

FIREFIGHTER

REGION 3

TYNE & WEAR, CLEVELAND, DURHAM AND NORTHUMBERLAND

Pressing the case against regional controls

THE Union has been working hard on a range of workplace issues in region 3 with regional controls and proposed cuts in Northumberland among the top issues being faced by members.

Following the decision of the north-east Regional Management Board to endorse the ODPM's outline business case, the region has stepped up its activity in the campaign against the regionalisation of emergency fire controls.

In February Control Staff National Committee officials visited the region. Val Salmon, Sue Offland and John Drake spent the day visiting the four control rooms in the region, speaking to our members and listening to their concerns.

A meeting was held on 21 February

with two officials from the regional office and the chair of the RMB to seek clarification on the process they had followed in order to agree this stance.

As a result of this, a presentation was given to the RMB on 4 March. A number of concerns were raised during this meeting with the members.

Following this, region 3 officials are in the process of corresponding with all the fire authority members in the entire region to clarify the stance of each authority and how the RMB's stance was decided. Grave concerns are held within the region on the decision making process employed.

EC member Alan McLean attended a meeting in the House of Commons on 8 March with the Northern Group of Labour MP's as part of the Regional TUC delegation. This again is being followed up by letter from the regional office raising our concerns.

Membership engagement is being encouraged throughout and the optimism being expressed by the membership is on the increase.

NORTHUMBERLAND

In Northumberland the Fire Authority have begun the dubious descent into PFI madness with the outrageous proposals to rid the Blyth Valley area of its fire cover.

The current proposals would, if successful, close down stations in Blyth and Cramlington.

The risk to life and property

in those densely populated areas would be met with the fire cover from a proposed new community station situated oddly enough, in an area with very little in the way of community. The campaign has begun in earnest and the initiative has been condemned by the Union, who have the support of local MPs.

With the prospect of decreased fire cover, the FBU has launched a local public awareness programme. Any reduction in fire cover will be resisted.

The members are ready to fight the proposals and any station closures in Northumberland with all powers at their disposal and have been assured support both regionally and nationally in their quest to maintain the service for the local community.

USE YOUR VOTE!

The month of April brings with it the most important time in this union's history with the impending election of the Union's General Secretary. The significance of this election and the influence it will have on the entire service will be well watched by employers and government alike. They would like to watch the union implode. It is important that the person with the most ability is elected. If recent past history is anything to go by we will be playing into the employers hands by ignoring the ballot papers and not casting our votes.

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The recent election for the Assistant General Secretary saw a brand new AGS elected with 11 percent of the total possible vote. Should this figure be replicated in the coming election, we will reap what we have sown and get our just desserts as a trade union.

We must remain intact and able to secure our future aims and aspirations. To dwell in the past will eventually prove to be fatal and everyone is urged to use their votes well. Pensions, pay, pay formula and service delivery depend on it. Use your vote.

ALAN MCLEAN
REGION 3 EXECUTIVE COUNCIL
MEMBER

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