



HM Fire Service Inspectorate

**Planning and Preparedness of
the Scottish Fire and Rescue
Service for the XXIII (23rd Edition)
Commonwealth Games 2026**



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Integrity, Objectivity, and Fairness.

Acknowledgements

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Foreword

This report presents the findings of His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland (HMFSI) following our inspection of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service's (SFRS) planning and preparedness for the XXIII (23rd Edition) Commonwealth Games, to be held in Glasgow in 2026.

In carrying out this inspection HMFSI has sought to provide independent assurance that appropriate arrangements are being developed to safeguard public safety, while ensuring that 'Business as Usual' operational resilience is maintained.

The evidence gathered during our inspection demonstrates that the SFRS has approached this challenge in a professional, proportionate and risk-based manner. The Service has shown strong internal governance, effective multi-agency collaboration, and a clear understanding of both operational and reputational risk. However, our inspection has also identified a number of planning challenges inherent in the shortened Games delivery timeline. While these factors have introduced complexity and required ongoing adaptation, the Service has managed them constructively and with professional integrity.

Overall, we conclude that, subject to the completion of outstanding actions, the SFRS is appropriately prepared to support the safe delivery of the 2026 Commonwealth Games. The report also highlights important lessons that should inform the planning and governance of future nationally significant events in Scotland, particularly those delivered under non-traditional models.

I would like to record my thanks to all who contributed to this inspection, and in particular to the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service for their openness, cooperation and positive engagement throughout.

Robert Scott QFSM

HM Chief Inspector
Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Inspectorate

Contents

1. Executive Summary	1
2. Why we inspected	5
3. A new Model for Games delivery	6
4. The SFRS's planning and preparedness for the XXIII (23rd Edition) Commonwealth Games 2026	8
5. Conclusions	20
6. Methodology	21
7. Glossary of Terms	23

1. Executive Summary

1. During July and August 2026, the XXIII (23rd Edition) Commonwealth Games (the Games or CG 2026) will be delivered in Scotland under a markedly different governance and funding model from the Games hosted in Glasgow in 2014. These Games will be hosted at four venues across the Glasgow area. Responsibility for delivery, including safety and security at venues, sits with the privately constituted Games Organising Company (GOC), with no co-hosting agreement in place with the Scottish Government (SG). The SG has explicitly determined that the Games will be delivered at no cost to the public purse, with public sector organisations expected to recover all additional costs incurred.
2. The Games were last hosted in Scotland in 2014 (CG 2014) at which time, and in common with other SG sponsored events, a co-host agreement had been formulated and implemented several years prior. A co-host event agreement would commit SG to providing public resources and funding as safety and security arrangements for an event were set out on a multi-year planning horizon. In the absence of a co-host arrangement for CG 2026, SG signed a letter of assurance at Ministerial level that set out its support for the Games, but explicitly stated that while public sector organisations will support games delivery this should not be at the expense of the public purse.
3. For CG 2014, SG had overall responsibility for safety and security of the event, but delegated responsibility for its resourcing and implementation to Police Scotland. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), and prior to the establishment of that entity, Strathclyde Fire and Rescue Service, played a crucial role in providing layers of resilience for the Games safety via its arrangements for Command, Control and Coordination (C3). The CG 2026 are markedly different in that the GOC has responsibility for putting in place suitable arrangements for safety and security for the upcoming events that will be hosted across Glasgow. At the point of our inspection fieldwork there was no formal cost recovery plan that public services could reference and use to calculate and monetise the capacity that they would utilise in support of the Games. This is important to note, as the lack of this formal document has led to a level of discourse between the SFRS and the GOC whilst they sought to reach agreement on cost recovery for necessary C3 arrangements.
4. Within this context, HMFSI has inspected the planning and preparedness of the SFRS to assess whether appropriate arrangements are being put in place to safeguard public safety while maintaining Business as Usual (BAU) operational resilience. Our overall conclusion is that SFRS has approached planning for the Games in a robust, professional, risk-based, and proportionate manner. The Service has demonstrated strong governance, adaptability to respond to compressed planning horizons, experienced planning leadership, and a detailed understanding of both operational and reputational risk.
5. However, the inspection also identifies systemic risks arising from the Games delivery model, including delayed provision of critical planning information, prolonged negotiations over cost recovery, and a divergence in approach by the GOC to C3. These issues have required SFRS to continuously adapt its planning assumptions and introduce bespoke arrangements to protect operational resilience, while placing greater reliance on BAU arrangements and contingency measures than would

normally be expected for an event of this profile.

6. Within the constraints imposed by the CG 2026 delivery model, we believe residual but manageable risk remains, and that this requires ongoing attention from senior Service planning personnel. HMFSI concludes that, subject to completion of outstanding actions, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service is appropriately prepared for the Games.

Key Findings

7. HMFSI identified a number of areas where the SFRS has demonstrated notably good practice in planning and preparing for the CG 2026. These examples provide assurance for the Games and offer the opportunity for transferable learning for future nationally significant events.

Professional, Proportionate and Risk-Based Planning

8. The SFRS has approached Games planning in a measured and proportionate manner, aligned to the reduced scale of the 2026 Games while remaining cognisant of their national and international profile. Planning assumptions have been continuously revisited to reflect evolving information and external constraints, demonstrating organisational agility and sound professional judgement. The Service has avoided both over-planning and under-resourcing, instead focusing effort where risk and consequence are identified as being highest.

Strong Internal Governance and Clear Accountability

9. The governance arrangements established for CG 2026 planning are clear, structured and effective. The use of an internal Tactical Action Group (TAG), with senior officer oversight and escalation routes to the Strategic Leadership Team, provides appropriate assurance and decision making authority. Roles and responsibilities within the planning structure are well understood, and HMFSI found evidence of active challenge, scrutiny and senior ownership of risk.

Integrated Prevention, Protection and Preparedness Capability

10. The creation of the Prevention Directorate has delivered tangible benefits for major event planning. HMFSI observed improved alignment between civil contingencies planning, operational preparedness, as well as fire safety enforcement and audit activity. This integrated structure supports a more coherent view of risk and enables more collegiate and informed decision making, particularly where venue operations, temporary structures and changes in building use are concerned.

Comprehensive Risk Identification and Management

11. The SFRS has applied a high standard of risk management to CG 2026. The Games Risk Management Plan and associated Event Risk Register (ERR) are comprehensive, clearly structured, and actively managed. Each identified risk has an assigned owner and mitigation strategy, with oversight retained at TAG level. This demonstrates a mature approach to risk governance and assurance, particularly in the complex, multi-agency environment that the Service is operating within for CG 2026.

Mature Multi-Agency Working and Information Sharing

12. HMFSI observed strong professional relationships between SFRS and key partners, including Police Scotland (PS), the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS), Glasgow City Council (GCC) and venue operators. Information sharing arrangements are well-developed and reflect long-standing collaborative practice within the Glasgow area. These relationships have assisted SFRS in alleviating some of the planning constraints created by delayed or incomplete external agency documentation.

Experienced Planning Workforce and Organisational Memory

13. The SFRS planning team contains personnel with significant experience of delivering large scale and high-profile events, including the 2014 Commonwealth Games, UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) and recent international sporting and entertainment events. HMFSI found that lessons identified from previous events have been actively applied, with existing planning products adapted rather than recreated. This use of organisational memory supports efficiency, consistency and resilience under compressed planning timelines.

Commitment to Maintaining Business as Usual Resilience

14. Throughout planning for CG 2026, SFRS has maintained a clear focus on preserving BAU service delivery and national resilience capability. HMFSI found no evidence that Games planning has compromised statutory duties or operational readiness. This focus reflects appropriate professional appreciation and an understanding that public expectations of emergency service response remain unchanged during major events.

Constructive but Firm Engagement with External Stakeholders

15. HMFSI noted positively that the SFRS engaged constructively and, where appropriate, assertively, with the GOC on issues of cost recovery, C3 and operational assurance. The Service evidenced a willingness to adapt where reasonable, while clearly documenting residual risk where compromise was agreed. This approach reflects strong professional integrity and clarity around statutory responsibilities.

Reflective Approach and Openness to Scrutiny

16. The SFRS demonstrated a high degree of openness towards the inspection team of HMFSI throughout this inspection, providing unrestricted access to documentation, personnel and planning tools. The Service's willingness to identify risks openly, rather than minimise or defer them, reflects a healthy learning culture and commitment to continuous improvement.

SFRS CG 2026 Ongoing Considerations

17. HMFSI makes the following observations of ongoing considerations to strengthen CG 2026 assurance and to inform future national event planning:
 - The SFRS should formally review, and document lessons identified from CG 2026, with particular focus on C3 under a privately led delivery model; cost recovery mechanisms; and management of external agency information flows. This review should be shared with the SG and other event planning partners to inform future event governance.


- The SFRS should ensure that final confirmation of C3 staffing and escalation arrangements is completed and tested no later than six weeks prior to Games commencement, including contingency arrangements for concurrent incidents.
- The SFRS should finalise and implement its CG 2026 Communication and Engagement Strategy at the earliest opportunity, ensuring that all operational personnel understand expected roles and the BAU assumptions that will be in place for these Games; and, that communications messaging is consistent with SFRS risk assessments and CG 2026 C3 arrangements.
- The SFRS should ask the SG to consider developing a standardised national framework for public service support and cost recovery for privately delivered major events to reduce uncertainty around future cost recovery, and the risk this involves to organisational budgets.

2. Why we inspected

18. The Commonwealth Games in either its traditional delivery format, or as the more streamlined Games of 2026, is a globally significant event, attracting sustained media attention and largescale spectator attendance. Events of this scale necessitate extensive planning to ensure public safety, emergency preparedness, and service continuity. The 2026 Games will feature 133 sessions across 11 days. Events will be hosted at four major venues within an eight-mile corridor across Glasgow, with associated non-venue events occurring concurrently across the city. The Games will utilise pre-existing stadia, venues, venue operator knowledge and the inherent expertise of public services who can plan and deliver events. Any Games hosted in Scotland would rightly be able to be categorised as a mega event, i.e. a large scale gathering with global attention and transformative impact. While the scale of the 2026 Games has been reduced compared to previous editions, potential public safety and reputational implications remain for the Service to navigate.
19. In this context, HMFSI therefore considered it appropriate to inspect SFRS planning and preparedness to provide independent assurance that:
 - Operational readiness and BAU capacity will be maintained.
 - Risks associated with the Games are appropriately identified and mitigated.
 - Command and control arrangements are appropriate and ensure interoperability.
 - Prevention and protection responsibilities are being met.
20. HMFSI sought to provide assurance that the SFRS planning is robust and that the level of resource associated with them is appropriate. In undertaking the inspection HMFSI was able to ascertain and gauge the level of confidence that the SFRS has in its planning and preparation for the Games.

3. A new Model for Games delivery

21. The 2026 Games are markedly different from an SG co-hosted event, such as CG 2014, in that they arrived in Scotland following the Australian State of Victoria deciding in July 2023 that it could not act as host due to a lack of financial sustainability for the event. In July 2023 Victoria estimated that the event hosting costs had tripled to £3.13 billion and that the derived economic benefits from CG 2026 would not come close to matching the financial input required. Despite much of this cost being associated with building an athletes' village and planned upgrades to hosting stadia, the level of budget normally associated with hosting the Games is an important point that bears reflection in terms of the subsequent planning for the Glasgow 2026 games, and the need for cost recovery for public services including the SFRS. CG 2026 has been authorised by the Commonwealth Games Federation to be delivered by a private company, Glasgow 2026 Limited, which has been constituted for that purpose. For the purposes of this report this company is referred to as the Games Organising Company (the GOC).
22. The CG 2026 will take place between 23rd July and 2nd August 2026, with an Opening and Closing Ceremony taking place within the city. The GOC has in effect subcontracted the hosting of the reduced sports itinerary for the Games to the four Glasgow venues. With this arrangement the GOC has access to the experienced event planning and hosting staff for each of the venues. In effect they have fit for purpose venues with seasoned and experienced teams to run them during the events that they will host. The GOC has in place arrangements for the payment of costs to the venue owners and operators. The Games will feature 10 sports and six para sports across four venues, with over 500,000 tickets to be sold. The venues are Scotstoun Stadium, the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome and Arena, Tollcross International Swimming Centre and the Scottish Events Campus. The opening and closing ceremony will be held at the OVO Hydro. All of these venues regularly host significant events and have skilled staffing teams who have extensive experience of doing so. Unlike previous editions of the Games, there will be no single site that serves as the athletes' village. Instead, national teams will be housed within existing hotel facilities across Glasgow.
23. The Games will be delivered through a multi-location model, with concurrent activities at non-venue sites across the city also, e.g. fan zones and at a number of associated GOC funded community events designed to support the games and wider community engagement. With no public funding, the GOC are moving towards "a reimagined and more sustainable method of delivery" that makes use of existing venues, and taps into existing public and private sector expertise in event delivery.
24. As well as securing suitable venues to host the events, the GOC has a responsibility to secure suitable arrangements for the safety and security of the 2026 Games. While SG authorised the hosting of the Games in Glasgow, they did not sign a co-hosting agreement and consequently did not delegate responsibility for safety and security to PS and other public service partners, including the SFRS.

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25. Despite this, there remained a need to ensure safety and security that could only be provided by PS, SFRS etc. Public Services, including the SFRS, are expected to support the Games as statutorily required, and to recover all additional costs from the GOC. SG had also been explicit in its requirement for no public money to be spent in the hosting arrangements for the Games, with this in mind the GOC was required to come to an agreement for cost recovery for each of its subcontracted or hosting partners. These included the SFRS for the monetised costs of the capacity of its personnel for C3 arrangements which have commonly been utilised for a wide range of events across a number of years. This approach has placed new demands on the SFRS and other public services to negotiate, rather than assume arrangements that would normally be embedded within a nationally-coordinated event framework. The inspection considered how effectively SFRS has navigated this environment. The C3 arrangements of the SFRS are in line with Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles (JESIP) of emergency services and are the foundation of integrated response to emergency situations in Scotland and across the UK.
26. It is worth noting that at the time of our inspection, evidence-gathering and report writing, no standardised cost recovery policy for the involved public services had been agreed or published. Such a policy would normally be agreed with SG as a hosting authority, and this would allow a standardised approach to reclaiming costs for services that are planned and provided for events. The SG Safety and Security team for events had recommended to the GOC that a clear cost recovery policy would be advantageous to all parties. Through this approach costs would be understood, and planning could be advanced by the SFRS as this would necessarily be predicated on staff overtime costs that were over and above BAU staffing costs. The issue of cost recovery is considered in more depth in relation to the SFRS and GOC agreed C3 arrangements for the Games.

4. The SFRS's planning and preparedness for the XXIII (23rd Edition) Commonwealth Games 2026

27. HMFSI, in the preparation for this inspection, and in its execution, came to the conclusion that the delivery of the Games of 2026 would be radically different from the Games of 2014. This is significant as CG 2014 saw a planning horizon of approximately six years, during which time the fire and rescue service was at the forefront of efforts that considered a wide spectrum of possible risk associated with the Games events, and the infrastructure that was being built to deliver them. The Games in 2014 were supported by a co-hosting agreement with the SG, the SFRS and other public service partners were made directly responsible for putting in place a multi-layered approach to safety and security that would underpin the resilience of the Games.
28. The GOC has indicated that the CG 2026 is intended to be “reimagined” and implemented in a manner that prioritises greater sustainability that would allow Commonwealth nations operating with smaller budgets to potentially host the Games in future. The 2026 edition is undoubtedly being delivered on a reduced scale. Given the reduced scale of the Games and the fact that the event venues are being subcontracted by the GOC, HMFSI understands the need for the new approach for delivery of these Games. While extensive planning and preparation are underway for CG 2026, there remains a potential divergence in that the GOC may not yet have fully considered how an incident during the events could affect blue light Public Services reputationally and the public perception of safety in the community. While incidents at these events are not commonplace, there is always a level of risk associated with hosting them. Such an incident has the potential to produce significant disruption beyond that which a standard event may experience. This could involve disruption to television scheduling of Games events, and conceivably timetable disruptions or venue closures, all while the world’s media watches on.
29. As set out previously, CG 2026 will be an endeavour that is delivered via a privately constituted company, and their approach to their responsibilities is that the Games are no different to the wide range of events that Glasgow facilitates each year. These similar events include large scale sporting occasions, music concerts, and festivals etc. In effect the Games delivery is, in their opinion, BAU and this only changes should a significant incident require an operational response from emergency services such as the SFRS. The GOC’s approach to Games delivery and its impact upon the planning approaches of the SFRS as it prepares is considered within the report.

SFRS Planning Experience for Major Events

30. The SFRS Prevention Directorate has a dedicated Resilience team who plan for and assist with the planning and delivery of major events across Scotland. Their recent experiences of doing so include COP26, INTERPOL (93rd) General Assembly and the separate visits of the President and Vice Presidents of the United States. Members of the Resilience team have extensive experience of assisting with the planning and

delivery of the Games in 2014. The team itself consists of several operational officers and three regional teams of Civil Contingencies Officers (CCO), with the ability to call upon a further team of nationally designated CCOs. In total the SFRS planning team consists of 20 personnel, although it should be noted that they are not utilised on a full time equivalent basis and a number have other work streams to fulfill.

31. The introduction of the Prevention Directorate is a recent structural change for the SFRS. By aligning the fire safety enforcement (FSE) teams of Prevention and Protection with the more operationally focused teams of Preparedness, including the regional and national CCO cadre, we believe that the Service will achieve synergies in planning for events such as the Games. The establishment of the Directorate has strengthened internal coordination, enabling closer alignment between operational planning, civil contingencies expertise and fire safety enforcement functions. This point was recognised and highlighted to us during our interviews, i.e. “we are in the same team, under the same umbrella”, and this supported close working across the Directorate functions as they planned for the Games. HMFSI considers these arrangements to be appropriate, proportionate and effective in the development of planning and preparedness for the Games.

Planning and Preparation for a “Reimagined Games 2026”

32. The 2026 Games were formally awarded to Glasgow in October 2024, planning for them within the SFRS began in earnest in June 2025 and is overseen through a clear governance framework. The bulk of the Service planning and preparation work has been undertaken by a cross functional group that initially met on a monthly basis, and from January 2026 on a fortnightly basis. This broad cross-functional group was supported by a range of subgroups that considered Service issues and fed them into the broader planning group for consideration and outcomes, e.g. People, Infrastructure, Logistics and Resources. Through our interviews we were able to gain assurance that a very wide range of planning issues relative to the Games, and the Service’s preparedness for them, were under active consideration or had already been considered and appropriately planned for.
33. As well as the planning team’s internal engagement efforts, they also have representation on several working groups that form part of the GOC governance infrastructure. These groups include the Safety and Security Working Group; the Command, Control and Coordination Working Group; and the Transport Working Group. Involvement in these three working groups has proven to be valuable for the SFRS and its other blue light partners who have a long history of professional engagement in relation to event planning which has to ensure a strong adherence to JESIP interoperability principles. At the early stages of the working groups interactions, it was not clear to the SFRS planning team that the GOC were as focused on interoperability between the Services, or were fully aware of their many recent successes in joint event planning. It became necessary for representations to be made to the GOC to ensure that these groups, and the plans and policies that they would produce were JESIP focused. Despite initial frustration, through meaningful engagement and dialogue, the concerns of the SFRS, SAS and PS were all taken into account and necessary principles were agreed. Additionally, and outwith the GOC, the SFRS alongside the SAS, PS and the British Transport Police formed and regularly meet as a unified Blue Light Group to discuss Games planning issues.

34. Strategic oversight for SFRS Games planning was undertaken by a TAG that operated under the aegis of a Deputy Assistant Chief Officer (DACO) who if necessary could report progress, issues or delays directly to the Strategic Leadership Team (SLT). While the planning and the delivery of the Service's role for CG 2026 will inevitably be less complex than for the 2014 edition, we consider that it is appropriate that a proportionate level of resource has been applied to it, and that its governance arrangements are robust.
35. While the SFRS has a detailed CG 2026 Event Planning Timeline, much of the activity contained within it had still to be undertaken at the point of our inspection interviews and report writing. This is not uncommon; indeed, it is a similar situation to that encountered in the run-up to the 2014 Games, and it did not cause us any undue concern. The timeline contains 98 separate work lines, each with a range of associated plans and processes. The aim of the Service is to deliver inputs at the optimal time for their maximum impact, e.g. operational crews visits to Games venues. HMFSI will seek assurance that the details set out in the Event Planning Timeline have been achieved at a point closer to the Games commencement in July 2026.

Venue Operating Plans and Operational Risk Information

36. In common with several other external partner groups that we interviewed, the planning group have at times felt somewhat constrained in their work due to what they described as a lack of timeous, substantive and finalised policy documentation and agreed cost recovery items from the GOC. Examples of these include finalised Venue Operating Plans (VOPs), finalised lists of hotels that would be utilised for Games athletes and officials, off-site venues for fans and hospitality that would operate during the Games, the agreed level of C3 that would be utilised across venues and the agreed costs that could be recovered by the SFRS for this. While SFRS has reduced the potential impact of these issues through experienced judgement, use of legacy best practice documentation, and an adaptive approach to planning, some risk remains beyond the Service's direct control.
37. An important distinction to be drawn from the Games of 2014 and those of 2026 is that production of the VOPs sits squarely with the GOC. It is worth noting that the SFRS and its personnel are familiar with the games venues and the myriad of off-venue sites that are likely to be utilised for a variety of support events during the Games. That being said, each VOP is known to produce changes in use and function of a venue during events, and this needs to be considered alongside the overlay schematics and plans that would be produced alongside them. An overlay would reasonably be expected to contain the Games security footprint, access and egress routes into and out of the venues, traffic management systems, catering arrangements, media village set-up arrangements etc., all of which is necessary for appropriate risk planning. Having early access to both the VOPs and their associated overlays is considered highly important by the SFRS and a range of partners who are working collectively to support Games delivery. There was a consensus between public sector partners that we interviewed that these important plans were behind the timeline that would normally be considered as necessary for the planning associated with an event such as CG 2026. The Service has a planned series of venue site visits for community fire station based operational crews who could be expected to mobilise to them in the event of an operational incident. These visits will be preceded by training packages being released to the stations that show venue visual fly-through

schematics. The details for these will be partly predicated on the VOPs, following their completion by the Operational Intelligence and Computer-Aided Design (CAD) teams.

38. Despite the delays in receiving some information, the SFRS planning team has worked in a diligent fashion to produce a range of event supporting plans and policies. Much of this is based upon lessons learned from previous involvement in large events in recent years. Effectively, the SFRS now has a suite of documents based on best practice that can be, and were amended to suit their preparations for the 2026 Games.
39. To assist in its role of managing national level events within Scotland, the SFRS will produce a National Event Operating Plan (NEOP). For CG 2026 a Games-specific NEOP has been drafted. The purpose of the plan is to outline the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of Flexi Duty Officers (FDO), Operations Control (OC) personnel and Operational Crews who will be on duty during the period of time that the events will be running. The assessment of whether an event will be categorised as local BAU or national (i.e. major) event planning, is based on the level of impact on BAU nationally and/or whether the event will draw resources from around and across the SFRS. The planning team assessment of the CG 2026 was that the security footprint, media interest and scale of the Games overall were beyond a normal BAU event. In their view there was also a need to consider the potential for organisational and national reputational damage, and thus a NEOP would be appropriate. At the time of writing this report the NEOP remained in an iterative development stage. This does not cause us concern and indeed is to be expected given the diverse range of information that it contains. Its end stage publication is expected in June 2026 in advance of the Games time, allowing enough time for full engagement with its finalised detail.
40. During our inspection we were able to review a substantial amount of planning documentation, as well as being granted open access to the SFRS Event Planning SharePoint site. We were grateful for the level of access that we were granted to the SFRS planning team's documentation which generally accorded with the way in which the Service approached this inspection. Given the dynamic and ongoing nature of planning for significant events, we would often seek further clarifications to documentation and information was always forthcoming for these requests. We are satisfied that the Service has an accurate and detailed record of inputs and outputs for its planning processes which we feel will be important given the new approach to facilitating the Games that is being utilised for this edition by the GOC. We also noted during our investigations that the SFRS is currently investigating options for the establishment of a unified blue light events planning function with financial support for its founding being requested via SG. Given the ongoing level of significant events that are held, and which are planned to be held in future across Scotland, we will await with interest news on this innovative approach.

SFRS Risk Management Plan

41. The SFRS conducted a deep dive review of a very wide range of Games related issues and scenarios that required appropriate risk assessments to be undertaken. The foundation for this within the Service was their CG 2026 Risk Management Plan that the inspection team have been granted access to. Alongside this, there is an accompanying and diverse range of risk management documentation that is contained within the Games SharePoint site. The purpose of the Risk Management Plan was to outline how the Service would ensure robust risk assessment and

monitoring practices are implemented to address the planning assumptions and challenges associated with the Games. Close to 100 Games-related risks were identified by the SFRS and placed in the Event Risk Register. Each of these had an associated risk mitigation plan drawn up, and a lead individual nominated to see its outcomes through to completion and risk reduced to acceptable and tolerable levels. We are satisfied that the Service has considered and conducted appropriate due diligence in relation to Games risk. Responsibility and oversight of the Games risk register sits with the TAG.

42. It is notable that extensive risk information is shared between the SFRS, GCC's resilience management team and the Glasgow Life Health and Safety team. This approach has been developed over a number of years as all parties have worked together to deliver significant events within the City of Glasgow. There were several instances of information being released to the external partners in advance of its release to the SFRS; the partners' active sharing approach has undoubtedly assisted the Service's planning and preparedness work.

CG 2026 Command, Control and Coordination (C3) Arrangements

43. As stated earlier in this report, the organisation and delivery of these Games is markedly different from the Glasgow 2014 edition. At CG 2014, multi-agency command and control for the Games was the responsibility of Police Scotland, who provided a Multi-Agency Coordination Centre (MACC) which acted as the standing command and control facility for safety and security, as well as for any operational incident which may occur during the events. At the 2026 Games, responsibility and ownership of safety at the games event venues falls within the purview of the GOC. In this regard the GOC, again as set out within this report, has a view of the Games being a series of interlinked events that are no different from the wide range of events that Glasgow would host over any summer period, and as such the Games should be considered as BAU operations for the local emergency services.

Command and Control Infrastructure

44. For these Games, primacy of location for event safety will be concentrated in the GOC's primary operating centre which is located within an existing building in Glasgow City centre. While such an arrangement is common, we have had a number of comments from partners who are working to facilitate the subcontracted arrangements set up by the GOC for Games delivery that the Glasgow office facility lacks the high degree of connectivity that could be achieved in other available facilities. Glasgow City Council has several facilities that have direct links to the city CCTV system and to its transport network systems. Should issues occur across the city that could impact upon Games delivery in real time, it was felt by some that the GOC may be unable, or at the very least may suffer avoidable delays, to get real time live pictures or data that could facilitate solutions.
45. In the event of an operational incident occurring, the MACC would automatically, for the blue light services, become the centre where tactical decisions are made. Having the Glasgow office at the head of the GOC C3 arrangements has the potential to cause delay and confusion in decision making. While our investigations were ongoing, the SFRS did not have a presence within the GOC Glasgow office. However, agreement was reached for a single person placement one day a week from May 2026. PS will have an embed officer at the GOC Glasgow office who can facilitate

communications with the MACC should that be necessary in the event of an incident. The GOC accept that there is some nervousness from the blue light public services regarding their approach to C3. They do however also believe that their planning for C3 is proportionate, and the approach is a potential legacy benefit from the 2026 Games that can be used to inform future events while also drawing less resource away from Public Service's BAU capacity during these Games.

46. Each Games venue will have an Event Control Room (ECR) operating during the delivery phase of the Games, SFRS as well as other blue light services will have personnel deployed within these facilities. This will allow for effective and efficient liaison with the venue management and their teams should any issues/incidents occur, which in turn will be of benefit to managing any need for an operational BAU response from the SFRS.
47. To provide specific support for the 2014 Games, the SFRS established an Event Support Room (ESR) at its Johnstone Operations Control (JOC) which operated in support of the MACC and facilitated direct and timeous communications, this facilitated real-time situational awareness about a range of small incidents that occurred during Games time. The GOC have taken the decision that the ESR is for the Service to manage and finance during the 2026 Games, despite its clear support to the MACC and the known position of SG that no public funds should be utilised to support the Games facilitation. The ESR is a long-established element of the SFRS C3 structure for all major events. Its function and purpose are not to serve as an additional standalone resilience layer, but rather to act as a conduit through which information can flow between the JOC into the MACC, ensuring realtime situational awareness of any incidents at a locus that may impact Games operations. Without an ESR, any operational communications flow can become fragmented, making delays more likely, and potentially compromising operational command and control. The lack of an ESR has been noted by the SFRS and placed within its ERR. At this time the SFRS is currently in the training and implementation phase for delivery of its New Mobilising System within the JOC and its other OCs. This too is a risk that has been noted in the ERR. For the duration of the games the JOC will operate on a BAU basis with personnel remote monitoring radio communications originated by SFRS colleagues embedded within the MACC.
48. HMFSI recognises the rationale for this "reimagined" delivery model, and acknowledges the view that the Games could be considered simply as significant events of a comparable scale which the city may host. We do, however, believe that there is potential for gaps in C3 should emergency situations occur at Games venues during the concurrent timetable of events that are planned. We note that concurrent SFRS BAU incident responses could extend beyond individual venues or geographical areas of the community with potential impacts on national reputation, public confidence, and emergency service capacity. Alongside acknowledging the relevant GOC view of the Games being a BAU event(s), there is also a need to consider the potential for concurrent operational events for the emergency services during Games time.
49. While we accept the GOC has a clear understanding of the need for effective C3 procedures, their approach to it for these Games did not align with the initial considerations of the SFRS. In doing so, it may not have fully accounted for the broader public safety implications for the communities hosting the venues and

events; this is particularly relevant should concurrency of incidents become an issue during the Games. Although such scenarios are not expected during this or any future Games, they remain credible risks that can be anticipated and reduction of their potential impact considered. Over many years, multi-agency planning and operational experience have established well-tested approaches to managing such risks. Emergency services are both familiar with and highly effective in delivering within these established frameworks. The SFRS presented a case to the GOC for retaining this proven approach. Following ongoing engagement, the outcome has been a shift away from standard C3 structures toward a variant model.

C3 Staffing arrangements for the SFRS

50. Key to the successful discharge of command-and-control functions is the availability of trained and competent personnel to fulfil C3 roles. Given the focus on a BAU approach to these Games, the requirement for additional personnel for C3 functional roles is significantly less than for the 2014 Games. During our inspection interview discussions we queried whether sufficient numbers of personnel would be available to cover the Games' C3 roles as well as service any BAU incident or a number of incidents that could occur in an overlapping timeframe. We were informed that this is normal practice for the SFRS and that suitable and sufficient personnel and emergency response appliances are available. Examples, including the recent Glasgow Union Street fire, were cited as incidents that were protracted in nature, and despite calling on significant personnel availability over a number of days, were managed to a successful conclusion.
51. Agreement on cost recovery for the SFRS was central to establishing C3 arrangements for the Games. In October 2025, the Service submitted detailed proposals to the GOC based on its established, proven approach. Agreement on C3 arrangements remained outstanding for several months. In early 2026 the GOC indicated that the SFRS proposals exceeded what they considered proportionate to the level of risk. In its planning documents, the GOC states that "C3 structures will be proportionate, scalable and risk-based, connecting event activities to the City's BAU." This reflects its view of what constitutes normal operating expectations for the SFRS and other emergency services, and, by extension, the level of activity it considers appropriate for cost recovery for the period of the Games.
52. Early in 2026 the SFRS planning team presented a revised proposal for the CG 2026 C3 arrangements. Through discussion, the GOC accepted that, while they still regarded the Games as BAU events, with reputational considerations for themselves, SG and SFRS potentially at stake, they would cover the reduced costs associated with revised Service C3 proposal. Both the SFRS and the GOC recognise that the approach to C3 differs to what was in place for 2014, but both believe that the agreed solution is workable in the circumstances of the new Games delivery model. With cost recovery now agreed, the SFRS has drawn up a list of suitably qualified personnel who are available to fulfill these C3 arrangements outwith the Service's ongoing BAU arrangements.
53. Investment in appropriate C3 arrangements should be viewed as an investment that helps secure a safe and effective delivery of the Games. The personnel who will be in place at a variety of event locations will have experience of their roles and can intercept issues and have input to solutions that ensure that no disruption to the

Games events is noticeable. The GOC has a strong focus on this new style of Games delivery that is very reliant on a BAU approach from public services such as the SFRS. Local Authority colleagues relayed to us that any significant incident would almost inevitably lead to a venue being evacuated, and that this potentially could lead to extended periods of time to allow for investigation to ascertain if the venue remained functional and was safe for spectators, athletes and a myriad of Games support staff to facilitate their return. While eventualities such as this are rare, the effectiveness of C3 is enhanced when a proportionate amount of personnel are deployed to deal with problems in real time, thus limiting any need for interruptions to event schedules.

54. The agreed and costed elements that the SFRS will put in place for CG 2026 C3 will include a Bronze Commander and a Tactical Liaison Officer (two at the Scottish Event Campus due to its size) at each Games venue when they are in use; and a Silver Commander and a supporting Loggist at the Police run MACC in Glasgow for the duration of the Games. Should it be necessary and in the event of an incident occurring, the SFRS personnel located at the MACC would be supported by the BAU Officer roster of the Service. The GOC have also confirmed that should a SFRS Gold level commander be required and aligned to a Games-related incident, then the costs for this would be recoverable by the Service. A specialist Multi-Agency Specialist Assessment Team (MASAT) will be put in place for both the Opening and Closing Ceremony events. The details for these teams is still to be confirmed via Police Scotland, but the costs for their roles have been agreed with the GOC.

National Resilience Incident Considerations for CG 2026

55. The SFRS has over many years developed a well-established history of planning for and responding to National Resilience incidents, including urban search and rescue, mass decontamination, marauding terrorist attacks, and flooding events. This has been undertaken in conjunction with blue light and multi-agency partners through sustained programmes of training, exercising, and operational deployment. These arrangements have enabled the Service to maintain high levels of operational competence and to capture and implement organisational learning over time.
56. The operational requirements associated with these incident types are well established and understood by the Service. Engagement with key personnel involved in resilience planning informed this aspect of our inspection. We also found evidence that specific National Resilience related risks relevant to CG 2026 had been considered by the Games planning team and appropriately recorded within the CG 2026 risk register.
57. Personnel interviewed during the inspection expressed confidence that the SFRS has sufficient resources, in terms of both personnel and equipment, to respond effectively to these incident types during the Games. We note that additional support vehicles are expected to become operational ahead of CG 2026, which should further enhance operational capability and resilience. In relation to competence, the Service indicated that staff training levels align with the requirements of its Target Operating Model, and that arrangements are in place to ensure appropriate numbers of competent personnel are available.
58. SFRS response to National Resilience incidents were consistently described as well rehearsed and regularly exercised. HMFSI observed a multi-agency exercise delivered under the Scottish Multi-Agency Resilience Training and Exercising Unit (SMARTEU) framework, which tested a range of mobilisation and response functions relevant to

National Resilience scenarios. This provided assurance regarding the Service's ability to operate effectively within a multi-agency environment. We also noted plans to further test communication processes linked to the alerting and mobilisation of a specialist FDO volunteer cadre to support responses to terrorist-related incidents. This forms part of wider preparedness activity in advance of the Games.

59. Based on the evidence available, we do not have significant concerns regarding the Service's ability to mobilise to and manage National Resilience incidents during the Games. However, we note that for previous major events in Scotland, enhanced arrangements were implemented whereby strategically located personnel received additional training, equipment, and remuneration to support counter-terrorism response capability.
60. While current plans for CG 2026 include the use of a volunteer FDO cadre for certain terrorist-related response functions, alternative arrangements similar to those previously implemented for previous significant planned events should be considered by the Service. These arrangements have previously been introduced on a time-bound basis by the SFRS through engagement and negotiation with representative bodies. HMFSI considers this an area worthy of further exploration and continued review as the SFRS seeks to optimise its preparedness and resilience arrangements, both for CG 2026 and for future large-scale events in Scotland.

Prevention and Protection

61. The 2014 Games were supported by a comprehensive programme of premises review, covering venues and relevant buildings within a 0.5-mile radius, alongside their associated risks. This approach prioritised sleeping risks through targeted FSE activity and a structured programme of audits and Operational Reassurance Visits (ORVs), largely delivered by local community fire station crews.
62. For the 2026 Games, the ORV model used in 2014 will not be replicated. Instead, fire safety enforcement and prevention activity will be delivered primarily through BAU arrangements within the City of Glasgow's (CoG) Local Senior Officer (LSO) Area existing structures, supported by the Prevention Directorate as required. While this approach is operationally viable, HMFSI notes that a dedicated Games focused team would have provided greater assurance, improved consistency, and reduced pressure on BAU inspection programmes. The absence of such a team increases the likelihood of competing demands leading to the deferral of other FSE activities within CoG.
63. Delays by the GOC in confirming athlete and officials' accommodation locations compressed inspection timescales, creating additional pressure on CoG FSE resources. Despite this, local CoG and Prevention officers did not identify any significant or insurmountable challenges in delivering an effective audit programme. CoG has operated an annual, risk-based inspection regime for hotels for several years, and all identified Games-related accommodation had already been subject to routine audit within the previous 12 months.
64. At the time of reporting, all Games hotels had been confirmed to SFRS, with some currently used for asylum accommodation. CoG FSE teams are aware of these premises and are actively clarifying any potential overlap in use during the Games period, and maintaining close communication with planning teams in this regard. While this will require careful workload management, HMFSI is satisfied that associated risks remain manageable.

65. HMFSI also notes the continued effectiveness of the SFRS Unwanted Fire Alarm Signals (UFAS) policy in reducing unnecessary operational demand across the Service area. The policy does not affect response to sleeping risks, including hotels, and this position will remain during the Games. UFAS arrangements will continue to apply to non-sleeping risk premises, including Games venues, where on-site C3 personnel will monitor fire alarm activations and report relevant information to the MACC.
66. Overall, the 2026 Games represent a scaled-back model compared to 2014, with FSE activity largely absorbed into CoG BAU structures. Premises across the CoG, East and West Dumbartonshire and Argyll and Bute, and Lanarkshire service areas are already subject to annual, risk-based audit programmes, and no significant challenges have been identified that cannot be managed within existing frameworks. Additional support from the Prevention Directorate has been offered and remains available if required, although this has not yet been requested.
67. While the current approach is supported by quality assurance processes, including random sampling to ensure consistency, HMFSI considers that a dedicated Games-specific FSE team would have been the preferred model to enhance resilience and minimise impact on BAU delivery.
68. Finally, HMFSI has highlighted in its recent reports the ongoing growth in the numbers of Short Term Let (STL) premises across Scotland. It is expected that STLs will accommodate a significant number of visitors to the city during the Games. The SFRS Communications Team, supported by FSE specialists, has developed targeted messaging to reinforce licence holders' regulatory responsibilities. The Service's involvement in the STL licensing process ensures that higher risk premises would have been identified and prioritised for inspection by FSE auditing officers where necessary.

Training and Exercising


69. The SFRS has adopted a BAU approach to training in preparation for CG 2026. We were informed by Training Safety and Assurance (TSA) officers responsible for training competence that the currency of records for relevant personnel profiles had been reviewed and were up to date, with no deficiencies identified that would present a material risk to service delivery during the Games. Assurance regarding workforce competence is further supported by the involvement of a SFRS training officer within the wider Games planning structure, who provides regular and current data on personnel competence levels to inform planning and decision making. We also noted that task cards detailing roles and responsibilities have been developed for SFRS officers assigned to Games venues, which should support role clarity and operational effectiveness during deployments.
70. In relation to exercising and testing, we recognise that for events of this scale and complexity, SMARTEU would ordinarily play a central role in designing and delivering a comprehensive, phased exercising programme over an extended pre-event period. Such an approach typically allows for the identification of learning and the opportunity to embed improvements ahead of live operations.
71. However, SMARTEU does not have a formal role in the CG 2026 exercising and testing programme. While SMARTEU was invited to submit recoverable costings to support the testing programme, these were not accepted by the GOC as they did not meet their fiduciary requirements, which culminated in them conducting a contract

tender process for the role. SMARTEU elected not to participate in the tender process. Despite this, SMARTEU has continued to provide informal support and advice to Police Scotland, SFRS, and the SAS as they prepare for the Games.

72. The GOC awarded the exercising and testing contract to a private provider, ID Resilience. At the time of inspection, we were advised that SMARTEU could not provide formal assurance or validation of the GOC's exercising programme or plans. Where key responder agencies are not fully integrated into the design and delivery of exercises, there is a risk that learning may be incomplete or not fully representative of real operational conditions.
73. We observed that some elements of the GOC testing programme commenced later than may have been expected for an event of this nature and scale. Concerns were raised by SFRS and partners that the Games' Concept of Operations was also developed late and initially lacked sufficient detail to support meaningful testing. We note that a command post exercise facilitated by the GOC was scheduled for 25th June 2026 at their Glasgow office which will act as the GOC C3 centre; however, this exercise was planned to be hosted within a single location rather than across multiple venues, potentially limiting its ability to fully test multi-site command and control arrangements. The timing of this exercise means that we are unable to comment on the outcomes from it.
74. We did note positive examples of collaborative working elsewhere. In particular, an exercise at the University of the West of Scotland, facilitated by the SAS and supported by SMARTEU, which was used to test specific elements of CG 2026 planning. The exercise was attended by the SFRS and PS who were active participants. This approach demonstrated the added value of leveraging existing multi-agency exercising activity to support Games preparedness.
75. Overall, while SFRS training and individual competence arrangements provide assurance, the exercising and testing programme for CG 2026 has been constrained by the timing and scope of some GOC planned activities. While we are confident that the blue light services have high levels of experience and competence to manage any potential incidents during Games time, the opportunities to exercise for these alongside GOC personnel and its appointed contractor ID Resilience would have been beneficial.

Games Communication and Engagement Strategy

76. During our inspection interviews we frequently spoke with individuals and groups of SFRS personnel who until that point had received little, or most often, no briefings regarding the role of the SFRS in the upcoming Games. All of these interviewees recognised that time was short as the Games approached, and all hoped to have an appropriate level of briefing that would allow them to fulfill whatever roles may be required of them during CG 2026. On raising this issue with the Games planning team and with the SFRS communications team we were informed that a bespoke CG 2026 Communication and Engagement Strategy was in draft production, and that this contained a range of personnel and media messages that would be delivered at an optimised time as the Games approached. These media releases were also scheduled as part of the planning team Games timeline of events. This is a similar issue with other Games inputs and outputs that affect the work of a range of SFRS personnel. The planning team was keen to emphasise that the timing of these information



releases was based on previous events best practice, and that to do so too early has been shown to lessen their impact and immediacy. That being said, it is our view that even when there is not substantial volumes of information to be imparted to personnel, they are always keen to be informed of significant events such as the Games at the earliest opportunity.

King's Baton Relay

77. A significant supporting event for any Games is the King's Baton Relay (KBR), with a planned procession running through all areas of the host country and city. This large, continually moving procession requires significant safety and security overlay to ensure it passes through the hosting area on schedule, this was evidenced in the 2014 Games where the SFRS designated significant resources to its overall management. For the 2026 Games there is no open road relay element to the KBR; rather it will be transported to and hosted at a series of fixed geographical locations where community and media events will be hosted. For this edition of the Games there is therefore no resource requirements for the SFRS or its blue light partners for the KBR.

5. Conclusions

SFRS Ongoing Planning and Preparation Work

78. SFRS has demonstrated strong leadership, professionalism and organisational maturity in preparing for CG 2026 under a challenging and non-traditional delivery model. At the time of writing this report the planning and preparation work being undertaken by the SFRS was ongoing. Several areas remain active and will necessitate HMFSI seeking assurance closer to Games time that all arrangements are in place and that the Service is satisfied as to their robustness:
- The SFRS is expected to confirm its preparations for the Games are complete in July 2026. It is expected that the ongoing preparations will be confirmed as complete by the CG Planning Team via the Games TAG. The Inspectorate will seek formal confirmation of this at that time which may necessitate a short addendum to this report or a standalone statement of assurance to that effect.
 - The C3 staffing availability that will supplement the BAU personnel during the Games was still to be collated and finalised. With the reduced levels of C3 and the emphasis on BAU for incident response to Games venues, we do not envisage staff availability for this purpose to be a significant issue; nevertheless it does require ongoing vigilance and final confirmation.
 - The SFRS Communication and Engagement Strategy was nearing completion but was in draft format at the time of writing this report. The Service had committed to providing a finalised version to our inspection team when the drafting work is completed.
 - The SFRS maintains an ongoing focus on contractual arrangements with the GOC regarding cost recovery for the Games.

6. Methodology

About HMFSI

HMFSI is a body that operates within, but independently of, the Scottish Government. Inspectors have the scrutiny powers specified in section 43B of the Fire (Scotland) Act 2005. These include inquiring into the state and efficiency of the SFRS, its compliance with best value, and the way it is carrying out its functions.

HMFSI Inspectors may, in conducting inspections, assess whether the SFRS is complying with its duty to secure best value and continuous improvement. If necessary, Scottish Ministers can direct Inspectors to investigate anything relating to the SFRS as they consider appropriate.

We also have an established role in providing professional advice and guidance on the emergency response, legislation and education in relation to the FRS in Scotland.

Our powers give latitude to investigate areas we consider necessary or expedient for the purposes of, or in connection with, the conducting of our functions.

The SFRS must provide us with such assistance and co-operation as we may require enabling us to conduct our functions. When we publish a report, the SFRS must also have regard to what we have found and take such measures, if any, as it thinks fit.

Where our report identifies that the SFRS is not efficient or effective (or best value is not secured), or will, unless remedial measures are taken, cease to be efficient or effective, Scottish Ministers may direct the SFRS to take such measures as may be required. The SFRS must comply with any direction given.

We work with other inspectorates and agencies across the public sector and co-ordinate our activities to reduce the burden of inspection and avoid unnecessary duplication.

We aim to add value and strengthen public confidence in the SFRS and do this through independent scrutiny and evidence-led reporting about what we find. Where we make recommendations in a report, we will follow them up to assess the level of progress.

We aim to identify and promote good practice that can be applied across Scotland. Our approach is to support the SFRS to deliver services that are high quality, continually improving, effective and responsive to local and national needs. The terms of reference for inspections are consulted upon and agreed with parties that the Chief Inspector deems relevant.

How This Inspection Was Carried out

The purpose of this inspection was to examine the planning and preparedness of the SFRS for the 23rd Commonwealth Games. An inquiry by the Inspectorate can be self-directed or can be subject to direction by Scottish Ministers. This inquiry into the SFRS was self-directed by the Chief Inspector.

The following persons contributed to the Inspection and to the report:

Robert Scott QFSM, Chief Inspector

John Joyce QFSM, Assistant Inspector

David Young, Assistant Inspector

Graeme Fraser, Assistant Inspector

Calum Bruce, Inspection Support Manager

Hilary Sangster, Inspection Support Manager

When undertaking this inspection, we followed established practice utilised in previous thematic inspections. This inspection outline framework provided a structure to our work, which was risk-based, proportionate and focussed on the SFRS planning and preparedness for the Commonwealth Games 2026.

We conducted early engagement with the Service and established a SPoC who facilitated a number of different methods of evidence gathering and analysis. These being:

- a. desk top data review of documents and data supplied by the SFRS. We undertook a sense check and assessment of the content of a range of planning documentation.
- b. numerous face-to-face and virtual interviews with SFRS staff who have responsibility for the ongoing planning and preparation work for the Games.
- c. observation of a Games-focused live play exercise.

7. Glossary of Terms

BAU	Business as Usual
C3	Command, Control and Coordination
CAD	Computer-Aided Design
CCO	Civil Contingencies Officer
CCTV	Close Circuit Television
CoG	City of Glasgow
CG 2026	XXIII (23rd Edition) Commonwealth Games
DACO	Deputy Assistant Chief Officer
ECR	Event Control Room
ESR	Event Support Room
ERR	Event Risk Register
FDO	Flexi Duty Officer
FSE	Fire Safety Enforcement
GCC	Glasgow City Council
GOC	The Games Organising Company: Glasgow 2026 Limited
JOC	Johnstone Operations Control
HMFSI	His Majesty's Fire Service Inspectorate in Scotland
INTERPOL	The International Criminal Police Organisation
JESIP	Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles
LSO	Local Senior Officer
NEOP	National Event Operating Plan
MACC	Multi-Agency Coordination Centre
MASAT	Multi-Agency Specialist Assessment Team
OC	Operations Control
ORV	Operational Reassurance Visit
PS	Police Scotland
SAS	Scottish Ambulance Service
SFRS	The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service
SG	The Scottish Government

SLT	Strategic Leadership Team
SMARTEU	Scottish Multi-Agency Resilience Training and Exercising Unit
SPoC	Single Point of Contact
STL	Short Term Let
TAG	Tactical Action Group
TSA	Training Safety and Assurance Directorate
The Games	XXIII (23rd Edition) Commonwealth Games
UFAS	Unwanted Fire Alarm Signal
VOP	Venue Operating Plan



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