

**THE MANCHESTER ARENA INQUIRY
SIR JOHN SAUNDERS**

STATEMENT OF SARAH-JANE WILSON

ON BEHALF OF NORTH WEST FIRE CONTROL LIMITED

POST 22 MAY 2017 CHANGES TO POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1.0 Introduction

1.1 I am Sarah-Jane Wilson, Head of North West Fire Control Limited ["NWFC"], Lingley Mere Business Park, Great Sankey, Warrington. As such I am authorized by NWFC to make this statement on its behalf.

1.2 My responsibilities are detailed in the job description which is contained in [INQ000936], but the following is a summary for the purposes of this statement. My role includes the operational responsibility of ensuring delivery of shareholder requirements as outlined in the Agreement for Services [INQ000933] in order for them to successfully carry out their operations. I am responsible for NWFC meeting its objectives and service standards and effectively managing the people, financial resources and various NWFC contracts. I am also responsible for the development and implementation of the Control Centre's operational strategy, working with internal and external stakeholders to achieve outcomes which support the delivery of objectives for both NWFC and its partner Fire and Rescue Services, to the required standard. I participate in strategic meetings with Fire Rescue Authorities, emergency services, local authorities and external bodies regarding:

- (i) NWFC operational performance
- (ii) Service Level Standards;
- (iii) Quality Policies;
- (iv) Company Working Practices and Procedures;
- (v) Major Events/Incident Planning

1.3 This statement incorporates matters which are directly within my knowledge and, where not so, are based upon my belief that they have been accurately reported to NWFC. Where the information provided herein is based upon documentary records in the possession of NWFC those records are identified within the body of this statement by reference to the Inquiry Reference or otherwise.

1.4 This is the third statement made by me in the Inquiry. I have made the following other statements:

- (i) 16 August 2019 [INQ023877] – Command and Control Statement.

(ii) 19 08 2019 [INQ023881] – Professional experience and narrative of events.

1.5 I make this statement in order to provide factual information concerning the following:

(i) The analysis by NWFC of its existing policies and procedures in the light of the events of the 22 / 23 May 2017.

(ii) The procedures which were in existence at the time of the events at Manchester Arena.

(iii) The extent and nature of the changes to those policies and procedures and the reasons for them.

1.6 Section 8 [page 32 of 66] of my statement of 16 August 2019 [Command and Control Statement INQ023877] has already provided the detail of 'Improvement Actions Taken' in the light of the events at Manchester Arena. These improvement actions were in part made as a result of the recommendations included in The Kerslake Report¹ [INQ000009]. The fire and rescue services paid close consideration to the recommendations made in that Report. On 21 June 2018 the NFCC's MTF National Working Group produced a series of recommendations arising from its examination of the conclusions expressed in the Kerslake Report [INQ004185].

1.7 For the purposes of reviewing the procedures implemented by NWFC, as defined by the fire and rescue services, in the light of the events at Manchester Arena and as a result of the recommendations contained in the Kerslake Report itself, NWFC prepared, on 14 January 2019, a schedule [INQ008383] entitled "*Actions taken and commentary concerned with recommendations and references to North West Fire Control in the Kerslake Report.*" On 16 January 2019 NWFC produced a documentary narrative, the purpose of which was to contextualise the changes that had been made to policies and procedures post 22 May 2017 [INQ008378]. That document contains a timeline of communications passing between NWFC and other agencies and individuals on the 22 / 23 May 2017.

2.0 Essential factual background to aid an understanding of the changes

2.1 The Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service ["GMFRS"] did not arrive at the scene of the incident for two hours [explosion 2231 hours / GMFRS attendance at Philips Park Community Fire Station at 2253 / three fire tenders and personnel reallocated to Manchester Arena at 0037]. The Kerslake Report concluded that this was due to a combination of poor communication and poor procedures [paragraph 16 of the Executive Summary – INQ004185]. Since GMFRS's operations were and are coordinated through the agency of NWFC the

¹ "The Kerslake Report: An independent review into the preparedness for and emergency response to the Manchester Arena attack on 22 May 2017".

protocols and procedures which governed NWFC's operations are of particular relevance in the context of this criticism. It is necessary to appreciate that NWFC opened its Incident Log [INQ008376] at 2238 and mobilized fire tenders and personnel after contact and in accordance with instructions from the Duty National Inter-Agency Liaison Officer ["NILO"] within 11 minutes 19 seconds of opening the Incident Log and that the fire crews arrived at the rendezvous point, as directed, 11 minutes 54 seconds after the incident log was opened.

2.2 The procedure for the deployment of GMFRS personnel and equipment arises as a result of an emergency call into NWFC either from a partner agency or from a member of the public via the 999 call system. NWFC is required under the terms of its Agreement with Greater Manchester Combined Authority ["GMCA"] [INQ INQ000933] to mobilise tenders and personnel in accordance with the call handling policies and procedures supplied to it from time to time by GMFRS. At 2232 on 22 May 2017 NWFC received a call from the Greater Manchester Police ["GMP"] control room which was at first unconnected with the events that were to follow at the Arena. In the course of that call GMP advised NWFC that it was receiving reports that there had been an 'explosion' in the foyer of the Arena. NWFC was then advised that a bomb had exploded [Transcript INQ001231]. At 2237 NWFC received a call [Transcript INQ001218] from North West Ambulance Service [NWAS] in the course of which NWFC was informed that a bomb had exploded and that there was an active shooter. In the course of that call and while the call from GMP remained in progress, GMP updated NWFC by informing NWFC that injuries appeared to have been caused by shrapnel. At 2238 NWFC updated its Incident Log 1705009074 [INQ008376] and described the incident, as reported, as an 'explosion.' NWFC's Action Plans provided for different responses depending upon whether the explosion was a CBRNE type incident [which would include an explosion caused by a bomb] or an explosion occurring in non malicious circumstances. Having regard to the fact that this was a CBRNE type incident and in accordance with the Action Plan's instructions NWFC then opened the Action Plan for a 'Bomb' for the purposes of mobilising the fire and rescue services. That Action Plan required NWFC to seek guidance from the duty NILO on the actions to be carried out by NWFC before proceeding further.

2.3 A report of an 'explosion' would have resulted in NWFC mobilising fire tenders and personnel to the Arena with an appropriate command structure present in the form of one of the personnel accompanying the tenders. The 'Bomb' mobilising protocols in force, instead, required a rendezvous point to be designated by the duty NILO to which fire tenders and personnel were to be mobilised in accordance with the Pre Determined Attendance. The command structure would have been no different. The duty NILO was Station Manager Berry who was contacted by NWFC at 2240 and informed that the Police had created a rendezvous point at Manchester Cathedral car park. Station Manager Berry advised NWFC to mobilise 4 pumps to a muster point at Philips Park Fire Station. Two of these were to be deployed to Philips Park from Manchester Central Fire Station, which was nearer to the Arena. The purpose underlying the response plan for a 'bomb' was to allow bomb disposal experts to declare the scene of any incident safe of secondary devices and other hazards before personnel were deployed there. The decision to place GMFRS resources at

Philips Park complied with procedures specified by the Local Resilience Forum and under the Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack protocol. This followed standard national operational guidance. At 2252 NWFC contacted Duty Group Manager Dean Nankivell and updated him including providing him with details of the rendezvous point of Philips Park. At some point during these events NWFC was monitoring the Police major incident and other channels but no information was being transmitted on them.

2.4 The Kerslake Report [paragraph 5.149] concluded that this step of deploying tenders and personnel to a remote location and the absence of a NILO at the Police multi-agency rendezvous point resulted in a denial of situational awareness for GMFRS [paragraph 5.149] and that the GMFRS response was effectively brought to a point of paralysis [paragraph 5.155]. The Report also concluded that inter-agency communications were also inadequate. Operation Plato is an emergency response plan, which, if activated is to be declared by the Police, and is intended to trigger a rapid joint response by the emergency services. Although Operation Plato was declared by GMP this information was not formally passed to NWFC. Until the publication of the final draft of the Kerslake Report, NWFC was unaware that communications on the ground had failed to the extent that they had. The staff in the control room at NWFC expected that inter-agency communications were taking place and that the absence of a deployment of the fire tenders and crews to the Arena was agreed between GMFRS, NWS and the Police. At the time of these events NWFC followed prescribed procedures for mobilising GMFRS resources to an incident involving a bomb.

2.5 It was apparent to NWFC as a result of the Kerslake Report that the Action Plans and Pre Determined Attendance required to be revised to avoid a repetition of these failures. NWFC determined that it would take a more proactive role in relation to the management and monitoring of communications, sharing information and establishing situational awareness. The following changes have been introduced.

3.0 NWFC's changes to protocols and procedures

3.1 NWFC has developed a Major Incident Action Plan and has consulted and worked with operational officers from each of the four fire and rescue services ["Ops Group"] to produce new incident types in the response plans to which will be attached new Pre-Determined Attendances and Action Plans.

The purpose of the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932] is to provide the Team Leaders in NWFC's control room with a 'prompt' to actively seek out and share information. The action plan requires the control room staff to actively facilitate and coordinate communications between the emergency services by providing contact information to NILO's, by monitoring inter-agency communication channels and by ensuring that the fire service is involved at all operational command levels.

The revised incident types in the response plans include 'Explosion - Non Terrorism', 'Exploded Bomb' and 'Unexploded Bomb.'

In consequence, where there are reports to NWFC of an exploded bomb, fire resources will be deployed directly to the scene of the incident. Where there are reports that an unexploded bomb is present, fire tenders and personnel will still be mobilised to a remote rendezvous point until the point at which the bomb is either declared safe or is detonated whereupon the fire service resources will then be relocated from the rendezvous point to the incident scene. The result will be that fire and rescue resources will be at the scene of such an incident either at the outset or very soon after detonation. An incident command structure will, as a result, be immediately in place.

In the event that fire service resources are deployed to a rendezvous point rather than the scene of the incident, for example because the bomb remains unexploded, or there is a secondary device or an active shooter, the new NWFC Major Incident Action Plan requires NWFC to contact the police control room to request the location of the multi-agency rendezvous point. If there is no multi-agency rendezvous point NWFC will be required to establish the location of each of the emergency services rendezvous points and inform the incident commander of those locations. Where no multi-agency rendezvous point has been identified the police rendezvous point will be deemed as the multi-agency rendezvous point. In that event NWFC will deploy resources to that rendezvous point.

3.2 The four fire and rescue authorities which contract for the service provided by NWFC [Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Cheshire and Cumbria] have met with their respective Local Resilience Forums to agree a methodology for establishing three way communications between the police, fire and ambulance services using Multi-Agency Airwave Talk Group, OS or Resilience Direct.

The process which resulted in these changes, involving a switch to Airwave OS for JESIP communications, had already been the subject of e mail correspondence between Greater Manchester Police, Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Authority and the North West Ambulance Service on 30 March 2017 following Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack commander training and had been forwarded to Janine Carden at NWFC [INQ001043] on that date.

After the events at Manchester Arena this arrangement was formally documented for use in the early stages of any major incident in the form of an 'Interim Initial Airwave Communication Protocol for Major Incidents – Standard Operating Procedure' [INQ001034] and was provided to NWFC by email from Greater Manchester Police on 26 May 2017 [INQ001033].

The Airwave Talk Group in use as a result of this agreement is the interoperability channel OS which is a police inter-agency talk group and is designed to allow information to be passed between all three emergency services simultaneously.

OS is now actively and continuously monitored by NWFC, Greater Manchester Police, and the North West Ambulance Service, in order that at any time any one of the emergency services can make immediate contact to pass emerging details of a major incident to NWFC and the remaining services in accordance with the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932]. The following are responsible for monitoring the channel at all times:

- Greater Manchester Police – The Force Duty Officer supervisor
- North West Ambulance Service – Control Room Manager
- NWFC – Control Room Staff

Mutual Assistance Mobilisation Arrangements by way of response to a Marauding Terrorist Firearms Attack have now been developed for the Fire and Rescue Service in collaboration with the Emergency Services Joint Operating Principles Working Group [INQ001050]. This provides that in the event that the indicators of an ‘unfolding Operation Plato’ are first recognized in fire and rescue service control centres, arrangements must be made to communicate this to the other local emergency services control centres immediately.

The initiatives adopted in the above referenced interim protocol and NWFC Major Incident Plan conform with this approach.

3.3 A number of training initiatives have been introduced.

In August 2017 as part of an initiative commissioned by Ministers to assess the level at which JESIP had been embedded across the emergency services in the UK, NWFC took part in a JESIP Assurance Visit. Verbal feedback was provided on the day of the visit and a written report was provided in December 2017. A summary of that report [INQ000992] included observations and recommendations.

Observation 6 (page 5) advised that,

“All staff are required to undertake the JESIP e-learning every year, this is also recorded on their PDRPro record. During the focus group it would appear that individuals across all grades haven’t completed the JESIP e-learning or had input since 2015.”

At the time of the visit NWFC was working to develop a bespoke training solution (‘LearnPro’) because whilst JESIP training was recorded in PDRPro, it had been identified that the learning packages could not be easily programmed into an individual’s annual training schedule. As a result of that work and following the verbal feedback provided after the visit, the JESIP awareness training, has been embedded into the LearnPro learning management system for staff of all grades across the organisation since October 2017. This includes the JESIP major incident training video. The training is programmed with an annual frequency and is automatically recorded on the person’s PDRPro upon completion. Reports are available to line managers who discuss individual PDRPro records with staff at least quarterly during one-to-ones and appraisals to ensure staff meet the objective that their PDRPro record, including JESIP training, conform with the requirements.

NWFC’s senior managers have attended Strategic Command Course Training in order to improve the flow of communications between the emergency services. In addition NWFC control room staff have received training in the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan.

On 30 January 2020 National Operational Learning issued Information Note 20180507-001 – A in relation to the importance of guidance for crews in relation to the response to a declaration of Operation Plato. On 06 February

2020 NWFC issued Operational Guidance to its control room staff in relation to the latter, a copy of these documents is annexed to this statement as "SJW 6." [INQ032103]

[INQ032105]

4.0 Summary of the Practical Effect of Changes

4.1 I have set out in the schedule at Appendix 1 below a summary of the changes that have been made in relation to NWFC's mobilising response in the light of knowledge of the events at Manchester Arena. The schedule sets out the position prior to May 22 2017, the changes that have been incorporated as a result of discussion with the fire and rescue services leading to the implementation of the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932] and the reasons which resulted in the changes. The Table incorporates reference to the paragraph numbers of the Command and Control Statement that I have prepared where they are relevant [INQ023877]. The Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932] has been further updated and a copy is annexed to this statement as "SJW 5."

[INQ017965]

STATEMENT OF TRUTH

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signature

Sarah-Jane Wilson

Head of North West Fire Control Limited

04 June 2020

APPENDIX 1

SUMMARY OF THE PRACTICAL EFFECT OF CHANGES INCORPORATED INTO NWFC'S MOBILISING RESPONSE

PRE 22 MAY 2017 POSITION	POST 22 MAY 2017 CHANGES	REASONS FOR THE CHANGE
NWFC was not required either by the Pre Determined Attendance Lists ["PDA's"] or the Action Plans provided to it by the fire and rescue services to pro-actively facilitate or coordinate multi agency communications.	A Major Incident Action Plan was devised and implemented to ensure that effective communication takes place between the three emergency services [INQ000931 / INQ000932]. The Plan, in conjunction with the use of the Police airwave [OS], enables the Team Leaders in NWFC's control room to monitor multi-agency communications and to allocate fire and rescue resources directly to the scene of an incident in the event of	The need to ensure effective deployment of resources, situational awareness and improved communication between the three emergency services in the course of dealing with a major incident.

	<p>an exploded bomb and to create effective situational awareness.</p> <p>Paragraphs 8.6 and 8.7</p>	
<p>Upon receiving a report of an explosion caused by a bomb detonating or an unexploded bomb NWFC was required to mobilise tenders and fire service personnel to a rendezvous point designated by the duty NILO.</p> <p>This was a 'risk based' approach designed to allow for bomb disposal experts to first declare the scene safe from the risk of explosion of secondary devices before fire service personnel and resources were deployed to the scene.</p>	<p>NWFC worked with the respective fire and rescue services to change their Pre Determined Attendance lists and Action Plans with the result that all fire and rescue services which utilise NWFC as their command and control centre have amended their Pre Determined Attendance Lists to provide for an 'exploded bomb' [rather than 'bomb']. The result is that in that situation NWFC are now required to mobilise fire and rescue service resources directly to the scene of the incident rather than to a remote location, thereby providing a normal command structure and removing any confusion in respect of who should assume the role of incident commander.</p> <p>Where reports indicate that a bomb is unexploded NWFC will continue to mobilise resources to a specific remote rendezvous point. In the event that the bomb thereafter explodes or is detonated NWFC will immediately deploy resources to the scene.</p> <p>Paragraphs 8.8 to 8.13</p>	<p>One of the conclusions reached in the Kerslake Report was that the deployment of four tenders and fire service personnel to Phillips Park Community Fire Station in accordance with the Action Plans and Pre Determined Attendance Lists which NWFC was required to apply, together with the fact that the failure to locate a NILO at the multi agency rendezvous point resulted in a process that lacked the command structure which would have been present in the response to a normal incident, resulted in a lack of situational awareness and caused operational paralysis of the GMFRS response.</p>
<p>When fire and rescue services were deployed to a rendezvous point, NWFC was not required, in accordance with the Pre Determined Attendance Lists or the Action Plans to seek information in relation to the location of a multi-agency rendezvous point.</p>	<p>The new NWFC Major Incident Action Plan requires NWFC to contact the Police control room to request the location of a multi-agency rendezvous point. If a multi-agency rendezvous point is not confirmed NWFC will establish the location of each emergency service and will communicate this to the incident commander. In the absence of an identified multi-agency rendezvous point NWFC will deploy a fire service response to the Police rendezvous point thereby ensuring that the fire service resources are co-located at</p>	<p>On the night of the incident a Multi-Agency rendezvous point was not declared to NWFC.</p> <p>The location of the Police rendezvous point at Manchester Cathedral car park was communicated to the Duty NILO by NWFC.</p> <p>The Duty NILO instructed NWFC to mobilise 4 pumps to a muster point at Phillips Park Community Fire Station, a distance of approximately 3 miles from the incident.</p> <p>The ensuing lack of situational awareness between the emergency services was identified in the conclusions</p>

	that location.	expressed in the Kerslake Report.
	Paragraphs 8.4 and 8.5	
Communications between the emergency services were conducted using direct dial telephone communications. The Police were required to set up a 3-way telecommunications link between the 3 local emergency control rooms upon Operation Plato being declared.	<p>OS is now actively and continuously monitored by NWFC, Greater Manchester Police, and the North West Ambulance Service, in order that at any time any one of the emergency services can make immediate contact to pass details of a major incident to NWFC and the remaining services in accordance with the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932]. This method of communication is used in the initial stages of a major incident and confirmation will be sought by NWFC from all local emergency service control rooms that this process is being utilised.</p> <p>Paragraphs 8.16, 8.21 to 8.23 and 8.25</p>	<p>On the night of the incident the Police Airwave Inter-Agency Channel OS was not utilised to communicate key information.</p> <p>The Kerslake report concluded that it was not solely the location of the fire and rescue service resources that resulted in their lack of situational awareness but that inter-agency communications both on the incident ground and across the control rooms was also inadequate.</p>
NWFC was not required to contact the Fire Incident Commander or any other emergency service to confirm whether a major incident had been declared or if a specific operational plan such as Operation Plato had been instigated.	<p>In the event that NWFC becomes aware of an incident that they consider may be declared a major incident either by the fire service or another emergency service or may require the implementation of a specific operational plan such as Operation Plato, the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932] will 'prompt' the mobilising officer to make enquiries via the incident commander and other emergency service control rooms in order to establish if a major incident has been declared or if a specific operational plan such as Operation Plato has been implemented.</p> <p>This Incident Plan has since been further updated.</p> <p>Paragraphs 8.24, 8.36 and 8.37</p>	<p>On the night of the incident NWFC Ltd did not receive a METHANE Message.</p> <p>Although Operation Plato had been declared this was not shared with NWFC.</p>
In the event that a Fire Service requested the name of the NWS Duty NILO a telephone call would need to be made by NWFC to the NWS Control	Each morning NWFC's control room contacts the NWS control room in order to obtain the name and contact details of the NWS	This will enable NWFC to immediately pass on the details to the Fire Service NILO in the event of a major incident.

Room to obtain that information.	designated Duty NILO. Paragraph 8.28	
The designated Fire Service Duty NILO was the first to be mobilised to any incident that required a NILO to attend.	The Fire and Rescue Services have amended their procedures in order that NWFC requires the NILO nearest to the incident to be mobilised to attend. NWFC has updated mobilising instructions to reflect this change. Paragraph 8.30	On the night of the incident the Duty NILO was located 22 miles from the incident and due to motorway closures took until 2340 to arrive at the Fire Service Rendezvous Point.
Prior to the Manchester Arena Incident NWFC was not required to actively seek situational reports from other emergency service control rooms.	NWFC now actively seeks situational reports. A 'prompt' has been included in NWFC's Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 / INQ000932]. Paragraph 8.38	To permit the mobilising officer to gain situational awareness through inter agency communications as the incident progresses.
NWFC was required by the fire and rescue service to actively seek/share information gained from different locations at which fire service resources were gathered in relation to the same incident, but only with the Incident Commander.	The NWFC Major Incident Action Plan provides that mobilising officers are required to establish points of contact at each location to which fire service resources have been deployed [INQ000931 / INQ000932] and for those points of contact to share that information. All information relating to the incident coming into NWFC's control room is to be passed to each contact point as and when it is received. Provision has been made for NWFC to recall more control room staff to duty in order to support such a communication stream. Paragraph 8.39 and 8.40	In order to improve the flow and content of information being communicated to the fire and rescue service.
Following the implementation of JESIP protocols there was no Action Plan requiring NWFC Operations Managers and Team Leaders in the control room to actively seek information from the various emergency services.	Once the NWFC Major Incident Action Plan had been devised it was circulated via the NWFC Learning Platform Notification Process [PDR Pro]. Training was undertaken with managers and staff in the use of the Major Incident Action Plan. Paragraph 8.42	It was deemed necessary to deliver direct training to all of the Operations Managers and Team Leaders working in the control room at NWFC in order to ensure that they fully understood their responsibilities in relation to the actions contained within the new Major Incident Action Plan.
There was no defined structure whereby senior	The NWFC Major Incident Action Plan [INQ000931 /	To ensure that Senior Managers are fully appraised

<p>managers at NWFC would liaise with the Strategic Command or Tactical Command Groups located at Police headquarters.</p>	<p>INQ000932] 'prompts' the mobilising officer in the NWFC control room to establish contact between NWFC and each of the command structure levels [Strategic, Tactical and Operational]. Strategic Command Course Training for senior managers has been implemented via the Local Resilience Forums. NWFC senior managers may attend Strategic Command Group meetings or liaise with senior officers who are in attendance at such meetings.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Paragraph 8.43</p>	<p>of all information in relation to Major Incidents or Events and to ensure the prompt and continuous flow of information to the emergency services.</p> <p>On the night of the incident NWFC was not advised that Operation Plato had been declared. That Operation Plato had been declared was only discovered when an officer from Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service attended the Police Force Duty Module.</p>
<p>A JESIP Assurance visit which took place in August 2017 identified the fact that there had been failures to ensure that staff across all levels had undertaken JESIP e learning every year. This had been identified following examination of the PDRPro records.</p>	<p>A bespoke training programme has been implemented which has embedded JESIP awareness training into the management structure for staff of all grades since October 2017. This includes the JESIP Major Incident Training Video.</p>	<p>To ensure that all staff are fully trained in JESIP awareness with a continuing training programme the results of which are recorded on individual PDRPro records and accessible to line managers for discussion with staff and appraisal on a quarterly basis.</p>