



The Fire Brigades Union

General Secretary: Matt Wrack

Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston-upon-Thames, Surrey, KT2 7AE

Telephone: 0208 541 1765

Facsimile: 0208 546 5187

E-mail: office@fbu.org.uk

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To: ALL MEMBERS

Dear Brother/Sister,

24 HOUR STRIKE ON 25 FEBRUARY AFTER SHAM PENSION GUARANTEE PROTEST IN LONDON AGAINST GOVERNMENT LIES

The union has issued a further call for strike action for firefighters in England for 24 hours from 7am on 25 February. This follows our campaign which has thoroughly exposed the sham 'guarantee' given in Parliament to enable Ministers to force through their unworkable proposals.

As members will be aware, DCLG fire minister Penny Mordaunt gave a clear guarantee in Parliament that firefighters aged 55 who failed a fitness test through no fault of their own would receive a full, unreduced pension or a redeployed role. This guarantee was subsequently confirmed by Secretary of State Eric Pickles.

Since the debate we have written to all fire authorities asking if they would implement this parliamentary guarantee. We have received responses from the national employers and numerous employers which clearly state that they do not accept that any such guarantee exists.

In fact, the London Fire Brigade confirmed that they had legal advice which showed why they could not implement the guarantee. This supports the longstanding FBU position that any guarantee would need a regulation change. They also confirmed that they had informed the minister of this before she gave the guarantee to Parliament.

The FBU has released a short film showing an extract of exactly what Penny Mordaunt said in Parliament in one of her guarantee responses (it was repeated more than once during the debate) and what the national employers confirmed in a letter back to us. This film can be viewed via the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk

There is no doubt that the minister used the promise of a guarantee to influence the Parliamentary vote knowing full well that the assurance was worthless. It is clear that when Penny Mordaunt gave the guarantee in Parliament she would have been aware that no fire authority ever planned to implement the 'guarantee'. In order to win the vote to pass the flawed firefighters' pension regulations the government misled firefighters and Parliament.

Since the debate and subsequent guarantee by the Secretary of State Eric Pickles, the FBU has called for a meeting with the minister but she has so far refused our suggestion.

As late as the 11 February the minister was still writing to firefighters telling them they have the guarantee when she clearly knows that they do not.

Firefighters have every right to be angry with the disgraceful actions of this government. They have misled Parliament with false claims and they continue to ignore all evidence about the real work firefighters do. Firefighters still face the choice of either being sacked or receiving a severely reduced pension if they fail fitness tests as a result of naturally declining fitness through age. Exactly the opposite of what the minister told Parliament

Last week our conference decided that the campaign must continue and that the DCLG proposal remains unworkable.

We have managed to get improvements elsewhere and are still discussing areas of concern but in England, DCLG continue to bury their heads in the sand.

- Firefighters in Northern Ireland have lifted their trade dispute as the result of a revised and improved offer with a lower pension age.
- Firefighters in Scotland will not be on strike as a result of genuine negotiations having delivered changes to the proposals facing firefighters.
- Firefighters in Wales will not be on strike as a result of ongoing genuine negotiations and a decision taken to improve the pension proposals so that firefighters retiring at 55 will see a reduction in their pension of around 9% rather than the 22% that is being imposed in England.

English firefighters are paying just as much as their colleagues in the rest of the UK but are getting a worse pension scheme and face a real prospect of being sacked at age 55 or having their pension reduced by 22%.

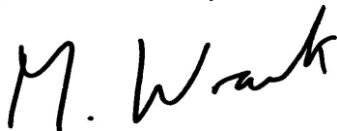
FBU members are asked to attend a demonstration and protest which will coincide with the 24 hour strike. This rally and protest will be held in Westminster, assembling from noon at Methodist Central Hall, Storeys Gate, London SW1 9NH. Information is being circulated separately. Members are asked to attend in numbers with placards and messages for DCLG and the government.

The message from our conference was clear - We are not going away and our campaign continues.

Please make every effort to attend. Contact your local and brigade officials for more details.

Best wishes.

Yours fraternally,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Wrack', with a stylized flourish at the end.

MATT WRACK
General Secretary

MW/SS/jr