



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

SERVICE ★ STRUGGLE ★ SOLIDARITY

Matt Wrack General Secretary

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Circular: 2015HOC0391MW

TO: ALL MEMBERS

12 June 2015

Dear Brother/Sister

PENSIONS - CAMPAIGNING CONTINUES; DISCUSSIONS SOUGHT WITH THE NEW DCLG FIRE MINISTER

In May the FBU Annual Conference endorsed the position that the FBU campaign against the pension attack must continue. There is no doubt that the general election result was a huge setback in relation to the potential discussions that had been lined up should Labour have formed the new government. This meant that the situation had to be reassessed to take account of this.

New Fire Minister

The union has made contact with the new DCLG Fire Minister, Mark Francois, requesting an urgent meeting. These arrangements are now being made. We hope that this discussion will enable us to set out the union's concerns - particularly the fact that key areas were unresolved under the last Westminster government. Members will receive a report following this meeting.

In addition to this we are continuing to press issues around the no job no pension guarantee that was set out by the previous DCLG Fire Minister in December 2014. Work also continues to raise our concerns in the National Joint Council (NJC) Joint Working Party looking at fitness issues relating to the firefighter role. Annual Conference made some very important decisions in relation to occupational fitness standards and the union is now following up on this work. This will include further detailed discussions with Firefit regarding the fitness requirements for essential elements of the firefighter's role. This work unsurprisingly supports many of the concerns raised by the FBU (as did the government's own 'Williams' review). We will continue to gather evidence to support our concerns that the imposed NPA makes the scheme unworkable.

Scheme governance problems

The Public Service Pension Act 2014 (and related legislation) includes a requirement to set up local pension boards and a national Scheme Advisory Board in all parts of the UK. This legislation was quite clear in relation to when these boards should be established, how they should function and how they should be made up.

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In the majority of cases we believe the legislation has not been applied correctly.

We have been raising significant concerns with the way that these boards are being established. These concerns include:

- How employee representatives to these boards are being appointed.
- The delay in setting up the boards.
- Training for board members.

In Northern Ireland and Scotland our discussions around the boards have been quite productive and many of our concerns have been addressed. These discussions are continuing. Elsewhere our concerns have not been addressed. This further threatens to undermine confidence in the pension scheme at a time when many scheme members are already outraged at earlier attacks on pension rights.

In some cases significant decisions have been made although the local boards have not yet been established (and therefore have not been able to meet to discuss the issues). These have been challenged as soon as they have emerged.

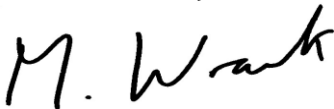
The FBU has raised concerns in relation to this nationally and locally and a letter is being prepared to raise these concerns at local level.

These are extremely important issues which, if necessary, will be progressed to the pension regulator.

The Executive Council meets on 16, 17 & 18 June and these issues will be discussed further. Further reports will follow.

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