



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Dawn Docx  
Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive  
North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority  
Ffordd Salesbury  
St Asaph Business Park  
LL17 0JJ

1, September 2023

Dear Dawn,

**As the Member of Parliament for Wrexham, I am extremely concerned that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority are consulting on the future provision of emergency cover for Wrexham.**

Fire and Rescue services in Wales are devolved to the Welsh Government in Cardiff. The first and most important duty of any government is to keep its citizens safe. Therefore, I would suggest that it is the responsibility of the Welsh Government to step up and provide the funding necessary to maintain Wrexham's current level of fire service provision – particularly as the UK Government recently delivered the largest annual funding settlement to Wales since devolution, providing a record £18 billion per year to the Welsh Government – around £1.20 for every £1 spent in England.

Two out of the three consultation options, as part of your Emergency Cover Review, propose removing Wrexham's third fire appliance (i.e., fire engine), maintaining one appliance staffed by wholetime firefighters and one retained appliance staffed by on-call firefighters – who would not always be available and who do not have the necessary skills to undertake some of the tasks of wholetime firefighters. This would be unacceptable for an area the size of Wrexham. As Wales' newest city, with plans for expansion both in domestic homes (the Local Development Plan allocates space for more than 8,000 homes) and businesses (with Wrexham soon to have the largest trading estate in Europe), these proposals are unacceptable and, I would suggest that the consideration should be to expand the current fire service provision covering Wrexham – not reduce it!

Wrexham is the largest urban settlement in North Wales, covering an area of almost 200 square miles, consisting of a city centre and surrounding communities which are home to approximately 140,000 residents. Wrexham has one of the largest industrial estates in Europe which contains over 340 businesses and employs over 10,000 people. It also contains HMP Berwyn, the UK's largest prison. Wrexham Maelor Hospital is the largest hospital in North Wales. This whole area is served primarily by Wrexham Fire Station and its three appliances, which currently attend 1,572 callouts a year – more than five incidents a day. I am seriously concerned that, if this decision goes ahead, and 24 firefighter jobs are lost, the safety of Wrexham residents would be compromised.

At the same time as these proposals, which involve large-scale cuts and redundancies, an undertaking to build a new training centre for North Wales Fire and Rescue Service in St. Asaph has been approved, I am told, to the cost of £48 million. North Wales Fire and Rescue Service is undoubtedly under-resourced and underfunded, and improved training facilities are certainly needed. However, the timing, size, and scale of this project is concerning.



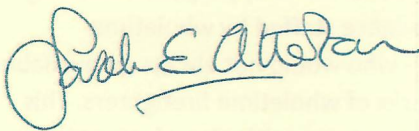
Furthermore, I am worried that Wrexham is, once again, bearing the brunt of the Welsh Government in Cardiff Bay's decision to underfund North Wales and treat us as an afterthought, instead of addressing the North-South funding disparity which led to the same proposals being made in 2016. Clearly, Wrexham is repeatedly being targeted, and residents will feel threatened by these potential cuts yet again. This cannot keep happening. Cities of a similar size in England, such as Preston, are served by two whole-time fire engines as well as other resources, like a Major Rescue Unit. Indeed, Newport in South Wales is served by three fire stations – each operating a whole-time service. I cannot understand why North Wales is losing out again.

Following our meeting on 9<sup>th</sup> June, alongside North Wales Conservative MP colleagues on 4<sup>th</sup> August, and throughout the consultation process, I have urged Wrexham residents to make their voices heard and respond to the consultation. Having submitted my own response, I was struck by how difficult it was to find the link to complete the questionnaire, as well as the lack of space available (250 words maximum) to object to the proposals. In addition, the structure and style of the questionnaire made it impossible to express a view in favour of retaining the current level of Fire Service provision across North Wales or to suggest that you seek the funding you require from the Welsh Government.

Following a high volume of correspondence from concerned residents, I launched a petition to oppose plans to remove Wrexham's third appliance. I will be submitting the hundreds of signatures as part of the consultation process before the closing date on 22<sup>nd</sup> September.

I sincerely hope that North Wales Fire and Rescue Authority take the views of the people of Wrexham into account, realise that these proposals are unworkable, and retain our current fire service provision. As there are bold proposals underway to grow the city of Wrexham, I am finding it difficult to comprehend how slashing coverage can be an option.

Yours sincerely,



**Sarah Atherton**  
Member of Parliament for Wrexham



*[Photo taken on High Street; 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2023 at 1738hrs].*

*If proposals to remove Wrexham's third fire appliance are adopted, an incident such as the one pictured would take up the entire provision of Wales' newest city – leaving the rest of Wrexham unsupported.*

***Thank you to our Wrexham firefighters.***