



News letter

Welcome to SF&RS's third newsletter. It's been just over 3 months since our last and a lot has happened here in Surrey in the UK. The launch of the first Fire Adapted Community not only Surrey, but also in the United Kingdom, took place late in October. Thursley Village became this first Firewise community and we were delighted to have Michelle Steinberg from the NFPA to be there at the launch. Michelle came over for 5 days and she attended Wildfire workshops and visited other Counties which also suffer from wildfire incidents. You can see from the photo below it was a very successful day with representatives from the Fire Service/Parish Councillors and other land owners and agencies, thoroughly enjoying the local media coverage!!



Quote from Parish Councillor Chairman Peter Hunter:

"Our Parish which incorporates large areas of naturally beautiful and scientifically significant countryside, has seen first hand the power and destructive force of devastating wildfires. Firewise presents an exciting opportunity for Thursley to work with SF&RS in what is the first such collaboration of its kind in the UK. The preventative measures taken by the residents will not only help them to protect themselves and their

properties, but will additionally assist the members of SF&RS with the challenges they face in the vent of a wildfire”.

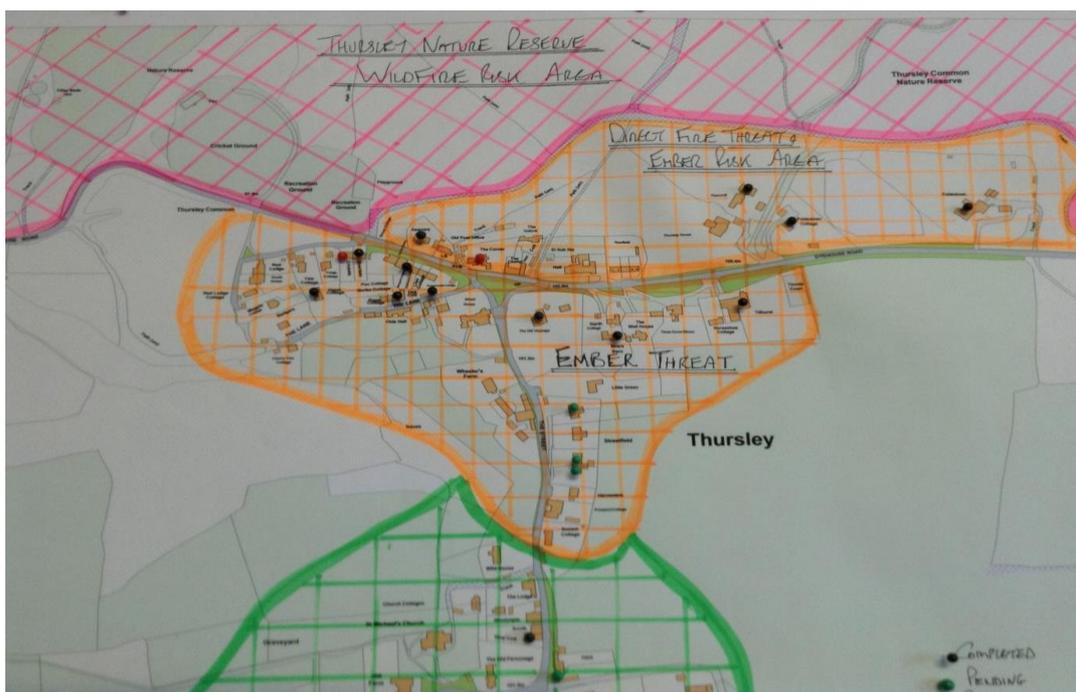
Several wildfire front-line fire appliances were on scene and a demonstration of the Unimog was very popular with the assembled adults and children. Over 50 residents turned up on the day and over 30 households signed up to become part of the Firewise scheme.

Watch Commander Dave Medley from Haslemere Fire Station, who has been instrumental in researching and implementing the scheme, spoke to the assembled group about the benefits of being part of a Fire Adapted Community. He showed videos and still photos from previous fires on Thursley Nature Reserve and many of the residents attending the event remembered only too vividly the last big Fire in 2006 which led to parts of the village being evacuated for up to 5 days. All participating residents were given an information pack which included information on the Home Ignition Zone, various documents on simple recommendations on how to make your property safer in advance of a wildfire, early evacuation information and many more informative details.

Wildfire Firewise visits to the residents who signed up to the scheme have been undertaken throughout November and December 2014 and are continuing to other residents as the scheme gathers pace into 2015. An all day event is being carried out in February, which will include attendance by the local Fire Station and its crew, Parish Councillors and SF&RS Volunteers who are playing a pivotal role in carrying out the visits. To date over 30 Firewise visits will have been completed with many more expected over the coming weeks.

Two neighbouring villages have both expressed interest in becoming Fire Adapted Communities and we hope to be rolling out similar projects in both villages in 2015.

Dave has created a Risk Assessment for the village concentrating on the most vulnerable properties and residents.



Preparing and carrying out Firewise visits in Thursley Village in Feb 2015







The weather here in Surrey at the moment is a real mixed bunch! We have lots of rain but currently are going through a cold spell with snow falling as we speak. During a recent Wildfire patrol last week on Thursley Common, it became abundantly clear that - following 3 years of relatively little or no significant Wildfire incidents on the common - vast quantities of Bracken, gorse and heather would cause a significant fuel loading if a wildfire were to occur. James Giles from Natural England is currently carrying a well managed maintenance programme with fuel/fire breaks being doubled in width. In addition, the electric overhead pylons are currently being put underground - which makes fire fighting much safer for the Fire fighters when tackling wildfires in this area.

Later on in the year (in the summer months), the village intends to hold a joint village Fete incorporating a Firewise information event. We intend to hold further events throughout 2015 and hope to expand the FAC 's programme throughout Surrey over the coming years.

Watch Commander Dave Medley

