My name is James Millar and I’m the Deputy Chief Fire Officer for Highlands and Islands Airports Limited. A typical day at one of our airports is anything but typical. There’s a huge range of tasks and duties that the airport fire service carry out, fire fighting isn’t the only thing that we do. Although it’s a critical part of what the fire service role is, there is so much more to the job than fire fighting. So that can be anything from maintenance of the airfield in the summer to winter operations which involves activities such as de-icing and snow clearing. We’re also involved in training external groups in first aid, manual handling, a range of health and safety related training courses. The job can extent to airfield inspections, to parking the aircraft as well, to planning the parking for a complicated airport such as Inverness, to parking the flights at Barra and Tyree for example.

There is a lot of liaison with external agencies and working in partnership with the category 1 and category 2 responders such as Scottish Fire and Rescue, Scottish Ambulance Service and the police. We work very closely with them to ensure our communities are served well by, not just the airport fire service, but the airport as a whole.

The shift pattern varies depending on the location. Some of the island stations, it ranges, notionally, from about seven in the morning through until about six in the evening. The medium sized airports that we have, then it can be a longer day with two shifts. But here at Inverness, for example, there is three shifts. Which includes a night shift, which is specifically for the meal operations and there is two full time day shifts as well. With a full complement, at Inverness, of thirty-six operational fire fighters.

The ideal candidate for one of our airports is, somebody who is flexible, who can adapt to a wide range of different duties because of the varying nature of the job, because there is a lot of hands-on and there is a lot of, or a range of different responsibilities that go with it. Previous experience isn’t the be all and end all for us. When you start with HIAL, whatever role, and particularly in the airport fire service, there is a comprehensive training package that can take you from having, virtually, no knowledge at all of the environment to being fully aware and fully competent across the range of the duties and the variety of the tasks that you would be required to carry out as a fire fighter.

So if you wanted to apply to be a fire fighter at any of our airports, then the first stage is to apply online. If you are successful in getting through the first stage, then you would move towards a practical day of exercises and of tests which would look at your physical capabilities. So there is a medical element involved there, which is dealt with later, but there is a physical test as part of the recruitment process. There is also an English comprehension and a mathematical element to tests that we do, and some practical fire fighting related exercises which are all evaluated by the panel. Followed, by those who precede to the next stage, by and interview. And if you are successful, you are the lucky winner and you get to join the team.

Everyday, for me, is an opportunity to try and make a difference. Really to try and help those I work with to make a difference as well. The pride I take in the role is of knowing that I can come to my work everyday and do a good job and to support people to enable them to do a good job. To help the travelling public, first and foremost, to help our communities as well and, essentially, just to do the best that I can everyday.

The fire fighter role is one that offer huge opportunities for someone who cares about what they do to really make a difference.

If you are watching this and think this is the job for you, then apply. The very next time you see a vacancy then throw your hat in the ring, fill the application form in to the best of your ability and get yourself to the selection day and you’ll see a little bit more of what the job entails. It’s a great job, it’s a varied job, it’s a challenging job at times but ultimately it’s a really worthwhile job and it’s on that I think that anybody who is physically fit and has a flexible approach can excel in and do a really good job.