



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

Circular: 2015HOC0144MW

20 February 2015

TO: ALL MEMBERS (SCOTLAND) - HOME ADDRESSES

Dear Brother/Sister

2015 SCOTTISH PENSION PROPOSALS UPDATE

You will be aware that firefighters in England are taking further strike action for 24 hours commencing at 07:00 hrs on 25 February 2015. This coincides with a rally and demonstration in Westminster.

This latest action does not include firefighters in Northern Ireland, Wales or Scotland.

The reason for this is that we have managed to get improved offers which address some of our concerns and that discussions are ongoing to look at other unresolved areas.

The proposal from Northern Ireland includes a Normal Pension Age of 55 which was a significant breakthrough and addressed several of our key concerns. However there are other areas still under discussion.

In Wales the improved 2015 pension proposal will utilise a much fairer method for working out actuarial reductions from 55 and sees a much less punitive 9% reduction rather than the 21.8% in the DCLG proposal. Other areas are also still being discussed.

In Scotland the proposal is much more detailed but not any less significant.

Through our negotiations, the FBU has secured a guarantee for firefighters in Scotland, that if a firefighter is unable to maintain their operational fitness at age 55, through no fault of their own and there are no redeployment in role opportunities they will receive an unreduced pension. This position has now been agreed by Scottish Government and the Scottish Fire Service employers and it will be introduced in the form of a statutory regulation in the 2015 pension regulations. This approach was at the suggestions of the union. Since this is placed in the pension regulations (as we demanded) it is entirely different to the 'sham guarantee' that DCLG Fire Minister Penny Mordaunt gave to Parliament on 15 December 2014, which the employers have universally said is undeliverable.

In Scotland the revised 2015 pension proposal will also utilise the much fairer method for working out actuarial reductions from 55. This means a much less punitive reduction of 9% at age 55 rather than the 21.8% in the DCLG proposal. The Scottish Government had previously proposed an actuarial reduction of 21.8% and never followed DCLG when they reverted to the more punitive 47.1% actuarial reduction. This latest improvement was once again achieved at the insistence of the FBU and following negotiations.

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In Scotland the proposal also improves on the transitional protection offered elsewhere and includes a protection based on length of service as well as age. This is similar to the protection that was included in the police pension scheme proposal. This does not satisfy our concern that all current scheme members should be protected but it does go further than any 2015 firefighters' pension scheme proposal elsewhere.

The Scottish Government have also confirmed that they will match any improved proposal made by DCLG.

These are alterations achieved through genuine discussions with the FBU and key improvements to the 2015 scheme are being delivered through legislation and the pension regulations. It is important to remember that as usual all the improvements have been negotiated by the FBU without any assistance from any other employee organisation.

Throughout the campaign the negotiations in Scotland have been conducted in a much more professional and respectful manner. There are still a number of outstanding concerns that we are discussing with Scottish Government including governance and transferability between schemes.

We have made it clear that we oppose the 2015 proposals whilst acknowledging the improvements that have been made.

Scottish Firefighters have not been involved in any periods of strike action but have been involved in action short of strike. However the Executive Council have recognised that Scottish Government are continuing to discuss our concerns and as such this action has been scaled down.

We have therefore at this time, instructed members in Scotland that the only ASOS they are asked to take, until further notice is:

- During periods of strike action being taken by FBU members, FBU members in Scotland should not cross borders to work in a Fire and Rescue Service where FBU members are taking strike action, or in a Fire and Rescue Service where the employer is not recognising partial performance.

The various options for ASOS will be kept under review and may be subject to change.

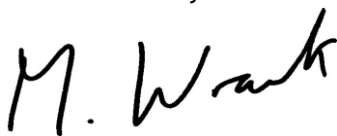
Members in Scotland can be assured that we will continue to campaign to pursue further improvements to the current proposals both in Scotland and elsewhere.

It is vitally important that you continue to support your brothers and sisters who are still taking strike action both morally and particularly financially by branches organising regular collections to contribute to the hardship fund.

The message from the recent Recall Conference is that we must continue with our campaign, we are not going away and that we must remain united in our goal to ensure that we maintain a firefighter pension scheme that reflects the role we undertake and that the scheme is fit for purpose.

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/sll