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FIRE BRIGADES UNION
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TO: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother/Sister:

2003 PAY AND CONDITIONS AGREEMENT - PROTECTED PAY SCALES

This circular is to update members on the current discussions regarding the position of certain groups of members on protected pay scales. The groups affected are in the following positions: Station Officer; Fire Control Officer; Principal Fire Control Officer.

As a result of the 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement, new rates of pay were agreed which were based on the new Role based structure. Following subsequent negotiations, brigades began to make the substantive move from rank to role.

The position of Station Officers, Fire Control Officers and Principal Fire Control Officers was addressed by placing these members on protected pay scales. The 2003 agreement stated that these protected scales would be reviewed in July 2007 (see Circular NJC/13/03, especially **Appendix B**).

In 2005, the FBU and the employers jointly took a separate issue of pay protection to ACAS for arbitration. This arbitration concerned other members who may be placed on a lower rate of pay as a result of the move from rank to role. The employers, in their submission to ACAS at that time, argued that the protected Station Officers, Fire Control Officers and Principal Fire Control Officers should also be covered by the results of the arbitration. The FBU successfully argued that the 2003 Pay and Conditions Agreement dealt with those who have specified pay protection points (i.e. the members mentioned above) with a review scheduled in 2007 and that they should retain that position.

The matter of a review has been raised with the employers on a number of occasions since 2005 and has been discussed in detail by the Joint Secretaries of the National Joint Council since late 2006. As a result of these discussions, a jointly agreed NJC survey was carried out to identify, brigade by brigade, how many members are currently paid according to the protected pay scales. That work is now complete and further discussions are under way about how the issue can be addressed.

Officials from the Officers National Committee will be meeting shortly and will be available at local level, along with Executive Council members, to provide further information and support to those members affected and will also be able to answer more detailed questions on this important issue. Further circulars will be issued as soon as is possible.

We are also aware of other groups of members who may be affected by pay protection issues. We are monitoring this to ensure that such members are protected as far as possible. Where any specific issue of concern arises, members should immediately contact local officials.

Pay protection is not a mechanism which has been widely necessary in the fire service prior to the 2003 agreement. It arises in this situation because in a number of cases the affected posts under the new role based system have been placed into a role where the rate of pay is lower than that under the previous system.

Pay protection is widely used elsewhere in industry and particularly in the public sector. In the worst cases it can lead to an immediate pay cut or to the affected employees receiving no pay rise for the period of protection. There are also legal precedents surrounding the issue of pay protection. The aim of the Union throughout these discussions has always been, and will always be, to negotiate the best possible protection for the affected members.

Yours fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', written in a cursive style.

MATT WRACK
General Secretary

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