



# Scottish Police Federation

5 Woodside Place Glasgow G3 7QF

**JCC Circular 50 of 2014**

Ref: CS/LS

11 November 2014

Dear Colleague

## **Water Rescue and Life Saving Capability - Consultation**

I refer to the above and attach herewith the relevant paperwork.

Please submit any negative comments/observations on the document to [Lesley.stevenson@spf.org.uk](mailto:Lesley.stevenson@spf.org.uk) by **Tuesday 18 November 2014**.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Calum Steele', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Calum Steele**  
**General Secretary**



## BRIEFING PAPER

<b>FOR DECISION</b>			
Disclosable under FOISA 2002		<b>YES</b>	
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Attachments: MOU Inland Flooding and Water Rescue			

## BRIEFING PAPER FOR DCC RICHARDSON REGARDING WATER RESCUE AND LIFE SAVING CAPABILITY

### 1. Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to provide a response to action 19 from the Police Scotland, Health and Safety Board held on 19 June 2014 with regards to "work being commissioned to prepare a profile on usage of throw lines and/ or lifesaving equipment carried on Police vehicles and any FAI recommendations in consultation with the Fire and Rescue service on such matters".

### 2. Review of Usage

#### Current Position

Police vehicles in legacy Lothian and Borders Police and Central Scotland Police had, and still have, as part of their equipment, emergency throw lines. Officers received annual refresher training in respect of their use during OST refresher training.

Legacy Fife Constabulary and Grampian Police do not have throw lines as part of their vehicle equipment and accordingly do not receive training in respect of their use.

Legacy Northern and Dumfries and Galloway Constabulary have some operational vehicles with throw lines as part of their equipment. Officers do not receive annual refresher training in respect of their use.

Legacy Tayside and Strathclyde Police have the provision of life vests and throw lines in Police vehicles. D Division have the life

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vests checked annually, however there are no servicing arrangements in place for legacy Strathclyde life vests.

Legacy Strathclyde Police previously provided refresher training that included information regarding the use of the throw lines. This has since ceased to be the case.

### **Records of Use**

No legacy area has any mechanism for recording the number of times throw lines have been used on the STORM or Command and Control databases and there is minimal anecdotal evidence of this equipment being utilised within the past 12 months.

Throw lines were used to rescue a male from Arbroath Harbour during 2013 but there were no requirement for lifejackets to be worn.

### **3. Scottish Fire and Rescue Service overview**

The SFRS have the responsibility for inland water rescue response and has provided teams who have the appropriate level of training and equipment to facilitate this need, however there are some important points to consider when making the decision about the level of Police involvement in water rescue.

Inland water rescue is the title used for all rescues that take place in non-coastal waterways, however this title covers a wide range of water types, from ponds to lochs and burns to rivers and as such it is difficult to have a one size fits all approach.

As we know, it is possible for people to need rescue from, or drown, in any body of water and we must ensure that any provision we make for water rescue is appropriate and risk based and the provision the SFRS has made across the country is located in the areas of greatest need, but as has been shown, incidents of this type that require an SFRS intervention can and do happen anywhere.

The public do not have an appreciation of the risks associated with a water rescue, the level of training required and the PPE that is necessary to effect a rescue. The simplistic view they take is that Police and Fire services will rescue the casualty, so when the first Police vehicle turns up the officers will come under public and moral pressure to do something.

If Police decide to provide throw lines in vehicles as mitigation measure to the above then the following requires consideration:

One person in moving water who is thrown a line which one or even two Police officers are holding onto is likely to pull one or both of the

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officers into the water. This is due to the force the moving water adds to the 'weight' and momentum of the casualty. Knowing this, it would be appropriate to then consider the supply of lifejackets to officers along with training on how to use a throw line, the lifejacket and how to treat the casualty once they are removed from the water (they must be kept in a horizontal position etc.). Additionally some form of relevant first aid equipment and training would also be required.

The situation in still water is obviously different as the current will be either greatly reduced or non-existent, however a throw line has a finite length, so again is a limited resource, all be it a useful and potentially lifesaving one if the casualty is within 20m of the shore and is able/willing to grab the line.

The SFRS do not have an expectation that Police Scotland will attempt a rescue in water. In fact, as there is a risk that Police Officers could themselves end up becoming additional casualties it is desirable that they do not put themselves at risk at all. This is the same rationale as not having Police officers running into houses on fire.

Having said that, it is entirely possible and likely that a Police Officer with a throw line in the right circumstances could save a life.

There is not an easy solution to this issue with many factors requiring to be taken into consideration. If a decision is taken to provide throw lines then Police Scotland must consider the risk that officers might be taking if they use it in the wrong circumstance because of public and moral pressure. There is the consideration of the additional PPE and training required to be also taken into account.

The FAI reports that are relevant to this matter focus on the inter-agency communications and local knowledge aspect rather than equipment for the Police, so there is no real imperative from that direction to provide equipment and the necessary training that goes along with it.

The Tomkins report recommended that ACPOS considers the question of developing a national policy and the costs associated with this, The suggestion from SFRS perspective is that a national policy would have to take a risk based view on the provision of equipment and accept that while it may be desirable to provide a throw line and the associated equipment to vehicles that do not have a swift water risk, it probably wouldn't be desirable in locations where the speed and volume of the rivers are a significant risk to Police personnel.

The decision to provide a seemingly small piece of equipment, while it may well save a life, also has the potential to incur a significant financial impact and may put Police officers at increased risk.

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There is the possibility that SFRS will provide DCC Richardson an opportunity to observe a swift water rescue exercise to see first-hand the complexities and risks associated with this subject.

### **4. Police Service precedence**

I have reviewed the position in England and Wales alongside the PSNI position on the provision of throw lines or water guidance. ACPO are in the process of drafting a Policy on Water Safety Guidance for Officers. In essence this covers the various scenarios involved in water rescue and for a risk assessment process to be developed by the officer or officers in attendance. As part of this risk tiered process an option at the high end level of the risk scale is to "throw a line".

ACPO recommend that forces assess the foreseeable risks of water hazards and incidents in their area of operation and establish the need for providing appropriate equipment such as installing throw lines in operational vehicles and, where lines are provided; officers should be trained to use the equipment.

There is a similar Policy in place within The Police Service of Northern Ireland and again a risk based approach is undertaken. Throw lines are provided in a vehicle allocated to each station and Officers receive training in their use.

Taking the above into account it must be remembered that there is no prerequisite for Officers to be able to swim and no formal lifesaving training is given to student officers or police staff. Those involved in operational deployment to water rescue incidents should consider this factor.

All personnel deployed on operational duties or who undertake activities, which are likely to bring them into contact with or in the vicinity of open water, must receive appropriate information regarding water incident awareness in the form of some guidance so their risk assessments are informed.

### **5. Recommendations from Reviews**

#### **INDEPENDENT REVIEW OF OPEN WATER AND FLOOD RESCUE IN SCOTLAND**

The aforementioned review was commissioned in 2009 by Fergus Ewing, Minister for Community Safety in the Scottish Government and charged Mr Paddy Tomkins, QPM with the following terms of reference to conduct a short term review and report with options and recommendations for change.

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Terms of Reference

To review and advise on

- The resources and capabilities of all agencies currently involved in water rescue emergencies, including flooding.
- Whether there is a need for changes in current operational arrangements between responders
- Whether there is a need for a change in the law covering the responders who cover water rescue
- The level of public awareness and education of the risks associated with open water.

The review focussed upon the policy, practice and capability at the strategic and operational level. It was apparent there were key questions emerging from the initial consultation and review process from the emergency responder community within Scotland. Primarily these focussed on the following:

- Definition of terms, what do we mean by freshwater?
- Who is in charge of water rescue?
- What is the definition of the area of risk?
- Who owns the risk?
- What is the scale of risk when assessed against other priorities?
- Who sets the standards for participation in water rescue?
- How are resources allocated to manage the risk?

The report was structured to address the above and to reflect the distinction between flood rescue and "acute" rescue. However, the main assumption was that the flooding of land will become an increasingly frequent event with a wider number of communities affected.

The Tomkins report contains 15 recommendations which I have not replicated but refer to those which may impact on a Police Scotland perspective.

Recommendation 5

*That each FRS in Scotland, working under the aegis of their respective SCG's, should be requested by Scottish Ministers, through the relevant Fire and Rescue Boards, to compile a public register of declared water rescue assets in the public, private and voluntary sectors ( including individual private persons), to include a clear definition of the capability in each instance.*

The above has clear implications for the Fire and Rescue Service in conjunction with to gather the necessary information in particular from private and voluntary sectors. This work is presently ongoing by SFRS and reported upon within Resilience Partnership arrangements.

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### Recommendation 9

*Scottish Ministers direct an audit of the utilisation and suitability of the FRS water rescue equipment procured to date; request each SCG to reappraise local risk and requirement; and, in the light of the SCG reports, to establish the need for a minimum national water rescue capability requirement, the long term funding arrangements for which should be negotiated and settled between national and local government*

This recommendation has been discharged and accompanied by extensive risk assessment process undertaken by SCG'S and now Resilience Partnerships and alongside responder representatives.

### Recommendation 12

*ACPOS consider the question of developing a national policy on life-saving equipment to be carried on police vehicles and calculate the cost of training appropriate personnel in their use.*

Clearly there was a consideration for ACPOS OPBA in this regard. However, it appeared to contradict Mr Tomkins views in page 41 of the document with regards to Public Rescue Equipment and limits of effectiveness of throw lines.

The cost of training could also be substantial given that it would have to be considered in a "Team Type" approach with the relevant criteria, equipment and training to maintain the Team Type model at the forefront of development of professional understanding of water rescue techniques and equipment seen as a requirement.

## 6. **Outcome of Recommendation 12**

I have sourced the following references from ACPOS OPBA minutes with regards to this matter: Open Minute of ACPOS EP December 2010 "lifesaving equipment for carrying in police vehicles previously endorsed through OPBA is being progressed"

Open Minute of ACPOS EP March 2011;

"Throw-lines in police vehicles – ACPOS OPBA members have agreed in principle to the carrying of throw-lines in police vehicles, however no decision has been made on whether there will be National or Force procurement for the required equipment."

The aforementioned may go some way into providing an explanation as to the current disparate arrangements regarding throw lines.

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### **Drowning Incident at Walpole Park, Gosport 2011**

During February 2012 a coroner in Portsmouth ruled that the death of a charity shop worker whose body was left floating in a shallow boating lake by the emergency services was an accident.

The Portsmouth inquest heard that Mr Burgess was seen to drop a bag into Walpole Park Lake and to enter the water to retrieve it shortly after 12pm on March 10 2011. The 41-year-old is then believed to have suffered an epileptic fit and fallen unconscious in the water.

A member of the public dialled 999 at 12.15pm and at 12.17pm Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service scrambled two fire appliances and a specialist water rescue unit.

The fire appliances arrived at 12.20pm and by 12.22pm Watch Manager Tony Nicholls had arrived and talked to members of the public about the situation

The inquest heard that, at first, Mr Nicholls could not see Mr Burgess whose body had floated up to 25 metres away.

When he had sighted it, he took the decision, which was agreed by his crew, that Mr Burgess had died.

Adhering to force policy not to enter water more than "half a boot" deep unless in a life-critical situation, he ordered his crew not to retrieve the body and to wait for the water rescue team, based at Fareham, which arrived at 12.31pm.

These specially-trained officers were equipped to enter water with flotation devices to retrieve the body.

The inquest heard that Constable Tony Jones, of Hampshire police, had volunteered to enter the water to retrieve Mr Burgess but had been ordered not to by Mr Nicholls and his own control room.

Paramedic Robert Wallace also suggested he should enter the water but did not after Mr Nicholls asked him where his equipment was, the inquest heard.

The body of Mr Burgess was eventually retrieved from the water at 12.52pm and was taken to Queen Alexandra Hospital in Portsmouth where he was pronounced dead at 1.42pm.

Pathologist Brett Lockyer told the hearing that a person cannot normally survive after being immersed unconscious after between five and seven minutes but added that under certain circumstances, including in icy conditions, this could be between 20 minutes and an hour.

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Mr Horsley said that he could not be certain that the delay in the recovery of the body had contributed to his death.

He said: *"In this case the delay in arrival of the specialist team has not been a significant factor in this tragic death."*

***He called on the three emergency services to re-examine their training in appropriate resuscitation times after immersion in water and to work together to come up with new joint protocols.***

He said: *"I am going to request they get together and re-examine the protocols jointly so the protocols can give the best possible guidance for situations like this where a life may hang in the balance."*

Temporary Assistant Chief Officer Andrew Bowers, of Hampshire Fire and Rescue Service, said that his officers made the decision on the scene that Mr Burgess was already dead.

He said that the force policy did not forbid the firefighters from entering the water if they were carrying out a life-saving operation. He said that health and safety regulations allowed for officers to take risks when a life could be saved.

**The above mentioned recommendations make no reference to the provision of throw lines or life saving equipment to be provided to Police.**

### 7. **Police Scotland MOU on Inland Water and Rescue and Flooding**

The attached embedded document whilst not making specific reference to throw lines, defines responsibilities and arrangements in respect of Police role in the coordination of water rescue incidents



MOU Inland Water  
Rescue & Flooding (V

### 8. **Recommendations**

There is not an easy solution to this issue with many factors requiring to be taken into consideration. If a decision is taken to provide throw lines then Police Scotland must consider the risk that officers might be taking if they use it in the wrong circumstance because of public and moral pressure. There is the consideration of the additional PPE, significant financial impacts and training required to be also taken into account.

Any Police Officer or potentially Police Staff member could be called upon to assist a member of the public in a water emergency. Police Officers and Police staff need to be informed of the inherent dangers of

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water and be trained in safe working practices and the correct use of relevant work equipment and personal protective equipment (PPE) Attempting to rescue someone without suitable equipment and competence puts the rescuer, casualty and potentially others, at additional risk

Given the previous decision of ACPOS OPBA and recommendation 12 of the Tomkins report it is recommended that Police Scotland consider the requirement for a policy to be developed on water safety guidance and that an appropriate throw line be procured for the service and located within Operational vehicles. This will also have a training impact which can be added to the Officer Safety Training day if appropriate. This is already in place within some legacy areas.

An alternative training method may be to produce a Force Policy with an Aide memoire for Operational Officers in terms of the associated risk involved in water rescue.

In the event that throw lines or life jackets are to be provided to Officers in Police Scotland then there is a requirement for a robust allocation, inspection, maintenance regime and recording of deployments to be retained. This will afford appropriate process to be in place to meet health and safety requirements in terms of PPE, near miss reporting and ensuring that equipment is fit for deployment.

### **Costs**

The manufacturer of the life jackets currently provided in Tayside area is 'Crewsaver' and the company which carries out the annual checks is Survitec, Service and Distribution, Edinburgh. The retail price of a life jacket is £130.00. The cost of the annual check of each life vest is £14.00

There are numerous suppliers of throw lines however the average retail price per throw line is £35.

## **9. Conclusion**

It is recommended that this report be considered by the Force Health and Safety Board and the above recommendations given consideration to protect the public, the reputational factors of Police Scotland and to ensure we continue to "keep people safe"

Colin Walker  
Chief Inspector  
EERP- North Area

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