

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

MONEY TO BURN: FIRE SERVICE IT PROJECT SPENDING £40 MILLION ON RENT AND OTHER BUILDING COSTS AFTER SERIES OF DELAYS

Nearly £40 million will be spent on nine regional fire control centre buildings before they become operational because of years of delays. The first regional fire control centres will have cost over two years in rent and other charges before they become operational in July 2010.

The nine regional fire control centres are meant to replace the 46 existing emergency control rooms the Government wants to close under a Project known as FireControl. The Fire Brigades Union says the project remains in turmoil and beset by spiralling costs, technical problems and delay after delay.

The union says the controversial project is years behind schedule with project costs rocketing above £1.4 billion. The union says the project should be scrapped before another penny is wasted.

An initial six month “rent holiday” was set aside to cover the period between the buildings being completed, a fit out programme and the first fire brigades moving in. None of the new buildings will become operational until late 2010 after further delays were announced in late 2008 which was itself a delay from the original timescales of the project being finalised in 2007.

The total rental costs between the buildings being completed until the first fire service moves in are £39,953,430. The union accuses the Department of Communities and Local Government of wasting money that should be going to frontline fire services.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: “This is a scandalous waste of public money when fire brigades are looking at major cuts because of a lack of cash. What was meant to be a money saving project has turned into a financial disaster and diverted funds away from frontline services.

“Despite a few meetings for window dressing, these are largely unused buildings which will not be operational for years. In some cases rent has been paid by Government since early 2008 and some will not be operational until 2011 at the earliest.

“They completed the buildings on time and delayed the start of rental payments to give them time to fit out the interiors. But a host of other delays have put the project years behind schedule.

“The fault lies at the door of Government. No local fire authority is responsible in anyway for anything which has happened up to now.

“Taxpayers are propping up another failing IT project because the Government is too embarrassed to admit how bad things have become. If they want to save money they should shut this Project down before it gets worse.”

South West Regional Control Centre has cost a total of £2,066,107.64 in rent and other building costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 22 August 2007. Rent commencement date: 15 February 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £154,893 from February 2009 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in July 2010.

Based on those costs, the price from February 2009 to July 2010 will be £2,478,288. That is a grand total of £4,544,395 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first becomes operational.

East Midlands has cost a total of £2,355,080 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 6 June 2007. Rent commencement date: 20 January 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £154,038 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in July 2010.

Based on those figures the costs to July 2010 will be £2,464,608. A grand total of £4,819,688 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

North East has cost a total of £2,077,812,080 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 6 June 2007. Rent commencement date: 13 April 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £148,939 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in July 2010.

Based on that figure the costs to July 2010 will be £2,383,024. A grand total of £4,460,836 in rents and other building costs from completing the building until the first fire brigade moves in.

West Midlands has cost a total of £1,229,656 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 31 December 2007. Rent commencement date: 4 October 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £167,824 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in October 2010.

Based on that figure the costs to October 2010 will be £3,188,656. A grand total of £4,418,312 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

South East has cost a total of £954,928 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 12 June 2008. Rent commencement date: 14 November 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £173,668 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in February 2011.

Based on that figure the costs to February 2011 will be £3,994,364. A grand total of £4,949,292 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

North West has cost a total of £666,730 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 8 July 2008. Rent commencement date: 1

January 2008. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £155,403 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in February 2011.

Based on that figure the costs to February 2011 will be £3,574,269. A grand total of £4,240,999 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

Yorkshire and Humberside has cost a total of £422,224 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 8 July 2008. Rent commencement date: 14 April 2009. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £152,662 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in February 2011.

Based on that figure the costs to August 2011 will be £4,427,198. A grand total of £4,849,422 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

East of England has cost a total of £313,686 in rent and other costs from the date it was completed until February 2009. Lease commencement date: 8 October 2008. Rent commencement date: 21 April 2009. The Government estimates that on-going monthly costs are £166,064 until the date of the first fire brigade moves into the building in October 2011.

Based on that figure the costs to October 2011 will be £4,981,920. A grand total of £5,295,606 in rents and other costs from completing the building until it first goes live.

London will cost a total of £118,744 in rent and other costs from the date it is completed until February 2011. Lease commencement date (projected) 26 February 2010. Rent commencement date: 26 November 2010. Assuming practical completion takes place in the next 3 months, 20 months rent until it is due to open in February 2011 will be £2,374,880.

This is a grand total – up to the date of the first fire brigade moving in - of £39,953,430 in rents for buildings which will not be operational until late 2010 at the very earliest. Even when the first fire brigade moves in, the buildings will still be under-utilised.

As the Department for Communities and Local Government routinely denies any negative story about Regional Control Centres, we re-produce below the Parliamentary Answers on which the calculations are based.

Drew - Fire Services (Manpower)

Tue, 31 March 09 | House of Commons - Written Answer

Summary

The following question was answered on 31 March 2009.

Contents

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government what estimate she has made of the minimum number of staff required (a) in each regional control centre and (b) to staff the national network of regional control centres to meet the needs of national resilience;

on what date each regional control centre was completed; what expenditure has been incurred in respect of each regional control centre since its completion; what estimate she has made of such costs in the period between completion and cut over for each centre; and what expenditure her Department has incurred on consultants engaged to work on the FiReControl project to date. [267875]

Mr. Khan: Information on staffing is included in the "FiReControl Business Case: the National Case" published in November 2008—a copy of the Business Case is available in the House Library. The actual number of staff to be employed within each regional control centre is a matter for each regional local authority controlled company who will be the employers.

To the end of February 2009 the cost of consultancy services for the FiReControl project totalled £45.3 million and this is taken into account within the overall project implementation costs outlined in the Business Case.

The costs from practical completion of each regional control centre until the end of February are set out in the following table:

	Cost (£)
NE	2,077,812.95
EM	2,355,080.31
SW	2,066,107.64
WM	1,229,656.29
SE	954,928.46
NW	666,730.56
Y&H	422,224.78
EoE	313,686.38

The anticipated costs per month until the current planned cutover dates are:

	Cost (£)
NE	148,939.00
EM	154,038.83
SW	154,893.58
WM	167,824.67
SE	173,668.08
NW	155,403.67
Y&H	152,662.67
EoE	166,064.17
London	118,744.33

Mr. Drew: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government when the lease upon each regional fire control centre commenced; on what date rent started to be paid on each lease; and on what date each centre began operations. [271665]

Mr. Khan: The information requested is set out in the following table, broken down by region.

Region	Lease commencement date	Rent commencement date
North East	6 June 2007	13 April 2008
East Midlands	6 June 2007	20 January 2008
South West	22 August 2007	15 February 2008
West Midlands	31 December 2007	4 October 2008
North West	8 July 2008	1 January 2009
Yorkshire and Humberside	8 July 2008	14 April 2009
East of England	8 October 2008	21 April 2009
South East	12 June 2008	14 November 2008
London (projected)	26 February 2010	26 November 2010

The buildings are undergoing a fit out programme at present to bring them into a fully operational state. No regional control centre has yet begun operation.

National Media contacts: 0208 541 1765 Mobile 07736 818100

Duncan Milligan
Head of Communications and Research
Fire Brigades Union
68 Coombe Road
Kingston Upon Thames
Surrey
KT2 7AE
0208 541 1765
Mobile 07736 818100