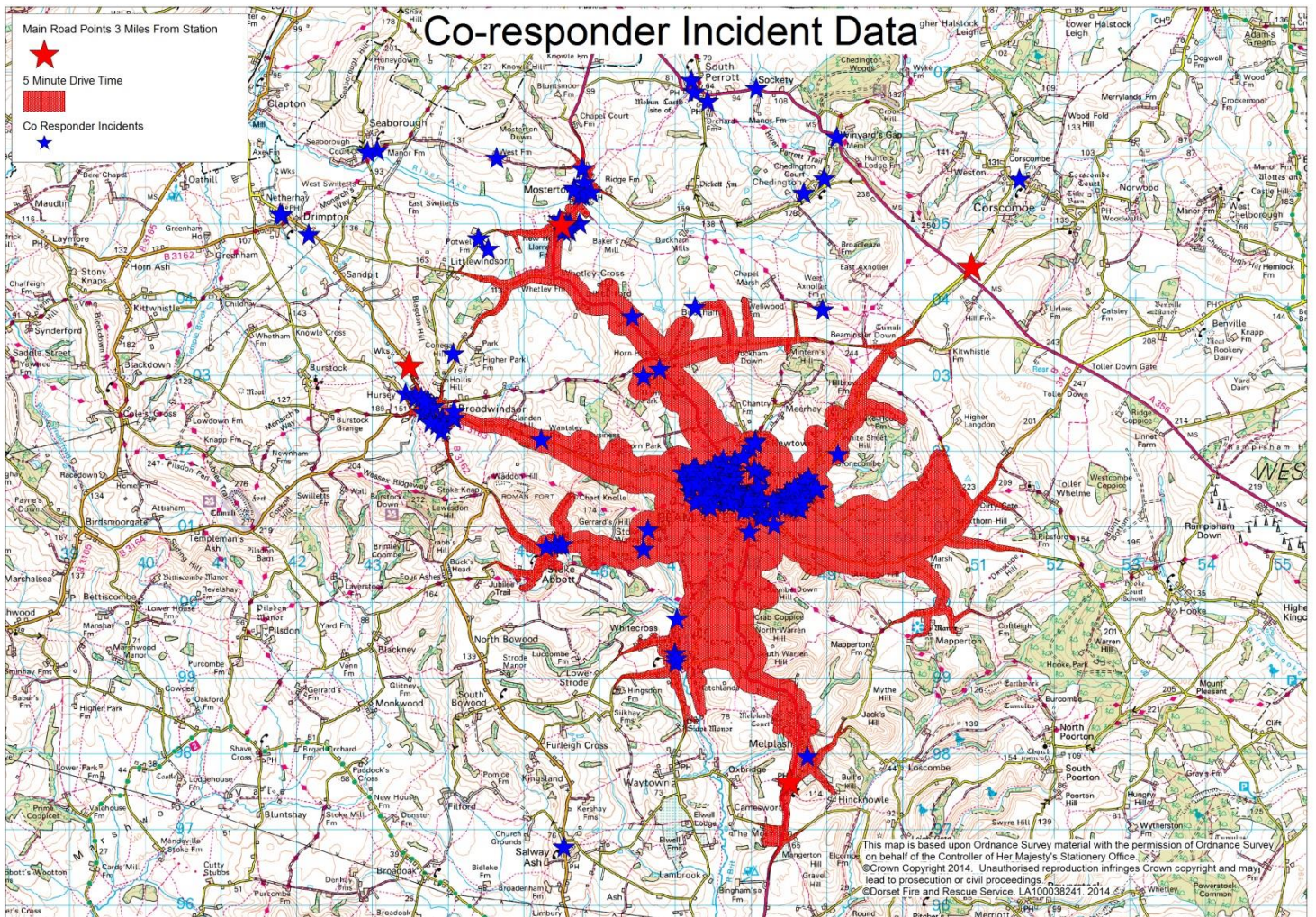


Figure 2 - Beaminster co-responder incidents overlaid with optimum performance range



Appendix B

Table 1 - Estimated financial impact of the new Memorandum of Understanding

Revenue cost of co-responder station comparison	Current MoU	New MoU
Annual calls (Lyme Regis and Beaminster)	469	469
Call income (£) (performance achieved)	23,870	18,055
Call income (£) where stand down applies	0	-234
Staff pay (£) (standard calls @ £55)	-15,190	-15,190
Over 1 hour call cost (£) (cost of extra hours incurred)	0	-988
Annual training maintenance cost (£)	-1,375	-1,375
Admin cost (£) (IRS)	-1,230	-1,230
Total Net (£)	5087	-962
Cost of ERD requirements	tbc	tbc
Cost of PPE maintenance	tbc	tbc

Table 2 - Estimated set-up costs for a one pump co-responder station

Capital cost of setting up a new scheme (eg 12 responders - 1 pump station)	
Initial cost of training on station (£) - SWAST module	£1,800
Training cost (£) - compulsory front-line experience	£2,000
PPE cost (£) - initial issue	£1,000
Shoes - cost of additional safety shoes (£)	£150
Vehicle costs	£tbc
	£4,950