

Dorset Fire &
Rescue Service



Fighting UK Wildfires

A firefighter's perspective



1

Working in partnership to make Dorset safer

Andy Elliott

- Senior GIS Developer Dorset County Council
- Station Commander DFRS (RDS)
- Former Countryside Ranger

Currently working with the Urban Heaths Partnership Advisory Board to help protect Dorset's Heathland



The Urban Heaths Partnership has been formed from various organisations working together to address urban pressures on Dorset heaths.

There are 14 partner organisations including the County Council, Dorset Fire and Rescue Service, Dorset Police, local authorities and conservation groups.



Unwanted Heath Fires are:

1. Hard work, exhausting for firefighters
2. Heavy on resources
3. Potentially dangerous
4. Often very damaging



Planning

1. Premise Risk Profiles (PRP) are prepared by firefighters
2. Stations regularly visit heathland sites
3. Firefighters are made aware of the conservation importance of heathland
4. Land Managers are trained in Fire and Rescue Service Incident Command System



Prevention

1. Site Managers and firefighters identify areas of high fire loading and remove it where possible via the PRP process
2. UHP staff, Police and Firefighters regularly visit schools and youth projects to deliver education packages
3. Media campaigns are used to deliver simple fire safety messages



6

Working in partnership to make Dorset safer

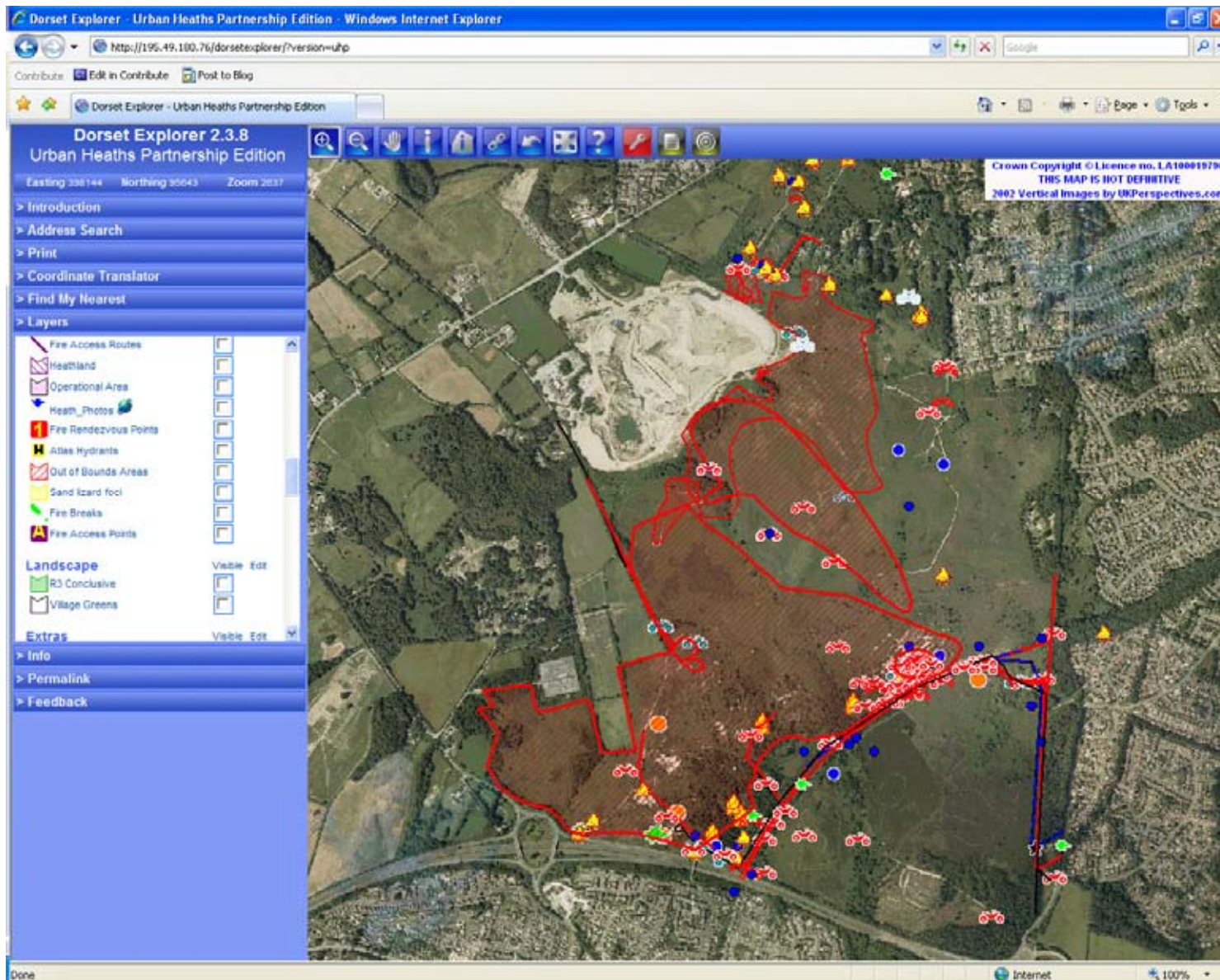
Response

1. One pump and one Land Rover (L4t)
2. Specialist off road vehicles-
 - Land Rover (14 in fleet)
 - Man 4x4 B type appliance (1 in fleet)
 - Unimog with CAFs monitor (1 in fleet)
 - Mercedes 4x4 (1 in fleet)
3. Firefighters – often lots of them!
4. UHP staff via pager
5. Police – if deliberate



Recovery

- 1. Incident Recording System (IRS) provides more accurate information but still not adequate**
- 2. UHP wardens attend to fill in the recording gap. Geographically record and measure the incident, log damage, count wildlife casualties etc.**
- 3. Ranger Staff manage recovery of site**
- 4. All partners deliver education packages to local schools**
- 5. Police attend ALL deliberate incidents and gather evidence to prosecute**



9 Working in partnership to make Dorset safer

Enforcement

There is a popular myth that you cannot prosecute a person for heathland arson.

“If it can be shown that there is a management body which carries out works, conservation or has responsibility for a particular area, then they become the 'victim' and therefore the offence of Arson is complete i.e 'Intentionally or recklessly damaging the property of another. By carrying out management, the Heathland is classed as 'being taken into the care of' or 'reduced into ownership'.” PC John Snellin.

Enforcement – How do we apply this?

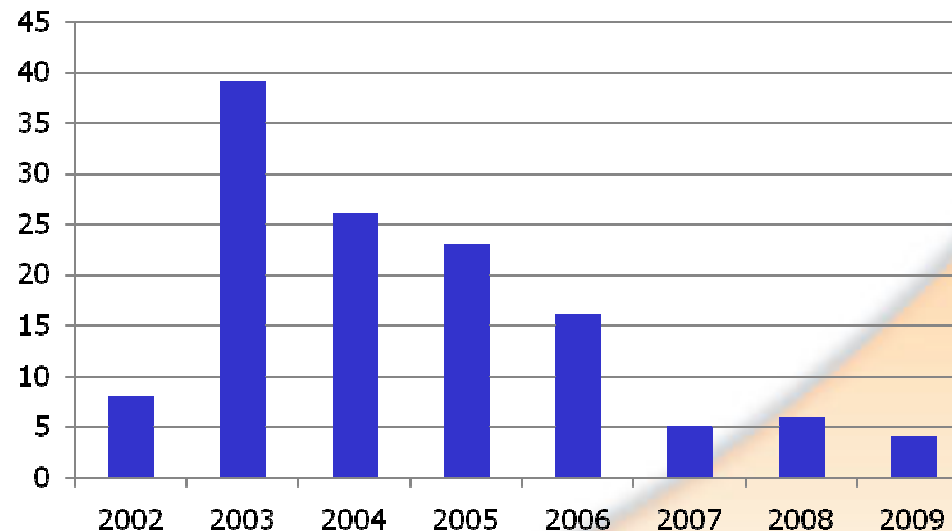
“All offenders in Dorset are arrested for Arson rather than the CRoW Act (third party damage to a SSSI). This is far easier to get through the courts, with no arguments as to whether irreparable damage was caused and is potentially a far more serious offence.” PC John Snellin.

PC John Snellin is Dorset Police’s Wildlife Crime Officer. His post was initially funded for four years by the UHP LIFE Natura Project.

Enforcement – What are the results?

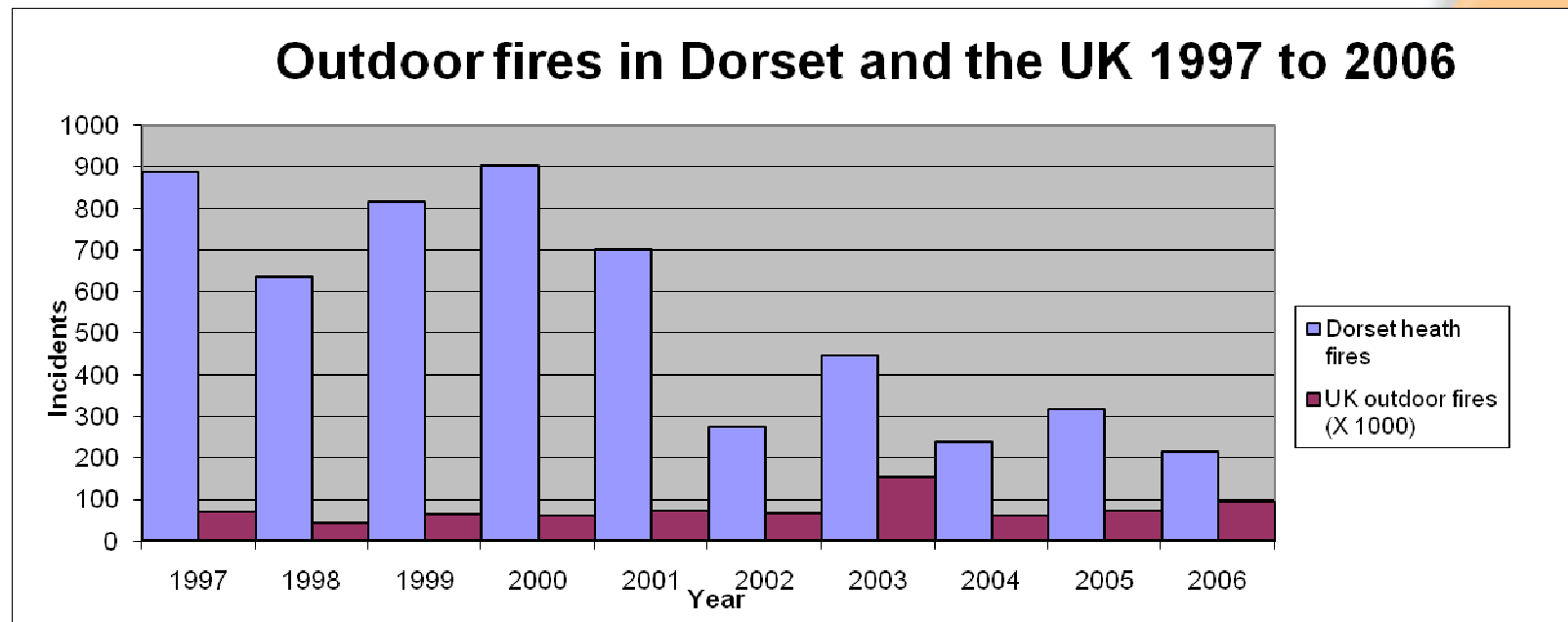
The majority of those arrested were juveniles, however six people have been successfully prosecuted with sentences ranging from supervision orders to 2 years imprisonment.

Arrests for heathland crime



Fire Reduction

By following the principles of the UHP the number of heathland fires in Dorset has dropped (-62%) despite the upward national trend (+46%).



Interim Planning Framework - IPF (adopted policy due in 2010)

- Planning applications within 400m of a Natura 2000 heathland are normally refused.
- Planning applications between 400m and 5km of a Natura 2000 heathland pay a mitigation fee of £1031 per flat and £1719 per house.
- Mitigation works to date include:
 - Ranger Staff
 - Monitoring equipment
 - Land management to reduce fire load
 - Firefighting equipment – hydrants etc.
 - Land purchased as alternative open space
- The IPF funds most heathland mitigation works in Dorset, currently **£1,000,000** per annum

What do firefighters want?

1. Training – there is currently no guidance on wildfire tactics and therefore little or no training

2. PPE – the UK Fire and Rescue Services are equipped to fight compartment fires in buildings. We need specialist wildfire PPE

3. Equipment – heaths and moors are difficult to get to. We need access to 4X4 vehicles and dedicated equipment

4. Most of all we don't want to be there! We need strong partnerships to manage the risk and reduce the number and severity of wildfires

Any Questions?

Dorset Fire & Rescue Service HQ | Peverell Avenue West
Dorchester | Dorset | DT1 3SU

sm05@dorsetfire.gov.uk

07967504716



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE