



BARRY BATCHELOR/PA/EMPICS



Fire crews from Somerset and Devon worked throughout the night last summer to control a heathland blaze that destroyed 30 acres at the North Hill beauty spot overlooking Minehead in Somerset

Combined authority to maintain jobs, stations and appliances

DEVON/SOMERSET MERGER

Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services are to merge with a new combined fire and rescue authority set to start business from 1 April 2007. The FBU has been fully involved in the lengthy consultation process at both a county and government level and has submitted detailed documents laying out the Union's views.

The Union's primary concerns have been addressed. There will be no closures of fire stations, no reduction in appliances, no reduction in firefighters and no compulsory redundancies.

The combination will result in the largest

non metropolitan Fire Service in England.

John Drake, FBU South West Regional Secretary said: "The Government has made its decision and the combination is going ahead. From the word go the FBU has approached the proposal for combination with one question: How will this improve the Service? We are clear that the fire authorities in both Devon and Somerset have taken our concerns seriously and we are pleased that our primary concerns have been met.

"Given the undertakings in regard to the safeguards in current levels of fire cover we do not believe that the public has anything to fear from the initial stages of this combination.

"However the ongoing development of such a large service will present many challenges and we will be vigilant to ensure that the positive vision set out by the two fire and rescue authorities is backed up by the improvements promised.

"We will hold the new service to its vision of a modern fire and rescue service which provides improved effective emergency response together with improved effective community safety and fire prevention measures."

This combination of the two fire and rescue services is entirely separate from the Government's plans to regionalise the emergency fire control rooms across the South West.