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The Rt Hon John Denham MP
*Secretary of State for Communities and Local
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Dear John,

FIRECONTROL

FiReControl is a project which has faced many difficulties. The delivery of regional control centres and a national network has proved to be more challenging than anticipated. The delays to go-live and increased costs have undermined the confidence of Fire and Rescue Services in the way CLG has delivered the project and the performance of our supplier, EADS.

Nevertheless the government remains strongly committed to FiReControl. The benefits which the project will deliver are considerable - first and foremost enhanced national resilience. That is why we decided to undertake the project in the first place, and that is why I believe it is still the right thing to do.

Given the difficulties we have experienced on the project I have explored every option available to assure myself that we have the best possible approach to delivery. To that end, I asked Gartner, one of the world's most respected IT research and advisory companies, to review the state of the project.

That report gives me confirmation that the project is deliverable, and that we have made real improvements in the way that CLG is managing it. Nevertheless, there are areas where further improvement is necessary. EADS has not delivered as they and we had hoped, and they have recognised that they need to achieve a substantial improvement in their performance. Likewise, I recognise that CLG needs to continue to raise its game on this project. So changes are required to both the CLG and EADS teams, and I have asked for these to be addressed immediately.

These include:

- increased collaborative working and the implementation of structures to exact rapid agreement on technical problems;
- restructuring the overall EADS commercial contract; and
- strengthening the technical capacity of the CLG team.

I also asked Gartner, working with officials, to review alternative options to FiReControl, as currently planned, and how they compare. That work has shown me that, notwithstanding the very real challenges we face on the project, continuing with FiReControl is the best way to deliver the benefits to which we are committed.

Gartner have posed some challenging questions on the project timeline. They believe there are some areas where more time will be required. This may have an impact on the overall schedule, and we are reviewing their conclusions. I want to address this sensibly - the paramount issue is getting the system right to meet the needs of the FRS.

The final issue Gartner raised, and one on which I need your specific support, is the way in which we work together. We are committed to FiReControl because of the benefits it brings. I know CFOA shares that commitment to the principle of FiReControl, and that your members actively support our work, but we need to go further. We need a strong shared commitment to making a success of this project and we need to pull together visibly and publicly. With that support from you and your colleagues we can tackle the remaining challenges. Without that support our task will be all the harder.

I would be grateful if you could make a copy of this letter available to your members.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Denham". The signature is written in a cursive style with a clear, legible font.

JOHN DENHAM