

Funding for fire prevention programmes announced

The Cabinet Secretary has today announced, that the three FRAs in Wales are to receive £1,424,000 to continue to support their arson reduction and youth engagement schemes, as well as for the purchase of home safety equipment.

He said:

“Our Fire and Rescue Services work incredibly hard to keep us safe and educate us about the threat fire poses. There are, however, many other risks to people’s safety besides fire; and the decline in the incidence of fire means FRAs can play an increasing role in addressing those too.

“Everyone agrees that preventing fires from happening in the first place is much better than responding to them. That is what these programmes aim to do. Some of them alert young people to the dangers of fire and fire-setting and divert them away from fire-related crime and other offending. Others help to keep our most vulnerable citizens safe from fire and other hazards in their homes, such as falls and electrical safety.”

One of the schemes to be funded is Operation Dawns Glow. This aims to educate the public and landowners, about the dangers and impact of deliberate fire-setting and raises awareness about the consequences of deliberate grass fires, which can result in prosecution.

Dawns Glow was established in 2015 and includes representatives of Welsh Government, FRAs, Police Services, Local Authorities, Met Office, Natural Resources Wales, Young Farmers Clubs, Crimestoppers and others. Multi-agency work like this has led to a reduction of 50% in grass fires in Wales over the past two years and a reduction of over 1,000 in the number of attendances made by the Fire & Rescue Services. Their interventions with young people at risk of offending has showed to consistently achieve exceptional levels of behaviour change and minimal reoffending rates, a positive example of how engagement through prevention has a long lasting effect.

Mydrian Harries, Chair of the Dawns Glow taskforce said:

“Deliberate grass fires endanger lives. If the Fire and Rescue Service are tied up tackling a deliberately set grass fire it can result in a delayed response to a life-threatening emergency, such as a house fire or road traffic collision. Deliberately set grass fires also severely damage our countryside and our environment,

pose a threat to wildlife and livestock, and costs the Welsh economy millions of pounds each year.

“We all have a part to play to reduce and eliminate deliberately lit grass fires in Wales. I would appeal to the public to remain vigilant and help us protect our communities and our countryside, by reporting any suspicious activity immediately to the Police.”

This additional funding also allows FRAs to provide free “Safe and Well” visits to check the safety of people’s homes, including the free provision of items such as smoke alarms and flame-retardant bedding. Around 50,000 such checks are carried out each year, focusing on those most at risk of fire such as frail, or elderly people, people with disabilities, smokers and single parents.