REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS 2026

97th CONFERENCE
13 – 15 MAY 2026

FIRE BRIGADES UNION



CREDIT: HANNAH TYLER

Established 1 October 1918

REPORT OF PROCEEDINGS

97th CONFERENCE 2026

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A full list of all resolutions, policy statements and conference decisions has been made available to all officials and members in the booklet 'Record of Decisions 2026'

This is also available on the fbu website www.fbu.org.uk

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WARWICK

13-15 MAY 2026

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Morning conference. Very loud. Can you hear me all right? Conference, welcome to the University of Warwick. A little bit different to Blackpool, but I'm sure, as usual, you will adapt and seek out the various establishments that you all like to visit. So anyway, welcome. So straight away, I now call the chair of standing orders, Brother Phil Millar, to give the standing orders committee report. Phil.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
That's the first problem. There you are. Thank you, president. Conference, good morning. Standing orders committee welcomes you to conference 2026, and as this is an FBU meeting, I will now read our statement on sexual harassment.

> The Fire Brigades Union stands for equality in the wider world, in the fire and rescue service, and in our union.
>
> Undermining equality means undermining the unity which makes us strong. We aim to make the FBU events inclusive, respectful, and effective. Everyone here is responsible for making that happen. The union is run by and for everyone, regardless of age, disability, sex, race, religion or beliefs, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, pregnancy or maternity, marriage or civil partnership status, socioeconomic status, and educational experience.
>
> Sexual harassment is incompatible with this, and we do not tolerate it. Sexual harassment is defined by law as any form of unwanted verbal, non-verbal, or physical conduct of a sexual nature with the purpose or effect of violating the dignity of a person when creating an intimidating, hostile, degrading, humiliating, or offensive environment.
>
> Please be aware that while you may have friends in this room, you are at a union event and are expected to behave with respect and empathy. Please be aware of the language you are using, and that what might seem like a joke to you could be humiliating or degrading to someone else. You should be aware that everyone here is accountable for their words and actions.
>
> Social events and online forums, including social media, are subject to the same policy. If you experience or witness any behaviour that you think is out of order, please report it to your regional secretary. If you feel uncomfortable reporting it to your regional secretary, you can also approach the national women's committee or the assistant general secretary.

Thank you. So conference, can anyone attending who has a vehicle parked in the grounds of Warwick University campus please ensure that you have it registered either online or on the data terminal at the reception of your hotel? Conference, as we have done previously, standing orders have issued documentation to each delegation as opposed to each delegate to reduce our paper usage, with the exception of a couple of the larger delegations that will have some extra copies.

This year, and similarly to last year, the document containing resolutions, amendments to resolutions or amendments to standing orders that have been ruled out this year by the standing orders committee comes to approximately 71 pages when you include copies of each form. Standing orders have taken the decision this year not to print this document, as it would amount to a print run of almost 18,000 pages if it went to each delegate and almost 5,000 if it just went to the delegations.

The document was circulated via head office circular 2026 HOC064JW to brigade secretaries, regional and sectional secretaries and EC members on 6 May. If you want to check your emails should there be a challenge from the conference floor. Conference, you should also each have received your programme of business.

Anyone who hasn't, by the way, there was a bit of a mix-up with that. Come to standing orders, we'll get you one. And following a few discussions from last year with some delegates, we have compiled and aligned the programme of business with the projected running order, and we'll try as much as possible to stick to that.

There are a few last-minute changes to the delegates list, so can those delegates that have a document folder in front of them please remove the delegate list and record the following?

So region 3 Cleveland, remove Chris Porter and replace with Glenn Watson. Region 8, North Wales, remove Anthony Weston and replace with Ruth Bateman. Region 10 London remove Paul Thomas and replace with Jon Lambe. And also on region 10, remove Dominic Pauffley and replace with Dan Ascough. In LGBT+ remove Matthew Black and replace with Alec Clear. And in the ONC remove, I have it down as Jason Kennedy, but it's not that. It's the top one and replace with Karl Smith.

So each delegate has now received the credentials, and with regards to a change of delegate, the standing orders committee asks that changes are kept to a minimum. However, these will only be facilitated when both parties in the exchange come to standing orders to explain the reason for the change of delegate, and in all circumstances, both parties need to be from the same brigade or section.

Please note, conference, that once a delegate change has taken place, the new delegate must, as a minimum, remain as part of the delegation for the entire morning or afternoon session, as there will be no delegate changes accepted by standing orders during comfort breaks. Only delegates and one regional, national, sectional official are allowed on the conference floor, and credentials must be worn and displayed.

I would like to stress the importance of delegates stating their name and brigade or section when addressing conference from the rostrum, as this will assist both the president and in the production of the verbatim report subsequent to conference. Can I now request that all delegates, officials, stewards, visitors, and observers take a moment to check that any mobile phones, laptops, tablets, and any other portable devices whilst the conference is in session are switched off or in silent mode? And mine's not!

I would ask conference to agree an amendment to standing order 16 for the duration of conference 2026, and the amendment is that conference will commence at 9.30, and the morning session will finish at 1.00 rather than 12.45 and reconvene at 2.15 instead of 2.00 to accommodate the time slot in which the venue can provide us with catering.

To avail of lunch, or dinner for some, please return to the hotel, either the Radcliffe or Scarman, in which you're staying, and it will be served in the relevant dining room. Dinner, not quite sure what the alternative for that, go with tea, will be served for everyone at the Scarman Hotel and will be available from 7pm until 9pm. Tea and coffee, that's the tea that you drink, not dinner, during comfort breaks at 11.00 and 3.30, will be served in the reception area of the Slate.

The list of scrutineers and tellers has been compiled, and they are Lee Hunter, Dave Pike, Andy Murray, Kate Yhnell, who is the chief scrutineer. The list of nominees for the final appeals committee has been printed, one for each delegation, and both these and the names of the tellers and scrutineers are now before conference for endorsement by agreeing the standing orders report.

Stall facilities. The standing orders committee have agreed stall facilities for the following organisations at conference: Institute of Employment Rights, Stand Up to Racism, Palestine Solidarity Campaign, Bookmarks, and Cuba Solidarity. and they're situated in the Slate reception area. The FBU shop is present at conference this year and is located in Room 26 in the Radcliffe Hotel, which can be found by turning right at the standing orders room. You should know where that is. Then immediately left, and it will be the first room on your right. The FBU media and research department are in attendance, and whilst conference is in session, they are at the back of the room. And when conference is not in session, they are located in rooms 18 and 19, directly opposite the standing orders room.

Fringe meetings have been agreed for the following: Stand Up to Racism will be held on Wednesday night from 6.00 to 7.00, and Palestine Solidarity Campaign on Thursday, also from 6.00 to 7.00. All fringe meetings will be held in the tiered lecture theatre of the Scarman Hotel which can be located by turning left at reception and will be directly in front of you.

Conference, for your information, a number of resolutions have been withdrawn, remitted, some with the right to speak and some without prior to conference opening, and there have also been some emergency resolutions and some that have been composited, as they are of a very similar nature. So can you please turn to your programme of business? This could take a while, so bear with. Page two, the proposed amendment to standing order 19 number seven from both Scotland and Merseyside have been withdrawn.

And on the EC policy statement, the amendment from Scotland has been removed or withdrawn, and resolution 6 has been withdrawn.

Turn to page three resolution 18 has been remitted, and at the bottom of the page, delete resolutions 1, 10, and 4, and insert composite A entitled Sick Pay-Grey Book. Turning to page 4, delete resolution 15 and 16 and insert composite B entitled Parental Support Leave. And then further down the page, resolution 27 has been withdrawn.

If you turn to page six on resolution 22, amendment 1 has been withdrawn. And resolution 24 has been remitted with the right to speak.

Then on page seven resolution 32 has been remitted.

And on resolution 35, the amendment, and only the amendment from NWC has been withdrawn.
resolution 37 has been withdrawn, and right at the bottom of the page after resolution 44, insert emergency resolution 5 from Durham and Darlington. That's after resolution 44. Emergency resolution 5, and it's entitled Degradation Plans and Cuts to Frontline Fire and Rescue Services by Stealth.

Then turning to page eight resolution 42 has been withdrawn. And then on page nine resolution 49 has been withdrawn to support resolution 50.

And then on your page between the amendment from Scotland to resolution 51 and resolution 52, insert emergency resolution 4 from Merseyside entitled Campaign Against Climate Change. Then immediately after resolution 53, insert emergency resolution 2 from Cheshire entitled Establishing a National Standard Framework and Protections for Emergency Blue Light Driving Response. You really do need to start working on some shorter titles, conference.

Then turning to page 10 Section F after para F1 introduction, insert emergency resolution 1 from Merseyside, Solidarity with Cuba and Against Extreme Aggression. Then page 11, after para F15 at the top of the page, insert emergency resolution 3 from the executive council, entitled Election Results: The Fire Brigades Union and Our Fight for the Future Labour Party.

And then immediately after emergency resolution 3, insert emergency resolution 6 from West Midlands entitled The Relationship Between the Fire Brigades Union and the Labour Party. Still on page 11, resolution 57 has been withdrawn, as has resolution 58.

And on page 13 resolution 78 has been remitted and resolution 79 has been withdrawn. That's it.

There have also been three emergency rule changes from the executive council that have been considered by standing orders and are on your desks. Speakers' times, executive council policy statement, Pay Reform, assistant general secretary will speak 20 minutes. Executive council policy statement, Internationalism, general secretary 20 minutes. Executive council policy statement, Fire Brigades Union, Independent, United, Strong, general secretary 20 minutes. As per the standing order 22, the mover of a resolution shall be allowed seven minutes to speak, the seconder five minutes, and each subsequent speaker three minutes.

The mover of an amendment shall be allowed five minutes, and the seconder three minutes, and no person shall speak more than once on a question except the mover of the original resolution, who alone shall have the right to reply. Conference standing order number 20, as amended by conference 2025, now states that after the opening of conference, the executive council shall present the report for the past year, which shall be laid on the table for discussion.

The items of the report shall be discussed seriatim and not as a whole. Delegates may move the reference back of the whole or any part thereof, each speaker limited to three minutes. As you will be aware, this relates to speaking on a paragraph within the annual report, and the standing orders committee would like to remind conference that for any delegate speaking on a para from the annual report, the content of what they are saying should be relevant to the content of the paragraph they have chosen to speak on.

With regards voting on a challenge to the chair of conference, I would draw your attention to standing order 15. The number of delegates to conference this year is 153. Therefore, the number of delegates voting to carry a challenge is 102. Please note that NRC delegates, ONC delegates, CSNC delegates, NWC delegates, B&EMM delegates, and LGBT+ delegates are entitled to vote on procedural motions and challenges only.

This year, conference, the NWC, B&EMM, and LGBT+ sections have been permitted to invite up to 13 delegates to conference, one from each region, and I would like to welcome those delegates who have availed and are in attendance. It should be noted, however, that in the event of a vote taking place on procedural motions or a challenge to the chair of conference, only two delegates from the equality sections will have a vote nominated by either the secretary or chair of the relevant equality section. Regional and sectional officials on the conference floor who are not delegates have been issued with different credentials, and they are not permitted to vote at all.

Conference, in 2023, I made it clear in the opening standing orders report that the standing orders committee were uncomfortable with the direction of travel in relation to the interventions that the committee were having to make for resolutions to be deemed competent.

It was becoming normal practice that in addition to identifying to committees the reason that the resolution had been ruled out, the standing orders committee were sending them back under the 24-hour rule and would also supply the suggested wording that would fix them. I also stated in 2023 that going forward when standing orders had their first meeting of the year to look at all the resolutions submitted; for any that were ruled out, we would just tell you why it had been ruled out and leave it up to you to fix it.

Conference, this year the standing orders committee continued with the same approach regarding returning resolutions under the 24-hour rule, and we received in total this year 104 resolutions, six of which were immediately ruled out completely as they could not be corrected under the parameters of the standing order number 4.

Of the 98 resolutions remaining, standing orders ruled out and returned a total of 27 resolutions under the provisions of standing order 4, of which two were withdrawn and two were returned outside of the 24-hour rule. A further six resolutions were not returned at all by the brigades they were sent back to.

And of the remaining 17 resolutions that were correctly returned under the 24-hour rule, 12 had been rectified and five had not. And one final note on the resolutions that were submitted this year, conference, and I include the ones that did not make it through standing orders, is that the standard of them was exceptional in how they were written and how they were constructed.

Some of them were a touch on the long side, not going to lie to you, but the standard of 2026 compared to 2023 is light years apart. So well done to everyone who had a hand in writing them.
Finally, conference, there will be two elections this year to the standing orders committee. Rebecca Savin is up for re-election, as she has completed four conferences. Since joining standing orders, she has become a valued, and I should say indispensable, member of the committee, and I would ask that you endorse her for re-election. Regarding the second election to standing orders, you'll be aware that my friend and colleague Jim Quinn, executive council member for region 2, recently retired.

Jim has been and continues to be one of the most committed trade unionists that I have ever met, and he will be sorely missed in region 2, on the executive council, not to mention the national union, as Jim was the national treasurer for many years. This does, however, mean that the executive council position is now vacant in region 2, a role I am currently acting up into, and it would be my intention to run for election for the post when the election is run.

Should I be successful in that election, the Rule Book is clear and states that the committee will be comprised of four elected from the floor of conference and two from the executive council, and that the chair will be appointed from one of the elected members. As I have no doubt that if I am elected I will most likely be appointed back on to standing orders by the EC, there will be an election to standing orders this year as I have to step down as an elected delegate on the standing orders committee. Tissues are available if required.

And there's always the possibility that if I'm not elected, I'll be back amongst you next year as a Region 2 delegate. Nomination forms will be distributed this afternoon, and can you please place your nominations in the ballot box that will be located at the rear of the hall during tomorrow morning's comfort break?

And the Rebecca Savin election will be first. President, if that report is agreed, then that concludes the standing orders report.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that, Phil. Any speakers? No. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you, conference. We now move on to Section N, obituary. In two seconds, I will ask you to stand when we've got the roll call ready. If we could all stand conference. Conference, if we remain standing for a minute's silence.

Conference stood in memory of those who had died

Thank you, conference.

Right, conference. I think he might just hear us. I think if we show our appreciation for the piper. *Applause*

THE VICE-PRESIDENT:
Conference, please come to order. I now call our president, Ian Murray, to give his presidential address.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Pete. And firstly, a big welcome to our increased delegations from our equality sections. Great to see you here. *Applause* Seeing the democracy of the union in action being determined by rank-and-file members.

Conference, I think it's absolutely appropriate and fully deserved to include in my opening address congratulations to the FBU officials and members in Oxfordshire on their magnificent victory in fighting the cuts that were being proposed. Three station closures, the removal of six fire engines, 42 firefighters made redundant, meaning increased attendance times, putting the communities they served at a greater risk and, as we all know, making the firefighters' job in Oxfordshire even more dangerous.

Not to mention, this is on the back of us just approaching the first anniversary on Friday of the deaths of two Oxfordshire firefighters, Jennie Logan and Martyn Sadler, who we have just remembered in our minute's silence. Those cuts have been scrapped, and there's no doubt in my mind it's on the back of the magnificent campaign and the massive 94% in favour of taking industrial action delivered by the Oxfordshire members, assisted by the local officials and regional officials. Every one of you, you deserve ours and the community's gratitude for achieving what you have done.

We've had other victories where proposed cuts have been shelved too, in Avon and Leicestershire, so a big well done to the FBU officials and members for the campaigns that they run. We all know we have to fight against every fire station closure, every firefighter job cut because once they're gone, they're gone for good.

Getting them back is extremely rare, and we have still got many battles ahead. We've got ongoing cuts in Buckinghamshire, where they're proposing further cuts there. In Dorset and Wiltshire, they're threatening to close eight fire stations with a loss of up to 96 firefighter jobs. Up in Scotland, they're running a fantastic campaign up there to plug the funding gap that could result in the loss of up to 500 jobs, and I'm sure they'll win that too.

So what I'd like to say to all of you is thank you. You continue to take 'em on, fighting the relentless cuts that no one else will, as only the FBU ever does. But what I will say is, don't be afraid to be bold like Oxfordshire were. Get the members fully on board with your local campaigns to fight the cuts. Send the message loud and clear to these chiefs, to these politicians: you push ahead with your cuts, and we'll push ahead with a strike ballot. *Applause* I applaud each and every one of you.

Conference, we also had another hugely significant milestone in the FBU's history just a couple of weeks ago. We held the FBU's inaugural Health and Safety Summit in Birmingham, and the summit brought together many well-renowned experts in their field, international guest speakers to address our health and safety reps from across the UK. People like Alex Forrest, a Canadian firefighter and a lawyer who has led on the presumptive legislation there and how they achieved it in Canada. We had Australian Mick Tisbury talking about PFAS and how they are systematically removing them in the fire service down under, and they're also raising global awareness on behalf of all of us by taking it to the United Nations.

We had Professor Anna Stec, who needs no introduction from FBU members for the work she has done identifying and evidencing the risk that firefighters face from the various cancers they are exposed to. We also had Martin Brown who did a presentation on developing operational and safety procedures for firefighters dealing with electric and hybrid vehicle fires and the dangers that they pose.

And I've got to be honest, conference, when we watched his presentation and videos, it frightened the life out of me. We had Ian Lavery MP, chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group, Health and Safety committee. We had an extra special guest in Anne Davies. Anne is the widow of Jeff Simpson, a firefighter, firstly in London and then transferred to South Yorkshire.

I knew Jeff personally from the shift dispute we had up in South Yorkshire, where he was very active in our campaign. Jeff retired and sadly was diagnosed with a very aggressive form of lung cancer, and he quickly succumbed to it and sadly passed away. During a very emotive speech at the summit, Anne explained how after Jeff's death, she collated the evidence and presented it to the coroner who, after considering it, determined that Jeff's cancer was an industrial disease caused by his profession.

We believe that this is the first time a coroner in the UK has attributed the cause of death from cancer directly to the firefighter's occupation. So this is another big step in us gathering all of the arguments and all of the evidence we will need to achieve that presumptive legislation here in the UK which we strive for.

And then to top it all, we had what was probably the biggest announcement we could have wished for, and it come from our last guest speaker. We had the Secretary of State for Health, Wes Streeting, attend and address the summit. But not only did he address the summit, he made an announcement. He announced that the Labour government are to create a Firefighter's Concordat, focusing on the health and wellbeing of firefighters, ensuring that firefighters receive consistent, regular health checks, as well as backing and funding research into the hazards that firefighters face.

Conference, that's been a decade in the making when we initiated our DECON campaign. But significantly, it's been achieved and progress made over recent months by the hard work of the general secretary, Steve Wright, and national officer, Adam Taylor, who in the run-up to the summit, had countless meetings with Wes Streeting and his team to get this over the line. It's an unbelievable and a huge step forward, which undoubtedly will save many firefighters' lives.

Conference, we may not be in a position to eradicate cancers that firefighters face on a daily basis, and we know that they're at a far greater risk of contracting those diseases than the general public are.

But until we are in that position, early detection and treatment is the key to saving hundreds of firefighters' lives that would've been lost without it. So a massive well done to all of those involved in achieving what is a historical milestone for all firefighters across the UK. *Applause*

Conference, globally over the last 12 months, we've seen the world we live in become a far more unstable place. You turn on the TV and what once would have shocked and rocked us to the core is now becoming a daily wave of craziness coming from Washington, which as we all know, has an impact across the globe.

Illegal wars, countries invaded, nations' leaders kidnapped, playing with tariffs as if they're at the world's largest casino roulette wheel. Here in the UK, thankfully, the prime minister refused to blindly follow the call from Washington. He may have gone further than many of us are comfortable with, but thankfully he's refused Trump's calls for us to play a full and active part in their war with Iran.

That was and is absolutely the right decision, and as I say, we don't always agree with this government, but that decision will be on the right side of history. Closer to home, we've seen some significant improvements to workers' rights with the introduction of the Employment Rights Act. This is the biggest improvement for workers' rights we've seen in a generation, and it is an outstanding achievement for workers rolling back draconian restrictions imposed on workers by the Tories.

These rights had to be hard fought for by the trade union movement, and our union was central to nailing these policies, working closely with the other affiliated unions. It was our efforts that meant they were committed to by the Labour Party in the manifesto and now implemented when in government.

And speaking on the Labour Party, they have done some good stuff over the introduction of school breakfasts for primary school kids. They eventually, after public outcry, lifted the two-child cap, reversed the decision on the winter fuel allowance, but as we all know, they have to go further. And let's face it, conference, the Labour Party have made a lot of decisions that many of us in this room and the rest of the UK have not been happy with.

There needs to be change. They have to truly represent the working class of this country, but they better get on with that quick because the working class are now looking for alternatives. For us as a union, we've seen the benefits of being affiliated to the Labour Party. It gives us that direct access to ministers and even direct access to the prime minister in a couple of ways.

Firstly, the general secretary, he has regular meetings at TULO that Keir Starmer attends. I sit on the Labour Party's NEC for the union, both of which allows us to deliver the direct messages to Keir Starmer face to face. And I know when I raised with him a couple of months ago, no, a couple of weeks ago now the critical state of the UK fire and rescue service and the latest round of cuts that was being proposed, his first words were, "Thanks, Ian. I can tell you that your general secretary has already raised these with me at TULO, and we are looking into it." As I say, we have regular meetings with the fire minister, who will be addressing conference this week. The gen sec and AGS have regular, almost weekly, meetings with officials from MHCLG, raising our issues with the senior civil servants.

And it also gives us the opportunity to directly raise with the Labour Party leadership our dissatisfaction with the party, some of their policies and the decisions they have made resulting in the increased threat of the alternatives. I know personally, I'd rather be governed by a bad Labour Party than the Tories or any of the other emerging alternatives.

I also believe that a Reform government would be a big disaster for us. I think they would pose a serious threat to the ability of trade unions to represent our members. In fact, I believe, I go a bit further, I think they'd pose a serious threat to the very existence of trade unions. They have voted against every single piece of legislation that would improve the lives of the working class, and they've made it clear where they stand on public sector pensions.

These are the party of the wealthy, for the wealthy, and friends just don't give you 5 million quid without expecting something in return. Farage and co are no friends of the working class, not to mention the racism within their ranks. We all need to do all that we can to avert that happening at the next general election.

Conference, this week we will debate our current affiliation to the Labour Party, and that will determine the union's political future one way or the other. Conference also this week, we'll have a big debate on the issue of firefighters' pay and the long-term aims of the union in seeing a new pay reform structure introduced into the fire and rescue service.

Our existing pay structures as a result of the 2002-03 pay dispute have been a disaster for our members. It's allowed for the fragmentation of the UK fire and rescue service, not only in the work that firefighters carry out on a daily basis, but also the reward they receive for carrying out this work.

We have huge disparities from one fire and rescue service to the next. Some pay firefighters for carrying out additional duties like water rescue, flood response, MTA, etc, other services don't, meaning our members are doing this work for nothing. The pay reform that is being negotiated at the National Joint Council is looking to address these flaws, reintroduce some consistency and standardisation on pay across the whole of the UK fire and rescue service.

The pay structure we are negotiating will affect all aspects of our membership, both wholetime, retained, control members, officer members, and others. Our aim is a member gets paid exactly the same as a member in a neighbouring fire and rescue service if you're carrying out the same role. You get paid exactly the same money for undertaking the same additional skills, and importantly, it will be paid as core pay.

So it cannot be removed at the whim of a chief fire officer as additional responsibility allowances currently can be. I honestly see this pay reform as a once in a generation opportunity to fix what was a bad outcome of the last national pay dispute that has set our pay structures for the last two decades.

In all of my time being on or around national pay negotiations over the last 16 years, I've never known it where all four of the key stakeholders are singing from the same hymn sheet. We've got the FBU, the national employers, the NFCC but most importantly, government ministers, because they are the ones that hold the key to unlocking the investment that will be needed for these pay reforms to be introduced.

Conference, you will determine how that is progressed in a debate this afternoon here in the parliament of our union, the place where elected officials come and have their say on behalf of the members they represent. But what I'd ask of you is, value the trust that's been put in you by your members, and when you leave here on Friday, those policies that you've agreed here this week, don't just sit back and forget about them until you're here next year.

Go back to your brigades and try to get these policies implemented locally. Conference, many resolutions call for the EC to gather information and to produce reports. So again, what I would ask is, when a request for information is put out by head office, please respond to it. We cannot complete what you demand of us in this conference without you doing that.

I know you're all busy, but sometimes we've got to ask you, and we've got to chase it, and sometimes it's quite demoralising for us when we're having to do that. Could I also say we're at a new venue. It's on a university campus, so please all be on your best behaviour. Any issues with the venue, please go see the standing orders committee.

Raise them there. Don't go direct to the venue because we've obviously paid for a package, and we need to know if there's any shortfalls in that. And speaking of behaviours, conference, as I said, you've come here to represent your members' views and be their voice, so do just that. Don't push your own personal agendas.

Represent your wider membership. Make decisions that you truly believe are in your members' best interests. Make decisions that you believe are in the best interest of all FBU members, and remember, comrades, during the week, we can disagree with each other, but we can do it in a comradely manner. We can disagree with what speakers say, but in our replies, we can do it with respect, and we can be passionate about all of the issues without being disrespectful.

Conference, we're all on the same side in here, or we're supposed to be, so above all, please, let's be nice to each other, and no matter what the result the debate ends up in, please respect the outcome, respect our democracy, and above all, let's leave here with a united voice to tackle the battles ahead we know we will undoubtedly face.

Conference, that's enough from me. Have a good week. Thank you. *Applause*

Conference, we're now moving on to Section M, Financial Accounts. I call para M1, para M2, financial statement. I now call the National Treasurer to move the financial statement, Brother Tony Curry.

NATIONAL TREASURER (Tony Curry)**:**
Thanks, president. Conference, a lot of detailed work has been carried out on the FBU Council over the past year.

This including working with our auditors, who are here with us today, to develop and improve our systems to deliver to our members. We're always aware that every penny spent comes from the hard-earned contributions of our members, and we owe it to them to deliver full financial transparency and accountability throughout the union.

This work has been led by our head of finance, Ana Carvalho who, together with her finance team, have performed magnificently. The process of putting the financial report together always comes with challenges, and I can't thank Ana and the team enough for their assistance in the preparation of this year's accounts to make sure we met our legal and Rule Book obligations in time for conference.

I'd also like to thank the regional treasurers, some of whom are sitting out here today, for the work they've done over the past year, not only in the regions, but their involvement and assistance in helping produce and implement and continuously improve our new expenses guidance document. I also think it's only right and proper that I should extend my gratitude to the previous national treasurer, Jimmy Quinn, for his help and advice in handing over the national treasurer's role.

Jimmy retired in February after 40 years in Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service and working tirelessly as an FBU rep for over 38 of them years. I'm sure you'll all join me in wishing Jimmy all the best for the future. On a serious note, I would like to state for the record that if there's anything wrong with these accounts, it's all Jimmy's fault!

Conference will be aware that over the last few years we have reformatted the way we present the accounts to conference, and by extension, to members. This has been done to increase transparency, ensure that we take our financial responsibility seriously, and conduct them openly. This year we have continued to build on that aim whilst maintaining the same type of formatting. We've maintained the formatting for several reasons, but mainly because traditional spreadsheet accounts can be difficult for most to fully comprehend, even for those who spend far too much time looking at them.

Of course, there'd be no point in making these changes, presentation or otherwise, unless there was a benefit in doing so. For us, the main benefit is that the far more transparent and accountable we are, the better our forecasting for the future will be. And the reality is, the tougher the financial environment you are in, which I do believe we are, the better your preparations need to be.

I'll now move on to the accounts themselves, president, give a quick overview and review of our finance in 2025, as it's already laid out in some detail in the annual report. In 2025, our total income was £13.05 million, and our total expenditure for 2025 was £14.06 million. Simply put, conference, last year we spent more than we got in, which is unsustainable going forward if we want to continue to operate as a sector-specific standalone trade union. We have, however, benefited from positive revaluations in both our investments and pension, which have given us an overall surplus of £1.56 million.

The surplus after actuarial pension adjustments was £3.3 million, and our general fund surplus has increased to £14.16 million. Positive pension scheme actuarial adjustments of £1.74 million further contributed to the surplus for the year. These adjustments are calculated using external factors completely out of our control, and therefore cannot be forecast with any accuracy, and do vary significantly from year to year.

During 2025, our ordinary membership levels fell by 128, that's 0.38%, to 33,589. Membership income from contributions increased to £12.6 million, due mainly to the increase in the contribution rates in 2025. Our expenditure increased by £806,000 during the year, owing primarily to new office costs. The pie chart in the report in front of you on your desks shows a breakdown of our 2025 expenditure.

It clearly shows that the bulk of our expenditure is in three main areas: staffing, £4.53 million; running costs for protecting members' interests, £3.08 million; and member benefits, £3.14 million. In concluding, the 2026 budget represents a balanced approach over the coming year. I want to draw conference's attention to the upcoming introduction of a new and much-needed purchase order system.

A key recommendation from our audit, this is being done closely to track, spend, and ensure adherence to budgets, as well as inform quarterly forecast meetings with the relevant officials. This will be rolled out across all regions and will require a new mindset regarding ordering products and initiating spends.

I ask all officials, especially our regional treasurers, to work with us as this rollout takes place and assist in its implementation. It may prove tricky initially, but its long-term benefit far outweighs any initial inconvenience.

The introduction of a centralised booking system via Steward Travel and the comprehensive expenses guidance document we initiated, has proved highly effective and already started to improve the way we function financially. With over 300 transactions a month on the system, we have achieved important benefits in providing effective ways of achieving accountable travel and accommodation.

As I've just stated, conference, we currently see our expenditure higher than our income. This must change, and we are undertaking a wide range of measures to address that. In recent months, the executive council, working in a coordinated and collective way, has had to consider several difficult issues and make some challenging decisions.

Those decisions have been based on detailed information, careful discussion, and a clear focus ensuring the long-term strength, stability, and the future of our union. None of this work is taken lightly. Throughout all of this, the priority has been to ensure that the union continues to provide members with the first-class service, representation, and support they expect and deserve.

But equally, we can't stand still or rest on our laurels. We must continue to explore ways of reducing expenditure where necessary to ensure the union is operating as effectively as possible. We also need to increase income by being more strategic and more organised. The new organising strategy developed by head office and agreed by this executive council will assist in achieving this, but the hard work must be done by all of us in this room today.

We need to be out there in the workplaces and on the branches face to face recruiting new members. The maths is simple, conference: increase membership, increase income, and secure the future of this union. And on that, president, I move the accounts.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Tony. Any speakers? Yep. Come to the front.

IAIN BALLANTYNE (Scotland)**:**
Conference, speaking on para M2 financial statement. Declining membership is a significant concern for the long-term viability of the union. What assessment has been undertaken of overall headcount reduction across the UK fire and rescue service and FBU membership figures? Is declining membership a direct result of declining firefighter numbers or due to organising not being successful?

Are we recruiting members at a greater or lesser rate than the fire and rescue services are reducing headcount? These are undeniably important details when assessing organising strategy. The figures are in the EC's report on page 91. These indicate our membership. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Tony?

NATIONAL TREASURER (Tony Curry)**:**
Sorry, president. Was there a question or?

IAIN BALLANTYNE (Scotland)**:**
Is the declining membership a direct result of the fire and rescue service reduction or lack of organising?

NATIONAL TREASURER (Tony Curry)**:**
I can't speak for the fire and rescue services, but definitely for the union, I think the strategy going forward, what I discussed earlier on, I think that will improve membership. It'll give us the basis to get there, get out there and increase our membership.

THE PRESIDENT:
Okay, any other speakers? Is that statement agreed? *Agreed* Thank you, conference. Conference, we've now done the opening formalities, so we now move on to the business of the week. Just before we do that, I just want to say a few things. We try to work resolutions and policy statements into the relevant paragraphs of the annual report.

That isn't always possible and resolutions may have to be brought into other debates, different sections of the annual report, but that's what we have to do if they have to be taken in the same debate. Conference, as the chair of standing orders has also just said to you, delegates can speak on the paragraphs as I call them.

It would help us if you let us know in advance, because I will just start ploughing through 'em. And if you do let us know in advance, we can enter your name onto my paperwork so that I don't miss you. But if not, if anybody does want to speak on a paragraph and they haven't warned us in advance, just shout out as soon as you hear me call it, on that one.

Also, as directed by the chair of standing orders, please ensure your contribution on a paragraph is relevant to it. I will be stopping people if their contribution isn't relevant to that paragraph, so take note region 5, wherever you are. Where are you? I'm looking. Yeah. Thank you. They did try to move a resolution that was ruled out of order once on a paragraph. So that won't be happening again.

And what I would ask of you all is be disciplined, stick to your times, and if someone else has said what you were going to say in a debate, don't just get up for the sake of it unless you've got something else to add. Let's crack on. So with the first item of business, we're coming onto the proposed alterations to the Fire Brigades Union Rule Book.

Conference, these rule changes were considered to be emergency rule changes that are required as a result of legislative changes which the AGS will cover now.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Hi, conference. President with your permission, I'll move all three together.

THE PRESIDENT:
Sounds good to me.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Sounds good to conference, I'm sure, as well. Look, conference, as the president has said there, these rule changes to E2 and H1 that the executive council are putting forward to you today come from the changes in legislation following the Employment Rights Act coming into law.

These allow us to continue to operate a political fund but do require those interim rule changes to be made. We've had our lawyers check over these rule changes. They've been agreed by the executive council, and now they're before you, conference, for agreement. And the other rule change president, is that of a typographical error in the Rule Book.

During a standing orders committee meeting, I think by the eagle-eyed executive council member for Wales, it was spotted that it referred to a rule that didn't even exist. So again, president, we're asking that be corrected in accordance with Rule C12.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you very much, AGS. We've moved them all together, so I'm going to call the first one, B2(ix)(x). Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. I now call alteration to Rule F5(iv). Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. I now call Rule H1. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody?

No? I now put proposed alteration to the Fire Brigades Union rulebook, Rule B2(1)(ix)(x) to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put proposed alterations to the Fire Brigades Union Rule Book F2(5) (iv) to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put proposed alteration to the Fire Brigades Union Rule Book, rule H1 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

We now move on to the proposed amendments to conference standing orders. Conference, for clarity, those moving rule changes or amendments to standing orders, there is no right of reply on procedural matters you will be there just to give your proposed amendments. So the first one I will call is a proposed amendment to standing order 3 moved by Scotland. The EC position is support. Scotland *Formally*, does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Now, open for debate for anybody? No.

I now put the proposed amendments conference standing order number 3 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call proposed amendments conference standing order 4, moved by London. The EC position is support. London? *Formally* Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's open for debate. Anybody? No.

I now put the proposed amendment to conference standing order number 4 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call proposed amendment to conference standing order 8, moved by Merseyside. The EC position is to oppose. Merseyside. Morning, Lee.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
Am I on?

THE PRESIDENT:
Yes.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, moving alteration to standing order 8. Conference, this amendment is needed. We have seen in previous conferences emergency resolutions moved simply because the EC or another brigade or section don't like a particular resolution.

That is not how conference should work. If you don't agree with the resolution, speak against it, lobby people to vote against it. Do the work. This amendment is not an attack on the constitutional rights of FBU members. It is simply ensuring that emergency resolutions are brought to make real change, not just to oppose resolutions that have already been brought.

That is why we included the last sentence, so that where there is a genuine need for an emergency resolution, it can be brought where the original resolution is withdrawn. Comrades, we may well see emergency resolutions brought at this conference that stand against resolutions in the final agenda.

Ask yourself, is that right? Have those bringing the emergency resolutions spoken to those who have taken the time and effort to pass their own resolutions through branches, through committees, and through standing orders to get here? Or have they simply submitted an emergency resolution to bring it down?

Conference, please support this amendment. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* It's open for debate, anybody? AGS to respond.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah. Thanks, president. Thanks, Lee. I don't think we have done any lobbying on this one actually, but we are in opposition to it, Lee, as you're aware. We believe this would certainly shackle and limit the opportunities of conference to handle and decide upon very urgent matters for which, yeah, you may want to – for instance, if there was a significant change in pensions or pay, for instance, then we may want to bring emergency resolutions in to debate those as a course of action. And otherwise as Lee said there, unless the resolution committee were willing to withdraw, then we wouldn't be able or permitted to bring emergency matters to conference. The executive council, on that basis, oppose this as we believe it shackles yourselves, conference delegates.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. I now put proposed amendment to conference standing order number 8 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That falls*.

I now call proposed amendment to conference standing order 22, moved by Scotland. The EC supports. Scotland.

Sorry, withdrawn. That one has been withdrawn. I now put – that was the last one, wasn't it? I haven't been given any other business. I think we can just chill out and have a …Becca, if you're watching in standing orders committee room, I need some business. There's going to be somebody running through the door flustered in a minute. Just talk amongst yourselves for a few minutes. Bless you. Conference don't all be dashing out of the conference hall, because I'm expecting Becca to come quickly. I have business. Very flustered. Conference, take your seats.

I now call Section B, pensions, para B1. I now call resolution 20, pensionability of incident overrun overtime moved by West Yorkshire. The EC are giving qualified support. West Yorkshire.

Resolution 20 PENSIONABILITY OF INCIDENT OVERRUN OVERTIME

Conference notes that firefighters are frequently required to remain on duty beyond the end of their rostered shift where operational incidents are still ongoing. This extension of duty — commonly referred to as incident overrun overtime — arises from operational necessity rather than personal choice.

Conference further notes that under the current structure of the Firefighters' Pension Schemes, payments made for overtime are not generally treated as pensionable pay. In practice, this means that firefighters who are required to remain on duty beyond their contracted shift due to operational incidents receive no pension credit for this additional time worked.

Conference considers this position to be unfair. Incident overrun overtime is not voluntary but arises directly from operational commitments and the professional duty placed upon firefighters to remain at incidents until they are safely concluded. Such time is clearly identifiable through incident and mobilising records.

Conference therefore calls upon the Executive Council to:

- ***commission analysis of the impact on firefighters of overtime payments not being treated as pensionable pay where these arise from operational incident overruns***
- ***explore options for seeking changes to pension scheme regulations so that time worked beyond rostered duty due to operational incidents can be recognised within pensionable pay***
- ***report progress to the next Conference.***

WEST YORKSHIRE

MATT HERRIN (West Yorkshire)**:**
Moving the pensionability of incident overrun overtime. Conference West Yorkshire moves motion 20. Let me start with a question. When a firefighter is ordered to remain on duty beyond the end of their shift because there are people in danger, because an incident is still running, because the job isn't done, are they working?

Of course they are. So why when it comes to their pension does the system treat that time as if it barely exists? Conference, incident overrun overtime is one of the most misunderstood injustices in our conditions of service. Every single one of us in this room has stayed beyond our contracted hours because an operational incident demanded it, not because we wanted the money, not because we volunteered for overtime, because there were people who still needed us, and we did not leave.

This is not a lifestyle choice. This is a professional and moral obligation. It is the very essence of what we signed up to do, and yet under the current structure of this pension scheme, those hours, compulsory, operationally essential, clearly documented, in incident and mobilising records generate no pension credits whatsoever.

Think about what that means over a career. Year after year, shift after shift, firefighters staying on, sometimes for hours, racking up time that contributes to the risk they carry. The wear on their bodies, the toll on their families, and none of it counts towards the pension that they've earned. This isn't a grey area. This isn't a matter of interpretation.

Incident overrun overtime arises directly from operational commitments. It's not discretionary, it's not ambiguous, it is compulsory service. The argument that overtime is somehow a different category of pay, one that doesn't deserve pension recognition, may have made sense in a world where overtime meant voluntary additional shifts. It makes no sense at all when applied to a time when a firefighter had to – no choice but to work.

Conference, fairness matters. Our members deserve to know that every minute they give, particularly every minute they give because they have no option, is recognised in their retirement. That is why West Yorkshire is calling on the EC to commission a proper analysis of the financial impact this is having on our members.

We need to understand the scale of this before we can make the strongest possible case for change. We are also calling on the EC to actively explore options for amending pension scheme regulations so that time worked beyond the duty due to operational incidents can be recognised within the pensionable pay.

And we expect a report back to next conference on progress made. This is quite a straightforward ask. It's a fair ask and one that our members absolutely deserve. Conference, please support this motion. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody?

You know when you want somebody to speak just to pad a little bit of time out to the morning break? And none of you do. And then when times when I don't want you to speak, there's a queue. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
There's not going to be a lot of padding here either, president. Matt, thanks very much for bringing the resolution. The executive council certainly appreciate that, and actually the ask is fairly straightforward and fair. The qualification really is that there are some legal concerns and considerations that we have to take alongside the resolution, certainly looking into things like the Blackburn principles. So we'll do that and actually I think we're probably likely to be able to report back way before conference next year. So we'll crack on with the intent of the resolution and do so with that qualification, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, AGS. I now put resolution 20 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para B2. Yep. Lee, this is one time I don't mind you getting up at all.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, speaking on paragraph B2, injury to feelings. What we would like to do is place on record our thanks to Brother Mark Rowe, national officer who has the remit for pensions. Mark unfortunately can't be with us this week. But the work that Mark has undertaken in ensuring our members had injury to feelings payments made to them has been outstanding. So our thanks once again to Brother Mark Rowe. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. We certainly echo that even though I think some members thought Mark had the money personally in his bank and was holding onto it, but that certainly wasn't the case. I now call para B3, para B4, para B5, para B6, para B7, para B8, para B9, para B10. Yep.

ANDY WARREN (London)**:**
People may be aware of this, I'm sure most are, but the review board of which the people sit recently had, they do the annual or the four-yearly review of making sure it's financially sustainable, and they change, as a result of this, the bands of who pays what percentage has changed. And the result of this has meant that firefighters in London and firefighters in other parts of the country who are all on the same, who are all the same competent firefighter are now getting paid different rates. So not just the amount based on your pay, but different rates of pay, different percentages towards their pension because of things like London weighting and other cost of living allowances or additional allowances moving them into a higher band. So two firefighters, one in one brigade and one in another, who are both competent firefighters, one of them has had a very small reduction in their rates, and the other one has had £550 a month added to their rates. And this isn't about the fact that they earn more in terms of you're paying more because you pay the same percentage at a higher amount.

They're paying a higher percentage, if that makes sense. Sorry, I was supposed to have a bit more time. It got moved up. So yeah, we've had a one point five percent increase in our pensions contributions and so have firefighters in other parts of the country. And I just wanted to bring this to people's attention; we think it's not reasonable because those allowances aren't – because people from London or whatever other bits of the country who are affected are wealthier; it's those allowances are to help with the higher cost of living in those places. So a firefighter should be in the same percentage band, just like we all should pay the same tax, whatever. We should be in the same band, we think. So when the next review comes along, which we hope might even be able to bring it forward, we would like this to be addressed so that firefighters on the same rank aren't paying competing or different rates of pension. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy. I'll just ask the AGS. Ben?

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah. Look thanks for the comments, Andy, but just a correction to the report for proceedings really in terms of what you said. Andy, it's not at all the responsibility of the SAB to set the bandings and the contribution rates within the fire service. That was done following consultation by the government, not by the SAB.

The SAB did respond to that. It is the case that the SAB want there to be a fair and equitable range of pension contributions across the service. But just to be clear again, that is set by the government and not by the SAB. But thanks for your comments.

THE PRESIDENT:
Okay, thanks, Ben. Conference. We are going to take a morning coffee break. Could I have you, ask you that you're back in your seats 11.15 sharp? And seeing as I'm such a good egg giving you an extended break because we're moving straight onto the solidarity medal presentation at 11.15 prompt. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:
That is effective, that. I'm going to take it home for the grandkids. Conference, give a few more minutes for people to take their seats. Come on. Conference, we now have reached the part of our three days where we present our FBU solidarity medal. So I will now pass the chair to the vice-president in order to participate in awarding the medal. Thanks, Pete.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT:
Thanks, president. Conference, at its 2019 December meeting, the executive council agreed to instigate a special solidarity award within the Fire Brigades Union, which will be undertaken on an ongoing basis. Against the background of chief fire officers and FRS politicians receiving establishment medals and awards for introducing cuts, the EC believed it was time for the voices of FBU members to be heard and for a set of democratic trade union awards to be introduced. In stark contrast to the establishment, these awards will be based on solidarity, democracy, and integrity, and we want all FBU members and branches to have the opportunity to nominate potential recipients.

We believe it is important that these awards are made here at the parliament of our union in front of delegates representing all FBU members from across the UK. Interest in the award is now becoming mainstreamed across the union, and we continue to encourage nominations to be made through brigade, section and regional committees.

Called the solidarity medal, the award is made on behalf of all FBU members, and although inclusive of serving and retired FBU members, the criteria for this award also includes persons or groups outside of our structures. The criteria are clear: to recognise or dispense solidarity or specific acts of solidarity on behalf of members of the FBU which are clearly of exceptional merit.

Comrades, the 2026 recipient meets these criteria in abundance. As trade unionists, we recognise that the law has often been written to advance the interests of bosses at the expense of workers. This is why our members need a special type of solicitor who not only shares the beliefs of our union but also has the necessary skills to offer the protections we need.

Thompsons Solicitors was founded in 1921 with a vision to do just that. For over a century, they've stood shoulder to shoulder with trade unions to use the law in the provision of justice for working people. They have a commitment to never represent employers or insurance companies, those who cause and pay out for injury.

Unlike other law firms, they only ever act for the injured or mistreated. That is an ethos to be proud of, and it was embodied by our 2026 recipient, Doug Christie. Doug Christie was a senior partner at Thompsons and held the portfolio for the FBU for almost two decades. This meant that he had a very close relationship with the FBU, its membership, and many officials. In his role, he provided critical support to the FBU, always with the key aim that the law would support and not impede the union to fight for members.

Doug provided advice and practical support on the majority of FBU trade disputes, including our national disputes. This was at a time of developing legislation which deliberately targeted trade unions with the aim of introducing obstacles and reducing our legal ability to take action or support members.

Doug navigated these laws and provided advice and support which proved to be groundbreaking, not just for the FBU, but the trade union movement as a whole. Doug ensured that the FBU was able to undertake national strike action and provided vital support in many other highly significant local disputes, such as in South Yorkshire, London, and Merseyside, to name a few.

His achievements for FBU members are too long to list, but we remember them all, and we deeply value his incredible solidarity. Conference, I'm very sad to inform you that this is the first ever posthumous award of the Solidarity Medal. In 2025, shortly after his retirement, Doug was diagnosed with terminal cancer.

Although he put up a brave fight, he was eventually overwhelmed and passed away in August 2025. Doug is fondly remembered and deeply respected by all FBU officials who had dealings with him for his friendly manner,

wise counsel, and commitment to the FBU and our members. Doug was a loving husband to Anne-Marie, a father, and a grandfather.

On behalf of the FBU, I send them our deepest condolences and solidarity. In recognition of exceptional dedication to wielding the law in the service of justice for FBU members and for enduring contributions to the trade union movement in the struggle against injustice and the mistreatment of workers, the FBU Solidarity Medal is awarded to Doug Christie.

I ask his widow, Anne-Marie, to now accept the award. *Applause*

ANNE-MARIE CHRISTIE:
I promised our kids I wouldn't cry today, so I'm going to try and get through these few words without doing that. I feel very honoured to be invited here today and completely overwhelmed by the generosity of the FBU in awarding this medal to Doug. I met Doug when I moved to Thompsons' Congress House branch from the Cardiff office in 1996.

I always admired how passionate he was about workers' rights and standing up for those who had been mistreated. Everything he did was done with conviction and dedication. He was well-respected for the advice he gave, which he gave with honesty and integrity. He would never tell you something just because he thought that's what you wanted to hear.

Doug spent the whole of his working life at Thompsons. I recall when he was asked to take over being the senior legal advisor to the FBU in around 1998, and pretty much from then until he retired in 2020, he worked closely with the FBU, which meant a great deal to him, to help improve employment rights for FBU members and their families.

He was kind, caring, and a wonderful husband and father to our children. He had so much more to give, and I know he would be deeply humbled to receive this medal today, although probably say he doesn't deserve it. I feel really proud to accept this on his behalf. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Anne-Marie, and there has never been a more worthy recipient. I've known Doug for 20-odd years, and I forget the number of times Doug pulled a legal rabbit out of the hat. When we thought we was in a corner Doug always seemed to find an angle, find a way in that we could challenge it. So thank you, Anne-Marie, for accepting that on Doug's behalf.

Right, conference, we're now moving on to Section H, equality and fairness at work. I call para H1. Ah, I seem to be tearing ahead. There's something missing off my business. I now call the chair of standing orders committee to give a report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, if you can turn to your programme of business, please and on page eight, resolution 45 from London has been removed or been withdrawn. Finally, conference, there was an issue with the list that went out for the final appeals. So a new list will be distributed before the end of conference for you to agree. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. I now call para H1. I now call resolution 34, menstruation best practice guide, moved by London.
Sorry, you're out of time.

Resolution 34 MENSTRUATION BEST PRACTICE
Conference recognises that menstruation is a natural part of the female reproductive cycle.

Conference notes that menstrual health is still a taboo subject within the workplace and stigma is even more pronounced within male dominated sectors. This silence impacts employee health and results in many not seeking medical help for symptoms.

Conference believes women and those who menstruate should have free access to period products (including period knickers), dignified disposal options, private washing facilities, and policies, that recognise and accommodate the impacts of menstruation on well-being and dignity at work, including on the fire ground.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to create a menstruation best practice guidance document by Conference 2027. Without clear guidance, our members may face unfair treatment and discrimination.

LONDON

DAN ASCOUGH (London)**:**
Shouldn't rely on technology, should you? Is that on? I'm on? I'm good. Yep. Dan Ascough, region 10 rep for disabled and neurodivergent members. I'm moving this motion on behalf of London, which has been brought forward by our female members. We felt it was important that as a show of solidarity and allyship, that this motion should be moved by a male.

Really, I think me standing here and doing this is also a way to demonstrate a bit of ignorance which isn't a bad thing to show. As a man, I have a wife, I've got a daughter, I've got a non-binary niece. I've got plenty of female colleagues and friends who all menstruate. But it's not something that we talk about very easily. It's still a bit of a taboo subject. I think from being at school and knowing all these people, I know the biology of menstruation. I know that it comes with side effects such as symptoms, maybe headaches, maybe stomach cramps. It's different for everyone. All I really know is that at certain times of the month, I will be making hot water bottles for my wife and for my daughter, and that's about the end of my part in menstruation.

So the reality is I am a man that doesn't really know enough. I can show empathy and kindness and but I'm never going to know what it's like to need support and how to give that support and when to give that support and what support is needed and how uncomfortable it may be to have to ask for that support, especially in the workplace. Unless a hot water bottle is needed, which probably isn't appropriate for me to give out as an officer to a female member of staff. As a male officer in a male-dominated industry, I think it's important to be honest about that lack of knowledge. And likewise, in a male-dominated union, we note that no women's issues made it to the Health and Safety Summit, which was a shame, and that's exactly why this motion matters.

This motion asks for the development of a proper best practice guide for managers produced with and fully informed by the national women's committee and members of LGBT+, and so that we can support colleagues when needed, consistently, appropriately, and with dignity.

Nothing about them without them, and as someone who recognises that I don't know enough about this subject, and it is still feels like a taboo subject in a male-dominated industry, I think the right thing to do is to listen to those who do know what they're talking about, so that all of us can learn and better support our members.

So with that, I will hand over to my friends and colleagues in NWC. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Dan. The EC are giving qualified support. NWC to second.

LEIGH RAND (NWC)**:**
Press a button. Seconding resolution 34. The national women's committee recognises that menstruation is a natural and routine aspect of life for many workers, including firefighters and fire service staff, and that the failure to adequately address menstrual health in the workplace contributes to gender inequality, stigma, discomfort, and unnecessary health and safety risks.

Many fire stations, control rooms, and places of work still lack access to free period products, appropriate disposal options, and private washing areas. Most services lack policies that recognise and accommodate the impacts of menstruation on workers' attendance, well-being, and dignity. Dated sickness categories often fail to cover women's specific health issues.

For too long, members have had to use sickness or annual leave to manage symptoms that are entirely natural but can have significant physical and emotional effects. Within firefighting, these challenges are compounded by shift work, PPE, and the physically demanding nature of our roles. The NWC believes that Fire Brigades Union should lead the way in breaking down stigma and pushing for inclusive, supportive, and practical approaches to menstrual health in all fire services and have it on the agenda of all FBU health and safety meetings and the future health and safety summits.

We support region 10 in asking you to develop and implement a best practice guidance on menstruation and menstrual health. Such guidance should include, but not be limited to, free and accessible menstrual products in all workplaces; access to private hygienic facilities for changing and disposal; guidance for line managers on supporting staff experiencing menstruation-related health issues, including flexible work arrangements where needed; recognition of menstruation-related conditions such as endometriosis or PMDD as legitimate health concerns requiring support; clear procedures to ensure dignity, privacy, and equality; specific leave category that is fully paid and not part of sickness. This should be stand-alone and not an expansion of the menopause guidance. Conference, we second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. That's now open for debate. Anybody? No? AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah. Look, first of all, this isn't a taboo subject. This is all very natural, and it is right we should be discussing it. So Dan, we appreciate London and you coming up to speak to that, and also Leigh in terms of the perspectives of the NWC committee. We have been looking at this, and we've been discussing this within the structures of the union for some time now, and the NWC have helpfully ran sessions and supported that work in the work that they do.

And certainly all of us are grateful for that. And, even in addition to that, Robyn at the Inclusive Fire Service group has raised the issues of menstruation directly to the national employers. And, we applaud the work Robyn on behalf of the women's committee has done in and around those spaces as well.

We think there are, further kind of aspects to this that go slightly beyond the kind of third paragraph within the motion, and we want to commit to doing far greater work than what's just mentioned here. Actually, there are issues in and around when the appropriate time is to do fitness testing, for instance, that we want to build in and around cycles as well.

So we're going to look at that work. We're committed to doing that. Whether it, needs to be a standalone policy, I think it may well do, but there are also things like best practice facilities guides we want to include aspects in and around this into as well. So I think what we're trying to say is the qualification is we need to be quite broad in our attempts here rather than just narrowly just one policy.

We may want to adapt and change other policies in accordance with the premise of the resolution as well. But thanks once again, London and the NWC.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. I now put resolution 34 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 65, medically prescribed use of medicinal cannabis, moved by West Yorkshire. The EC are giving qualified support. West Yorkshire.

Resolution 65 MEDICALLY PRESCRIBED USE OF MEDICINAL CANNABIS
Conference notes that cannabis-based medicinal products (CBPMs) have been legally prescribable in the UK since 2018 and are used by patients to treat a range of medical conditions.

Conference recognises that firefighters, like other workers, may be lawfully prescribed CBPMs or other medications which could potentially trigger workplace drug testing or raise questions around operational capability.

Conference believes that members who are taking lawfully prescribed medication in accordance with medical advice should not face stigma, disciplinary action, or capability procedures solely because of that prescription.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to develop national guidance and best practice for brigades on the management of prescribed medications, including CBPMs, addressing workplace drug testing, operational fitness, and protections for members from inappropriate disciplinary or capability action.

WEST YORKSHIRE

JIM DAVIES (West Yorkshire)**:**
President, conference, the use of medically prescribed cannabis started in 2018. Since then, the number of people using this prescription has risen to eighty thousand, with an estimated growth of a hundred and twenty-four percent, rising to a hundred and forty-one thousand by 2028.

Opioids are prescribed and used by members for pain. Stimulants are commonly prescribed for ADHD. I'm sure we have people in the room. Some of these do not come with the same stigma as prescribed cannabis. Our service has tried to bring in a blanket ban on this without any research. The issue with any prescribed medication being used should be about the impairment.

Conference understands the implications of any impairment. The dosage levels of prescriptions can be so low, with some reporting absolute zero impairment. This resolution is about allowing our members to have access to medication to allow them to attend work free from all their ailments. This is not about giving them a green light to turn up to work baked.

Conference understands that this work cannot be undertaken overnight. This needs to be thorough and correct. We move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jim. Do I have a seconder? Seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody?

KIAH MIDDLETON (NWC)**:**
President, conference, speaking in opposition to medically prescribed use of medical marijuana. We can respect that some may be prescribed cannabis-based medicines or other medicines for legitimate health reasons, but let's be honest, firefighter is not an office job. Lives depend on split-second decisions, clear thinking, and peak operational fitness. Any substance that could impair judgment, reaction times, or safety, even legally prescribed, cannot be treated lightly. Our priority is always the public, our colleagues, and ourselves. We already have clear procedures for fitness and managing health concerns. Introducing guidance that could blur those lines between treatment and operational readiness is a risk we simply cannot take. Conference, I urge you to oppose this motion because in our job there are no second chances. Safety isn't optional and neither is responsibility. Conference, I oppose. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kiah. Anybody else? Yep

DAN ASCOUGH (London)**:**
Conference, president, still disabled neurodivergent members. I wasn't planning on standing up to support this because I thought we would get good support anyway. I completely understand what my comrade has just said about absolutely that being at our absolute best on frontline operations is always going to be the first thing and most important thing.

I think there is a misunderstanding around some medications that's used for certain disabilities and we see this happening across the service with things like medically prescribed marijuana, certain drugs for medications for ADHD, which are amphetamine-based, which show up in our routine medicals, and we've had people taken off the run.

What we need to understand, though, is that when it's prescribed medically, dosages are very controlled, and they are set at limits where they are done to match that individual's needs, and they are monitored, and the person will find, with a specialist, the level that suits them so that they are not impaired. Actually their performance is increased because it removes whether it be an anxiety, whether it removes a lack of focus. It removes all sorts of things from their particular condition. It's a case-by-case system, and that's how it's triaged, and that's how it's managed.

So to say, "No, you can't have that to be in this job," we are restricting those with medical disabilities from accessing the frontline job that we all love and can absolutely do. So I think to say no to this motion is to say no to disability. Please support this motion. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dan. Anybody else in the debate? No. AGS. Is it Adam? Sorry. Adam, to give the qualification. Yeah.

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, the executive council is supporting resolution 65 with a qualification. Hopefully, that qualification allays the concerns of the NWC. And actually, it was a debate around the executive council. We have moved from seeking West Yorkshire to remit this resolution to qualified support. And our qualification, hopefully, like I say, just talk to that. Look, the resolution itself raises serious issues around disability, prescribed medication, dignity at work, and protection from unfair treatment. And as trade unionists in the fire service, we should always approach those issues seriously and compassionately.

Conference, medically prescribed cannabis is legal in the UK. There are thousands of patients, reportedly twenty to thirty thousand patients, prescribed cannabis-based medicinal products for conditions including epilepsy, MS, chronic pain, and the side effects of chemotherapy. Those members should not face stigma simply because they are following medical advice.

But conference, that is not the same thing as saying the FBU is currently in a position to adopt clear national guidance immediately on operational use in the fire and rescue service. Because simply, the reality is this: the evidence base is not yet there. There are not yet agreed occupational standards.

There is not yet clear legal guidance, and there are not yet answers to some very serious operational questions that face us.

Conference, firefighters work in one of the most safety critical professions in the country. Firefighters drive emergency vehicles at speed. Firefighters wear breathing apparatus in extreme heat and exhaustion. Firefighters in control rooms provide vital life-saving fire survival guidance. Firefighters work at height. Firefighters make split second decisions in dangerous and unpredictable environments. And unlike alcohol, there is currently no universally accepted workplace standard for determining impairment from cannabis-based medicines in operational settings, and that matters.

Conference, there is currently very little evidence about how these medications interact with fatigue, heat stress, BA wears, reaction time, or operational decision-making. And if conference is honest with itself, there is not yet enough known about where the line sits between lawful prescription and operational capability in frontline firefighting.

That is precisely why this work needs further extensive research. The union will need to consult legal experts, occupational health professionals, medical specialists, affected members, and the fire and rescue services themselves. The union can then produce guidance rooted in evidence rather than assumption.

Conference also needs to be careful not to create expectations that may later prove impossible to defend industrially or legally after a serious incident. That is the reality of a safety critical employment like ours, and the executive council has a responsibility to proceed carefully – and responsibly.

So with the executive council's qualification that further extensive research is carried out before a policy is devised and implemented, the executive council support.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks. Adam. West Yorkshire, there was somebody speaking opposition, so you got a right of reply? No. Okay, I'm now going to put resolution 65 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 66, retained duty system, RDS to wholetime recruitment and diversity moved by Lancashire with amendment from Scotland. Lancashire.

Resolution 66 RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM (RDS) TO WHOLETIME RECRUITMENT AND DIVERSITY
Conference notes that recruitment pathways from RDS to Wholetime roles are increasingly used within UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs).

Conference is concerned that reliance on RDS to Wholetime recruitment can disadvantage groups who are under-represented in UKFRSs, as RDS roles often require working patterns, availability and geographic stability that are not accessible to all.

Conference further notes that recruiting Wholetime firefighters primarily from RDS risks weakening RDS provision by thinning out existing crews, effectively moving staff from one area of need to another rather than expanding overall workforce capacity.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to oppose recruitment models that rely primarily on RDS to Wholetime pathways, and to campaign for inclusive Wholetime recruitment processes that actively improve workforce diversity.

LANCASHIRE

AMENDMENT
3rd paragraph
Delete 'Conference further notes that recruiting Wholetime firefighters primarily from RDS risks weakening RDS provision by thinning out existing crews, effectively moving staff from one area of need to another rather than expanding overall workforce capacity.'

SCOTLAND

KEVIN WILKIE (Lancashire)**:**
Thank you very much. President, conference, as someone who grew up in a new town built for the overflow from Liverpool, Skelmersdale has always been a diverse, multicultural community, a community I was proud to serve as a firefighter. However, Skelmersdale Fire Station does not reflect the demographics of the community it serves.

It currently only has one female retained firefighter. Let me be absolutely clear from the outset, this resolution is not an attack on retained firefighters. I actually joined the retained 33 years ago at Skelm, so I know where we are. Retained firefighters are competent, experienced, and committed professionals. Their experience matters, their contribution matters. This is not a two-tier union. RDS and wholetime are equal. We also appreciate the AGS for taking the time to discuss this resolution with Lancashire, and for taking our concerns seriously. RDS alone cannot become a primary route into wholetime if we were serious about building a workforce that reflects the communities we serve.

Three of the most populous and diverse areas in Lancashire are Blackburn, with a population of 40% non-white. Preston at 30% non-white, and Burnley 22% non-white. These are wholetime stations with no retained capability. If recruitment continues to rely heavily on conversion courses from retained to wholetime roles, the diversity of our workforce will inevitably be shaped by the demographics of the areas where retained recruitment is concentrated. This is not social engineering, it is recognising the recruitment systems produce outcomes.

If those outcomes remain overwhelmingly narrow year after year, then we have a responsibility to examine the system producing them.

Relying on conversion courses from retained areas such as Silverdale, with a population of 99.5% white, Bolton-le-Sands, 98.9% white, and Clitheroe of 95.8% white, means we are on course to predominantly recruit white firefighters. And this is not an attack on rural stations either. Rural retained stations are not the issue.

Structural over-reliance on those stations as primary recruitment pool is the issue. If we shift the focus from ethnicity to gender diversity, the same pattern exists. Silverdale has 13 staff with only one female firefighter. Bolton-le-Sands has 13 staff with no female firefighters. Clitheroe has 25 staff with only one female firefighter. It is also difficult to assess representation within the LGBT+ community without directly asking members, which further demonstrates why robust equality, diversity, and inclusion policies are essential within recruitment.

Conference, no matter how fair the final recruitment process appears, if the doorway into process is only realistically acceptable to certain communities, the outcome will never truly change. Retained firefighters absolutely deserve progression opportunities. This resolution does not oppose progression.

What it is opposing is reliance on a single recruitment pathway. We all want to recruit the best person for the job, but the best person cannot apply if structural barriers prevent them from entering the pathway in the first place. Communities cannot aspire to the role they rarely see represented. Visibility matters. Access matters. Representation matters.

Conference, this resolution is not about division. It's about recognising that if we continue to rely on recruitment systems that disproportionately draw from the same demographics, then we should not be surprised when the workforce fails to change. We cannot claim to support equality, diversity, and inclusion while defending structures that limit access to opportunity. If we want a fire and rescue service that genuinely reflects the communities we serve, then we must widen the pathway into it.

Following discussions with the AGS, I will remit this resolution as I am confident in the intent of this resolution, that being to create a more diverse fire service, are at the heart of the work the union does.

The AGS has helpfully agreed to set up a meeting between our equality sections and the national retained committee and Lancashire officials to discuss how we can bring our objects into one central united campaign. Conference, I remit. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that, Kev. As it's remitted the amendment falls, and I'll bring in the AGS to speak on it.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks president, I appreciate I may be taking a liberty. And thanks, Kev, for bringing the motion and remitting it following the discussions we had. We will quickly establish that meeting because we understand the premise to the motion.

We all want to see a far more inclusive fire and rescue service, and our campaigns must be centred around that. Our issue with the motion or the executive council's issue with the resolution was the principle that the union holds quite dear that a firefighter is a firefighter, and we don't necessarily see the transferring from one duty system to another, from the retained duty system into one of the whole time duty systems to be that of recruitment, but more so of a transfer.

But the premise to your motion will be at the heart of those discussions and those meetings we have soon after conference. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. I now call para H2, para H3. I now call resolution 61, Police Stop and Search, moved by B&EMM. EC are supporting.

Resolution 61 POLICE STOP AND SEARCH
Conference notes evidence of the disproportionate use of police stop and search powers against Black and Ethnic Minority communities across the UK.

Conference recognises that, as a result of this disproportionality, Black and Ethnic Minority Members may be more likely to experience arrest, even where no charge or conviction ultimately follows.

Conference further notes that in many UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs), arrest alone may trigger automatic suspension pending investigation or trial and as such, these suspensions can result in reputational damage, financial and mental health strain and long-term career consequences, even where no wrongdoing is proven.

Conference believes that employer risk assessment processes must be transparent, proportionate and evidence-based and must not compound the structural societal inequalities that may already exist within the criminal justice system.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council (EC) to:
- ***campaign for the publication and scrutiny of workplace suspension data within UKFRSs, disaggregated by race and ethnicity, in collaboration with other trade unions where appropriate***
- ***develop model policies and guidance stating that arrest alone, without charge or demonstrable safeguarding risk, should not automatically trigger suspension***
- ***call for transparent and evidence-based employer risk assessment frameworks that are capable of independent review***
- ***develop and implement anti-racism and bias-awareness training for union representatives to strengthen support for members subject to arrest or suspension***
- ***work with other trade unions to raise awareness of the impact of disproportionate policing practices on workers from Black and Ethnic Minority communities and to advocate for safeguards that protect due process and equality.***

Conference instructs the EC to report progress to Conference 2027.

B&EMM

ANDRAE EDWARDS (B&EMM)**:**
Testing. Oh, that's a bit loud. Sorry. General sec, president, resolution 61. Conference, this motion matters. It is bigger than a fire and rescue service. It speaks to the reality that too many Black and ethnic minority workers know all too well, me being one of them.

Unequal treatment does not begin and end with policing. It follows people into workplaces, careers, and futures. It shapes opportunities, outcomes, and how people are perceived before they've even entered or had the chance to speak for themselves. Conference agrees that Black and ethnic minority communities are disproportionately subjected to stop and search powers.

The statistics on this are too well-known and repeatedly evidenced. Black people are stopped and searched at far higher rates than our brothers, sisters, and colleagues from majority communities, four times, in fact. This disproportionality matters deeply for our members. It affects many of us from a young age and continues into adulthood.

Many of us fear that the safety and treatment of our own children by those who are supposed to protect them. From the murder of Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent Macpherson report in 1999, throughout the Baroness Casey review in 2023, and the IOPC race discrimination report in 2024, also the BBC Panorama documentary *Undercover: Can Probation Keep Us Safe?* and the wider undercover police investigations. The evidence has repeatedly highlighted institutional racism, discrimination, misogyny, and homophobia within policing and the wider systems. Conference, when someone is disproportionately stopped, they are disproportionately drawn into the criminal justice system. More police interactions means more arrests. More arrests means more records, more suspicion, and more

scrutiny, even when there's no charge, no conviction, and no wrongdoing. For firefighters and control staff, the consequences can be immediately intimidating and devastating.

Too often, an arrest alone is enough to trigger an automatic suspension pending further investigation. Not conviction, not guilt, simply arrest. Unlike the justice system, the fire and rescue service members can too often feel guilty until proven innocent. Conference, we must ask ourselves honestly, what does this mean for Black and ethnic minority members who are already disproportionately exposed to police intervention?

Let me be clear. This motion is not about hiding wrongdoing. Those who break the law should and will be held accountable through proper process. The B&EMM section does not and will not support unlawful contact. This motion is about protecting members from disproportionate consequences arising from disproportionate policing.

It's about the members being stopped because they fit the description. I have been a victim. The member questioned because the car isn't registered locally. Again, I have been a victim. The member stopped for no reason beyond routine checks or just doing or the classic, 'I'm just doing my job'.

Again, I have been a victim. We all know that these interactions can escalate rapidly, and when they do, Black and ethnic minority members are disproportionately exposed to suspension, reputational damage, financial uncertainty, stress, anxiety, and long-term career harm. Again, I have been a victim.

Conference, a suspension is not a natural act. Even when a member is eventually cleared, the damage is often already done. Colleagues talk, rumours spread, confidence is undermined, mental health suffers, promotion opportunities can disappear. Relationship with watches and teams are affected. Cases can take months, sometimes years to resolve, and for many members, the stain never fully leaves.

This is why this motion matters because systematic inequality is not always an obvious act of discrimination. Sometimes it is the communicable effect of the interconnected systems, policing, employer policies, risk assessment processes, and workplace culture, all reinforcing one another. Conference, we must also acknowledge an uncomfortable truth.

Risk assessment frameworks are not immune to bias. Too many members fall victim to confirmation bias and sub-subjective assumptions. And who actually gets to scrutinise suspension risk assessments? Very few. There is little transparency, little accountability, and little opportunity for challenge.

Whether conscious or unconscious, assumptions can be made about the risk, professionalism, trustworthiness, or reputation of that individual. And when these assumptions are shaped by wider stereotypes, Black and ethnic minority members can face harsher outcomes for the same circumstances.

This is structural disadvantage in action. Conference, this motion does not ask for special treatment, it asks for fairness. It asks for evidence-based processes instead of automatic reactions. It also asks for transparency instead of closed-doors decision-making. It asks for accountability where power is exercised, and it asks the union to stand firmly beside members who may otherwise feel isolated and abandoned during some of the most difficult moments of their lives.

These actions proposed are reasonable, practical, and necessary. Publishing suspension data disaggregated by race and ethnicity will allow us to identify patterns that remain hidden. Developing policies so that arrest alone does not automatically trigger suspensions protects the principles of innocent until proven guilty.

Introducing transparency and independently reviewable risk assessments ensures employers can justify decisions fairly and consistently. Mandatory anti-racist and bias awareness training for representatives strengthens our ability as a union to support members effectively and challenge unfair treatment when we see it.

That's what I thought unions were about. And lobbying for stronger safeguarding around stop and search recognises that workplace inequality can be separated from inequality in a wider society. Conference, trade unions

exist to challenge injustice where it appears. If we ignore how racism disproportionately in policing spills over into employment practices, then we fail in that duty.

This motion is about solidarity, it's about due process, it is about dignity. It also is about ensuring Black and ethnic minority members are not forced to carry the burden of systematic bias both outside and inside the workplace. And ultimately, conference, this motion is about protecting every member from unfair treatment, poor outcomes, and unchecked power.

I urge conference to support this motion. Thank you, conference. I move.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andrae. Do I have a seconder? Dave. The EC are supporting.

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 61, police stop and search. Conference, at its heart, this motion is about fairness, equality, and due process. It's about recognising the reality that too many Black and ethnic minority members already know from lived experience that disproportionality in policing does not end at the police station door. Its effects can follow people into their workplaces, into their careers, and into their lives. Conference, we know the evidence is overwhelming. Black and ethnic minority communities are disproportionately subjected to stop and search powers across the UK. That is not a matter of opinion, it's a documented fact. And when those unequal encounters result in arrest, even when there is no charge, no conviction, and no wrongdoing proven, the consequences can still be devastating. For firefighters, an arrest alone can trigger automatic suspension. Not an assessment, not a review of risk, an automatic suspension. But what does that mean in practice?

It means reputational damage before any facts are established. It means stress, anxiety, and serious impacts on mental health, and it can mean long-term damage to careers that members have spent years building in their fire and rescue service. Conference, we must ask ourselves, if the criminal justice system already produces unequal outcomes, why would we allow workplace policies to amplify those inequalities even further?

Comrades, at our conference in 2024, Greater Manchester moved resolution 7, suspension framework, resolving that suspension must not be automatically used as a knee-jerk reaction to a situation. Additionally, it must not be used arbitrarily as a tool to protect the service.

Conference, this resolution does not ask employers to ignore safeguarding concerns. It does not ask services to abandon risk management. What it asks for is transparency, proportionality, and evidence-based decision making. That is entirely reasonable. An arrest is not a conviction. In this country, we are supposed to believe in innocent until proven guilty. Yet for too many members, particularly Black and ethnic minority members, the punishment begins immediately, before any investigation is complete.

That is why the measures in this resolution matter. Publishing suspension data disaggregated by race and ethnicity will help expose where the patterns of discrimination exist. Developing model policies will help ensure that automatic suspension is not treated as a default response. Transparent and independently reviewable risk assessments will help protect both workers and our members.

And anti-racism and bias awareness training for union reps will strengthen the support we provide to our members when they are at their most vulnerable. Conference, trade unions exist to challenge injustice wherever it appears, including when structural inequalities seep into our workplace practices. If we fail to act, we risk allowing institutional bias to operate unchecked under the guise of procedure. But if we pass this motion, we send a clear message: fairness matters, evidence matters, equality matters.

We stand for due process, we stand for anti-racism, and we stand for every member who deserves to be treated with dignity and justice, regardless of the colour of their skin. Conference, support this resolution. Greater Manchester seconds. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dave. Anybody else in the debate?

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, our section support this resolution. As LGBT+ members, we know all too well what it means to be seen as different, and how that difference can shape our experiences of authority, including policing. For many in our community, especially our trans siblings, navigating public spaces already comes with heightened scrutiny.

When that intersects with policing powers like stop and search, the risk multiplies. We have seen it at Pride, and at marches, and at protests. Events that are meant to be spaces of visibility, joy, resistance, have historically and even now been shadowed by the police presence that does not always feel protective.

Many in our community carry the memory and in some cases the reality of being stopped, questioned, or even arrested simply for showing up, for existing publicly, or for looking different. We have already seen how this wider climate plays out in the real world. Many of us stood in solidarity at Honour Oak, attending protests and supporting our communities.

Yet members were stopped simply for walking to or near these protests. That experience of being scrutinised for showing up, for being visible, does not disappear. It follows people into their working lives and reinforces the very uncertainty and fear we are talking about today. That experience is not felt equally across our LGBT+ community.

Our white, cis, gay man and a Black trans woman do not experience policing in the same way. Intersectionality is not just a theory for us; it is a lived reality. When racism and queerphobia combine, the consequences are sharper, harsher, and more dangerous. That is why this motion matters to us, to our section, and to the wider movement.

When stop and search is used disproportionately against Black and ethnic minority communities, our siblings within those communities are doubly impacted by both their race and their identity. When arrest alone can trigger suspension at work without charge, that injustice does not end at the roadside. It follows us to work.

We cannot separate these issues. We cannot talk about LGBT+ equality without also confronting racial injustice. We stand with the Black and ethnic minority members. We support the call for transparency, for fairness, and for systems that do not reproduce the inequalities that already exist.
No one should fear career consequences simply for disproportionate targeting by a flawed system. Conference, this resolution is about justice and dignity. It's about ensuring that our workplaces do not amplify the harm done elsewhere. We support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Maria. Anybody else in the debate? No? I'm now going to put resolution 61 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.
I now call Para H4. Yep.

ASH HAYCOCK (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, second time at conference, first time speaking. *Applause*

In July 2025, we saw the verdict of a High Court ruling involving a gender-critical individual who took Northumbria Police to court over the force's attendance at Newcastle Pride 2024. The argument presented was that participating in Pride events breached the Police Service duty of impartiality.

November 2025, the National Chiefs Council provided chief fire officers with a Pride briefing document outlining the High Court ruling case, but also potentially giving guidance for services who are thinking of attending Pride events this year. However, last year and this year, we are seeing fire and rescue services withdraw entirely or asking LGBT stakeholder groups to move away from the Progress Pride flag and revert instead to the traditional six-coloured rainbow flag, which is going to going to be a step backwards in terms of progression for the LGBT public service employees and the community we serve.

It is important that chief fire officers and senior leadership teams understand that the Progress flag is not a political symbol but was created to reflect the diversity of the wider LGBT+ community and those who have historically faced additional marginalisation. The chevron shape on the Progress flag points forward, symbolising progress and the continued work needed to achieve equality. The light blue, pink, and white stripes represent trans members. The black and brown stripes recognise B&EMM members. The Progress flag also honours those living with HIV and those that have lost their lives to AIDS-related illnesses. In 2021, an intersex inclusive update was added, a yellow triangle with a purple circle, to ensure that intersexual individuals were also visible represented within the flag.

So when we are discussing the Progress Pride flag, we are discussing a symbol intended to recognise inclusion, visibility, and the ongoing commitment to equality for multiple communities, not solely one group.

As the political landscape is changing, and not for the better, we should be bringing people together and not dividing people because of the fear of inclusion and diversity.
If CFOs can use this High Court ruling to withdraw their support for Pride events, what else can this High Court ruling be used for? LGBT+ committee is fully represented by each region in the FBU. But it's crucial that each brigade committee has an LGBT rep to represent the voices of those members in that service and have those difficult conversations with the CFOs and senior leadership team why, as a fire and rescue service, we should be attending Pride events.

We remind EC and conference of the importance of supporting Pride events this year to show solidarity with the LGBT+ members. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, look, thanks for bringing up those important points especially, I know there's plenty of debate going on within the LGBT+ committee. There should also be within regions about our attendance at Pride. I just want to say, look, let's frankly be honest about this. I'm not sure we should be overly bothered what managers and chief fire officers think we should be at and where we should be. What we're bothered about is where we think we should be, who we think we should stand alongside, and who and when we should campaign and challenge the behaviours of others.

So it's for the Fire Brigades Union to determine which Pride events we support. And last year, I think we supported most major Pride events, and we should be there, and we will be there, and we'll continue to be there. Often, managers and chief fire officers use Pride as some sort of advertising campaign.

That's not what we do. We use them as a campaign and a tool for which we want to see serious change within society, within our own industry, and within our own workplaces, and we'll continue to do that. So we don't see them just as this kind of trend of capitalist kind of markets and ability to use them for advertising.

We'll stand and continue to stand by our siblings right across communities, and we always will. So please make sure you have the conversations within your regions. Decide where you're supporting Pride. Make sure that's as many as you possibly can do. Organise your members. Be out in those and stand shoulder to shoulder with all. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. I now call Para H5, NWC and London.
London's going to speak on it. If you come down on page five. If you're not, no worries. Page six. Okay. Yep.

ROBYN RICHARDSON (NWC)**:**
Oh, gosh. Technology. President, conference, speaking on para H5 Women's Section report and the important work carried out by the wonderful national women's committee over the past year. This report is both a reflection of progress and a reminder of why our work remains so necessary. The report makes clear that women in the fire and rescue service continue to face unacceptable challenges: sexual harassment, gender-based bullying, sexual assault,

maternity discrimination, misogyny, poor facilities, ill-fitting PPE, barriers around flexible working, and menopause support. These are recurring themes, and they affect the safety, dignity, and wellbeing of women across our service.

But what this report also shows is that women in our union are organising, campaigning, and refusing to accept the status quo. One of the strongest examples of that is the continued Fight for 52 campaign. The campaign for fifty-two weeks' maternity pay continues because women should never be financially penalised for having a family.

That matters, not just for current members but for the future of our profession. The report also celebrates the visibility and solidarity shown on International Women's Day, with the FBU attending the Million Women Rise march in London for the first time with the FBU fire engine when it eventually started.

At Women's School and our AGM, the involvement of external speakers and charities also shows the committee's commitment to learning from wider campaigns and experiences. Whether discussing women's health, communication skills, diagnosis challenges, or support for vulnerable women, the message is clear: women's issues are trade union issues.

The report also demonstrates the ongoing commitment of the committee itself, meeting throughout the year across the country despite logistical challenges, continuing to represent women members nationally and ensuring these voices are heard within our union structures. The national women's committee should be proud of the work outlined in this report, but we should also recognise that this work cannot sit with women alone.

Challenging misogyny, improving culture, and creating fair workplaces is the responsibility of every single one of us in this union. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Robyn. Anybody else on H5? No.

I now call resolution 63, Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Women's Leadership and Development Programme, moved by the national women's committee. The EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 63 FIRE BRIGADES UNION (FBU) WOMEN'S LEADERSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Conference notes the persistent underrepresentation of women in leadership and decision-making positions within the structures of the FBU, including at brigade, regional, and national levels. These barriers exist for women seeking leadership roles within the union, including limited access to mentoring, networking, and confidence-building opportunities, alongside cultural and structural challenges. Evidence from across the trade union movement shows empowering women to take on leadership roles strengthens union democracy, improves representation, and supports more equitable and inclusive outcomes.

Conference believes that the FBU requires commitment to equality, and the need to ensure that our union reflects the diversity of our membership in its leadership and organising efforts.

Conference also believes that increasing the number of women in leadership and activist positions within the FBU is essential to building a stronger, more representative, and more effective union.

Conference believes futhermore that systematic support and development structures are required to remove barriers, develop skills, and encourage women to engage in union leadership at all levels and creating a dedicated programme to support women's leadership is an important step toward ensuring gender equity in our union's structures and processes.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to:

- ***establish a national Women's Leadership and Development Programme within the FBU, designed to support and encourage women members to take on leadership and representative roles in the union***

- ***develop a structured mentoring scheme that pairs women members with experienced union officials, activists, and leaders for ongoing support and development***
- ***provide regular training sessions, workshops, and events specifically tailored to building the skills and confidence required for union leadership, including public speaking, negotiations, campaigning, and member representation***
- ***encourage all FBU regions, brigades, and sections to actively support the recruitment, development, and visibility of women activists and leaders***
- ***ensure that this programme considers intersectionality and is accessible and inclusive to all women within the union, including those from Black, Asian and other minority ethnic backgrounds, disabled women, LGBT+ women, and other underrepresented groups***
- ***require annual reporting by the EC to FBU Conference on the progress and impact of the Women's Leadership and Development Programme***
- ***promote this programme through union communications to encourage widespread participation and support throughout the membership.***

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

KERRY McCRONE (NWC)**:**
Conference, president moving resolution 63 on behalf of the national women's committee. Conference, women remain underrepresented in leadership and decision-making across our union, at brigade, regional, and national level. That is not because women lack ability, commitment, or ambition, it is because barriers still exist, structural and cultural barriers, that limit access to opportunities, mentoring, and confidence-building.

This is not just a women's issue; this is a trade union issue. When leadership does not reflect the diversity of its membership, our union is weaker. When voices are missing from the room, decisions are poorer, and when barriers go unchallenged, inequality becomes embedded. Just take a look behind me at the top table.

What do you see? When women are supported into leadership, our union becomes stronger, more representative, and more effective. We make better decisions, we build deeper solidarity, and we deliver fairer outcomes for all of our members. Conference, we already know this. The evidence is there across the trade union movement.

The question is not whether we should act, it's whether we are prepared to act with purpose. This resolution says we must. It recognises that commitment to equality is not just about words. It must be reflected in our structures, our leadership, and our organising. It recognises that increasing the number of women in leadership, in activist roles, is not optional. It is essential in building a stronger union. And crucially, it recognises that change does not happen by accident. It requires systematic support, it requires investment, and it requires leadership. That is why the NWC are calling for the establishment of a national women's leadership and development programme within the FBU.

Conference, this is about creating a clear pathway for women to step into leadership with support skills and confidence that they need to succeed. It means structured mentoring, pairing women members with experienced activists and leaders who can guide, support, and encourage them. It means regular training and development focused on the real skills required for union leadership: public speaking, negotiations, campaigning, and representing members.

It means building networks so women across brigades and regions can connect, share experiences, and support each other, and it means visibility, ensuring that women activists and leaders are seen, recognised, and encouraged across our union.

Conference, this resolution also goes further, and rightly so. Because if we are serious about equality, then we must also be serious about inclusion. That means recognising intersectionality. It means ensuring that this programme is accessible and relevant to all women in our union, including B&EMM women, our DND women, LGBT+ women, and those from other underrepresented groups.

Equality cannot be selective, it must be comprehensive, and this makes that commitment clear. It also ensures accountability through annual reporting to conference on progress and impact because if we are going to do this,

we must be able to measure it, learn from it, and improve it. And finally, it calls for the promotion of the programme across the union because opportunity only exists if people know it exists and feel encouraged to take part.

Conference, this is not about tokenism, and it's not about ticking boxes. It's about removing barriers, it's about unlocking potential that already exists within our membership, and it's about ensuring that our union lives up to its own values of equality, fairness, and solidarity. Because the reality is this: there are women across this union right now who could be outstanding reps, outstanding officials, outstanding leaders, but who are not stepping forward because the pathway is not clear, the support is not there, or the culture does not yet feel open to them.

We have a responsibility to change that. Not tomorrow, not at some undefined point in the future, but now. I looked at the delegates list and saw there are 11 voting women in this room out of a delegation of 116. There are no women EC members, there are no women national officers. Something has to change.

Conference, if we want a stronger FBU, a more representative FBU, and a more effective FBU, then we must invest in the leadership of women across our union. This resolution gives us a framework to do exactly that. So I urge conference, support this resolution, back this programme, and take a meaningful step towards a more equal and inclusive union. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kerry. Do we have a seconder?

GEMMA BETTS (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, I rise to second this resolution. As LGBT+ members, we know what it means to face barriers to participation, confidence, and representation within our workplaces and within our union structures. When leadership does not reflect the diversity of our membership, voices are missed, experiences are overlooked, and our union is weaker for it.

This programme is an important step forward to changing that. Providing mentoring, training, and support for members will help break down structural barriers and ensure more people feel able to step forward as activists and leaders. A stronger, more representative leadership can only strengthen our union democracy and organising power.

We especially welcome the commitment to intersectionality. LGBT+ women, Black and ethnic women, disabled women, and other underrepresented members often face multiple layers of exclusion, and it is right that this programme recognises that reality. I would also say that the principle behind this resolution should not stop here.

The same commitment to leadership, development, inclusion, and representation should exist across all sectional committees and equality structures, including LGBT+, B&EMM, national women's committee, and DND, so every single part of our union can grow stronger and more representative. Conference, this resolution is about building an FBU where everyone can see themselves in leadership and feel empowered to participate. I urge conference to support. We second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Gemma. That's now open for debate. Yep. Yep, you're on.

IAIN BALLANTYNE (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 63. Women across the fire and rescue service and within our union continue to be underrepresented in leadership and decision-making roles. We cannot simply acknowledge that fact year after year without taking meaningful action to address this.

Our union has always been at its strongest when it's been inclusive, organised, and representative of all firefighters. When more voices are heard, our union becomes stronger. Last year at the regional office, we held a workshop on unconscious bias and gender-based violence, and it was eye-opening. As a single white male, it's something I'm blissfully ignorant of but thankfully now more aware of.

This is present in all professions, not just the fire and rescue service and our union. So importantly, this resolution addresses this by providing practical measures to help develop confidence, skills, and opportunities for women members who want to step into leadership roles. That benefits not just the individual but our entire union.

If we want a stronger union for the future, we must develop the next generation of leaders. Supporting this resolution does that. I urge conference to support. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Iain. Any more speakers? No? Qualification? It's Adam's. Is it Adam? I keep going the wrong way.

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Thanks, president. You're going to get whiplash doing that. President, conference yeah, just one minor qualification. The executive council supports this important resolution, and we thank the NWC for bringing it and the speakers speaking on it.

The TUC already have a developed programme in place for women in leadership and development. The executive council would like to explore that and, where appropriate, utilise that programme as well going forward, but the executive council support with that qualification. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Cheers, Adam. I now put resolution 63 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 64, Campaign Against Misogyny, moved by Scotland with an amendment from B&EMM. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 64 CAMPAIGN AGAINST MISOGYNY
Conference notes the continued prevalence of cases of misogyny within UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs), including but not limited to discriminatory attitudes, harassment, and the undermining of women's roles within the workplace. Reports from women members across the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) highlight cultures that can normalise sexist behaviour and discourage the reporting of misogynistic incidents. Additionally, the findings of the FBU sexual harassment survey revealed alarming rates of harassment and discrimination faced by women nationally across UKFRSs.

Conference believes that misogyny is a systemic issue that undermines not only women but the safety, unity and integrity of all our members. The rise of misogynistic rhetoric in wider society, amplified by social media and public figures, contributes to normalising discrimination and violence against women. A collective, union led response is required to challenge and change attitudes and cultures that allow misogyny to persist. The FBU, as a democratic and progressive trade union, has a responsibility to lead on issues of equality and act in solidarity with women, both within UKFRSs and in wider society. Failure to act swiftly on agreed commitments, such as mandatory training, risks undermining trust in the union's equality work.

Conference therefore calls upon the Executive Council to:
- ***launch a union wide campaign to stand against misogyny, with full input from the National Women's Committee and the support of all national sectional equality committees***
- ***prioritise the immediate rollout of the previously agreed mandatory sexual harassment training to all officials and ensure it is embedded in future ongoing training***
- ***provide additional educational resources, workshops and awareness raising sessions for members on identifying, challenging and reporting misogyny in the workplace***
- ***lobby fire and rescue service employers to implement robust, survivor-centred policies on misogyny, harassment and gender based violence***
- ***collaborate with appropriate specialist organisations and movements working to end misogyny and gender-based discrimination to support best practice and solidarity***

- ***encourage workplace branches to hold meetings to raise awareness of the impact of misogyny and to gather members' experiences and proposals for further action***
- ***report back by Conference 2027 on the progress and effectiveness of this campaign, including specific updates on the rollout of mandatory sexual harassment training.***

SCOTLAND

AMENDMENT
Change 3rd bullet point to

- ***'provide additional educational resources, workshops and awareness raising sessions for members on identifying, challenging and reporting misogyny, including misogynoir which is specific discrimination towards Black women'***

B&EMM

THE PRESIDENT:
And it's raining.

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
Can you hear me? Yeah. President, conference, moving motion 64, campaign against misogyny. Conference, a workplace where discriminatory attitudes are tolerated is a workplace where trust is eroded, and in our profession, trust is crucial. Misogyny is not an issue confined to headlines or social media debates; it's real, it's persistent, and a huge issue, not only in the wider society and the fire and rescue services, but also, as we're all aware, within our own union.

Women across services have told us firsthand about discriminatory attitudes, about harassment, about being undermined, and about cultures where sexist behaviour is normalised and too often goes unchallenged. But what is most concerning of all, they've told us that reporting these experiences can feel pointless, or worse, unsafe, and that should concern every single one of us. Because misogyny doesn't just harm women, it undermines the safety, unity, and integrity of our entire union.

Conference, we cannot claim to be a modern progressive union if we are not actively confronting this issue. The rise of misogynistic rhetoric in wider society, amplified online, particularly by public figures, does not stop at the doors of our stations, our control rooms, our headquarters.

It seeps into our culture unless we take action to challenge it, and this is what this resolution is about. Not fluffy words or vague commitments, proper action. This resolution calls for a union-wide campaign to stand against misogyny, developed with the full involvement of the national women's committee, and supported across all equality structures, because those voices must not just be heard, they must lead.

It calls for the immediate rollout of mandatory sexual harassment training, not as a tick box exercise, but as meaningful ongoing education that shapes behaviours and sets clear expectations. It calls for proper resources, including workshops and training and awareness sessions, so that every member understands how to identify, challenge, and report misogyny, because you cannot tackle what you don't recognise.

It calls on employers to step up and implement robust survivor-centred policies that don't just exist on paper in a tick box, but actually work in practice, and it calls for collaboration with subject matter experts within specialist organisations and movements who have the expertise to help us get this right.

This is about culture change, which will only happen when it's recognised it matters, and the work is put in place to address it. Scotland also supports the amendment proposed by the B&EMM section, which strengthens this resolution and ensures that no one is excluded from the protection and progress we're calling for. Because when we talk about misogyny, we must also recognise that not all women experience it in the same way. Black women can face specific forms of discrimination that combine racism and sexism recognised as misogynoir, and if we're serious about equality, we must be serious about understanding and addressing that too.

Conference, standing against misogyny is not just a women's issue, it's a trade union issue about fairness and dignity and ensuring that every member of our union can come to work, do their job, and be treated with respect.

If we fail to act, we risk sending a message that these experiences are acceptable, that these voices don't matter, and our commitment to equality has limits.

Conference, support this resolution, support the amendment, and stand with Scotland in the clear message that misogyny has no place in our service and no place in our union. I move. *Applause*
Thank you, Seona. Does that have a seconder?

KERRY McCRONE (NWC)**:**
Conference, president, seconding this resolution on behalf of the national women's committee. This resolution is rooted in the lived reality of our women members and across the fire and rescue services, and in wider society that we all operate in every single day. One of the main reasons our women's reps are contacted, one of the primary reasons, is because women are being treated abhorrently simply for being women.

They have come to us not once, not occasionally, but repeatedly. They come to us after being undermined on station, after being spoken over, belittled, or isolated, after inappropriate comments, jokes, and behaviours that cross the line. And they come to us after trying everything else, after being ignored, dismissed, or to be made to feel that they are the problem.

This should shame every single one of us into action. This is a failure of systems, of leadership, and accountability. Across society, misogyny is becoming louder, more aggressive, and more normalised. Online influencers with massive platforms are pushing narratives that reduce women to objects, question their existence in the workplace, and frame equality as something to be resisted.

The rise in trad wives and incels is often shared widespread across social media as the norm. And you don't even have to go looking for it. It's on every and any social media post that involves women. Responses are flooded with misogyny, dismissive comments, sexualised abuse, mockery, threats, a constant drip of hostility that tells women they are not welcome, not respected, and are not safe.

"You can't fit a square peg in a round hole. Could she rescue me from a fire? Let's face it, it's not a job for a woman." Just a few comments women firefighters read on social media. That is the environment people are absorbing every single day, and it does not stay online. It walks straight through the doors of our workplaces.

Undercover reporting by CNN exposed online rape communities, spaces where violence against women is not only discussed, but encouraged and normalised. That is not an extreme outlier. It is part of a wider culture that is becoming increasingly desensitised to misogyny.

Misogyny in schools is widespread. Sexist language, harassment, and degrading attitudes are being normalised amongst young people. These are the future members of our fire and rescue service and our union. If those behaviours are not challenged early, they don't disappear, they become embedded, and we are already seeing the consequences.

Cultural reviews of fire and rescue services across the UK have identified misogyny is systemic. Trust in reporting is low. Confidence in outcomes is low, and progress has been too slow. Which brings us to accountability. Following the FBU's own sexual harassment survey, there was a clear commitment to implement mandatory sexual harassment training.

That commitment mattered. It told women we were being heard. But that training has been almost at a standstill, with very few having received it. And we have to be honest about what that means. Every delay sends a message that tackling misogyny is not urgent, that it can wait, that it is not a priority.

Sexual harassment was highlighted by the general secretary after the NWC had to amend the EC policy statement last year on a safety-first FBU. Yet it still wasn't included on the agenda or spoken about at the flagship First Health and Safety Summit. Conference, it is a priority because misogyny doesn't just harm women, it corrodes trust, damages teamwork, and weakens the effectiveness of our entire service.

A workplace where women are degraded or made to feel unsafe is not a workplace that can function properly. We pride ourselves on solidarity, but solidarity is not a slogan. It is a responsibility, and it means standing up, not just when it's easy, but when it's necessary. We cannot say this is not who we are if we are not prepared to confront what is happening and change it.

This resolution gives us that opportunity to move from words to action, from commitments to delivery, and from awareness to accountability. Stand with the women who have spoken up and those who still feel that they cannot. The NWC seconds this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kerry. Anybody else in the debate?

FRAN McQUADE (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, speaking in support of resolution 64, Campaign Against Misogyny. Conference, every woman in this room will have experienced misogyny. This fact has long been known, and more recently evidenced by cultural reviews by both fire and rescue services and the FBU.

There has been plenty of talk about tackling misogyny, but it is time for action, and that is what this resolution aims to achieve. We must support it. The importance of the amendment from the Black and ethnic minority members section must also be acknowledged and supported. The movement against sexism and misogyny must be intersectional and part of a wider movement against racism, transphobia, and all forms of oppression.

Allowing misogyny to continue in our workplaces and union undermines the incredible work and talent of our women reps and members. I personally have seen women colleagues leave the fire and rescue service or step away from certain FBU roles due to the culture they experience or the way they are treated, or at the very least, give serious consideration as to whether this is the career for them.

This is a disservice to these women and the communities we serve. The ask of this resolution will not just benefit women. Our workplaces and union are safer and stronger when we have diverse representation and people are free from all forms of discrimination. Misogyny is part of a patriarchal system of oppression that harms all of us.

We've seen much public discourse recently on subjects such as toxic masculinity and the effect it has on boys and young men, as well as women and girls. It is in everyone's interest to dismantle this system, and this resolution is an important step in doing so. Conference, support this motion and support the amendment we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Frances. Anybody else in the debate? Yep, not yet. Ah, Kasey, you have spotted a little error on my part. I should have moved the amendment first before I opened it to debate. So Kasey, do you want to come and move the B&EMM amendment?

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
It works. President, conference, misogynoir. Noir is French for black. What is it? It's a specific type of harassment and discrimination towards Black women. It's misogyny towards Black women. It's perfectly fine if you've never heard of it before. I only heard of it a couple of years ago when I went to the TUC Black workers' conference.

And when they started speaking on misogynoir, it was very much real as a Black woman to something click in your head and think, "Yeah it's different. It's not just misogyny, it's completely different." So it's okay to not fully understand it, but to include it within education courses and awareness, it's really important to take it on board and understand that if you do have Black women within your fire and rescue services, they will experience it different to a white woman.

When we speak with passion or we challenge anything, it's classed as aggressive. We'll be labelled as aggressive. If we dress or act in a certain way, we are taken as being too bougie. If you don't know what that word is, look it up. We're not just called a female dog. You know what that is. I won't say it because it's all written down.

Don't want to swear. We're known as a Black female dog. All right? So that extra part of discrimination or extra part of name-calling is something additional for a Black woman. I can be invited or attend a women's only event, and I'll think, "Yeah, nice." But then I'll attend and I'm I might be the only Black woman, and it is so noticeable because automatically I am conscious of how I'm speaking. I am automatically aware of my tone of voice.

I might even change my attire or how I present myself because I don't just have to fit in as a woman, I have to fit in as a Black woman. And we have different backgrounds, experiences, cultures, and we're aware that we will have to work harder to be accepted.

It's really important that you include misogynoir when you are speaking about misogyny, and that's all this amendment is. And we appreciate Scotland and accept Scotland taking that on board. I've had a good chat with Seona this morning, so I know this is going to be taken on board.

I just want everyone to be really aware of the differences that myself and a few others that I've seen in the room will experience differently as a Black woman. I move the amendment for this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kasey, and thanks for pointing out my little error. Does that amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That is now officially open for debate. Anybody? No.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, look, president, we weren't going to speak on this debate because we think the motion is excellent and support the amendment. And actually, Kasey, as you're aware, intersectionality, misogynoir is a huge part of the training we're receiving. But it is to correct the statement made by the seconder.

And again, just to be clear, we're not trying to at all detract from the intent of the motion or the speeches there. But it was suggested that there's been a delay to the mandatory training. That's simply not the case. We set out a plan. We agreed who, where, and when those sessions would be provided, and we are, I think, two-thirds through the process of training reps at regional and executive council level.

The idea and the plan, as agreed, was to then disseminate that down further through the structures of the union. But we are working to the timetable of the TUC trainers, and we have been doing right from the very start. So it's just to correct for the record that the training isn't delayed. It is in full flow, and it is being completed by all those nominated to complete it, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. I now put amendment to resolution 64 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 64 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 67, Defending Women's Bodily Rights, moved by London. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 67 DEFENDING WOMEN'S BODILY RIGHTS
Conference notes the growing influence of right-wing groups and parties such as Reform UK, that are working alongside anti-choice campaigners to roll back women's reproductive rights.

Conference believes:
- ***access to safe, legal abortion is a fundamental healthcare right***
- ***attacks on reproductive rights are part of a wider agenda that seeks to divide working people and undermine equality***
- ***firefighters and control staff, as part of a proud, progressive trade union, have a responsibility to stand in solidarity with women and all those whose rights are under threat.***

Conference resolves:

- ***to reaffirm the FBU's unequivocal support for a woman's right to choose***
- ***to publicly oppose any political or campaign group that seeks to restrict reproductive healthcare access***
- ***to continue working alongside the wider trade union movement and equality organisations to defend bodily autonomy, healthcare rights, and gender equality.***

LONDON

CORNEIL POWER (London)**:**
General secretary, president, proud B&EMM member, moving resolution 67, Defending Women's Bodily Rights. Conference, I'm moving this resolution today extremely conscious of something that matters, and I want to state clearly from the outset that, as a man, I do not have the lived experience of these issues at the heart of this motion.

Decisions about reproductive healthcare are not decisions I will ever have to make about my own body. However, not having lived experience does not mean having no responsibility. Trade unionism has never been about only defending rights that affect us personally. It is and always has been about solidarity, recognising when others' rights are under attack, and deciding that those attacks matter to all of us.

Attack one, attack all. The wording of this resolution is careful and accurate. It's important to highlight, it does not claim a formal alliance or single policy document but reflects the well-evidenced reality that senior figures, advisors, and candidates associated with Reform UK have promoted restrictive views on reproductive rights and engage with anti-choice networks.

And it's entirely legitimate for this union to name and oppose political forces that threaten fundamental healthcare and equality. This resolution addresses the growing pressure being placed on reproductive rights and recognises that those pressures do not exist in isolation.

Conference, on Reform UK, the alarm bell has been rung many times. They're now marching to Number 10. It's important that we need to start organising and planning ahead to make sure we get as many policies and structures in place to combat what they are going to do if they come into power. Resolutions like this one does exactly that. Attacks on bodily autonomy sit alongside attacks on equality, on public services, and on working-class unity.

Time and again, we see that when one group's rights are questioned, others are soon to follow. As firefighters and control staff, we understand the importance of access to safe, timely, and professional care. We see the consequences when services are denied, delayed, or politically stalled. The understanding does not end with this emergency response.

It extends to healthcare, dignity, and the right of individuals to make decisions about their own bodies without interference. Conference, this motion is not about speaking for women, it's about standing with them. It's about making it clear that this union will not look the other way when fundamental healthcare rights are challenged.

This resolution does three clear things. First, it reaffirms the FBU's unequivocal support for a woman's right to choose, recognising reproductive healthcare as exactly that, healthcare. Second, it commits our union to opposing efforts to restrict access to that care, because silence or being neutral has never protected rights.

And thirdly, it commits to us working collectively with wider trade union movement and equality organisations, acknowledging that defending rights is always strongest when we act together. Conference, being a proud progressive member-led union means standing up when the issue does not affect us personally. Because if we only defend rights when they affect us directly, we weaken the very principle of solidarity our movement is built on. For those reasons, and my own position, I urge conference to support resolution 67. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. EC is supporting. That's open for debate. Anybody? Yep.

ALEC CLEAR (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, first-time speaker. *Applause*

Speaking in favour of resolution 67. We support this resolution because attacks on reproductive rights are often linked to wider attacks on equality and minority communities. Restrictions on reproductive healthcare don't just affect one group. They can also impact people who rely on those services to start and grow families, including many within the LGBT+ community.

Everyone deserves dignity, autonomy, and access to healthcare without fear or political interference. We must defend reproductive rights and bodily autonomy from those trying to divide working people and attack equality. While this motion talks about women's bodily rights, it's important to remember that this can affect more than just women. For example, non-binary people, intersex people, and trans men may also require access to reproductive healthcare. Trade union solidarity means supporting everyone facing attacks on their rights and healthcare. Please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Any more?

KIAH MIDDLETON (NWC)**:**
President, conference, supporting, defending women's bodily rights. We gather today at a moment when the rights of women and all those who can become pregnant are facing renewed challenges. Across the country and internationally, we are witnessing the growing influence of far-right groups and political parties who are working alongside anti-choice campaigners to roll back fundamental reproductive rights.

We, as a proud progressive trade union, know that access to safe and legal abortion is not a political privilege, but is a healthcare right. It is a cornerstone of bodily autonomy and a critical component of gender equality. To restrict it is not only an attack on individuals, but also an attack on our society as a whole.

Attacks on reproductive rights are rarely isolated. They form part of a wider agenda designed to divide working people, to distract from economic inequalities, and to undermine progress towards true equality.

Our union has a proud history of solidarity and of standing with those whose rights are under threat. By taking a stand, we are not only defending reproductive rights, but we are also defending the principles that make our union strong. Conference, we must reaffirm loudly and clearly our unwavering support for a woman's right to choose, oppose any political or campaign group that seeks to take away reproductive healthcare, stand shoulder to shoulder with the wider trade union movement and equality organisations to defend bodily autonomy, healthcare rights, and gender inequality.

Let's be clear: if we stay silent, if we fail to act, we are complicit. But if we speak up, if we stand together, we send a powerful message. The FBU will always fight for fairness, equality, and justice. Conference, I urge you to support this motion. Stand with women, stand for rights. Conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kiah. Yep.

MALACHI GRANT-BURRELL (B&EMM)**:**
President, chair, first time speaker as well. *Applause*

So to say, at the heart of it this is about one simple thing, basic human rights. The right to make decisions about your own body, your own health, and your own future. As you just heard access to safe and legal abortion is not a political bargaining chip, it is a fundamental healthcare. We cannot stand by and allow these continued attempts and attacks to undermine equality, divide the working people, and push back against social progress. These growing attacks from the far right and anti-choice campaigners are unacceptable, and they must be challenged wherever they appear.

As trade unionists, we understand that solidarity means standing up wherever rights are threatened. Our union has always been strongest when we defend not only pay and conditions, but dignity, fairness, and justice for all. This resolution makes clear that we will not be silent, we reaffirm our support for women's right to choose, and we oppose those who seek to restrict reproductive healthcare and roll back hard-won rights. Conference, I urge you to support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Malachi. Anybody else in the debate? No? I now put resolution 67 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Conference, we're going to break for lunch now. I want you back in the hall at 2.15, where we'll move straight on to Section A. The remainder of Section H we will take after Section A this afternoon.

So break for lunch. Back in at 2.15, please. Thank you.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Right, conference, can we take our seats, please? I now call the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar, to give the standing orders report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, the record of decisions of the morning session has now been produced and distributed to your delegations and will also be available on the FBU app. Can you please turn to your delegate list and add a delegate to the B&EMM delegation and insert Aaliyah McQuillan.

And can you now turn to your programme of business? And go to page eight, please. So after resolution 41, insert resolution 43, police co-location from West Mids, and that one is on standing orders, so apologies, West Mids.

Conference, it has been brought to the attention of standing orders that at times some people in the hall have been video recording whilst conference is in session. Can I ask you to cease doing so in the conference hall, as the only filming allowed is the official FBU commissioned recording, who you see walking around taking videos.

And finally, conference, can I restate from the previous standing orders report that if you are staying in the Scarman Hotel, your lunch will be in the Scarman, and the same with the Radcliffe, as we have ordered 125 lunches in each location.

It seems that today the majority went to the Radcliffe, and the staff there struggled with demand. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. Right, conference. We are now moving on to section A, Pay and Conditions. I call para A1. I'm now moving to para A6. Conference, the EC have brought a policy statement on pay reform, and there are a number of resolutions that have to be considered alongside it. So I will be calling the following resolutions and amendments as part of the same debate. These are: executive council policy statement, Pay Reform, resolution 2, Pay Reform, Fire Control, control staff national committee, resolution 9, Pay Reform from Merseyside, Amendment from West Midlands, resolution 21, Urban Search And Rescue, USAR, National Standards And Pensionable Pay, London.

I will open the debate in a moment, but for your information, I have determined that if the EC policy statement Pay Reform from the executive council carries, resolution 9 Pay Reform from Merseyside will fall if amended by West Midlands, as West Midlands' amendment stands in opposition to it.

Conference, the following resolutions can carry alongside the EC policy statement: resolution 2, Pay Reform Fire Control, moved by the control staff national committee, resolution 9 Pay Reform from Merseyside if unamended, resolution 21, Urban Search And Rescue, USAR, National Standards And Pensionable Pay, moved by London.

Conference, I will take you through the voting step by step when we conclude the debate to try to make this as easy and as understandable as possible. I now call executive council policy statement pay reform. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
President, conference, I want to speak today about the direction of fire service pay. Not a pay figure, not a headline, but the direction we're traveling, why we're on that path, how we're getting there, and what it means for members, our service, and for public safety. This matters because pay does not sit in isolation.

It reflects what firefighters are asked to do, how the system values their work, and whether the fire and rescue service we rely on is sustainable in the future. So let me be clear from the outset what this speech is and what it is not. This is not an announcement of a settlement, it's not a substitute for negotiation, and it's not an attempt to close down good, comradely debate.

It is an explanation of the direction, the framework, the framework conference mandated us to last year, and the reality we're operating in, and the choices being managed by the executive council on a day-to-day basis for members' benefit. That clarity matters because in the absence of an explanation, uncertainty certainly fills the gap.

For the first time in decades, there's a formally agreed aim, a shared aim across the sector, to deliver long-term sustainable fire and rescue service role and workforce reform, supporting recruitment and retention, professionalisation, public safety, and a valued workforce. That aim is not owned by one part of the sector, it's jointly recognised by us, the union, the national employers, and this Labour government.

That does not mean there are not differences. There surely is. But it does mean there's an alignment on the need for change, and that alignment is the moment we're looking at now. The current Grey Book structure is over 25 years old now. This is essentially a flat pay structure as we know it. It provides little or no progression in role. It offers no structured way to recognise the development of new skills, responsibility, or accredited competence. During those years of pay restraint and austerity, that flatness impacted our members more so than other public sectors. As you're aware, other workers in other sectors, even where headline figures were capped, they were able to progress through pay structures.

THE PRESIDENT:
Ben, can I just stop you there, please? I'm getting a lot of shaking heads. We've got a problem with the sound. Can we just revert back to how we was at the very beginning of it? I think we had a slight echo, but it was better than the puzzled faces I was getting then. Oh, mics are fine, it's just Ben. Ben, you're speaking with an echoed voice. I don't know how you're managing it, but –

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Does that one need turning off?

THE PRESIDENT:
We've got our best NWC techie on it. Right, Ben, can you give us a sound check?

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Hello, president. Is that...

THE PRESIDENT:
No. Can we revert back to how we was at the beginning? I think that was better than the surround sound we had or seemed to have. Do you want to try giving us another test, Ben?

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Hello. Hello. Hello. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right. Give us a sound test from there, Ben.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
It's been a while, president, since I've stood down here. Feels very different.

THE PRESIDENT:
Is that all right, everybody? *Yeah*. Yep. Thank you.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Conference, as you know, the current Grey Book structure is over 25 years old now. It's an essentially flat pay structure. It provides little or no progression in role.

It offers no structured way to recognise development of new skills, responsibility, or accredited competence. During those years, as you all know, of pay restraint and austerity, that flatness impacted our members. More so than other

public sectors. Other workers in other sectors where headline pay was capped, they were able to progress within their structure, increasing their pay, but firefighters were largely not able to do so.

At the same time, the role itself did not stand still. Our responsibilities in 25 years have broadened significantly, risks have changed, and expectations have grown. Without matching those changes to pay standards, we have no national consistency. The result is frustration, inequality across roles and duty systems, and a system that struggles to reflect what the modern fire and rescue service looks like today.

And that's not a criticism of any of our members or individuals across the services, it's a description of structural drift. You, delegates of this conference, did not stumble into this agenda. Conference 2025 made pay reform the number one industrial priority, and the general secretary has been clear and at each and every outing.

Conference instructed the executive council to pursue a pay structure reform and do it intensively. Make the role of a firefighter central to it. Progress the annual pay in parallel. Report regularly to members and ensure members have the final say on the outcomes. That mandate is explicit, it's democratic, and it certainly still stands.

So when we talk about direction, we're talking about the position this conference last year authorised. It is essential though to distinguish clearly between annual pay and pay reform. Annual pay is the short term; it responds to the economic conditions. It protects living standards in the here and now.

But pay reform is structural. It reshapes how pay works. It determines whether skills, competence, and contribution are recognised fairly and over time. They're linked, but they're not the same, and that's why your executive council is clear. Progress on one must not be brought at the expense of the other, and conference, you have been clear: both matter.

We cannot talk about pay direction without talking about the economy. Inflation has eased from its peak, but it remains volatile. Energy markets are unstable. Global events continue to create risk, especially when the guy in the White House reaches for his Twitter account. Recent experiences shows us something important.

Agreeing pay based on a single snapshot of inflation can result in real term erosion of pay across the pay year. That's not a hypothetical. Our members have lived it. That's why flexibility at this point is not weakness. Agility is not weakness. It's protection, and it's a protection for all members. As you're aware, earlier this year, indicators suggested the risk of early settlement might actually be manageable.

Since then, conditions have changed. Economic uncertainty has increased. Upward pressure on inflation has returned, largely due to that illegal war in the Middle East, and locking into a settlement early will fail to protect members. So it's in that context recently the executive council reassessed its position.

That's not to drift. That was not indecision. It was responsible decision-making and risk management. The 2026 pay negotiations remain live, and when we have reached a point, in the view of the executive council, that something on the table is fair and credible, members will decide.

Returning now to pay reform, any serious discussions about pay must certainly begin with the role, the ask of what firefighters and firefighter control are asked to do. Firefighters today are not only responders to fire. They're increasingly involved in flood and wildfires, resilience and civil protection, medical emergencies, blue lights, other blue light context, prevention, protection, and recovery, specialist technical capabilities.

And control firefighters carry growing responsibility in increasingly complex operational environments too. That must be recognised. The system must be honest about what it's asking people to do and what it is not. Because without the clarity on role, pay systems are rather arbitrary. This brings us, conference, to competence.

Competence frameworks define the safe and effective performance. They're about firefighters and the public safety. They're not about pay progression systems. However, competence, role, and the pay are interdependent, whether we like it or not. If the system cannot clearly describe what good looks like in role, how can it fairly evaluate it?

The mistake would be to pretend that these discussions are unrelated or to allow competence work to become pay reform by stealth. That safeguard has been clearly stated and remains firm between us and the national employers. Pay reform must be nationally negotiated, setting a standard for pay and role and ending role expansion, which we've seen locally.

It has to be collectively bargained, fully funded, and subject to yours and members' approval. It's about fairness, transparency, and sustainability, and nothing is agreed, of course, until members agree it. As we have said, one of the strongest arguments for reform is national consistency. At present, skills are recognised and rewarded differently right across the United Kingdom, and sometimes significantly so.

That creates more inequality, more confusion, and certainly more frustration. A reformed system must recognise the skills and responsibility consistently, support progression in role, and allow specialist and non-managerial career paths, and be simple enough for us to understand and operate within.

Professionalisation must mean recognition, not just expectation. And for the first time, the NJC is now seeking to develop a national job evaluation framework designed specifically for operational fire and rescue roles. The current Grey Book has no such mechanism. The NJC has agreed that this must be independently assured, tested, and designed to eliminate biases, support equal pay compliance, ensure national consistency, and recognise the knowledge, skills, and responsibility of all roles.

It's not pay setting. It's the foundation without which fair pay setting is impossible. Getting this wrong would lock us into problems for another generation, and we must learn from the errors of twenty-five years ago and not allow us to fall back into the uneven place we are today after we hit the reset button.

Complex reform takes time, and it must. It involves role clarity, evaluation methodology, equality impact assessment, funded cases put directly to Treasury, national negotiation, and members making decisions. Speed alone is not progress. Good reform done once is better than quick reform done badly. So those wanting us to rush to do so, are only helping the employers.

We must get it right, conference, for it will matter for at least twenty-five years. None of this means that members' pay today does not matter. It does. Protecting living standards remains essential. So does addressing long-term standing inequalities, retained pay, control pay, CPD, maternity and parental provisions.

Reform must deliver real improvement to all of that, and not just a future promise. And if progress stalls, well, conference, you've been very clear what options we'll take. This time last year, the EC committed to a significant consultation process. It was about listening to you as officials and to our members.

This has involved EC strategy days, NJC negotiations and feedback immediately to the executive council, regional and brigade briefings, structured reporting, and open challenge and discussion. And it's important to us that that engagement continues right throughout the process. There's no start and finish to this consultation. It exists all the way through. Members will decide the outcomes, and that principle shall not change.

What comes next? Well, the continued NJC work on reform, continued monitoring of those economic conditions we spoke about, progress on job evaluation design, engagement on funding and investment, and clear reporting back to you and members.

No shortcuts, no surprises, and no abandonment of the annual pay award. So in closing, president, the direction of fire service pay is not just a question of numbers. It's a question of whether professionalism is recognised, whether skills are valued, whether inequality is addressed, and whether the fire and rescue service remains sustainable in an ever-changing world.

This is a rare moment of alignment, a moment of opportunity, and a moment that must be handled carefully but decisively. Conference, you mandated this direction. Members will decide the destination. Our task, all of us, is to make sure the path between the two is honest, fair, and worthy of the job firefighters and control staff do every day. Thank you, Conference. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. London to second. London, as speakers are only permitted to speak once in a debate other than the right of reply, I will ask you to second EC policy statement, Jon, and then if you could move to moving resolution 21. I'm sure the vice-president will adjust the speaking times accordingly, and we'll give you three minutes in total.

Okay, the EC are giving qualified support to Reso 21. So when you're ready, Jon.

Resolution 21 URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (USAR) – NATIONAL STANDARDS AND PENSIONABLE PAY
Conference recognises the importance of USAR capability across the UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs).

Conference notes that for a significant period there have been major inconsistencies between UKFRSs in relation to pay enhancements and the work undertaken by USAR trained firefighters.

Conference further notes that additional funding is provided to FRSs through the National Resilience Assurance Team and the Home Office, which should enable appropriate remuneration for USAR work with minimal or no additional budgetary impact.

Conference believes that the current arrangements create a postcode lottery, where USAR firefighters are treated and paid differently depending on their employer.

Conference affirms that any change must not reduce existing enhancements in those FRSs that already provide appropriate additional payments but must instead level up and bring consistency so that all brigades apply the available additional funding fairly and appropriately. In some cases, this is already pensionable.

Conference calls for a UK-wide standard, negotiated through the National Joint Council, which establishes that where firefighters undertake USAR skills and duties, they are paid accordingly, and that this payment must be pensionable.

Conference further calls for any agreed changes to be incorporated into the Grey Book as nationally recognised terms and conditions.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***negotiate for USAR work to be formally recognised as work covered under the Grey Book***
- ***secure additional pensionable pay for USAR duties and skills***
- ***report back to Conference 2027 on progress made and/or agreements reached.***

LONDON

JON LAMBE (London)**:**
Conference, president, general secretary, London are seconding the EC policy statement, moving resolution 21. Conference, we had a resolution 18 which we have remitted. We did this as we were told it stood in opposition with the EC policy statement, so we chose to remit it, and are seconding the EC policy statement, as we believe we need, as a union, to be unified, and we have trust that the EC will do the work now that it's been remitted to them. We're also happy that they're giving qualified support to our Reso 21 as well.

Conference, I look out at the delegation floor, and what I see are the best shop stewards in the trade union movement. And we must be united in getting our members the best pay we can. And we believe the EC policy statement is the best way to do that. And whilst we support the direction the union's going in, we do want some assurances from the EC. We want to know that it is made clear to the employers that we will not accept a low 2026 pay settlement because of promises of jam in 2027, and any attempt by the employers to do that will be met with the appropriate action from the union.

The pay progression talks need to be exactly that, and we will not allow employers to use it in any way to hold back our members' wages, and that includes the pay of firefighters for doing their job once they're at station risking their lives. That we expect improvements for all our members and will not accept any of our members being worse off, and that conference needs to be clear. We are yet again here saying next year regarding pay. But if talks have not reached a satisfactory conclusion in a timely manner, then the talking needs to stop and the fight needs to start. Conference, I second and I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Jon. The EC, as I said, are giving qualified support to resolution 21. Does resolution 21 have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you.

I now call resolution 2, Pay Reform Fire Control, moved by the control staff national committee, the EC are supporting.

Resolution 2 PAY REFORM FIRE CONTROL
Conference notes that the Control Staff National Committee (CSNC) welcomed the opportunity to be involved in the Pay Reform strategy discussions which were positive and constructive.

Conference also notes that CSNC are concerned about the lack of detail of the reform for Fire Control, as it is not clear how this will benefit the Fire Control members.

Conference seeks guarantees and assurances from the Executive Council that Fire Control will be fully considered within any Pay Reform discussions and CSNC be included in negotiations with the goal of pay parity with our firefighting colleagues from the outset.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

LYNDSEY BURTON (CSNC)**:**
Afternoon, president, conference. I am from CSNC, which is control staff national committee. I'm based in region 3. CSNC would like to note their appreciation of being involved in the pay reform strategy discussions in 2025. However, we do have concerns with the lack of detail about how this will benefit fire control members.

The EC policy statement does refer to fire control with the simple bullet point, "control rules and pay". We feel that all options must be fully explored and negotiated with the goal of pay parity in mind from the outset. It often feels that we here in control are on a perpetual merry-go-round with the pay parity query and request, and we have lost and are losing members because of this.

But with the increased responsibilities, ever-increasing workloads, and questionable staffing models, this issue is never more important than it is today. So we seek guarantees and assurances from the EC to be fully considered in pay reform discussions and for CSNC to be included in negotiations. Conference, please support. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Lyndsey. Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder?

ROBYN RICHARDSON (NWC)**:**
President, conference, seconding motion two, Pay Reform Fire Control. And I do so proudly as a watch manager who has worked in the control room for 17 years. This motion calls for the recognition for an essential part of our fire and rescue service that has been overlooked for far too long.

The work of fire control is so often undervalued. That calm at the end of the line, gathering the critical information, mobilising the crews, coordinating incidents, making split decision decisions, and keeping both firefighters and the public safe. We are not support staff; we're not office staff. We are highly trained professionals who respond to whatever emergency is presented to us.

And yet despite the complexity, pressure, and accountability of the role, pay has simply not kept pace and recognised the reality of the job. Conference, this inequality has existed for far too long, and for years, firefighters in control have often been expected to deliver more and more whilst receiving less recognition, less visibility, and lower pay than they deserve.

We must also recognise a very obvious truth at the heart of this debate that the majority of control rooms are predominantly staffed by women. That matters because historically, professions dominated by women have too often been undervalued, underpaid, and overlooked. Work that requires emotional resilience, communication skills, multitasking, technical expertise, and crisis management has somehow been treated as less worthy than firefighters on station.

But let us be absolutely clear, the skills required in control rooms are specialist skills. The responsibility is real, the pressure can be relentless, and the value of that work is simply not recognised. This motion is about correcting that imbalance. It's about recognising that equality is not just something we talk about in policy documents or conference speeches.

It must be reflected in pay structures and the experts, the ones who represent us, must be front and centre of those discussions. Negotiations happen, reviews take place, decisions are made, and the voices of those in control are either absent or treated as an afterthought, and that cannot continue. If pay reform discussions are taking place, then firefighters control must be included at negotiation stage.

Not consulted at the end, not informed after decisions are made, but properly consulted when those decisions are being shaped. Their voices matter. And pay must finally reflect the professionalism, expertise, and responsibility that the role demands. Equality delayed is equality denied, and now is the time for change.

Conference, I urge you to support this motion I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Robyn. I now call resolution 9, Pay Reform from Merseyside. EC are seeking withdraw. No. Oh, no? No, we're not. We support now. Oh, no, sorry. We're now supporting, Lee. Always been supporting. We've always been supporting. It doesn't say that on my sheet. It's not just you, Lee, honestly.

Resolution 9 PAY REFORM
Conference recognises the work undertaken by officials of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in taking forward the issue of pay reform.

Conference also notes the emergency resolution on pay, brought by the Executive Council (EC) at Conference in 2025. That emergency resolution included the following paragraph:
"As a result of the agreed 2025 pay offer, Conference 2025 instructs the Executive Council (EC) to undertake intensive negotiations over the coming year, with the intention of introducing improvements to the pay structures from the 1 July 2026."

Conference understands that the work so far undertaken has been done in good faith and that those negotiations have not been able to bring resolution to the issue, at this time.

Conference however is also cognisant of the fact that previous talks on 'Broadening the Role' of a firefighter were complex and no definitive resolution was reached.

Conference does not wish to see a repeat of that.

Conference instructs the EC to continue with the talks on pay reform.

Conference affirms that If there is no agreement reached on all work to be undertaken and the relevant pay to be linked to that work, with an offer ready to be voted on by members by the end of 2027, then Conference instructs the EC to stop negotiations and recall Conference to decide on what the next steps should be. This should include all options, including all forms of industrial action.

MERSEYSIDE

Amendment
Last paragraph, line 3: **replace *'the end of'* with *'July'***

WEST MIDLANDS

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 9, pay reform. First of all, I'd like to start to say that we do support CSNC on resolution 2. Comrades, last year, Merseyside took the pragmatic stance of withdrawing our resolution on broadening of the role in order to second the EC emergency policy statement on pay.

That resolution stated, *"Conference instructs the EC to undertake intensive negotiations over the coming year with the intention of introducing improvements to the pay structure from the 1st of July, 2026."* In a speech on that resolution, the general secretary spoke about being crystal clear to the employers that we want to see an improved pay structure for next year's pay round.

He also went on to say, *"We will not tolerate any further delay, and nor should you."* In seconding the resolution, we said that the time has to be limited to ensure that our members are protected. Conference, we are not suggesting that that work has not been undertaken. The general secretary and the assistant general secretary have obviously and diligently worked to thrash out a deal that is acceptable to our members. However, the EC policy statement on pay reform this year states that the EC will continue intensive negotiations on pay reform with the ambition of securing agreement on a new pay structure for implementation commencing in 2027.

The issue we have is with the word ambition. Whilst we understand that these discussions and negotiations are undoubtedly complex, they cannot be open-ended. We've been there before with broadening of the role, and it didn't work. What we're now asking for, conference, is that we take control of the timescale on this, that we strengthen the negotiation stance of the Fire Brigades Union by setting out for the employers a definitive date to have these negotiations concluded by.

This is not an attack on the EC, the general secretary, or the assistant general secretary. It is us, as firefighters, telling the employers that we have had enough of protracted talks and promises of next year that is always rolled on year after year. Our members in many places are already undertaking much of the work that is being discussed in the pay reform talks.

They have had that work imposed on them by unscrupulous chief fire officers who do not recognise the firefighters' role map. They are undertaking this work without pay, without the requisite training, without the correct kit, and without the funding that is required to ensure that this work is carried out properly.

And whilst this is happening, our members are seeing their terms and conditions worsened. They're seeing their pay stagnate, and they aren't paid for this work. And whilst pay is stagnating, they're also looking at a longer-term issue. Because as we've seen changes to our pensions, we now have those pensions not as final salary schemes, but as career average schemes.

So for every day this drags on, we not only see the impact in our monthly pay, we are also looking at our career average pensions being affected for every day, every month, every year that these negotiations drag on without conclusion. It will affect our members' pensions when they do finally get to retire by seeing their career average pay reduced and so impacting on what their pensions will be made up on.

We can't allow this to happen. Conference, we will discuss at this conference how the Labour government have a very limited period in which to work due in most part to their own terrible decisions and policies. But regardless of my own thoughts on the Labour Party, what I do agree with is that if pay reform is actually going to be realised, it has to be within this parliament, and that reality brings this issue into stark contrast.

The current Labour government, in my opinion, will struggle to see out the remaining term that they have, which is why this matter has to be resolved quickly, not with an ambition, but with a definitive timescale that we hold them to account on. We did welcome the amendment from West Midlands as we believe that bringing the date forward to July 27 would benefit FBU members, but I think we may have an update on that shortly. Conference, I implore you to take control of this issue.

Tell the government, tell the employers that the talks started in 2025 must be concluded and an offer to firefighters must be ready for FBU members by the end of July 2027. We've been patient enough. Our communities deserve better by having fully trained firefighters with the correct funding and kit. Our members deserve better by being properly paid for the roles that they undertake.

Conference, support this resolution and let us empower our negotiation team and if by the end of 2027, we're still not there, then conference, this conference will be recalled so that we can agree our next actions. Please support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. And just to clarify that the EC are supporting resolution 9. Does that have a seconder? Yep, Sasha. Are you going to move your amendment at the same time? You chatting about your amendment, are you?

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 9, pay reform, and withdrawing West Midlands amendment. Many in this room will remember the broadening of the role discussions. Members were repeatedly told to be patient, that talks were progressing and negotiations were ongoing. And year after year, there was no definitive resolution.

With respect, we know that those involved will be doing everything they can to progress this important piece of work, but there is a risk of this becoming a process that simply rolls forward without conclusion, while firefighters are expected to wait endlessly for meaningful outcomes, and that is why we support this resolution from Merseyside.

It doesn't shut down negotiations or reject pay reform, and it doesn't undermine the work being undertaken by officials. It places structure, accountability, and a clear timeframe around that process. It says negotiations should continue in good faith, but not forever. If there is no agreement reached on all of the work undertaken with an offer ready for members by next year, we don't want to have to keep telling our members to be patient. Talks are progressing. We can't walk away now. There's too much to lose. And that is why we believed that the West Midlands amendment strengthened the resolution. However, we do understand and appreciate that it could possibly have been too restrictive. This resolution from Merseyside creates a clear point next year where there is either an agreement ready to put to our members or there isn't.

And if there is not, conference is recalled, and conference decides what happens next. It will be a recall conference that decides whether we can justify to our members to continue or not, and that is an important safeguard. Patience cannot become a permanent strategy. At some point, there must either be a deal for members to consider or an honest recognition that agreement is not being reached.

This resolution ensures that this process remains focused, accountable, and time limited. Conference, West Midlands withdraws our amendment and supports resolution 9. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Sasha. Conference, now that is all of the resolutions and amendments moved and seconded, so... Well, no, the one amendment has been withdrawn, so they are now open for debate. Anybody? Anybody? Yep.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 9, pay reform, brought by our comrades at Merseyside. Conference, Scotland supports this resolution, as do the EC, which I'm as surprised as Merseyside to see. But it did kind of change my speech a bit. But joking aside, it's good to see that the recognition that this resolution only looks to ensure that we, as a union, can't be strung along for years with a continued promise of further talks on this all-too-important issue.

The NJC have a suggested framework on their website, and as the AGS has alluded to earlier on, even the NSCC are aligned. We appear to have, for now, a sympathetic government to work with for the first time in 14 years, and so it seems perfectly reasonable for us to be firming up the ambition set out in the EC policy statement into a set timeframe.

Conference, the resolution only asks for conference to be recalled for us to discuss the next steps. If we are nearing the end of 2027 and we're nowhere near having an agreement that we can put to our members, then we should have the opportunity to decide where we are and what options we have as a conference, surely.

If we are close at that point, fine. If there are valid reasons for having not reached agreement, but we've worked through them, fine. This isn't rushing anything. But if we spend the rest of this year and the majority of the following year, bearing in mind this was put to us at conference last year, and we're nowhere near an agreement, then surely we, the representatives of this membership, the parliament of this union, should be given the chance to make the decision on what happens next. Conference, support the resolution. *Applause*

RICHARD BEEBY (Suffolk)**:**
Conference, president, 10 months ago, Suffolk finally opened its new control room and our control members truly begun their work. Since then, they have worked tirelessly, relentlessly, and brilliantly to keep us safe, to keep the brigade where it needs to be, and to offer that vital support to the public in their time of need.

We have seen them work well above the pay that they receive, and we are embarrassed that they do not receive the same pay as the rest of us in the fire service. Conference, this is a must for the future of the fire service, and we support. *Applause*

CRAIG CARTER (Bedfordshire)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 9. Conference, while pay reform promises to deliver the change in pay and investment that we've been seeking for years, our members are concerned about accepting below-inflation pay offers with the promise of a better tomorrow that may never come.

Just remember, we've been let down by Labour governments before. We all hope that pay reform is delivered, and I've no doubt the EC policy statement will be agreed. But point three, progress discussions on the 2026 pay settlement in parallel, seeking a fair award that reflects economic conditions and members' expectations, needs to go further in restoring pay lost from years of below-inflation pay awards.

Twelve percent down was the line. Well, now we face the possibility of another pay award that equates to real term pay cut. This followed by pay reform that may never materialise, leaving us further behind and maybe on the brink of a different government who have a very different outlook on public services.

Remember, it was a 2022/2023 pay award that promised pay progression, new roles, control pay parity, and CPD levelling up. Then 2024, a new Labour government with a new deal for working people. But here we are, still waiting. How much longer do we wait? Of course, we support investment in the sector, but we need it quickly and pay awards that don't leave us further behind. Conference, I support. *Applause*

HAYLEIGH MARKS TALABIS (Northamptonshire)**:**
I am a proud control member for 16 years. I'm speaking in support of resolution 2, pay reform for fire control. And this isn't just about pay parity because we need it for the operational side. Many control rooms across the country manage their own training. We manage our own recruitment.

We implement our policy. We do this alongside managing teams. The station managers also don't have pay parity. We provide welfare for all the incidents. We often don't have parity for flexi duty systems. We're often the subject matter experts for the whole service and we do this alongside running on our minimum crewing.

So we deserve that pay parity for the non-operational side doing this all alongside our operational side as well. So Northamptonshire supports pay reform for fire control. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Hayleigh. Anybody else? No. There's been no opposition, so there's no rights of reply, so I'll now call the AGS to give the EC qualifications.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah. A bit to say on a few issues, Ian. Thank you for bringing me back in. And look, thanks London Jon for remitting the other motion and I'll start probably with the qualification to 21, if I may.
I think the only kind of issue we had with 21 is the fact that it's the view of this union, this conference, and the executive council that we seek for all additional work, including USAR, to be fundamental in pay progression in about bringing it into core pay, which in essence would make it immediately pensionable anyway.

That's the position you've held for quite some time. That's what we're looking to achieve, Jon, so we think both, both can stand as Ian has set out there. I just want to mention a few other things though because there's a few comments in, in the debate, Ian, there that were suggesting that Steve, myself, the executive council would be minded to accept something below the rate of inflation this year as some form of jam tomorrow.

That's not what's been suggested. That's not what I spoke to. That's not what the EC policy statement says. That's not the tactic of the executive council, Steve or I in the negotiation. So where you're getting that from might be useful information to us if it's coming from a reliable source. That's certainly not what we're doing here.

And also, I just want to make another point, and I'm really grateful for the work certainly of the CSNC because the CSNC have been involved in these discussions. They have a seat on the National Joint Council, that real high pay collective bargaining arena, and they've been really central to the decisions we've been taking, the research we've been doing, and the continued work to achieve pay equality.

I spoke to that when I moved the policy statement. It remains a firm commitment from the executive council, in each and every step of pay reform, we're making the point of the necessity to address the inequalities in pay. That's not just in relation to CPD and roles. That's also in relation to control pay. So that, again, is another thing we're completely aligned on, and that's why we support wholeheartedly the resolution from the CSNC.

This point on rushing as well, I'm again not completely sure where that's coming from. As I say, it's separate to the annual pay awards. There's no suggestion at all, as I said, that that would mean something less than the rate of inflation.

We're not certainly pushing for that. If the employers offered it, I'm sure as the resolution said, it wouldn't meet the expectations of our members. The policy statement says that. But again, I ask you to think us rushing as a trade union in terms of pay structure, not pay annual awards, in pay structure, doesn't serve you, it doesn't serve our members, it doesn't serve us as a union.

We have to get it right, conference, and we have to take time in getting it right. Actually, one of the reasons, and I know somebody's already made light of it, Lee, but one of the reasons we support the resolution is because weirdly from yourself and Merseyside it completely aligns with the position of the executive council.

Even the points you made at the back end of your contribution there, the executive council has already referred to there may be a need to recall conference. It says so on the penultimate paragraph in the motion. And again, we're saying, like you have, this has to be delivered in 2027. So yes, there is that hard stop.

The executive council has set that out in its policy statement. You have done in the Merseyside resolution, and that's why we are, well, we consider it extremely helpful. And yes, Gus, it does again make the point the executive council is very clear that might mean we have to recall conference, and we're not afraid of doing so if progress isn't made.

The executive council meet regularly. As I said earlier, after every single joint secretariat meeting, the general secretary and I brief the executive council, so they're completely up to date with progress. I know I can say this with confidence, if they felt progress wasn't being made, they would have recalled conference last year.

Okay. Again, I make the point to Craig, actually, we're not aware of any offers being below inflation. We're not aware of any offers actually being above inflation yet. So if you've got any detail of, of noises, and certainly, you know, certain delegates here, have kind of let Steve or I know what chief fire officers have said or fire authority chairs have said in and around budgets and things, that's really useful information for us as negotiators.

So if you are told or you're given a nod and a wink of where the settlement may be from the employer's perspective, let us know. The lines are open in relation to that, and that will be very helpful. But certainly, president, we're appreciative of the resolutions and the debate and trust that the executive council policy shall carry.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. Right, we are going to now move on to the voting in the debate. So just to clarify, now the amendment from West Midlands has been withdrawn, resolution 9 can carry with the EC policy statement, as can resolution 2, and as can resolution 21. So moving on to the vote, I now put executive council policy statement, pay reform to the vote.

All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 2 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 9 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 21 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, conference, we are now carrying on, still in section A. I will now be taking resolutions 11 and 13 in the same debate. They stand in opposition to each other, so if 11 carries, 13 will fall. I now call resolution 11, retail – yeah come up, come up to the rostrum, yeah.

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire)**:**
President, conference, Martin Starkey, Brigade Secretary, Staffordshire. Basically we're in a position where we're still not understanding exactly why these two resolutions can't stand together. Resolution 11 determines the rate of inflation that the executive council must use moving forward in pay negotiations. Resolution 13 simply states whether or not the executive council can recommend a pay offer based on the level of inflation a national measure of inflation. 11 sets the national measure of inflation that the executive council can use. 13 does not open up the possibility for the executive council to use any national measure of inflation.

So I'd like it to be explained to the conference floor exactly why these two cannot stand together, president. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Martin. Well, I'll try and do that as best as I can. So my role, along with that of the standing orders committee, is to identify and determine if resolutions can carry together or they stand in opposition to each other. We don't care about the political content of the resolution. It's more about the technical wording as laid down. Here we've got two resolutions. One, reso 11 says that RPI must be used as the benchmark and not CPI as a measure of inflation. The other, 13, in the last paragraph, calls for any nationally recognised measure of inflation, of which CPI is one. So therefore, in my opinion and that of the standing orders committee, they can't stand together.

They stand in opposition. We can't have a resolution which then immediately changes the intent of another resolution. They stand in opposition clearly to it, and that's my ruling.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT:
Conference, there's been a challenge on the president's ruling. There'll be no further debate on the issue. You're all in your seats, so that's good. So in accordance with standing order 15, the challenge needs to be supported, sorry, by two-thirds of the number of delegates stated in the report given by the chair of standing orders. That number is one hundred and two, 102. I'm now going to put the challenge to the vote. All of those who support the challenge, that's support the challenge, please show. Thank you. All of those who oppose the challenge, please show.

Bear with me. *(Calls for card vote)* Okay, hold on. Hold on. There's no card, but there is a version of card, so don't worry. Okay, it's a standing vote. So as it's not clear, in accordance with standing order 15 again, and a call from the floor, can I ask the tellers to come to the front, please, to carry out the standing card vote, please?

And can I also ask the scrutineers to come to the front to cross-reference the tellers' count? Delegates, can you remain seated? You will be asked to stand up when directed to show whether you support or oppose the challenge. Delegates, you must clearly show your delegate credentials to the tellers and scrutineers as you are being counted to identify your right to vote in the standing count.

I now call on the delegates who support the challenge to stand.

Okay, if the tellers and scrutineers can make their way down, count the rows, people in it, please.
Each in row is each delegate. Yeah. So standing delegate count is number of people. The number rather than card. Thank you. Please sit down.

I now call on all delegates who oppose the challenge to stand.

Sections, as this was a procedural matter, you did have two votes in this. Would you like to cast them? So sections supporting the vote, please make your votes now. Sections, are you in consultation? We do need to move on with this, so if nobody's standing, I do want to stand to oppose.

Okay, we'll go from the start. Sections supporting, please stand. And sections in opposition. Thank you. Please sit down.

Conference, for clarity, the two scrutineers and the two tellers are also eligible to vote, and their numbers will be within those figures. So I now call on the head teller to announce the result of the challenge.

CHIEF SCRUTINEER (Kate Yhnell)**:**
So it was 52 who support and 64 who challenge.

THE VICE-PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kate. As that did not reach the two thirds required to make the challenge, that challenge *falls*.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks for that, conference. I think that's the second time in all of my years coming to conference we've had a standing delegate count, and it's not a bad thing. So well done, Staffordshire. If you don't agree with what I say, challenge it, absolutely. Although on that occasion, you did lose.

Right. I now call resolution 11, retail price index, RPI, not consumer price index, CPI, moved by Greater Manchester with an amendment from Scotland. The EC are seeking withdrawal or they oppose.

Resolution 11 RETAIL PRICE INDEX (RPI) NOT CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (CPI)
Conference notes that regarding recent pay offers, the Executive Council (EC) has used the current CPI as a measure of the rate of inflation when forming its assessment and recommendation of pay offer to Fire Brigades Union members.

The rate of inflation in the UK is published every month by the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The ONS measures inflation in 2 different ways: the RPI and the CPI.

CPI is the government's chosen method of measuring the rate of inflation, yet it does not include several factors that are included in RPI, such as increases to council tax, mortgage interest payments, house depreciation, building insurance, ground rent and other house purchase costs such as estate agents and conveyancing fees.

Conference believes many unions use RPI when assessing and recommending pay offers because they believe it is a more comprehensive measurement of their members rise in the cost of living.

Conference therefore instructs all future pay assessments and recommendations that are made by the EC, that they use RPI as the measure of the rate of inflation.

GREATER MANCHESTER

AMENDMENT
4th paragraph, 2nd line
Delete ', that they' so that content reads: 'are made by the EC use RPI as the measure'

SCOTLAND

PATRICK BRENNAN (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, we will withdraw resolution 11 in support of resolution 13. These two resolutions come very much from the same place. I'd like to speak to second resolution 13 when we come to that. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Pat, if you just hang about. Right, I now call resolution 13, pay negotiations protecting members from real term pay cuts, moved by Staffordshire. You know, if you'd have talked to each other before, we could have avoided all of that palaver. No.

Resolution 13 PAY NEGOTIATIONS: PROTECTING MEMBERS FROM REAL-TERMS PAY CUTS
Conference notes that firefighters' pay has declined in real terms over a number of years due to pay awards that have failed to keep pace with inflation.

Conference recognises that any pay award below the rate of inflation represents a real terms pay cut and contributes to declining living standards for members.

Conference recognises that recommendations issued by the Executive Council (EC) carry significant influence and can shape members' expectations and decisions during pay ballots.

Conference believes that the Fire Brigades Union exists to defend and improve members' pay, terms and conditions and should not endorse or normalise real terms pay cuts.

Conference instructs the EC that it shall not recommend or campaign for acceptance of any pay offer that represents a real terms pay cut, defined for the purposes of this resolution as a pay award below a recognised national measure of inflation.

STAFFORDSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire)**:**
President, conference, so at its heart, this resolution is actually quite simple. If inflation is higher than any pay offer, firefighters take a pay cut. Not on paper, not technically, in real life. It means higher mortgages, higher rent, higher fuel bills, higher food costs, and less left at the end of a month for people who keep the country safe. And let's be honest, it's not a one-off issue either. It's happened repeatedly over many years. Our members have already endured over a decade of erosion to their pay, and during that same period, firefighters have faced increasing workloads, more complex incidents, growing expectations, and reduced staffing levels. We are expected to do more with less for less. And despite that, our members continue to deliver every single day. They continue turning out professionally to house fires, RTCs, flooding, wildfires, environmental incidents, and increasing complex operational risks.

The public still see firefighters as trusted professionals, but trust does not pay our bills. Dedication does not stop inflation, and applause does not replace lost wages. Unfortunately, supermarkets still insist on being paid in actual money.

Conference, this resolution is not about attempting to dictate negotiating strategy, and I want to be absolutely clear about something. This resolution does not prevent negotiation, it does not prevent compromise, and it does not force members into industrial action.

It does not prevent the executive council from putting any pay offer out to ballot of the membership. It does not remove the democratic right of members to accept whatever offer they believe is in their interests, and what it does say is that the leadership of this union should not actively campaign for firefighters to accept a reduction in their living standards.

It's not an unreasonable principle for a trade union. Conference, this resolution does not guarantee that every negotiation ends with an above inflation settlement. What it says is that union should be honest about what a below inflation settlement actually represents, and if members choose to accept a below inflation offer, that is their democratic right, but members deserve clarity from their union about what that means in real terms. Because there is a major difference between members making a difficult decision in difficult circumstances and the union leadership actively recommending and campaigning for acceptance. Executive council recommendations carry enormous weight, we know that. When the EC recommends acceptance, many members understandably interpret it as, "This is the best we can do, and this is what the union thinks that I should do."

That shapes expectations before the ballot even begins. And Conference, we should not allow real terms pay erosion to become normalised within our service or our union simply because politicians and employers have spent years trying to convince working people to lower their expectations and accept getting poorer, especially when firefighters did not create the economic problems that this country faces and should not be expected to quietly pay for them either, especially not in a cost of living crisis, especially not after years of declining wages.

We cannot continually tell firefighters, "Your work is essential. Your role is critical. You are a highly skilled professional," while simultaneously accepting that their standard of living should continually fall behind. At some point, those two positions become incompatible. Conference, this resolution also deliberately refers to a recognised national measure of inflation.

Why? Because firefighters live in the real economy. Our members buy food in the real economy. They pay mortgages in a real economy, and inflation is not theoretical to firefighters. They feel it every single month, and if our pay offers do not at least keep pace with that reality, then in practical terms, our members are getting poorer for doing the same job. That is the definition of a real terms pay cut.

Conference, this resolution is ultimately about clarity. It is about setting a clear principle that this union should not endorse declining living standards for firefighters. It says to our members, "Your union recognises what a real terms pay cut actually is," and it says, "We will not pretend otherwise."

Firefighters deserve a union that is clear, honest, and ambitious about defending their living standards. I ask conference support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Martin. Pat.

PAT BRENNAN (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, speaking to second resolution 13. Now, as I was going to touch on earlier in, resolution 11 on CPI, sorry, on RPI over CPI, this resolution isn't just about the technicality of a pay offer. It's about class consciousness. It's about a principle that should inform our organising, that no firefighter should ever vote for their own poverty.

So of course, the same rules apply to EC pay recommendations. Any real term pay cut is in itself unacceptable, but on the back of the pay erosion and a reduction in living standards that has been maintained now for twenty-five years, it's just lumping coal on the fire. This resolution is about resetting the bar.

It's about giving our members the truth and the dignity that they deserve. We must stop telling our members to be grateful for whatever they are given. How many times have you heard a member say, "Well, something's better than nothing," when we all know that a below inflation pay offer is actually less than nothing? It's a pay cut. We must stop advising them to take a backwards step while the cost of living races ahead.

Now we aren't naive. We know the struggle. We know the external factors and the economic pressures. But we, as trade unionists, it's our job to challenge the very idea that we have to accept less just because the government would prefer to line the bulging pockets of big business.

Not recommending below inflation pay offers far from guarantees achieving actual real term pay rises. But at the same time, who in their right mind would see real term pay cuts of twenty-seven percent, if you use the correct measure of RPI, since 2010 as a success? Yet time and time again, the EC recommends to gratefully accept the crumbs from the table.

And don't get me wrong, I do applaud the work of the EC and the strength and unity that members show for every uplift in pay. But let's tell it how it is. Accepting a pay cut is never a win, it's a concession. The managed decline of the fire service is unacceptable. The worsening living standards of firefighter families is unacceptable.

And for this union to recommend a real term pay cut is unacceptable. We're here to lead, not to manage decline. Let's set the bar where it belongs. Conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Pat. Conference, just to clarify, the EC are opposing. That's now open for debate. Anybody?

JOHN SIMS (West Midlands)**:**
Conference, president, West Midlands is speaking in support of resolution 13. After many years of real terms pay cuts and our pay failing to keep up with inflation following the 2008 banking crisis and the inflationary pressures of the COVID pandemic, we need to work towards redressing this imbalance.

We also face an ever more unstable world, where price shocks inflation are more likely due to a war in the Middle East. This resolution should provide some safeguards against increasing pay degradation and can be used in negotiations with employers to push for fair and reasonable pay offers. While we recognise the pay progress made in the pay reform negotiations through the NJC, these benefits will quickly unravel if our pay doesn't keep up with inflation. Thank you. *Applause*

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 13, protecting members from real terms pay cuts. I'm not going to repeat the points made so powerfully by the two comrades that moved and seconded this resolution. But, conference, I find it hard to understand the opposition to this.

It's only asking for the EC not to recommend or to campaign to get our members to accept a pay cut. It's hard to argue for the ability to do that, and I actually think this is what the AGS said earlier. We all understand that there are political and geopolitical factors that will play into any pay round.

But as we saw certainly in Scotland last year, the recommendation to accept the 3.2% was rushed through with no time to properly consult, which turned out to be below inflation quickly after acceptance, and was met with a lot of bad feeling because of the recommendation that accompanied it. Conference, if the EC want to put a below inflation pay offer to us, then they can do just that.

Just don't recommend acceptance and don't campaign for acceptance. The message can and should go out that it's been taken as far as possible through negotiations, and that to improve and to improve it, we'd need industrial action. That's what we should be doing anyway, no? So if inflation's our ambition, maybe we need more ambition. Conference, support the resolution. *Applause*

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 13. Conference, we've had the scraps off the table for too long. I've been in this job long enough to remember 1% pay offers being recommended. I've been in the job long enough to remember years when we got no pay uplifts whatsoever.

We talked for several years about pay restoration. Any pay offer recommended below inflation gets us nowhere near pay restoration, and that is something that we should be fighting for absolutely. And a question for the EC, if this passes, what system will you use to gauge inflation? Will it be RPI or CPI? *Applause*

JON LAMBE (London)**:**
Conference, president, general secretary, speaking in opposition. Why are we letting the EC off? All you're saying is they can put anything to us, and they have to take no accountability for it. Let's have it right. If the EC's giving us a rubbish, well below inflation, then they should accept why they're giving it to us. Because if it's no good, don't give it to us. Tell the employers no. And, you know, everyone going, "Oh, the EC." All this does is stop the EC giving their position why they've done it. It protects them, but it's all... Look, the EC, they're the highest committee we have, and what, they can just not have an opinion, or they're not allowed to tell us their opinion.

Doesn't stop me from campaigning to take it or not take it. And it was a few years ago, but I do remember probably seven, eight years ago, different EC to what we got now putting a ballot to our members that they got overturned on because regions did the work. You don't have to support them. If you carry your membership, you carry your membership.

But what you shouldn't do is go, "You can't have a say," because it protects them. What are we going to do if we get offered two percent in a month's time. All right, they're giving the two percent to the membership. Not the EC's fault. If they said we were going to say we're not going to accept offers like that, I could almost understand it, but it doesn't in any form. That's where I am anyway. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jon, and I promise I won't mention the Millwall/Hull City result, by the way. So I, I'm not going to mention that. Andy.

ANDY MURRAY (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, speaking out in opposition to this resolution. We need to look at the Birmingham bin strikers, bin workers. They're out on strike. They've been out on strike. If we don't recommend below inflation pay offers, we will end up on strike consistently. We've had 14 years of zeros, ones. If the EC didn't recommend that we took those, then we would be on strike. We wouldn't be getting any uplift at all. We would be losing money over and over and over and getting nowhere. We cannot restrict the EC from putting out offers. They negotiate. We empower them to negotiate on our behalf.

Once they get to the point where those negotiations have naturally ended, they have to come back and say, "This is where we're at. We recommend either you accept, or the alternative is a ballot for strike." Those are the two options. We oppose. *Applause*

DERMOT ROONEY (Northern Ireland)**:**
I'm just going to pose a question to you in opposition. If there was a spike in inflation and the EC were offered, or the, the negotiators were offered eight or nine percent, are we really saying no because we'll end up permanently on strike? Will you be voting against? *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dermot. Conference, do you agree to suspend your standing orders for the tea break? *Agreed*. Thank you. We'll finish the debate, and then we will catch up.

JAMES MEREDITH (Cheshire)**:**
Conference, just want to make the point that all this is saying, speaking in support of this all this is saying is that we

don't want the EC to recommend below inflation, uh, pay offers. It doesn't actually stop the members voting and making a decision.

It's basically just putting the decision back in members' hands without that influence of encouraging to be, to take a below inflation pay offer. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James.

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear)**:**
Conference, president, speaking in opposition for this resolution. I listened to the great debate, right, in sitting there. Just one thing's very clear is that if the EC recommend whether we should or shouldn't accept, they're the ones in the room. We're not in that room. The members aren't in the room. They're going to reach a point like in any negotiation where the negotiations can go no further. So if we're saying that we'll only take inflation and the offer is below that, then what are we going to do? And as Andy Murray pointed out, that we will just be constantly out on strike and at odds with our employers.

Whilst I completely understand that pay is an emotive subject, but we have to be realistic. We've seen zeros, ones, twos, threes. Sometimes we just have to be happy with what we can get, otherwise we're just going to be constantly out the door and constantly in argument. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Anybody else? No. AGS to outline the EC's opposition.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
I have the best jobs, don't I? Some opposition, although I've got quite a lot of scribble, so I'm going to try and get through it all. There were a few speakers, president, that kept saying, "This is all the resolution says. This is all the resolution says." The truth is it doesn't just say that. It says a lot more when you read it. It says, "A recognised national measure of inflation." Well, what is that? And do we pick it? Because there are some very low, and there's some very high. It doesn't give a lot of detail about what that would be. So it isn't all it says at all. Inflation plays a huge part in the discussions around where we look to settle and what we determine to be reasonable. I don't think anyone has ever done the jobs of the executive council and attended meetings and the negotiations and sought to worsen the pay of firefighters and the members that they represent. I think it's the case that each and every year they look to improve the standing of firefighters in the economy.

So any suggestion that they're recommending piecemeal pay offers, I think you're receiving a wee bit of pushback to that here. I ask you as well a series of questions. If the employers offered us slightly less than inflation, but offered us fifty-two weeks' maternity provision, and they offered us an increase to CPD, and they offered us pay parity from control, are you really suggesting that the executive council would recommend nothing?

That's what this says. So it doesn't just say that. If the national employers offered us ten percent this year, two percent next, and then ten percent in the third year, are you really suggesting your executive council that you democratically put up here couldn't have a say in improving the benefits to our members?

Because that's what this says. You elected them. This motion, in our view, is undemocratic. You elected them. You put them here. They have a voice just like you do, and it is perverse in this resolution that the executive council couldn't make a recommendation, but a regional committee could, and a brigade committee could. That's not democratic. The executive council is opposed to it for all of those reasons and many more.

The point on RPI, and the reason I think the president was absolutely right, is because in the very near future, it won't actually be a measure at all. The Treasury has announced it is going. It won't be recorded. They're going to start using CPIH as its equivalent measure. So that's why it would have been in opposition, as it wouldn't have been a national recognised measure. Some question whether it's even nationally recognised today, as it's not really used much across public sector. They're the reasons for the opposition.

I trust conference will think carefully about what they're potentially agreeing here and the undemocratic sounding that it would deliver. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. Martin, right of reply

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire)**:**
President, conference, a couple of things I heard there talking about going on strike constantly. Do you actually think that if the executive council put out a recommendation to members and they do not give a recommendation to it, members are just going to go out and vote on strike straight away? Do you think that's going to happen every single time? Because I don't think it will. There are other unions in recent years that took neutral positions on pay offers. GMB did it in the local government pay offer 2025-26. the police, Unison employees, Unison did it in that one as well. Doesn't mean we'll go out on strike all the time because we'd still have to ballot members to see if they want to go out on strike.

It doesn't stop members voting to accept a pay rise. All the situations you gave there, Ben, with the greatest of respect, we're talking about hypothetical situations. What isn't hypothetical is that our members have been getting pay offers below inflation for years, over a decade, and if we do put that pay offer out, say inflation's at 10% and the government comes to us and says, "Yeah, we'll give you 9%," do we honestly think if we put that out to members to vote, just because the EC didn't put a recommendation to accept, our members are just going to reject it and force us into a position of strike?

I don't think they will. I don't think they'll just necessarily reject it straight out. What you will get is you'll get the ground truth of how the members feel about that pay offer and whether or not they're up for a fight over it. That's what you'll get. And to sit here and say that it removes democracy, I'm sorry, Ben, but we're a member-led union.

You're putting it to the members. You're asking them what you want the members to do. So I disagree with a lot of those points, but let's be really clear on what it doesn't do. It does not prevent negotiation. It does not prevent compromise because the members will decide it. It does not prevent a ballot taking place on pay.

It does not prevent members democratically accepting any pay offer that is put before them. What this resolution says is narrower and simpler. What the leadership of this union should not actively campaign for is the acceptance of real terms reduction in firefighters' living standards. That's what the resolution says. Let the members decide. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right. Thanks for that, Martin. There is one flaw. You said the EC can't have a position. You didn't say head office. You didn't say head office can't have a position. I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

Right, conference, I now put resolution 13 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That falls*. *Calls for card vote*.

Why did I know that was coming? Right on tea break. Nobody move. Thank you.

Right, conference, come to order. We've still got this to sort out.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
You'd almost think I saw that coming. Can I have the tellers and scrutineers at the front, please? So just to explain what's going to happen. So there's two boxes, one for, one against. So I'm going to call those delegates firstly that are in favour of resolution 13? To come up and place their voting cards, which are on the table in front of you, into the relevant box.

And then after that, I'm going to ask the no's to come and do the same thing. Then we will, accompanied by the tellers and scrutineers, go over to standing orders, and the cards, there's a barcode on the back of them, and the tellers and scrutineers will watch us calculate the votes. So can I first of all ask those who are in favour of resolution 13 to come up and place a voting card in the yes box?

Thank you, conference. Now can I ask those who are in opposition to resolution 13 to come up and do the same?

Thank you, conference. Just for your information, for those that don't know, the figures are ... that we base this on each of your voting cards, the barcode relates to the number of members that you have, or had on 31 December 2025. That's the figure that we use. So it's based on the number of members. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. Right, conference, we are going to go for a coffee break. If we could have you back in your seats for five past 3.00, please. five past 3.00. Thank you. Are we going five past 4.00? Sorry. five past 4.00.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, can we start taking our seats now, please?

You all right for a minute? You all right for a minute, Kasey? Can't be bothered just yet.

You ready now, Kate? Kate, are you ready now? I just say, are you ready now or do you want a few more minutes? What you say? All right now. Thank you.

Right, conference come to order. I now call Kate Yhnell, the Chief Scrutineer, to announce the result of the card vote.

CHIEF SCRUTINEER (Kate Yhnell)**:**
Votes for were 14,990 and against was 18,704. Therefore, the resolution *falls*.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Kate.

Not one to gloat, but my eye's still got it. Yeah, not been wrong yet, but there's two days to go/two and a half days. Right. Okay, right, thanks for that. I now call para A2, para A3, para A4, para A5. Conference, I'll now be taking resolution 3 and resolution 8 in the same debate. They stand in opposition, so if resolution 3 carries, 8 will fall. I now call resolution 3, paper ballot consultation from Scotland.

Come to the rostrum, Gus, please, for the purpose of the minutes. Or the verbatim report, should I say, not minutes

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
That was withdrawn. Resolution 3 was withdrawn.

THE PRESIDENT:
Excellent, Gus. Thank you for that. I now call resolution 8, membership consultation on pay offers, moved by Merseyside. The EC are opposing. Merseyside.

Resolution 8 MEMBERSHIP CONSULTATION ON PAY OFFERS
Conference notes that negotiations on pay are undertaken by senior officials within the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and that the decision on any pay offer rests, ultimately, with the FBU membership.

Conference believes that the structures of this union are in place to promote debate and to enable members to reach decisions in a democratic manner.

Conference also believes the matter of pay is one that affects every FBU member in the UK. Those members are best informed and able to make a balanced and informed decision when they have all of the information available, when coming to those decisions.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to provide the employers pay offer to FBU members, as soon as possible once negotiations have concluded. At the point that the pay offer is provided to FBU members, the EC should then begin a 4 week period of consultation, which allows FBU officials the time to visit workplaces and arrange meetings to provide our members with all information available and engage in meaningful debate. Once the 4 week consultation period has concluded, there should then commence a ballot of members on whether to accept the pay offer. This ballot should be of no less than 4 weeks in duration.

MERSEYSIDE

GRAEME JONES (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 8, membership consultation on pay offers. So there are three things that every single one of us in this room will hear when we step onto a branch or attend committee meetings. What is happening with broadening of the role? What's happening with pension? And what's happening with pay?

That last point is increasingly followed with the question of, why were we told to accept a below inflation pay offer last year? Why didn't we get a chance to discuss it? Conference, the ask of this resolution is fairly simple. We talk about being well informed.

Then let us have those informed talks with our branches. We talk about being an engaged membership base, then let us engage with our membership. We talk about being active. Well, let our members actively have a say. This resolution simply asks for brigade officials to be given the opportunity to speak with our members. Four weeks. Four weeks is all we ask for.

Four weeks to speak to our members about the offer that the EC have put forward. Four weeks to inform our members who might not understand what inflation means, who might not understand what accepting or rejecting an offer means for them. Four weeks for us to create a solidified and unified voice from our branches.

Conference, I don't say this to brag. The offer where we accepted half a percent below inflation didn't really affect me too much. I'm single. I've got no kids. My mortgage is fairly small, and I don't really have a lot of bills going out. So it'd be easy for me to just put a little bit less money away each month or buy a couple of less pints each month. But for the firefighter in my watch who's divorced with three kids and a sole carer for his elderly mother, half a percent below inflation was huge. So surely one of the solutions to that is letting them tell the rest of our committee and the rest of their branch how accepting an offer would leave them no better off.

Surely they deserve a voice. Surely they deserve an opportunity to have a view on pay offers before every member sits in the comfort of their own home and makes a decision that affects us collectively without even knowing how the collective feels.

Full disclosure, I didn't accept last year's pay offer. And I don't know if it would have even made a difference to the overall outcome, but what I do know is, given the opportunity to hear how our comrades felt about the offer, given the opportunity to listen to the most experienced who have seen 12% disappear from their pay, and given the opportunity to understand the ins and outs of the offer, more of our members would have voted with intention, whether that was to accept or not.

Without an opportunity for engagement with our branches, we are actively encouraging an uninformed vote for many of our members. We are actively discouraging unity, and we are actively working against the very reason this union was founded. Now, the EC may talk about how this resolution will delay pay being in firefighters' bank accounts and how this resolution is restrictive.

If that's the case, I ask the EC where's the pay offer for this year then? And when will it be in our bank accounts? If we're worried about delays, why have we been delayed this year? The EC might talk about how last year's system was democratic and every member had a vote. Conference, this resolution doesn't take that away.

It merely asks that our members are given an opportunity to sit around a mess table and talk it through. Merely asks that they're given an opportunity to ask questions, and it merely asks that they are afforded informed democratic choices. I do hope the opposition to this resolution by the EC is, as the AGS declared in his pay reform policy statement, not an attempt to shut down comradely debate.

In fact, I want to thank the AGS for making my argument for me in his pay reform speech. He is right. Our members do absolutely need the opportunity to debate when it comes to pay. Branch and brigade meetings around pay are by far the most highly attended, most engaging, and most critical meetings that we hold.

By supporting this resolution, I believe we strengthen our union, I believe we engage with our membership, and I believe our members are given a voice beyond putting an X in a box or clicking a screen. National officer with the remit for organising talks fondly about the importance of organising properly.

Communicating with our members through email or WhatsApp is not meaningful. It isn't effective, and it is not organising. Meeting our members on branches, engaging them in open, honest, and full debate, that is organising. It's how we make sure we have the most engaged, the most informed, and the most organised membership in the trade union movement.

I know some of you may hold concerns around the four-week pay ballot period. The reason for that is simple. Needs to be ample time for our members to come back off annual leave, to come back off sick, and have those conversations, and then make an informed decision. Conference, I urge you to support informed members, I urge you to support unity, and I urge you to support this resolution. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Graeme. Seconder?

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 8, membership consultation on pay offers. Conference, last year's consultative ballot on the pay offer began on 28th April, and the result was published just 20 days later on the 19 May. The EC recommended acceptance of the offer, and it was accepted, as we know, by 82% of our members on a 59% turnout.

In Scotland, in the limited time we had to speak to members, the offer and the recommendation were met with a less than favourable response. At subsequent branch and area meetings over the following weeks and months, it was repeatedly brought up that members hadn't had the chance to speak to officials and make their feelings known, and for this to be reported back to the EC.

There was and remains a palpable sense of anger at this, which led to two branches in the east of Scotland to bring similar resolutions to their area committee that was endorsed unanimously. It was then unanimously endorsed by the Scottish regional committee and brought to this conference, and that's the resolution that we withdrew in order to support Merseyside's.

All we're asking for, all we're both asking for, is the opportunity and the time to consult with our members on the most important issue they face every year. We all know that an EC recommendation carries significant weight with a lot of our members, but equally, a lot of our members want the chance to ask questions, raise their concerns, and expect those concerns to be reported back to the EC.

After all, we keep talking about putting the union firmly back in the hands of the members. Let's actually do that. Please support the resolution. Scotland seconds. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Gus. That's now open for debate. Anybody? Yep.

STEVE MATTINSON (Cumbria)**:**
President, conference, I stand here in support of resolution 8 brought by Merseyside. Last year, I stood at the rostrum and voiced my concerns and frustrations over the way the pay offer was determined and the decision by the EC to recommend the pay offer with no real time to engage with branches and members.

In terms of what Brother Jones says, just to clarify, I'm not on his shift, but I am divorced, living with a parent, co-parent three children who I support, and our pay is of the utmost importance to me. But last year I did reject the offer on that cause. Pay in the whole is one of the most engaging subjects and one that gets most opinions and one of the most divisive topics within our union.

The EC should wholeheartedly provide a recommendation but should also provide the time to engage with members and the rationale of why we should go with that recommendation. And to quote the AGS, we shouldn't be rushing, as he says. All we're asking for here is to uphold the spirit, the intent and the expression of our Rule Book, which clearly states: *"the foundation of the union's democratic structure shall be the organisation and representation of members of their place of work."*

I repeat, their place of work. Our democracy cannot and will not be achieved by home postal communications. It can only be completed by democratic debate, open discussion and exchange of views to make informed decisions and promote activism in our union. We need time to exchange, to motivate and get out 'the why'.

Conference, I support this resolution and those that value our Rule Book, that value democracy should do, too. Let members decide. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. Anybody else in the debate? No. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah. The executive council oppose this resolution. and it's not at all to stifle debate and I'll set out the opposition now. But I just want it noted, president, I've never been quoted so extensively. The issue with the resolution is twofold really. First of all, the resolution in the final paragraph says that the executive council is instructed to provide the employers' pay offer.

That would mean if a derisory offer was presented, the executive council couldn't therefore reject it out of hand. I think that's an important point for which you enter negotiations with an executive council in and around the room, that they're able to quickly assess the validity of an offer and whether it's acceptable to members, and if it is not, they should be able to reject that out of hand.

The text of the resolution, although the intention may be slightly different, the policy would set that the employers' pay offer to FBU members is soon as possible passed across to members in the way it's set out of four weeks, consultation.

Again, we're not opposed to periods of consultation. At times that has been in place. There have been times where time is of the essence or, or when time is, is more available. But this, in essence, isn't just a period of four weeks. As it sets out in here, it's eight weeks. It's four weeks consultation and four weeks for a ballot. Imagine if that was whilst we were on strike, comrades.

Imagine the long, extensive period for which we would have to wait before we could end a potential strike. Graeme, respectfully comrade, I don't think members do need to be explained what inflation is. I think they know. They're intelligent. They feel the effect of the cost of living on a daily basis. They don't need to know and look at the numbers and a percentage sign.

So, you know, I think we sometimes do our members a disservice in their understanding of pay and, and their conditions. In my experience, they're all too aware of that. That's not at all to say that we don't agree with the premise of having time, spending time debating and consulting with members.

That is often at the heart. But we need to be able to make the right decisions at the right time, set out at sometimes in different ways, and that may mean we want to have longer periods of consultation and shorter ballots or shorter periods of consultation and longer ballots. This would be extremely restrictive in how the executive council could do that.

But again, I think starting with my first point, one of, I think, the important things for a negotiator is to be able to say, "Well, we will consult with the executive council. We don't think they will accept it." This would force us to return to the membership each and every time and we think the power the executive council has is an important part to negotiations. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. Graeme, right of reply.

GRAEME JONES (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, it's good to see nobody spoke in opposition, so I'm hoping that means you're all going to support this resolution.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Um – I did, Graeme.

GRAEME JONES (Merseyside)**:**
Just to pick up on a few points. Comrades, I think if you read the resolution, it's pretty clear in its ask that the resolution states once negotiations have been concluded. It doesn't bring about every single pay offer. That clearly gives the EC an opportunity to speak in a room and come to a decision on a pay offer that they should put forward to us. And with respect, Ben, I'm not disparaging any members, but I have had a few members ask directly what inflation means. So I just want to put that on record. Also, I mean, I understand what you're saying around potentially eight weeks on strike, but we could come up with as many hypotheticals as we want, really. Again, conference, I really urge you to support this. I think if you want to stand here and oppose it, feel free to go back to your members and tell them that you didn't want to give them a chance to discuss their pay when they go back to their branches, to their committee. Tell them that you are happy to take their voices away from them. Tell them that you are happy that the EC has just opposed resolution 13 because they think that they should have an opportunity to, as elected officials, come to a conclusion and tell you what to do, but they don't think you, as branch officials, should be able to go out and tell your members what your opinions are. Conference, please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Graeme. I'll let him get back all the way back there before I put it to the vote.

Conference, I now put resolution 8 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That falls*.

I now call resolution 19, Ballot Recommendation Communications, moved by Buckinghamshire with an amendment from Merseyside.

Resolution 19 BALLOT RECOMMENDATION COMMUNICATIONS
Conference notes the importance of communicating information to members and utilising all available channels to do so.

Conference further notes, however, that some information should be reserved for members only.

Conference is aware that during the 2025 pay ballot the Executive Council (EC) recommended that members accept the pay offer, and that this recommendation was shared widely and repeatedly.

Conference recognises the trust members place in their elected EC and the considerable work undertaken on their behalf.

Conference further recognises that the recommendation was reached following careful consideration of a range of relevant factors, which were appropriately detailed within member communications.

Conference has no issue with the content of the recommendation itself and believes such recommendations remain an important reference point for members when casting their vote.

Conference believes that the sharing of ballot recommendations outside of direct-to-member channels, particularly via social media, places unnecessary and unfair pressure on members who may hold a different view to that of the EC.

Conference is concerned that, should a democratic ballot result not align with the EC's recommendation, the public circulation of that recommendation may create a perception of division or weakness within the Fire Brigades Union.

Conference therefore instructs the EC to restrict communications relating specifically to their recommendation on how members should vote in any ballot to channels that are delivered directly to members, and to members only.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

AMENDMENT
Paragraph 6, remove 'has no issue with the content of the recommendation itself and'.

MERSEYSIDE

ROB MARTIN (Buckinghamshire)**:**
President, conference, Buckinghamshire believes in this resolution and the intent with which it was written. Ballots on pay are not to be taken lightly and warrant serious debate and discussion amongst the membership. The executive council work tirelessly on behalf of all members when collectively bargaining on pay.

Through their hard work, a natural recommendation will be reached on an offer that is then brought to the membership for ballot. Should that recommendation be rejected by means of a calculated move to force the hand of our employers or accepted following what is believed to be successful negotiation, this information is invaluable to ensure the offer is debated at committees and on branches prior to the democratic vote.

Our issue lies very specifically with the way in which the EC uses national FBU outlets, such as social media platforms to share said recommendations. Whilst we acknowledge that they remain an important reference point for members when discussing the ballot and casting their vote, and welcome the amendment from Merseyside, to make such a statement on a global platform fully accessible to anyone risks undermining the membership and the strength of the Fire Brigades Union should a democratic vote go against the recommendation.

This motion was to call for a limit to all communications concerning the recommendation on how members should vote in a pay offer ballot to established internal channels that are delivered directly to FBU members. Whilst it may be considered easier to reach large numbers via social media communications, the importance of the subject and maintaining our democratic, unified strength in the eye of the public should make the additional effort required a worthwhile effort.

However, we cannot overlook that our resolution by the letter calls for a restriction on communications of, of how members should vote in any ballot. Having witnessed the successful campaign run by Oxfordshire, we now fear that this oversight in wording of our resolution as per the final agenda could have unintended consequences depending on how you interpret that final paragraph.

I should also add that our aim was never to restrict the EC in isolation, so at this time, we agree that in order to move towards the resolution that we want, we must withdraw for reconsideration at conference next year. Conference, I withdraw. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that, Rob. I now call para A7. Para A8. I now call composite A, Sick Pay, Grey Book, moved by the CSNC, seconded by Durham and Darlington. CSNC.

Composite A (Resolutions 1, 4, 10) SICK PAY – GREY BOOK
Conference understands that currently within the Grey Book, the provision under 'Sick Leave' includes both of the following:

> ***"An employee on authorised sick leave shall be entitled to full pay for six months in any twelve-month period. Thereafter the fire and rescue employer may reduce pay by up to half for six months."***

And

> ***"An employee on authorised sick leave as a result of an illness or injury arising out of authorised duty shall be entitled to full pay for twelve months. Thereafter the fire and rescue employer may reduce pay by up to half for six months."***

Conference notes with concern that members diagnosed with conditions that are automatically deemed disabilities under the Equality Act face having their pay reduced by half after 6 months' absence under the current Grey Book provisions.

Conference also notes that it has become increasingly apparent that fire and rescue employers are automatically reducing pay to half for all employees who are on authorised sick leave, either for illness or injury not arising out of authorised duty or where they can contest the validity of the sick leave arising out of authorised duty, for example, stress related injuries, cancers and post-traumatic stress disorder, without any form of formal process, assessment or due care for the wellbeing of the individual.

Conference believes it is unacceptable that some employers use our national terms and conditions to place seriously ill members in financial detriment at a time when they are undergoing life-saving treatment or managing progressive and life-altering conditions.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council (EC) to negotiate through the National Joint Council (NJC) to amend the Grey Book so that absences, wholly or substantially attributable to such disabilities are exempt from pay reduction provisions. This must include the treatment, recovery, aftercare and clinical monitoring and any periods of remission for such qualifying conditions.

Conference instructs the Executive Council, through the NJC to negotiate an agreed position to ensure that any member undergoing cancer treatment must not be subject to reduced pay whilst undergoing that treatment

Conference instructs the EC to commence these negotiations within 3 months of Conference 2026 and to report progress to Conference 2027.

LYNDSEY BURTON (CSNC)**:**
Good afternoon, president, conference. As set out in the composite resolution A, CSNC, we feel that members who are diagnosed with conditions that are automatically deemed disabilities under the Equalities Act should not be subject to a reduction in pay whilst undertaking the treatment.

We must protect those who protect our communities, and we must protect ourselves. We say equality matters, then why should these decisions be based on the mood or how the chief or the head of HR is feeling that day? We should be going to work with clear expectations of the measures in place to protect us should we need them.

Dealing with issues associated with cancer and other illnesses takes strength and focus, and members should not have to face additional stress worrying about finances or the timescales of a potential reduction of finances and the

implications of that. We therefore ask of our EC to negotiate exemption of pay reduction provisions as set out in the resolution.

To also negotiate an agreed position to ensure that any member undergoing cancer treatment must not be subject to reduced pay whilst undergoing that treatment. These negotiations are to commence within three months of conference 2026 and to report progress to conference 2027. Conference, we urge you to support. I move. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Lyndsey. The EC are supporting. Andy, Durham and Darlington to second. You have to talk.

ANDY MURRAY (Durham and Darlington)**:**
Fair enough. I just stand here silently and prolong everything. Apologies. President, conference, this resolution was brought by all three of the committees with the same intention.

People should not be detrimentally impacted because of illnesses caused by work. They shouldn't be off work with no pay or half pay, fighting against illnesses that are keeping them away from work, but also fighting against paying the mortgage, fighting against bailiffs knocking on their door. We challenge robustly every single time that a member gets put on to half pay or zero pay when it's based on coming out of duty. But these challenges take time.

These challenges leave the member in a position where they don't have the money to live their life, to focus on getting better, focus on getting back to work. We need a more robust and transparent process that holds services to account. We second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy. That's now open for debate. Anybody? Yep.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, comrades, we fully support this resolution. We have a member in Merseyside at the moment who is going through this right now. No member should have to worry about paying the bills and putting food on the table while they fight for their lives.

Three months ago, we approached Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service asking them to change their policies on those undergoing cancer treatment. We're still waiting for a reply. What we did as a trade union was fight to get our member full pay beyond the six months that the service were going to give him.

That should not be a fight that we have to take on for anyone. Anyone with a shred of decency should give the support to people who are fighting cancer. Comrades, please support this resolution. *Applause*

ADAM BARNES (Warwickshire)**:**
President, conference, while we do stand in support of composite A, I wanted to stand and talk around some of the terminology used in one of the motions. Two years ago, Brother Madden took to the rostrum and conference unanimously agreed to remove the word disorder from PTSD in our union language. That decision mattered because words matter. Disorder suggests something is wrong with the individual, and as firefighters, we witness tragedy and suffering as part of our everyday job. The impact of that is not weakness or a disorder, it is trauma. Conference already recognise this, yet motions are still being accepted with terminology we agreed to move away from. This is not criticising the brigades submitting them. We support the intent and principles behind the motions. But if we are serious about reducing stigma, our language must reflect that.

Language shapes culture, and culture shapes whether members feel able to ask for help. Asking for help should never feel like admitting to a disorder. Removal of the word disorder does not change the substance of the motions. It strengthens them. It reaffirms the position the union has already taken and sends a clear message to our members, experiencing trauma does not make you disordered, it makes you human. Conference, I move. *Applause*

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
Conference, president, we need to take this away from some people who make these decisions. In Norfolk, when I go to try and get someone extended, I don't go to the chief fire officer. We have to go to an unelected HR manager. We need to take it away from these people.

We need to give back the Grey Book. That needs to take charge and say, these people will have the pay that they richly deserve if they're getting their treatment. It's ridiculous. I have to go cap in hand and most of the time they turn around and say no. So I urge you to support. Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Alan. Anybody else in the debate? No. I now put composite A to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 5, Redeployment Opportunities, moved by South Yorkshire with amendments from Scotland. The EC are seeking withdraw or they oppose.

Resolution 5 REDEPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES
Conference notes that the increase in retirement age across UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) has resulted in more members being expected to maintain operational fitness standards later in life.

Conference recognises that some members may be unable to meet operational fitness requirements later in their career through no fault of their own, but as a consequence of the physical demands of firefighting and longer working lives.

Conference further notes that members have reported that access to redeployment opportunities across UKFRSs remains inconsistent and, in some cases, extremely limited.

Conference also recognises that this situation risks experienced firefighters losing their career, income, and professional identity despite many years of dedicated service.

Conference believes that no member should face the loss of their employment simply because they are unable to meet operational fitness standards later in their career.

Conference also believes that UKFRSs should seek to retain the skills, experience and professionalism of long-serving firefighters wherever possible.

Conference expects that redeployment should not be treated as an exceptional or discretionary arrangement, but as a structured and recognised pathway within UKFRSs.

Conference also expects that the development of non-fitness-tested Grey Book roles – including work in prevention, protection, operational planning and similar functions – should form part of a consistent national approach.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***campaign for the development of a national redeployment framework within UKFRSs***
- ***seek to establish minimum expectations for redeployment opportunities within every UKFRS***
- ***promote the development of non-fitness-tested Grey Book roles across Services where appropriate***
- ***work to ensure members have fair access to meaningful alternative roles where operational fitness can no longer be maintained***

- ***challenge any Service that fails to explore genuine pathways for retaining experienced firefighters.***

Conference affirms that firefighters who are unable to remain operational due to age or the physical demands of the role should be given the opportunity to continue contributing their knowledge, skills and experience to their Service. Long service should provide security and dignity, not exclusion.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

AMENDMENT 1
3rd paragraph, 2nd line: Insert 'uniformed' so that content reads: 'access to uniformed redeployment opportunities across'

SCOTLAND

AMENDMENT 2
5th paragraph, 1st line:
Insert ', or access to uniformed occupational pension scheme,' so that content reads: 'the loss of their employment, or access to uniformed occupational pension scheme simply because,'

SCOTLAND

AMENDMENT 3
Insert new first bullet point
- ***'negotiate with the national employers through the National Joint Council to secure the necessary related provisions within the Grey Book'***

SCOTLAND

AMENDMENT 4
4th bullet point, 1st line:
Insert 'uniformed' so that content reads: 'access to meaningful uniformed alternative roles'

SCOTLAND

STU SMITH (South Yorkshire)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution number five, redeployment opportunities. Conference, let me be absolutely clear from the outset, moving this motion does not in any way accept or endorse a retirement age of 60 for firefighters. We all know that 60 is not an appropriate retirement age for a role that is physically demanding as ours, and nothing in this motion suggests otherwise.

What this motion does do is confront the reality that we are currently facing. Right now, while we continue that fight with our employers, members are being lost from the service, not through lack of commitment, not through lack of professionalism, but because they can no longer meet operational fitness standards later in their careers and they are being lost with no consistent safety net.

Conference, we are effectively sacrificing experienced firefighters while that wider battle continues. This cannot be right. We can no longer afford to ignore this problem or leave it to chance depending on which service you work for. This motion is about ensuring that when a firefighter can no longer remain operational, through no fault of their own, they are not simply discarded.

It is about creating a proper structured redeployment pathway, one that values experience, retains skills, and treats our members with dignity. And let's be clear, if we are successful in establishing a national redeployment framework, we do not weaken our position, we actually strengthen it. We force the employers to recognise and confront the reality of an aging workforce. We force them to recognise the consequences of a retirement age that does not reflect the demands of this job, and ultimately, we increase the pressure to address the need to reduce pension age for our firefighters.

Conference, this is not retreat. This is protecting our members now while strengthening our fight for the future. Long service should not end in exclusion. It should be recognised, respected, and retained. I ask you to support this motion. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Stu. Do I have a seconder? Scotland, are you going to move your amendments at the same time please, Gus? Yep. Thank you.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution five, redeployment opportunities from South Yorkshire and moving our amendments. Conference, we welcome the resolution from South Yorkshire and only made amendments to try and strengthen it based on experiences in our region that have seen our members redeployed into civilian roles as a result of capability processes where no uniformed roles existed for redeployment.

As the comrade from South Yorkshire said in moving, we understand that the EC are concerned that this resolution implies that the FBU is happy with the normal pension age of 60, but we refute that completely. This resolution is a reflection of the realities of the current normal pension age of the 2015 scheme that we're all now on, and until that is changed through legislation, this is the reality that persists.

Should there be a change in pension legislation and a subsequent lowering of the pension age, then this resolution would still apply. The need for redeployment opportunities will still exist, and without a significant change in approach for many fire and rescue services, we will still have to fight to prevent our members being forced out the job they joined before collecting their pension at whatever age.

Conference, please support the resolution. Scotland seconds. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks for that, Gus. Right, there are four amendments from Scotland. So does amendment 1 have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you.

Does amendment 2 have a seconder? *Formally*

Amendment 3, have a seconder? *Formally*

Amendment 4, have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody? No. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president. Again, the executive council are opposing this. We're seeking withdrawal. However, at the very least, we would prefer if it was remitted South Yorkshire, and that's because – and it's not trying to play semantics, but words and language do matter. In the first paragraphs, it's the conference notes the increase to retirement age.

Up until this, conference has opposed the increase to the retirement age, and that may seem like semantics, but the position of the executive council and our lawyers are this may be used against us by the government. We are in with them regularly in and around this, and they will follow the text of policy that you agree today.

One thing I will do is, and I'll take a slight liberty, president, is even if conference vote against this, if South Yorkshire don't remit, we will continue with the work the union is doing around pensions and the premise of this resolution sits at the heart of that work anyway. So there won't be any relaxing from looking to achieve the text of the motion, even if you vote against it.

But again, because of the language and the concerns we have and how it may be used against us by the lawyers at GAD, we're asking that South Yorkshire remit it anyway. So South Yorkshire, just to be clear, the premise and the delivery of the motion will be in play.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. Stu, right of reply?

STU SMITH (South Yorkshire)**:**
Just let me respond directly to the point that Ben just raised, that we should be just solely focusing on perhaps the pension age and not redeployment. And I agree with the principle. 60, obviously, as I said before, is not a fair retirement age. It does not reflect the reality of the job, and it is a fight we must continue and take on nationally, politically, and collectively.

But here is the reality we can just not ignore. That fight is not won today, and while it continues, our members are paying the price right now. Right now, firefighters later on in their careers, experienced, committed professionals, are being pushed out of the service because they can no longer meet operational fitness standards.

Not because they've failed, not because they've given less, but because the job is relentless. And too often they are leaving with nothing more than uncertainty. Conference, doing nothing until we win on pension age is not a strategy, it's a gap, and that gap is where our members are already falling through.

This motion fills that gap. It says, "While we fight to fix the system, we also protect the people inside it." A structured national redeployment pathway is not about accepting 60. It is about refusing to discard firefighters before they get there. In fact, it strengthens our argument because it forces the employers and the government to confront the truth, that firefighters cannot realistically sustain frontline fitness to 60, and that the system has to compensate for that failure.

So I say again, this is not retreat, this is pressure. Protecting members now, retaining experience, and strengthening our case for a fairer pension age in the future. Conference, we can and we must do both. I urge you to support. South Yorkshire is not remitting. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Stu. I now put amendment 1 to resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show.

Right, I'm going to call that again because some people didn't put their hands up, they put their hands up late. I now put amendment 1 to resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. Keep your hands up. I've got a seating plan here, and I have to look where the big brigades are and where the smaller ones are. So keep your arms up, please. *That falls*.

A card vote was called

Conference, can I ask you all to not start moving around the, the hall yet. And could I ask you just from my point of view, I know it's late in the day and your arms must be getting tired now, but can you raise your – I think even in that one, there was some part of a delegation was down and part of it was up. And then when I asked for it again, it went the opposite way. So it was like whack-a-mole.

So do me a favour, please, make it as clear as you can. Right. Just waiting for the chair of standing orders. Chair of standing orders will be with us now. He'll be sprinting across that roadway. Conference, keep in your seats, please. Phil, when you're ready.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Here we get déjà vu. Folks, same drill as last time. There's two boxes, so we'll go with those who are in favour of the amendment. If you can come up and put your voting card into the yes box, please. Thank you, conference. Can we now have the no's?

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference come to order. Again Phil, please.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Can we now have those who are against place their voting card in the, the box please? Thank you, conference, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. Conference, if my clean sheet falls after that, I'm blaming you lot because of your tiredness in putting your arms up. Right. What we're going to do now is while they've taken that away to be counted, I am going to pause that debate, and I'm going to move on to the next business.

I now call resolution 12, Paid Time For Retained Duty System, RDS, Firefighters To Maintain Operational Fitness, moved by Leicestershire. The EC are supporting, Leicestershire.

Resolution 12 PAID TIME FOR RETAINED DUTY SYSTEM, RDS, FIREFIGHTERS TO MAINTAIN OPERATIONAL FITNESS
Conference notes the resolution 'Fitness Training Facilities Provision for Retained Duty System (RDS) Employees' brought by Avon in 2025.

Conference also notes the current status update provided by the General Secretary on this resolution in the Conference 2025 'Implementation' document.

Conference recognises the quote within the above stated resolution:
"Conference notes the Grey Book Part B – Occupational health, General Principles, paragraph 1, states;
"Authorities are encouraged to provide facilities to enable employees to maintain and/or improve their levels of fitness as part of an overall health and fitness culture."

Conference however, believes this aspect of the Grey Book does not go far enough.

Conference understands it is long established that a minimum level of fitness is required to be maintained to be able to respond to emergency incidents. Currently, RDS firefighters are at a detriment to most Wholetime counterparts who are afforded time to maintain operational fitness in work hours. Our RDS members often have other primary employment and more limited opportunities to maintain operational fitness to be able to help their communities. A provision to be paid for this occupational requirement would level the playing field and increase standards across the UK Fire and Rescue Services.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to seek to improve the wording of the Grey Book through negotiations at the National Joint Council to ensure that all RDS firefighters are entitled to be paid for personal training time to maintain operational fitness.

LEICESTERSHIRE

HARRY BRANT (Leicestershire)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 12. Conference, we had some great resolutions passed and debates had on the floor on equality this morning. This resolution is asking for a different type of equality, equality in pay for our RDS members to maintain operational fitness.

Conference, we don't need war and peace on this resolution. We are seeking our RDS brothers and sisters are afforded the same rights and provisions as their wholetime counterparts. This follows on from Avon's resolution to conference 2025 and goes beyond the expectations set out in that resolution. We have members within our own brigade that are currently on performance and capability due to not maintaining operational fitness, all whilst not paying our members to be at the required standard. Conference, we are aware that paid time to maintain operational fitness for our retained firefighters exists in some services.

This resolution seeks to end that postcode lottery and ensure our retained brothers and sisters are treated equally. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Harry. Does that have a seconder? Yep

OLLIE BALDAM (NRC)**:**
Conference, president, speaking to support and second resolution 12. This resolution is about fairness, professionalism, and public safety. Every firefighter in this room understands one simple truth: operational fitness is not optional in our job, it is essential.

Whether you are entering a burning building, carrying casualties, working in extreme heat, or operating for hours at demanding incidents, the public expects every firefighter to be physically capable of doing the job safely and effectively. Retained firefighters are no different. Retained crews respond to the same emergencies, face the same dangers, and carry the same responsibilities as our wholetime colleagues.

The fire does not burn less fiercely because the appliance is crewed by retained firefighters. The risks do not reduce because someone is responding from their home or another workplace. Yet despite this, many retained firefighters are expected to maintain the operational fitness standards required of the role in their own unpaid time.

Conference, that cannot be right. Most retained firefighters balance service to their communities alongside primary employment, family commitments, and caring responsibilities. They give extraordinary commitment to the fire and rescue service, often at significant personal sacrifice. But unlike many wholetime firefighters, they frequently do not have the access to paid training time or structured opportunities during the working day to maintain this operational fitness.

Wholetime firefighters majority of the time are afforded time during shift to work on fitness in a kitted-out station gym. So why shouldn't all firefighters be afforded this? This creates an inequality that has existed for far too long. The current wording in Grey Book merely encourages authorities to provide the facilities and the opportunities.

Encouragement isn't enough. If operational fitness is a requirement of the role, then maintaining that fitness must be recognised as part of the role. Conference, this is not asking for special treatment. This is asking for equal treatment. Providing paid time for fitness would improve firefighter safety, support operational readiness, help reduce injuries, improve retention and recruitment, which within the RDS we know we struggle with, and it will create a consistent approach across the fire and rescue service within the UK.

Most importantly, it would further recognise maintaining retained firefighters as the professional firefighters that we are. We often speak in our union about valuing firefighters properly. Value is not shown through words alone, it is shown through condition, support, and investment to our members. This resolution sends a clear message. Operational fitness is work. Maintaining it is part of the job, and retained firefighters deserve to be supported and paid accordingly. Conference, I urge you to support this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ollie. That's now open for debate. Anybody? No?

Right, I now put resolution 12 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 14, A National Minimum Paid Special Leave For Family And Emergency Circumstances moved by South Wales. The EC are giving qualified support. South Wales.

Resolution 14 A NATIONAL MINIMUM PAID SPECIAL LEAVE FOR FAMILY AND EMERGENCY CIRCUMSTANCES
Conference notes that:

- ***UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) currently operate with widely differing local policies relating to special leave for family emergencies and unforeseen personal circumstance***
- ***in some UKFRSs, employees receive no entitlement to paid special leave, and are required to use annual leave, TOIL, or unpaid leave to manage sudden emergencies***
- ***other UKFRSs provide up to 10 days paid special leave, depending on the nature of the emergency (for example, the hospitalisation of a dependent)***

- ***these variations create a postcode lottery, resulting in inequitable treatment of members undertaking the same roles under the same Grey Book Terms and Conditions, based solely on employing authority.***

Conference believes that:
- ***firefighters and Fire Control staff must be supported to respond to genuine family and personal emergencies without financial penalty***
- ***access to paid special leave is a welfare, wellbeing, and equality issue particularly for those with care giving responsibilities***
- ***nationally agreed minimum standards are essential to ensure fairness, consistency, and dignity for all members***
- ***special leave for emergencies should be facilitated compassionately and consistently, rather than acting as a barrier to attendance or retention.***

Conference instructs that the Executive Council shall:
- ***call upon the National Joint Council to negotiate and introduce a national minimum entitlement to paid special leave within Grey Book Terms and Conditions***
- ***seek agreement that this entitlement shall be a minimum of 4 days paid special leave per leave year or the equivalent of 1 working week, adjusted proportionately for locally agreed duty systems, part-time workers and Retained Duty System personnel***
- ***ensure that this entitlement applies to unforeseen family or personal emergencies, including (but not limited to) the serious illness, hospitalisation or urgent care needs of dependants***
- ***secure agreement that local policies may exceed but must not fall below this nationally agreed minimum standard***
- ***oppose any attempt to substitute or offset this entitlement with annual leave, TOIL, or unpaid leave***
- ***campaign for the application of special leave to be supportive and non-punitive, recognising the operational realities and welfare needs of members.***

SOUTH WALES

LLOYD PRICE (South Wales)**:**
President, conference, I bring this resolution to conference. This issue is simple: care dependency leave has become a postcode lottery, and this is happening right now in Wales. We have three brigades in Wales, all doing the same job, all facing the same risk, but all on different terms and conditions.

Across the UK, firefighters do the same role, same responsibility, same pressure, but not the same conditions. In Wales, this is clear. With paid care dependency leave, some members get it, five days' time off, others get none. This causes real problem. In joint control, members work side by side, same job, same shifts, different conditions.

That creates tension. That creates division. That is not right. This resolution is about fairness. It's about raising standards up, not dragging anyone down. But conference, the situation is now under threat. In South Wales, there are attempts to remove our five days paid care dependency leave. Let me be clear, we are fighting that locally.

Comrades, this matter is all of us. If conditions can be taken away in one place, they can take it away anywhere. Equality must never mean losing hard-won conditions. The FBU is built on solidarity. If one group loses out, we all lose out. Conference, this resolution calls on us to defend existing conditions, challenge unfair differences, stand together across the UK.

I ask conference to support the resolution. Send a clear message: we protect our conditions. We stand together. We do not level down. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lloyd. Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody? Yep.

JAMES SALT (NRC)**:**
President, conference, please allow me to give my lived experience as an RDS firefighter. While my young son spent some time in children's hospital two hours away from home for a number of operations over a number of different times, I was able to organise time spent there and time looking after my other dependent son at home around time off shift from a whole time role to reduce the amount of time I had to ask to take off work.

In my RDS role, this required a good supportive local management team, and I had to make the most of the good relationship I had with them. Most of the time I took off from my RDS role was unpaid. Please allow me now to give a general RDS perspective on leave for family and emergency circumstances. It's important to note at this stage, uh, this is not about pitting one duty system against another, but more sharing how important this resolution is to the retained duty system.

We have no shift pattern as such. Wholetime firefighters will only require support if something happens that clashes with that shift. For most RDS, they may well be on call for at least some part of every day, so the chances of a family or emergency circumstance affecting their fire service work is much higher.

Add to this the fact that they will also be balancing primary employment, and this gives a picture of how finely balanced life can be for a retained firefighter and how an unexpected emergency can throw out the equilibrium. For longer periods of absence due to family emergencies, the ten days leave that was mentioned in the resolution for a wholetime firefighter would generally be two lots of twelve days off, another lot of only working two shifts in twelve.

But for RDS, any prolonged period of time off duty would soon use up an entitlement of ten days. We welcome any campaigns around special leave. Conference, we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. Yep.

MARK STRINGER (London)**:**
President, conference, Mark Stringer, first conference, first-time speaker. *Applause*

Speaking in opposition to resolution 14. Although Region 10 oppose this resolution, we wanted to acknowledge the spirit of the resolution and explain the opposition. So special leave is an important lifeline for members when life becomes unexpectedly difficult to manage and tumultuous, as we've just heard.

Special leave is rooted in fairness, and it's a mechanism for enacting equality, and it gives dignity to all members who benefit from it. However, as the resolution states, some FRS currently get 10 days of special leave. Members in Region 10 are some of the fortunate ones who do get 10 days. In the region, we're currently fighting a proposed reduction to five days.

This resolution advocates for four days, which we believe isn't quite enough and also undermines that local position, and therefore, for that reason, Region 10 unfortunately has to vote in opposition of the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Mark. Anybody else? No. South Wales, right of reply? No? Okay. Qualified support? AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah. Thank you, president. And not going to keep conference long at all here. It's really that the executive council felt the figures of the minimum level there in terms of days were rather arbitrary. We'd like to do more work to assess whether that should be the starting point for those discussions, or if it should be greater.

Certainly, the assessment across Scandinavia is that the provisions are higher than that which is suggested in this resolution. So we'll do that work. We'll report back, and the minimum will be what the work identifies it to be.

THE PRESIDENT:
Right. Right, thanks for that, Ben. I now put resolution 14 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, conference, I have seen a lot of people walking back in, which was tellers and scrutineers, so I will now call Chief Scrutineer Kate Yhnell to give the result of the card vote. My intention is to move back to that debate and see if we can finish that before we adjourn for tonight.

CHIEF SCRUTINEER (Kate Yhnell)**:**
Hello again. The results for resolution 5, Redeployment Opportunities Amendment One were 11,577 against, 19,271 for, therefore, amendment one carries. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right, thanks for that, Kate. Right, I have been made aware by the chair of the standing orders committee that there was three brigades didn't even vote in that one. Now, that may have been of choice, but please give me a fighting chance, and when I do ask for indication of arms, please raise your arms so that I can clearly see them until I tell you to put them down.

Because it was quite substantive, that difference, so please give me a fighting chance. Right.

So amendment 1 has carried.

I now put amendment 2 to resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. That is miles easier. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 3 to resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 4 to resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 5 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, conference, thank you very much. I've got a couple of little points. You can't call a card vote, sorry. And I'm not calling it. Nobody up there's called it. Did somebody shout card vote? Kate did, yeah. Yep.

A card vote was called

Conference, once again, please stay in your seats. Phil, when you're ready.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Can we have those with voting cards, we'll go with for first, those in favour, if you could please come up and place your voting card in the box.

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16 so that the scrutineers and tellers can take these away, count the vote, and we will carry on. We'll do one more resolution. They have promised to get this back hastily. Is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. Phil, over to you.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Can those that are against the resolution come up and place their voting card in the box, please?

THE PRESIDENT:
Right, conference, we're still doing that job. The scrutineers and tellers, we tell them that they don't have to do anything usually. Been a bit busy.

Right, while they're doing that, I'm now going to call composite B, Parental Support Leave moved by Suffolk. The EC are supporting, seconded by London. Suffolk.

Composite B (Resolutions 15, 16) PARENTAL SUPPORT LEAVE
Conference notes the importance that adequate parental leave can have on a family at the start of a child's life. Our working patterns are often disruptive and not conducive with forming strong bonds between the non-birthing parent(s) and the newborn.

Conference agrees that it is also important to be able to support the birthing partner during this period whilst they recover and that it is also vital that this time can be taken off without financial loss.

Conference notes that improved parental support leave assists child development, family wellbeing, gender equality and the equitable sharing of caring responsibilities.

Conference recognises that firefighters work in physically and emotionally demanding roles and that adequate parental support leave is essential to wellbeing, retention and a sustainable workforce.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to commence negotiations through the National Joint Council to secure an improvement to paid parental support leave for all firefighters, and to report back by conference 2027.

RICHARD BEEBY (Suffolk)**:**
Conference, president, moving resolution composite B. Conference, last year Scotland brought forward a resolution on increasing the paternity leave for members of our union, and we are here now to ensure that that work becomes conference policy.

As a union, we push for betterment for our members in every area that we can, and that must now include a real push to increase the Grey Book paternity allowances to enable our members to be able to be there to support their birthing partners. Childbirth can come with all number of complications, and even the most straightforward births take more time to recover from than our current Grey Book allowance.

Conference, we are calling now on the EC to negotiate a swift, fully paid increase to paternity leave. We must not get too caught up in what other countries have achieved, and it must be an increase that can be delivered to our members, but we are happy for the EC to negotiate this on behalf of its members. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Richard. London, second.

JON LAMBE (London)**:**
Conference, president, general secretary, seconding this composite resolution. I think my comrade from Suffolk has pretty much covered all of it. All we would add is initially we did have some time frames in there, and the executive council made the point that they weren't enough, and they want the flexibility to negotiate far better, and, we agree with them, so we look forward to it. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jon. Jon, did you like your new conference bag? It's just in black and amber colours, that's all. Black and amber, Hull City colours. Don't know if we've done that on purpose. Okay, right. Thanks for that. That's now open for debate. Anybody? Yep.

ELLA BOWKLEY (NWC)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support. Every parent deserves to be given a fair time off at full pay to ensure that they can bond with their newborn child as well as to offer maternal support. I am a firefighter who has been let down and was not able to receive the support I needed after childbirth due to the poor standards of paternity leave which was offered to my child's father.

After having an emergency C-section with my daughter, we stayed in hospital for seven days after I gave birth. Once returning home, I was unable to sit down on the sofa unaided, lie my daughter into her Moses basket without being in a world of pain, or even to have a shower without help. At this time, our policy in West Midlands for paternity was one-week full pay and one week at statutory.

We, as a family, could not afford to drop this money and therefore had to beg, borrow and swap annual leave to make sure that my partner did not have to return to work the day we returned home from hospital. This was an added stress which we as a family could have simply avoided if he was given a right to fair time off at full pay.

40% of all childbirths in the UK end up in C-sections and on average, it takes at least six weeks for a mother to recover properly from this operation. The fact that we expect partners to return to work before this time is disgusting and it cannot continue to be the case in the fire service. As a new mum at home, I would have loved nothing more than for the fire service to give my partner a fair amount of time off to allow him to support me, and studies that have been carried out prove that if a fair and full paid paternity leave was brought in, this would mean that mums would have a 25% less chance of experiencing postnatal depression.

Postnatal depression is not a myth. It's not made up and it's real. It's something that I survived, but others do not. I would never wish anybody to have to go through what I did where both parents in the fire service were let down and under-supported during a time which is supposed to be so special and precious.

I urge you to support this resolution, as this needs to change. We need to ensure that families within the fire service are supported and that they can bond as a family and not struggle separately. Conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ella. Next one. Thank you.

MATTHEW BLACK (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of this composite B. Our own section's resolution on improving statutory paternity and adoption leave was sadly ruled out of order. However, the principles behind it remain absolutely relevant to this debate.

Conference notes that the statutory rate of pay for paternity leave is significantly lower than the average earnings and is widely regarded as one of the least generous, uh, provisions in Europe for non-birth parents. This reinforces outdated gender roles in early childcare and places financial strain on families.

Conference recognises that campaigners, members of parliament, and equality bodies have called for paternity and adoption leave to be extended, including proposals for a minimum of six weeks paid leave at an appropriate earnings-related rate to promote family wellbeing and greater equality in the workplace.

Conference believes that trade unions must be at the forefront of campaigning for meaningful improvements to statutory paternity and adoption leave entitlements across the United Kingdom. Members work unsocial, physically demanding and emotionally draining shift patterns. We all know the sacrifices our members make to protect the public.

But becoming a parent should not mean members are forced back to work before they are physically, emotionally, or financially ready. For too long, paternity leave in the UK has been treated as an afterthought. Two weeks at low pay is nowhere near enough for modern families, and it does not reflect the reality of family life in 2026.

These resolutions recognise something important, that bonding with a newborn, supporting a recovering partner, and sharing caring responsibilities is not a luxury. It is essential for family wellbeing, equality, and the long-term health of our workforce. The issue matters deeply to LGBT+ members. Families are built in many different ways.

Last year, I spoke of my own personal journey, my husband and I adopting our boys. They said it was going to get easier, but it actually gets more difficult. This composite recognises fathers, partners, and non-birthing parents, and the inclusive language matters because every family deserves equal support and dignity.

The important thing today is that conference sends a clear message to the NJC and employers that current provision is inadequate and must improve significantly. We should raise the expectations, open negotiations, and our employers should come back with proposals that members can collectively consider and decide upon through our democratic structures.

What matters most is securing meaningful improvements, not limiting ourselves before discussions have started. Conference, I ask you to support this. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Matthew. Tim.

TIM GREEN (Kent)**:**
Sorry about that. I thought I was going to have to press a button or something. Conference, supporting this composite. Kent's got a really broad and well-received maternity, paternity provision. We have six weeks for paternity, parental leave which I think was quite hard won. But it should be a model for a lot of services to take on board. We also got the adoption leave.

But we also have slightly separate to this, the time to heal leave, which we don't have a timeframe on. So if you are one of those unfortunate parents that does lose a child or has a child who happens to be in intensive care or going through any type of treatment, we don't have a time limit on it and that's all part of the broad 52-week paid maternity leave that we've got. So, you know, it can be done, and it should be done, and it's actually quite disappointing that as a union or even as a service that, um, we're not even at that point nowadays where we're looking after those people that look after the others. Kent support this composite. *Applause*

DANNY CAMPBELL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of Composite B. Conference, we are all aware that current provisions across the UK fall well short of what working families need. Statutory leave for fathers, partners, and non-birthing parents is not only limited in duration, but also financially restrictive, which creates a real barrier to firefighters taking the time they need at one of the most important moments in their lives.

This is not a nice-to-have. It's about child development, family wellbeing, and fairness. It's about ensuring that caring responsibilities are shared more equally, and that no firefighter is forced to choose between bonding with their child and paying the bills. Conference, Scotland brought forward a resolution on paternity pay last year, as many of you may remember.

We heard about the reality behind the statistics that six weeks is widely recognised as a minimum period for bonding and recovery, that childbirth, particularly where there are complications or caesarean sections, places significant physical demands on the birthing parent, and that the role of the non-birthing partner during that time is not optional, it's essential.

We also heard the stark financial reality of firefighters facing a drop of hundreds of pounds if they take more than the bare minimum leave, and that many simply cannot afford to take it. So they return to work early, tired, stressed, worried about their family, and that has consequences not just at home, but in a job where focus and wellbeing are critical.

Conference, this resolution calls for improved paternity and maternity support leave for all firefighters, fathers, partners, and non-birthing parents. Not statutory minimums or partial pay, but meaningful, properly paid time that allows families to recover, bond, and adjust without financial pressure.

For too long, paternity leave has been treated as secondary, as something optional or even a luxury. But we know that when fathers and partners are supported to take leave, it leads to stronger families, better outcomes for children, and greater equality in the workplace and at home. Last year, Scotland remitted our resolution on paternity because of the omission of the word minimum on the understanding that significant progress be made by conference 2026.

And this resolution highlights that progress has not happened. This resolution is reasonable, and it's long overdue, and Scotland urges conference to support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks for that. Any more speakers? No. I'll now put composite B to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call Chief Scrutineer, Kate Yhnell, to announce the result of the card vote.

CHIEF SCRUTINEER (Kate Yhnell)**:**
Resolution five, Redeployment Opportunities. Votes for, 12,729. Votes against, 20,963. Therefore, resolution five *falls*.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks for that, Kate. That was a good call, whoever called the card vote. Can't be right all the time. Right. We are about to stop, but before you all jump up, just a couple bits of information. Tomorrow night we've got a fringe meeting on Palestine solidarity. Tonight there's a Stand Up to Racism fringe. You may have seen the leaflets on your desk advertising it. The meeting is at the conference on the theme of stopping Reform UK and the far right and is at 18:00 after conference finishes in the Scarman ground floor tiered lecture theatre. The meeting will be introduced by the gen sec. It will be an important space for delegates to reflect on the worrying rise of the far right, a space to discuss and debate, organise what we can do as a union at a level of the workplace and at our localities as trade unionists and workers to counter divisive racist narratives and build unity and confidence to stand together against the threat the far right poses.

Please come along. It starts at 18:00, and it will be finished by 19.10.

Conference, just before you go, can I give another shout-out to the FBU shop, which is in room 26, which is just next to standing orders, just around the corner. And remember, if you buy a purchase, you get a raffle ticket for an extremely good gift and in the words of Tam, high-quality merchandise at reasonable prices.

There's nothing wrong with Tam's tat whatsoever. Right, conference. That is it. Conference is adjourned for tonight. See you in the morning, bright and breezy. Thank you.

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Morning conference.

Are we all bright and bushy-tailed today? Just before we start the business, just a reminder, we've got the PSC fringe tonight, but we've also been notified that PSC are having an exhibition as a part of the student day of action. And they're going to be here on campus outside Senate House with an exhibition.

So if any delegates fancy a walk over there during the dinner break, lunch break to some, they'd be pleased to see you. Right. Thanks. I now call the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar, to give a report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Morning, conference. Can't wait to see how today goes. Conference, the record of decisions for the afternoon session yesterday has been produced and distributed to your delegations and will also be available on the FBU app.

Can you please turn to your delegates list, for those that have them? So Region 4, West Yorkshire, remove Matthew Herrin and replace with Matthew Green. And Humberside remove Lynden Young and replace with Craig Needham. Region 7, Warwickshire, remove Neil Stuart and replace with Matthew Hibberd. Region 8, Mid and West Wales, remove Christopher Eyton-Jones and replace with Dave Ricketts. Region 10, remove Dave Young and replace with Dominic Pauffley. And NWC remove Leigh Rand and replace with Robyn Richardson.

So can you now turn please to your programme of business? Turn to page four and on resolution 17, amendment 2 from B&EMM has been withdrawn. And then if you can turn to page eight. So after resolution 41, resolution 43 that had been missed and added yesterday has now been withdrawn.

And finally, conference, the voting box for standing orders elections has now been placed in the reception area of the Slate. Voting forms are on the tables in front of you, and this is for the re-election of Rebecca Savin. So could you please have them filled out and placed in the box during this morning's comfort break. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. Right, conference, we're now going to mop up the outstanding business from Section A and Section H from yesterday. We do have a guest speaker at 11.15. If we conclude those outstanding bits of business from Sections A and H, we will make a start on Section C, and then we will stop for the coffee break.

Immediately after the break, we will have the guest speaker, and then we'll be moving on to Section F. Right. I now call Section A again. I now call resolution 17, Medical Recovery Leave, moved by London with amendments from the NWC and B&EMM. The EC are supporting and supporting all amendments.

Resolution 17 MEDICAL RECOVERY LEAVE
Conference notes that firefighters undertake physically demanding, safety-critical roles and that full medical fitness is essential to protect themselves, their colleagues, and the public.

Conference further notes that pre-planned medical procedures, including but not limited to vasectomies, are routinely undertaken following professional medical advice and require appropriate recovery periods to ensure safe return to operational duties.

Conference is concerned that the Grey Book does not adequately support firefighters recovering from pre-planned medical procedures.

Conference highlights that medical advice following a pre-planned medical procedure commonly includes restrictions on lifting and physical exertion for a defined recovery period. Firefighters returning to operational duties prematurely, or being pressured to avoid sick leave, risk injury, compromised recovery, and reduced operational safety.

Conference believes that firefighters should not be penalised, discouraged, or placed at risk for undergoing medically advised procedures, nor should they be forced to use annual leave to avoid sickness monitoring.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to negotiate improvements to the Grey Book for firefighters recovering from pre planned medical procedures and to report back by Conference 2027.

LONDON

AMENDMENT 1
2nd Paragraph 1st line, delete ', including but not limited to vasectomies,'

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT 3
Change paragraph 4 to
'Conference highlights that medical advice following a pre-planned medical procedure commonly includes restrictions on lifting and physical exertion for a defined recovery period. Firefighters returning to duties prematurely, or being pressured to avoid sick leave, risk injury, compromised recovery, and reduced safety.'

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 4
Change paragraph 6 to
'Conference instructs the Executive Council to negotiate improvements to the Grey Book for firefighters recovering from specifically agreed, pre-planned medical procedures and to report back by Conference 2027.'

B&EMM

BRIAN FLANAGAN (London)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 17, medical recovery leave. No one is arguing that the current capability process does not have its advantages, specifically when it can help navigate members through the ill health retirement process.

However, it is clear that employers also use the process as a monitoring tool to ensure members do not have more time off sick than is necessary, and if so, monitoring periods, etc, can be implemented to enforce this. There are, however, incidences where members may need to undertake pre-planned surgical procedures which require recuperation times that cause them to be absent from work through no fault of their own, but from medical advice.

The current system does not take this into account and can penalise members unnecessarily when it is clear that they require a period of absence from that medical advice. As an example, I myself fell foul of this recently when I was advised to undergo a minor hernia procedure, required four weeks off for recuperation, yet was placed on a stage one capability for sickness, despite me advising my brigade in advance that I was going to be absent under medical advice.

There have been other instances that I'm aware of where members have delayed medical intervention whilst waiting for sickness monitoring periods to end or even using annual leave for their recuperation process. This cannot be right. Conference believes that firefighters should not be penalised, discouraged, or placed at risk for undergoing medically advised procedures, nor should they be forced to use annual leave to avoid sickness monitoring. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Brian. Does that have a seconder?

GEMMA BETTS (LGBT+)**:**
Thank you, president, conference, the LGBT+ section seconds this resolution because access to healthcare and the ability to recover from healthcare without fear or penalty is a workplace equality issue. For many LGBT+ firefighters, medical procedures are not abstract or occasional issues.

They can include gender-affirming healthcare, reproductive healthcare, fertility treatment, HIV-related procedures, or other medically necessary interventions that already come with additional stress, scrutiny, and stigma. No worker should ever feel pressured to hide a procedure. They should not fear monitoring periods, judgement, or workplace consequences.

Yet too many LGBT+ workers know exactly what that pressure feels like. I personally know many LGBT+ firefighters that have had to hide medical interventions which put them under unnecessary stress and unattainable timelines. This motion recognises a simple principle. If a medical professional says someone needs time to recover, that recovery must be respected.

In a physically demanding and safety critical role like firefighting, ignoring medical advice puts everyone at risk. Supporting proper medical recovery leave is about dignity, safety, and equality. It is about creating a service where all firefighters can access healthcare without fear of being penalised for it.

Conference, this is a fair, practical, and compassionate resolution. We urge you to support it. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Gemma. NWC to move your amendment

ROBYN KEEBLE (NWC)**:**
President, conference, First time conference, first time speaker. *Applause*

Conference, this amendment strengthens the resolution because it makes it clear that this issue is all about firefighters requiring proper recovery from pre-planned procedures, not just one specific operation or for one specific purpose. We deliberately did not support adding named examples, such as hysterectomies, into the wording, not because these procedures are unimportant, far from it, but because we do not want this debate reduced solely to fertility or reproductive issues. This resolution is broader than that.

As operational firefighters, we may require forms of pre-planned medical treatment during our careers. Knee surgeries, shoulder repairs, hernia operations, minor cardiac procedures, diagnostic arthroscopies, and yes, vasectomies and gynaecological procedures too. What matters is not the type of procedure, it's the medically advised recovery afterwards.

Conference, there's an important distinction between different surgeries. A vasectomy is generally a day procedure with a relatively short recovery period. A hysterectomy, on the other hand, is major surgery involving significant recovery time and potentially life-changing health impacts. Trying to group two very different procedures together in the wording risks confusing the principle we're trying to establish.

The principle is simple. If a firefighter has undergone a medically advised procedure and is temporarily restricted from lifting, exertion, or full operational activity, they should not be pressured into returning early, using annual leave or avoiding sickness processes just to avoid, just to protect attendance figures.

This is about safety, dignity, and proper recovery. We cannot tell firefighters to prioritise operational safety while simultaneously creating a culture where people feel compelled to return before medically fit. Conference, please support the amended resolution which keeps the focus exactly where it should be: on a fair and inclusive approach to medical recovery leave for all. Conference, I move this amendment. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Robyn. Does that have a seconder? Do I have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. B&EMM to move amendment number three. I like that. I like that. Karen's delegation have been saying I should come off a market stall, but we think it's very practical for holding all what you need to hold!

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
Conference, president, general secretary, amendment 3. It's very simple. It was very short. We just ask that the word operational be removed, as we would not want the resolution to be restrictive, being mindful that some firefighters undertake other physical duties outside that of operational frontline role, such as those working within fire safety.

Simple as that. Nothing complicated.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks. Karen, are you going to move amendment 4 as well?

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
Amendment 4. Although sympathetic to those undergoing medical procedures, some medical procedures are undertaken due to choice. We simply would like to ensure that the ask is achievable by our union and manageable within each service.

Therefore, we simply ask that it's specific medical conditions, or we look at those medical conditions before we put pen to paper as something that we all have to abide by. That's all. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Karen. Does amendment three have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Does amendment four have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody?
No. AGS, have you got?

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president. Morning, conference. Look, thank you, London. Thank you, Brian, for this important motion. The executive council is pleased that B&EMM have decided to withdraw the second amendment. I understand, yeah, why it was submitted, but, you know, as we discussed, it did create a few issues.

But we believe that the three amendments there left do actually strengthen the policy and motion as set out. So thanks, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. I now put amendment 1 to resolution 17 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 3 to resolution 17 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 4 to resolution 17 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 17 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para A10. Para A11. That concludes section A.

(Ian, you didn't do nine.)

THE PRESIDENT:
Oh. Well spotted, people. There's a para A9 on the bottom of my paper which I missed. So I call para nine, A, A9. Yeah.

We should maybe get one of them travelators for down the middle!

NICK HAYS (Isle of Man)**:**
Yep, it's on. President, conference, it's just to say on the record, on behalf of our members in the island just want to say thank you to our regional secretary in region 5 and the EC member for securing this pay increase. You might note that it's slightly higher than what was achieved in the UK as we sit outside NJC. So it's just to go on record recognising that. It's a big victory for our members in the Isle of Man. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. And just for clarity, I now call para A10. We'll do it in numerical order. Para A10, para A11. That concludes Section A. We're now moving on to the outstanding business from Section H. Para H6, London. And Guy as well.

Conference, can I ask when you do get up and speak on the paragraphs, you keep it as brief as possible? Because we've got loads of business to do in two days. I think it was 50-odd resolutions still to do. We don't want to be here on Saturday. Yep.

GUY LAWES (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, speaking on para H6, the short version. Durham would like to show our appreciation towards the positive work that's been done and must be done by the FBU to keep fire services accountable to providing reasonable adjustments where there is a reason to suspect a disability, not only where the person has a diagnosis, because as we are aware, many waiting lists for many diagnostic services can be more than 10 years long.

We support the ongoing work both by and for the DND forum as it's greatly positive, but it's sad to see that the annual forum has so far not been held or announced this year. In region 3, we've had many member requests for this so far. DND members need to feel included at every level of the FBU, and events like this show that they are welcome and help prevent isolation. Can an update be provided as to when the next DND forum might be held? Thank you.

DAN ASCOUGH (London)**:**
Conference, president, Sec for DND. I'll try and be as concise as I can. Firstly I want to thank you for the positive progress that's been made via the Disabled and Neurodivergent Members Forum in '24 and '25. They're genuinely valuable, bringing together members from across the regions demonstrates both the need and appetite for this work across the union.

Likewise, last year attending TUC Disability Conference as delegates for the first time and moving an important motion, we should be proud of the work so far. I'll skip that because we're going to get to, I don't want to be... I'll be a bit more concise.

However, it would be remiss of me not to highlight where the union has fallen short, and I do think there was a structural issue that paragraph H6 unintentionally highlights. As all this work is from 2025, and at the end of that paragraph is also the last time we've seen positive action, work, and engagement from head office. Unlike other self-organised groups within the union, DND, Disabled and Neurodivergent members do not yet have the same organisational continuity or autonomy.

Existing equality sections have established structures that allow members themselves to shape activity, organise schools, and maintain momentum with support from head office. At present, our organising remains heavily reliant on head office capacity and direction. As a result, when pressures have arisen, this work has become vulnerable to delay, disruption, and members have suffered as a result.

I fully recognise the pressures head office has faced this year. I don't raise this to criticise any individuals, but I do think it highlights the disabled and neurodivergent organising currently remains far more vulnerable to disruption than any of our other areas, and this paragraph doesn't reflect that many of our DND members feel left behind, forgotten, or at best, bottom of the list in equality support.

Our steering group meetings have been repeatedly postponed. It's now over 18 months since our last one, leaving members without updates despite constant chasing. Our annual forum, as my comrade just said, effectively our

equivalent of a sectional school, was due around January. Despite constant requests, this has still no confirmed date and now realistically may not happen until pushing two years after the previous one.

That has deprived members of valuable networking, learning, and organising opportunities. Para H6 celebrates our first attendance as delegates at TUC Disabled Workers Conference last year as delegates and our first successful motion there in 2025. This year, despite early confirmation with head office, we missed the deadline to submit a motion, and our attendance still remains uncertain despite members volunteering and engaging early.

This conference is next week. None of this has happened with our official equality groups. Their schools have been on time, have been well represented at relevant TUC conferences. I could not imagine this being any other way, and if it was, I think there would be uproar.

Also, I'd like to note Kasey's point yesterday that the learning we get from TUC conferences, like misogynoir – a term I'd never heard, and as she said, wherever you are, you'd never heard. These are the kind of things we bring back from going to those conferences, and we get to bring that learning here.

I know how issues highlighted are not intentional, and I would never claim that to be the case.
I know you care. Please remember, in the disability and neurodiverse world, we're used to being the first thing to be cut by government and an afterthought in infrastructure. It stings our members to feel that the same sentiments, intentional or not, are getting this from our own union leaders.

On a positive note, I'm encouraged that Joe Weir has now been given a remit to help support and drive this work forward, and I hope that brings greater consistency, and momentum nationally.
So my question to the executive council was this: What concrete steps will now be taken to ensure disabled and neurodivergent organising is given the same continuity, stability, and member-led support as our other equality groups so that this work can be properly developed nationally and members are not left behind?

And just a reminder, the favourite slogan in the disability activism world: nothing about us without us. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dan. Thanks, Guy. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks Dan for coming up and setting that out, and also Guy. Look, there is no intention to not hold the annual DND forum. It will be held in 2026. That's the assurance: we will hold one every calendar year. We're only in May comrades and the idea is certainly to do one in the autumn of this year.

I think it has been really important work. It's certainly work that I think across this sector has been driven only by the Fire Brigades Union and members of the Fire Brigades Union.

We've seen, I think, constant attacks on those with neurodivergence in many different ways within our fire and rescue services, and it's the guidance that we drew together two years ago, I think, that's securing better workplace rights for those members of the forum.

In terms of the forum there's a steering committee. To be clear, Dan, I'm not on the steering committee. I facilitate or have facilitated it. But if the steering committee does wish to meet, then they can meet. There's no prevention of that from a head office perspective at all. So I do recommend that, you know, people get together and discuss the need to drive this work forward independently.

Certainly there's no control of that from a head office perspective. But look, we're happy to talk. I mean some comments there, president, are rather new to us, but we're happy to sit down and discuss some of this going forward and look at how we can improve that. You did mention that the remit has moved across to Joe Weir. I wish Joe the very best in that work and hope that we can build it from strength to strength.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. Right, I now call para H7, para H8.

KATIE ALLENBY (NWC)**:**
President, conference, Katie Allenby, national women's committee, speaking on para H8 Fight for 52 campaign. First time delegate, first time speaker. *Applause*

This represents one of the most important equality battles in our union today. I want to start by recognising the brilliant work of the FBU, and particularly the national women's committee, in securing a significant victory, an uplift to twenty-six weeks full pay maternity leave. That is a major step forward, and it has been achieved through determination, organisation, and collective strength.

However, this is not the finish line. Our goal remains fifty-two weeks full pay maternity leave for every single woman in the fire and rescue service across the UK. Anything less risks leaving women facing financial hardship at a time when they should be supported, not penalised. We already know this is achievable.

Some brigades have stepped up and implemented fifty-two weeks full pay. They have shown leadership, they have shown respect, and they have shown that valuing women in the workplace is not just the right thing to do, it's entirely possible. Where brigades fall short, we will campaign and we will challenge. We will not shy away from calling out those fire and rescue services that do not value their women enough.

At a local level, the campaigning has been nothing short of fantastic. Women reps and members across the union have come together showing real solidarity and determination, raising awareness, applying pressure, and driving this issue forward in every brigade.

Scotland's survey of how women felt about the current provisions and what benefit fifty-two weeks would mean to them brought added pressure to the employer to listen to what their employees, their women think and need. This is what our union does at its best. We organise, we support each other, and we fight for what is right.

The fight for fifty-two is about fairness, dignity, and equality, and together we will win it. So please continue to support our women's committees. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Katie. Lewis?

LEWIS CLARK (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, just to get on the report again, the thanks to my partner and the FBU member, Hayley Clark who's holding down the fort at home after just giving birth to another wee boy, Dougal, two weeks ago. *Applause* So without her support I couldn't do this job, which is why I don't give her too much stick about not being a branch rep.

But the campaigning that's gone on across the country, as has just been said, getting the local wins for 52 weeks in different brigades, we've still got a bit of a postcode lottery with that. The pressure that can be maintained at that local level can always be bolstered by the negotiations that go on with NJC.

So this is a question just looking for a quick update on how that's been going, if there's any sort of progress being made, and will it tie in with the pay reform and the progression that we can make with that? Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lewis.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Look, thanks for those comments. It's certainly been a hugely important campaign and a successful campaign to date that this union has led, and it's certainly been led by our national women's committee. I think we're all very grateful for their hard endeavours in terms of improving the rights of women across our fire service.

In terms of Lewis's question there, it's certainly something Steve and I raise on a regular basis at joint secretaries' meetings, and it has been a constant agenda item for the NJC. It sits there as one of those standing concerns the FBU have. The employers did shift, as we know, and doubled the provision, two years ago.

We will continue to push that that is increased to the point in which we think is acceptable. At the moment, we believe that to be 52 weeks, and we will continue to campaign in that sense, Lewis. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. I now call resolution 62, A Standardised Approach To Return To Work Following Maternity Leave, moved by the national women's committee. The EC are supporting. NWC.

Resolution 62 A STANDARDISED APPROACH TO RETURN TO WORK FOLLOWING MATERNITY LEAVE
Conference acknowledges that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has fought for better maternity provision with the Fight For 52 campaign and has won the full 52 in several fire services and a national uplift of 26 weeks full pay in 2024. The fight continues but we must also look beyond just the pay.

Conference believes that when someone returns to work after maternity leave there is not a standardised approach to what their return to work looks like. Experiences have been dramatically different across services in terms of what is expected for returning mothers. In some cases, women have been off work for nearly 2 years and getting back to work requires the right support and structure.

Conference instructs that rather than returning parents being subject to a postcode lottery, the Executive Council (EC) undertake a comprehensive review into the experiences of FBU members who have returned to the fire service following maternity leave in the past 3 years (2023/2024&2025).

Conference also instructs the EC to work with the National Women's Committee to devise a plan to identify issues, successes and practices via surveys, focus groups and/or individual meetings and report back by Conference 2027.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

ELLA BOWKLEY (NWC)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 62: a standardised approach to return to work following maternity leave. Conference acknowledges the incredible work our union has already done through the fight for 52 campaign, and we have secured a full 52 for maternity pay in several services and also won a national lift to 26 weeks full pay in 2024.

But whilst we continue that fight, we must also recognise that maternity support does not just end with the pay alone. Because right now, when women return to work after maternity leave, there is no standardised approach to what that return may look like. Across fire and rescue services, experiences vary dramatically. Expectations differ from brigade to brigade, station to station, and sometimes even watch to watch. Women are facing a postcode lottery.

Some receive structured support, phased returns, and clear plans to regain competence and confidence. Others are left to navigate the process alone with little guidance and no consistency whatsoever, and this matters.

Many women will have been away from operational duties for a significant period of time, and returning to work after this is not straightforward. Women are adjusting to a completely new life as a parent whilst also trying to regain operational confidence, catch up with policy and procedural changes, and manage the very real impact of skill fade.

That process can feel very overwhelming. Conference, I know this because I experienced it myself. My own return to work following maternity leave was not short, but horrific. After 24 months away from ops duties, I returned to find there was no structured workup plan in place, no clear guidance, and no standard process.

The responsibility was effectively left down to my manager to just make something up. That is not good enough. The lack of direction places huge pressure, not only on the individual returning to work, but also on managers trying to support them without any formal framework in place. We should not be leaving women feeling under-supported, isolated, or lacking confidence at one of the most vulnerable points in their whole career.

And if we fail to address this properly, we risk losing women from our service altogether. Because when returning to work feels under-supported and uncertain, people are less likely to come back at all. Women in the fire service deserve clear support, proper training, and the opportunity to rebuild confidence and competence safely when returning to operational duties.

This resolution asks for something entirely reasonable, a comprehensive review of members' experiences and meaningful work with the national women's committee to identify issues, highlight good practices, and also develop consistent standards across services. Conference, we have fought hard to improve the maternity provision on pay. Now we must ensure women are properly supported when they return from this. Please support this motion. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ella. Seconder?

ROB MARTIN (Buckinghamshire)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 62. It is with great respect that we're able to stand here and now consider the return-to-work process for new mothers following the success of the 52 weeks maternity campaign for staff that has been implemented by many fire and rescue services throughout the UK.

Whilst this fight continues to ensure that all services recognise the importance of protecting new mothers as they transition from childbirth, we must now move to ensure that the reintegration to operational duties is managed with the same level of respect and understanding afforded to them at this critical time.

The success of the 52 weeks maternity campaign to date has allowed new mothers to nurture the bond with their newborn whilst promoting a safe and carefree approach to the earliest interactions that can shape their development as they move into nursery and preschool life. The same care and attention must be afforded to mothers as they transition back into full and active operational duty.

Defining the period of time it takes to make such a transition should not be taken lightly. Mothers may face a number of challenges postpartum that will affect their ability to return to immediate duty. Mothers may experience perinatal mental health issues that can be worsened by workplace pressures, as well as physical health challenges that need not be specified.

To subject new mothers to generic return-to-work programmes has the potential to undermine the positive work already achieved through the 52 weeks campaign. Instead, we support the development of a return-to-work programme that recognises the unique needs of mothers through a focused and experience-based survey with the aim of supporting all new mothers back into the roles within the service. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Rob. That's now open for debate. Anybody? No. I now put resolution 62 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para H9. Yep. Thanks delegates. We do appreciate if you can keep it as brief as possible. Thank you.

RICHARD BEEBY (Suffolk)**:**
Conference, president, we just had a brief question for the EC, really. Last year, 96 requests for representation around ADAEs were made, and that shows to us a clear-cut need for the ADAE process still.

Now, during my time in the union as an ADAE investigator, this policy has always been under review, and we just wondered if there was any update on it, given it was supposed to be before conference this year. Thank you.
Laughter, applause

THE PRESIDENT:
That saves time. Ben.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
They must have been pre-empting what I was going to say. Thanks for the question, Richard, and I imagine the other two were going to ask something similar. I just want to, first of all, point to the appreciation the executive council has to all of those, and we are in the tens, if not hundred, officials and members that have fed into that constant consultation process in and around ADAE.

It's been, I think, one of the most extensive pieces of work we've done on ADAE for its existence. And certainly your views have shaped the work that the small group has done in terms of drawing that all together. That report has been finalised. It is going to your equality subcommittee on 2nd June and to the executive council on 9th June. So Richard, yeah, we're really close to having it.

You made the point about it always being under review. Well, yes, it is – and I think it always should be. It should be a live policy this union has. We need to be able to be agile to the circumstances of change and be able to adapt and be, as I say, agile in our approach to that. It is a very important policy of the union. We certainly hold it extremely so. Again, just thank you, huge thanks to those that have made up that working group, including the vice-president and Nina Reece, the equalities officer. It has been extremely extensive, but we are close now. As I say, in a matter of weeks, we should have finalised all of that work. So again, thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. I now call para H10. Yep.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, speaking on paragraph H10. The executive council's report and the union's submission to the EHRC consultation rightly underlines our longstanding policy on trans inclusivity. But I stand because we cannot stop at submission alone. We must be absolutely clear about implementation, accountability, and solidarity.

The political landscape we are operating in has shifted. The recent local elections showed us a continued trend where divisive narratives about equality and identity are being heightened and showcased for political gain. We are seeing a mainstreaming of rhetoric that seeks to pit workers against each other, and in particular, to marginalise trans people under the guise of clarity or common sense.

Trade unions exist to oppose this. Our strength is collective. Our role is to bring people together, not to allow sections of our membership to be isolated, questioned, or excluded. The Supreme Court judgment and the HRC's subsequent draft code of practice creates a real and immediate risk for our members, not just in theory but in practice.

And to be quite frank, anyone that wants to be themselves at work, this guidance opens the door to exclusionary practices in workplaces and public services. Practices that could see trans firefighters unsure which facilities they're allowed to use, unsure of their rights, and unsure of whether their employer or even their colleagues will stand with them.

The uncertainty has consequences. It affects people's mental health. It affects their ability to do their job safely and with dignity. It affects recruitment because why would someone join the service where their identity is contested or worse, it has to be hidden? It affects retention because people will leave workplaces where they do not feel respected, and it affects progression because exclusion, even when informal, holds back people from development.

Conference, we should be deeply concerned about the long-term impact this could have on our fire and rescue service and our union. We already face challenges around recruitment and diversity. If we allow a climate to develop where some people feel they do not belong, we are actively weakening our service.

And beyond all of that, there is a human factor. They are our members. That is why the role of our section is absolutely critical at this moment in time. We're not an add-on to the union; we are a vital part of it. I ask that when the code of practice is released, we continue to commit to work with partnership with the LGBT+ section, and that as the situation develops, we ensure a timely response is given, ensure that any guidance, advice, or support issued to brigades reflects on our union's policy and not the minimum standards set by our fire service or the NFCC, and we will not step back from the commitment to equality.

Conference, moments like this define who we are. We can either respond cautiously and allow external pressures to shape our approach, or we can make our voices heard, and there is no contradiction between workplace safety, professionalism, or full exclusion. We need this union to stand visible –

THE PRESIDENT:
Okay, so wind it up, Maria.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
– and actively with us, our LGBT+ section, we need you now, and we need you to show your solidarity and support. Thank you, *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Maria. I now call para H11.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Ian, can I respond?

THE PRESIDENT:
Oh, sorry. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, Sorry, Kasey. Thanks, Maria. I think it's important we do respond to that because, look, as you've raised with us, and as we've been in discussions, Maria, we are aware of a fairly imminent announcement in and around that subject, and we are ready, and certainly Steve and I have been in discussion quite heavily about how we react to that.

I think it's important to note that it is this union that sets policies in our workplaces. So any minimum standard the NFCC may have does not reflect the demands this union places on our members in our workplaces. And yeah, as you said there, look, that is not in theory. That is in practice. Equality that matters is not in theory. It is in practice. So thanks for bringing those comments towards us Maria.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. Para H11, Kasey.

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
President, conference, a number of years ago, we asked for the Fire Brigades Union to undertake an independent review into racism within the FBU. We finally got there. It took us a little while to sort of get the appropriate team together to conduct the review.

We eventually settled with Professor Nicola Rollock to do the independent review, and she was so welcoming for our committee, and it was really, really welcoming to have an all-Black team to interview us, make us feel comfortable, and we weren't feeling uncomfortable to talk about the racial disparities within the Fire Brigades Union.

So we still haven't received the report. It did take a little while for it to kickstart. It was then open to everybody, not just Black and ethnic minorities. It was open to absolutely everybody to take part in the review. At the moment, we're still waiting for the report to come back. We would like an update just so you can all get an update.

It's not just for us, it's for everybody. So we would like an update from the EC for you to get a little bit of an update on where we're at, when we're going to get the report back. Karen and I will be there. So we will be present when the EC receive the report. So we're really looking forward to receiving that.

Whilst we have had an increase of delegation this year it's been fantastic. It has been really, really lovely to have more of our committee able to sit with us, to engage in conversations, to attend regional meetings. If whilst you're next speaking at the front, I just want you to look out, look out on the conference floor, and I want you to take note of the clear separation of Black people sat all in one space.

I can't even tell you how triggering that is. We have been separated from the rest of the conference floor. I want you to look out, and there we are sat at the front all on our own. So I just want you to be mindful and just have that in your head. We still have loads of regions which are very, very un-diverse, and I just wanted to add that in.

But yes, if we could have an update from EC on the independent review into racism within the Fire Brigades Union. Oh, one more thing. Fire and rescue services across the UK are conducting independent reviews into various cultures. Unless we go looking for them, we don't know if those reviews have anything in them.

I want you to be mindful of word clouds. It was passed at conference to look at word clouds. It's not a visual for neurodiversity. It's to do with the number count of people who take part in reviews. So if they've got a number of people who take part –

THE PRESIDENT:
Kasey, can I ask you to wrap it up?

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Ooh, it's on red.

Um, yeah, so I want you to just be mindful of word clouds. If you do get the reviews, come in, please do engage with the B&EMM section. We don't have B&EMM reps in every single region, so please do reach out. Drop me an email, drop Karen an email, drop your regional or brigade reps an email. Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kasey. AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks Ian. Kasey, look, thanks for that myriad, I think, of issues on that. You took some liberty there. That's it. You got away with it. First of all, we've not yet received that final report from Professor Rollock, as you're aware. I think you're aware. We're hoping it comes in next week.

I'm certainly hopeful of that because we have got some time allocated for it at the business meeting in June, which you've been invited to attend. I think that's important you are there. The executive council certainly values your views in and around those discussions. So again, I think it's important we put on record our thanks to Professor Nicola Rollock and the dedication she's shown to this project.

It has been pretty extensive, as you're aware, and I'm sure there'll be plenty in that report that this union needs to react to. We do know it's not the most inclusive space for all, and we do know we've got a journey and a road ahead of us to improve that. But this report should enable us to see where those gaps are and see how we improve this union for all, and we're determined to do that.

I'm just trying to work out. You made an interesting or very useful point on cultural reviews being done in individual services. What we're asking you to do is before we recommend members conduct or complete those surveys, that you bring those surveys to us so we can assess whether they are at all relevant, and supportive of creating more inclusive workplaces.

We have seen some reviews that are actually really set up just to show how good certain leaders are in services and not actually look at the depth and roots of the issue we are seeking to overcome and address. So, I think we issued a circular fairly recently asking you to highlight any of those reviews with us, and we will look at that in accordance with the programme of the union. President, thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. Just from my point of view, Kasey made a point about the seating plan. I know there was a difference. It's the first year of increased delegations for the equality sections. I did speak to the gen sec and AGS, and we were consulting with the sections about how they wanted to play it.
And from my point of view, who has to look out and check who's voting which way, there's one thing I've learnt from this year, it's very difficult to see where the first few rows are voting, and I'm looking beyond them. So that's one thing we might have to learn from. And I know there's different views of different equality sections about the seating plan, but we'll take all of the feedback from this year and, we'll consult with you and try and come up with a solution for next year.

Okay, thank you. I now call para H12, para H13, para H14.

We are now moving on to Section C, Operations, Health and Safety. Para C1. No. I now call resolution 22, Prostate Cancer Screening For Black Firefighters, moved by the B&EMM section with amendments from Northumberland. The EC are giving qualified support. B&EMM. They're outside. Yeah.

I'll tell you what, while they're out, we'll jump back to that. I'm now going to call resolution 23, Support For Firefighters Undergoing Fertility Treatment, moved by the LGBT+ section, the EC are supporting.

Resolution 23 SUPPORT FOR FIREFIGHTERS UNDERGOING FERTILITY TREATMENT
Conference notes that firefighters undergoing in vitro fertilisation (IVF) treatment and intrauterine insemination (IUI) treatment are often expected to remain fully operational during the course of treatment.

Conference recognises that IVF and IUI treatment involve hormone medication and medical procedures that may cause side effects including fatigue, dizziness, nausea, pain and emotional strain.

Conference further recognises that operational firefighters may be exposed to smoke, heat, chemicals and carcinogens, and that this may raise health and safety concerns for those undergoing fertility treatment.

Conference believes that current workplace policies across UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) do not consistently reflect the realities faced by firefighters undertaking fertility treatment and should be reviewed to ensure appropriate health, safety and wellbeing protections.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***seek national guidance through the National Joint Council to ensure appropriate temporary alternative duties, flexible adjustments and support pathways are available to firefighters undergoing fertility treatment***
- ***promote clear health and safety guidance to UKFRSs to ensure no firefighter is placed at unnecessary risk during IVF or IUI treatment.***

LGBT+

FRAN McQUADE (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 23, support for firefighters undergoing fertility treatment. I firstly want to acknowledge this may be a difficult topic for some in the room. Many of us here will be lucky enough to be parents, and I'm aware that everyone's journey to parenthood is different and not always straightforward.

Becoming a parent two years ago has been the greatest joy of my life. My partner underwent IVF, in vitro fertilisation treatment, and gave birth to our son, so I have a first-hand experience of this process. I watched in awe and

admiration as she went through fertility treatment, which included injections and medical procedures. Geez oh. *Applause*

Affecting her both physically and emotionally. This resolution was brought by our section because for many LGBT+ families, becoming parents might look different to how it might have traditionally. And IVF or IUI is an avenue we might consider when hoping to become parents. But this resolution can affect anyone.

Anyone can have fertility struggles, and for many the journey begins long before they embark upon IVF or IUI. This period must be included in the work this resolution asks for. Wow, sorry. At the moment, the support you receive when undergoing fertility treatment depends entirely on what brigade you work in and who your manager is.

Some members may experience understanding and adjustments, others may get none of this. It is vital that we achieve standardised support from employers and ensure an understanding of the treatment which is based around the menstrual cycle, with appointment dates and times set by the clinic.

There are also risks and possible side effects associated with IVF or IUI treatment. Flexibility from employers is essential to allow firefighters to undergo treatment. Clear guidance will protect and benefit both the member and the employer. Firefighters already undertake temporary adjustments for injuries, recovery periods, and other medical issues. Fertility treatment should be treated with the same professionalism and dignity.

It is entirely reasonable to ask for short-term, sensible adjustments during a medically significant period. Fire and rescue services now accept that contaminant exposure is a major occupational health issue. It makes no sense to acknowledge those risks generally but ignore them during fertility treatment.

This is about prevention rather than waiting until harm occurs. NHS funding varies significantly across the UK, meaning for many people fertility treatment can bring financial stress. With treatment funding being a postcode lottery, we must work to ensure that members experiencing the workplace whilst undergoing fertility treatment isn't also a lottery.

Without guidance, members may feel pressure to stay fully operational when medically they shouldn't be. No firefighter should feel forced to choose between family planning and operational pressures. Firefighters work hard every day to keep families and our own communities safe, and we should be afforded appropriate time and support to start our own. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Frances. Do I have a seconder? Yep.

KATIE HOLLOWAY (NWC)**:**
Conference, president, seconding resolution 23. I do so not just as a firefighter or an FBU official, but as someone who has lived the reality that this resolution seeks to address. Firefighters undergoing fertility treatment are often expected to remain fully operational throughout the treatment.

This motion recognises that IVF and IUI involve hormone medication, invasive medical procedures, and side effects including fatigue, dizziness, nausea, pain, and emotional strain. It also recognises the very real health and safety concerns posed by exposure to smoke, heat, chemicals, carcinogens while undergoing the treatment.

The truth is, this issue goes beyond IVF and IUI alone. Fertility treatment is not one single procedure. For many of us, the journey begins years before IVF even starts. Hormone injections, investigations, procedures under sedation, operations under general anaesthetic, hospital admissions due to side effects. The list goes on.

And through all of it, firefighters are still expected to turn up operationally fit for duty. My own fertility journey began long before IVF. I experienced the fatigue, the headaches, the nausea, the night sweats, the excruciating pain that many people in this room will never see, that many firefighters silently endure.

There are also the emotional toll, the monthly heartbreak, the uncertainty, and the constant cycle of hope and then disappointment. Yet throughout that time, I continued to serve as an operational firefighter. There were days that I felt so faint I genuinely thought I would collapse. One night shift shortly after starting a new medication, a colleague looked at me around the mess table and asked if I was okay.

My lips, they were literally blue. At that moment, was I fit to wear BA? No. Was I fit to drive a fire engine? No. Was I physically in a condition to be at work? No. But there I was because the support simply did not exist. And for many people going through fertility treatment, I kept it private. Why would I disclose something so deeply personal when I knew that there were no meaningful policies, no adjustments, and no protections in place?

What makes this even more frustrating is that I already knew the gaps existed because I was involved in the union side of discussions around the workplace policy. I was sitting at the table helping negotiate support for an issue I was quietly battling on my own.

Not every stage of fertility treatment affected me the same way. There were periods where I could carry out my role perfectly safely and competently, but there were also periods when I needed options, temporary adjustments, flexibility, understanding, and those options were simply not available. No firefighter should have to choose between their health, their safety, their career, and their chance to start a family.

I'm proud to say that by the time my IVF journey began, London had started drafting a fertility policy. And the support I eventually received was excellent. But that cannot depend on geography or good fortune. It cannot depend on whether our service happens to be progressive enough to recognise the issue.

This has to be a national standard. That is exactly why this resolution matters. It calls for national guidance through the NJC to ensure firefighters undergoing fertility treatment have access to temporary alternative duties, flexible adjustments, and proper support pathways. It calls for clear health and safety guidance, so no firefighter is placed at unnecessary risk whilst undergoing treatment.

Fundamentally, it sends a message to firefighters across the UK that you do not have to fight this battle alone. Fertility treatment is already physically exhausting and emotionally draining enough without having to fight your employer for understanding and safety at work. I urge you to support this resolution because no firefighter should ever have to fight two battles at the same time, one in their workplace and one in their personal life without support. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Katie. That's now open for debate. Yep.

GRAEME JONES (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of this resolution. Everything I've wrote down has pretty much already been covered, and I can't give anywhere near enough experience, knowledge, or emotion than what's already been shared. But I did promise a few of our members that I would get up and speak on this, so I want to just put on record that I really appreciate the LGBT+ section for bringing this resolution.

I spoke with Matt around this issue probably just after conference last year around IUI, which was a term I'd never heard until one of our members brought it to us and told that she was offered a health and safety risk assessment if she found out she was pregnant and nothing else. Another member of ours, who's a very dear friend of mine, described me as looking like I'd just learned about the birds and the bees for the first time when she explained the process that she'd been through.

It wasn't just the stress of thinking that she might never be a parent or, as has already been said, the feeling that she was letting her partner down every time the pregnancy tests come back negative. It was the lack of empathy, the lack of understanding, the lack of compassion, and the lack of care shown by the service towards her during the fertility treatment.

And another member who, when raising a question around reciprocal IVF with HR, was met with a blank look and told that she could have two days off because she was just the donor. So yeah, thank you to the LGBT+ section for bringing this. I know it means a lot to a lot of our members, and it will bring about proactive, meaningful change, so please support it. Merseyside supports. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Dave.

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, supporting resolution 23. Conference, I felt it was important to get up and support this resolution that originated from Greater Manchester through sister Weston-Efe, who is our LGBT+ sectional secretary. Comrades, firefighters undergoing fertility treatment are often expected to remain fully operational during the course of treatment, risking exposure to smoke, heat, chemicals, and carcinogens.

Not only that, fertility treatment can be physically exhausting, it is emotionally draining, and it can be financially stressful, and too often, firefighters can be forced to go through it silently, worried about how they will be judged at work or whether they'll be treated fairly. That cannot be right. As trade unionists, we believe in dignity at work, and it's not optional.

Compassion at work is not weakness, and supporting our members through difficult periods of their lives is not a favour. It is a responsibility. Firefighters protect the public every day. We work nights, weekends, long shifts, attending traumatic incidents. Yet when some members need flexibility for fertility treatments, recovery time, or emotional support, too many are made to feel like they are asking for special treatment.

They are not. They are asking for understanding, they are asking for humanity, and they are asking for equality. No firefighter should have to choose between their career and the chance to have a family. We know fertility treatment often includes repeated hospital visits, invasive procedures, hormone treatment, failed cycles, and heartbreaking disappointment. Many firefighters suffer in silence because of stigma and frequently carry the burden physically, emotionally, while worrying about sickness procedures, attendance policies, or promotional prospects.

In June 2022, the Fertility Treatment Bill, a bill that would require employers to allow employees to take time off from work for fertility treatment did not achieve a second reading. That is why we must lead on this issue, comrades. Clear fertility treatment workplace policies, paid leave, protection from discrimination and unfair absence management, and access to wellbeing support. A truly modern fire and rescue service must recognise that supporting family life includes supporting those trying to create a family in the first place.

To any firefighter currently going through fertility treatment, I want to say this: you are not alone. Your union stands with you. Your right to a family matters. Your fire and rescue service must support you with dignity, respect, and compassion. Conference, Greater Manchester support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dave. Anybody else? No. I now put resolution 23 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. That's carried.

Right, conference, we're now just going to jump back to resolution 22, Prostate Cancer Screening For Black Firefighters, moved by B&EMM with amendments from Northumberland. The EC are giving qualified support. Karen. That does look good. Very useful.

Resolution 22 PROSTATE CANCER SCREENING FOR BLACK FIREFIGHTERS
Conference notes that prostate cancer remains one of the most significant health risks for men in the UK. Evidence from Prostate Cancer UK demonstrates that Black men have up to twice the lifetime risk of dying from prostate cancer compared with white men, with approximately 1 in 4 Black men diagnosed compared with 1 in 8 white men.

Conference recognises that Black men face systemic health inequalities which contribute to later diagnosis and reduced access to life-extending treatments. Early detection significantly improves survival outcomes, yet high-risk groups are not consistently targeted within existing awareness or occupational health programmes.

Conference further recognises that firefighters are exposed to additional occupational health risks and that Fire and Rescue Service (FRS) medicals currently do not consistently account for elevated prostate cancer risk in high-risk groups.

Conference believes that as a union committed to equality, safety and fairness, the Fire Brigades Union must challenge health inequalities which disproportionately affect Black members. Targeted early detection saves lives and supports workforce wellbeing and retention.

Conference, therefore, instructs the Executive Council (EC) to:

- ***commence a national campaign for FRSs to introduce risk-based prostate cancer screening within occupational health provision for Black male firefighters and other firefighters with a prostate in identified high-risk groups, from age 45***
- ***pursue through appropriate negotiating bodies the inclusion of Prostate -Specific Antigen testing, with informed clinical guidance and consent, as part of periodic medicals for those in identified high-risk groups***
- ***develop guidance and awareness materials for members regarding elevated prostate cancer risk and early detection.***

Conference also instructs the EC to report on progress to Conference 2027.

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 2
Add paragraph after paragraph 2
'Conference highlights the critical importance of early diagnosis and effective treatment pathways, noting that positive outcomes are significantly improved where cancers are detected early, yet no firefighters, including high-risk groups, have their occupational risk consistently recognised across primary and secondary healthcare settings, and are therefore not consistently targeted within existing awareness or occupational health programmes.'

NORTHUMBERLAND

AMENDMENT 3
Add bullet point

- ***'develop initiatives to raise awareness and address any cultural or organisational barriers that may prevent firefighters from seeking early medical advice or participating in screening programmes'***

NORTHUMBERLAND

AMENDMENT 4
Add bullet point

- ***'work with relevant health bodies to ensure occupational risk, including exposure to carcinogens in firefighting, is consistently recognised within primary and secondary healthcare systems, including the use of clinical coding systems such as SNOMED, to support targeted screening and earlier diagnosis'***

NORTHUMBERLAND

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
Rude! Good morning. Before I begin, please indulge me. I'd like us all to spare a thought. First of all, apologies for my tardiness earlier. I'd like us to spare a thought for our colleague from Wales who has sadly had a medical emergency. He is being taken care of as we speak now. So just all spare a thought for our colleague from Wales, Geoff, who's being taken care of right now. So apologies for my tardiness. Think of him while I speak. So, general secretary, president, conference, as I stand here today representing our B&EMM members, I will start with sharing some data and general information. I make no apology that the data I share with you focuses on the inequality of diagnosis, treatment, and outcome for Black men.

THE PRESIDENT:
Karen, sorry to stop you. Can I just ask you to state your name for the record for when we get it transcribed.

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
Apologies. Shall I start again or shall I continue?

THE PRESIDENT:
You can start again if it helps you. Or you can just continue.

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
I'll continue with the data, making no apologies that I focus on the health of Black men.

Prostate cancer is the most common cancer in men in the UK, with over 52,000 new cases and around twelve thousand deaths each year. Prostate cancer is one of the most curable cancers with early detection. One in four Black men, compared to one in eight white men, will contract prostate cancer.

Black men are two point five times more likely to die from prostate cancer than white men. Behind these national figures lies a stark and unacceptable truth: Black men face dramatically higher risks, later diagnoses, and poorer access to life-saving treatment. When diagnosis comes for Black men, it's often at a later, more dangerous stage.

In England, Black men are diagnosed with stage three or four prostate cancer at a rate of 1.5 times higher than white men. But the inequality does not stop at diagnosis. Even after entering the healthcare system, Black men face further disadvantages. Black men in their 60s with later stage disease are 14% less likely to receive life-saving treatments approved by the NHS. And broad analysis show that Black men have up to twice the lifetime risk of dying from prostate cancer, even when accounting for socioeconomic factors, meaning the disparity cannot be explained away by deprivation alone.

These are not just statistics. These are our colleagues, friends, and for some, our families. Conference, when men are diagnosed late, when treatment is delayed, when awareness is low, the consequences ripple through families, workplaces, and the entire communities. But there is hope, and it lies in early diagnosis. When prostate cancer is caught early, survival rates are extremely high. Conference, with fire rescue services having routine periodical medicals, there is opportunity to capture those who are currently unable to benefit from routine NHS life-saving screening.

There is opportunity to educate and spread awareness. Conference, as a union who prides itself on fighting for equality, we have the powers to negotiate for better outcomes for our men. Let us use our powers to ensure that lives are not lost needlessly. Let us use our powers to ensure that the colleagues we sit beside today and alongside tomorrow have a fighting chance to survive a treatable disease.

Before I leave this rostrum, I'd like to share something with you. My dad, Liston Glenroy Bell. I wanted to say his name because I want it to be real. He was diagnosed with prostate cancer at the age of 65 not because of routine screening, but because of other health issues. We, my mum, my sisters, and I, fought for years to get life-saving treatment. Our battle crossed 10 years, but sadly he lost his fight to cancer, prostate cancer, at the age of 75 on 8th July 2016. It's worth noting that his dad died at the age of 62 because of prostate cancer. Both of his brothers died before the age of 70 of prostate cancer. All avoidable. *Applause*

Conference, I'm not going to cry. No, I'm not going to cry. I'm not going to cry. Conference, I urge you to support Reso 22. This Reso will take us all on a journey. Oh, sorry. This resolution sets out to take all those with prostate on a life-saving journey. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Karen. Northumberland to second. Are you going to move your amendments at the same time? Thank you.

MARK DOWTHWAITE (Northumberland)**:**
President, conference, unfortunately, prostate cancer is a specialist subject of mine. I spoke last year about part of my journey, and I've got no wish to repeat that. However, as a brief recap, I've been there, done that, got the T-shirt, wear the badge, got the scars to prove it. Where were we? What my story does capture is the exact reason why early diagnosis and access to the correct medical pathways are exactly what's required if positive outcomes for prostate cancer are to be expected.

At present, firefighter occupational risk is not consistently recognised in many NHS healthcare settings, let alone in our occupational health provision. Where inequalities and barriers for Black firefighters exist when accessing any healthcare, this must be recognised, challenged and changed. The president spoke yesterday regarding the Firefighters' Concordat, and hopefully some of the items in this resolution and the amendments will be addressed by that agreement made by the current/former health secretary, brackets delete as appropriate. The task for the concordat will be challenging. The ask of this resolution and the amendments will not be challenging.

Takeaway statements as follows: Recognising the highlighted risks for Black firefighters will save members' lives. Early diagnosis for Black firefighters and others with prostate, or without, will save members' lives. Removing barriers to screening will save members' lives. Conference, I second and move the amendments. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Mark. Conference for clarity, amendment number 1 was withdrawn. So do I have a seconder for amendment number 2? *Formally* Thank you.

Do I have a seconder for amendment number 3? *Formally* Thank you.

Do I have a seconder for amendment number 4? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate.

GEMMA BETTS (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, first of all, thank you, Karen and Mark, and we send our love and support to you, and anyone affected in this. I'm going to be skipping lots of parts of my speech because they have already been beautifully covered by our comrades. However, to start it off, the LGBT section fully supports this resolution. Targeted screening for higher groups is both evidence-based and necessary. We see this very process being delivered with breast cancer screening, which targets higher risk groups, but also acknowledges that all people can experience cancer within their breast or chest tissue. But in supporting this motion, we also just want to remind conference of the importance of inclusive language and how we discuss prostate and health screening.

While Black men are disproportionately affected, not everyone with a prostate identifies as a man. Trans women, non-binary people, and some intersex members could fall under this high-risk category and may also require access to prostate cancer screening and appropriate occupational healthcare. That is why inclusive wording matters.

When we talk about people with a prostate alongside Black men in high-risk groups, we ensure that no member is overlooked, excluded, or made invisible within our union. Inclusive language does not take away from the reality of racial health inequality. It strengthens our commitment to protecting every worker who is at risk.

B&EMM and LGBT+ members can face multiple overlapping barriers when accessing healthcare. Many experience distrust or fear within healthcare settings, cultural stigma around discussing prostate health, and additional challenges when talking openly about gender identity or sexuality with medical professionals.

These barriers can lead to delayed engagement with screening, later diagnosis, and poorer health outcomes. That is why targeted, inclusive, and culturally competent occupational health provision is so important. This resolution is about fairness, prevention, and saving lives. Conference, we urge you to support this motion and continue building a union where every member sees themselves included in our fight for health, safety, and dignity in work. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Gemma. Adam to give the qualification.

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thank you, president. Conference, firstly solidarity, with all the speakers actually on this debate, especially with Karen. That was a brave contribution to conference for many reasons. We also extend our solidarity to Geoff Miller, who I'm sure has given an entertaining journey to the paramedics.

For those that have witnessed his contributions before he is certainly lively, for sure, but our solidarity is with Geoff.

Look, our qualification is pretty simple really, and actually Mark mentioned the concordat that was delivered by the I was going to say former, I'm not sure if he is former yet, the health minister. But the concordat may actually deliver, some of the outcomes from this resolution. And the qualification is this, that if the academics and the researchers, when they come together, determine actually the health screening for prostate cancer should be delivered at a younger age than that's been asked for in this, we don't want to be tied into benchmarking at the age of 45 if actually the recommendation is an age younger. That's our qualification, president. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Adam. Right, we now come to the vote. I now put amendment 2 to resolution 22 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 3 to resolution 22 to the vote. All those in favour, please show.
All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 4 to resolution 22 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 22 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

And that, conference, is a great time to stop for coffee break. Before you all dash out, I need you sat back in your seats at 11.15 sharp. We've got the Cuban ambassador addressing conference. We're on a really tight time scale. We've got another guest speaker before lunch, and we've still got a hell of a lot of business to get through, so 11.15 sharp, please, back in your seats. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, can we start taking our seats, please? Conference, take your seats please.
Conference, while you are doing that, we have had a phone handed in. It was left in the foyer. It's got a screensaver of Allure of the Seas. Anybody wants that, it'll be at the end of the row. Thank you.
Absolutely, Karen. If they'd had your equipment, it would've been safe. Karen is selling those, by the way. If, anybody's got any orders, get to her. Right, conference, we're now down to the serious business.

Apparently, it's Seona's. Come on, Seona, do the walk of shame. *Applause*

And can you please make sure you take better care of it? Otherwise, we'll take it off you and ground you.

Right, conference, we now move on to the serious business, and it gives me immense pleasure to welcome our first guest speaker today, the Cuban Ambassador, Ismara Mercedes Vargas Walter. Her Excellency Ismara Mercedes Vargas Walter has served as Cuban Ambassador to the UK since 2024. Ismara's highlighted in the historic ties between Cuba and the United Kingdom and believes in strengthening political dialogue and cooperation between Cuba and the UK.

The FBU operates in a globally interconnected system, has a proud history of solidarity with workers in struggles across the globe, one it shares with the whole of the UK labour movement. The FBU's affiliation to the Cuba Solidarity Campaign is an integral part of that commitment. FBU officials have spoken at rallies and at fringe meetings on Cuba solidarity, including at last year's TUC Congress.

This solidarity is more important than ever. Ismara has described the latest measures against Cuba by Donald Trump as no longer an embargo, but a siege. This is economic warfare. She describes international solidarity as actively saving Cubans' lives. Ismara has highlighted the importance of continuing international solidarity, saying that Cuba deserves the power to determine its own future, asking the international community to stay with Cuba, continue believing in Cuba.

Conference, give a warm welcome to Her Excellency Ismara. Thank you. *Applause*

ISMARA MERCEDES VARGAS WALTER (Cuban Ambassador to the UK)**:**
Thank you very much comrades, delegates, brothers and sisters of the Fire Brigades Union. I stand before you today not merely as a diplomat representing a sovereign country, but as a representative of a people who believe that solidarity is the most powerful tool in the hands of the working class. I stand here as a partner speaking to fellow partners.

In Cuba, we do not see your uniforms as mere symbols of an institution. We see them as the attire of those who have dedicated their lives to the preservation of life itself. When I look out at this hall, I see the same grit, the same determination, and the same selfless love for the community that defines the bomberos in Matanzas, Santiago, or Havana.

On behalf of the people of Cuba and the government of Cuba, and especially on behalf of the heroic men and women of the Fire Brigade of Cuba, I bring you the warmest, most fraternal greetings. I want to begin with the most important word in any language: thank you, gracias. It's easy to offer friendship when the sun is shining. It's easy to speak of solidarity when there is no cost involved. But for more than 25 years now, since your formal affiliation with the Cuba Solidarity Campaign in 2001, the Fire Brigades Union has been a friend during the most difficult of seasons. We do not forget. We remember that when the world turned its back, the FBU stood up.

We remember your consistent resolutions year after year, which have provided moral oxygen to our struggle. We remember your contributions that were transformed into the very medical supplies that kept our people breathing during the COVID pandemic. I want to personally thank general secretary Steve Wright, president Ian Murray, and every member of the executive council for everything you've done.

But more than that, I thank you, the delegates, because you are the ones who take the truth of the Cuban reality back to the stations and the mess tables. You are the heartbeat of this internationalist spirit. You see, the bond we share is rooted in a profound historic respect for your profession.

The fire brigade of Cuba is one of the oldest in the Americas, born in 1696 when the residents of Santa Clara in Cuba pooled their own resources to buy our very first water pump. For over three centuries, we have understood the ultimate price of this calling. In fact, every May 17, our nation will commemorate the martyrs of the 1890 Isasi Hardware Store fire in Old Havana. Twenty-six firefighters perished that day. To this very moment, the tallest and most magnificent mausoleum in Great Colón Cemetery belongs not to a politician, not to a billionaire, but to those fallen firefighters. That is the reverence the Cuban people hold for the uniform you wear.

When the Matanzas supertanker facility was engulfed in flames in 2022, the most horrific industrial disaster in our history, it was the firefighters of Britain, led by the FBU, who reached across the Atlantic. You did not just send condolences; you sent the strength of your professional kinship. You helped Cuba heal. And recently, through the Cuba Vive Appeal, your contributions have been a literal lifeline.

In Cuba, when a child receives treatment made possible because of your fundraising, we do not call it charity. We call it the shared victory of a community with a common humanity.

But comrades, as we gather here, I must speak to you with the honesty that only brothers and sisters can share. I must tell you the truth about the moment Cuba is in, because as we speak, my country's enduring a policy of economic strangulation that defies the modern conscience. Since January of this year, the administration in Washington has decided to escalate the almost 70-year blockade into what we can only describe as an energy siege. Under the direct orchestration of Secretary of State Marco Rubio, we are witnessing a campaign designed to paralyse our fuel supplies and by extension, our society. In January and May, president Trump signed executive orders as an attempt to tighten the noose around our energy sector.

It authorises more illegal sanctions on any entity anywhere in the world that helps Cuba power its hospitals, its schools, or its fire stations. On May 7th, they targeted the heart of our economic management in an explicit attempt to cripple our ability to function. They speak of targeting regimes.

Let me tell you what that looks like on the streets of Cuba right now. It looks like blackouts that last 12, 20, or 22 hours every single day. It looks like a mother sitting in the dark trying to comfort her children in the stifling heat because the fans will not turn on. It looks like water pumps cannot run because there is no electricity, leaving entire neighbourhoods without supplies for days.

It looks like a transport system ground to a halt because the fuel meant for our buses is being blocked through financial intimidation and maritime pressure. This is a systematic attempt to extinguish the lights of a nation. But what they do not understand is that you can cut the power to a city, but you cannot cut the light of dignity that burns in the heart of a resilient people.

Now, I want to talk to you specifically as firefighters because this energy siege has a brutal impact on your brothers and sisters in the fire brigade in Cuba. Imagine, just for a moment, that you are on a shift in Havana. The alarm goes off. You jump into the appliance, but you look at the fuel gauge and your heart sinks. You have just enough diesel to get there, but you do not know if you have enough to keep the pump running for the duration of the incident. You arrive at the scene. The smoke is thick. You go to the hydrant, you crack it open, and nothing happens. Nothing happens because the electrical grid is down. The water pumps in that district have no power. There is no pressure.

This is the reality that our Cuban comrades are facing right now. We have seen firefighters responding to an increase in electrical fires as the aging infrastructure cannot cope with the power when the power finally surges back after twenty hours of darkness. Our firefighters are tackling these blazes with limited fuel, outdated equipment, and failing water supplies due to an external blockade. They do not ask if there is enough fuel for the return journey. They go in because they are just like you. They have a duty to their people that transcends the cruelty of any sanctions.

This is the human face of the Trump administration sanctions. They are trying to turn our public servants into the rationers of despair. But it will not work because our firefighters are the people. They go home to the same dark houses. They worry about the same scarcities, and then they put on that uniform and go back to the station to protect their neighbours.

Dear comrades, in every corner of the world, there is a tension between those who see public services as a cost to be cut and those of us who see them as the foundation of a civilised society. *Applause*

In Cuba, we are fighting not just against the internal pressures of a developing economy, but also against an external, illegal, and immoral economic siege that seeks to make our public services impossible to maintain. The blockade of Cuba and the challenges facing public services globally are part of the same conversation. They both involve the idea that the safety of many should be secondary to the political or financial interest of the few.

But look at how we are responding to this pressure. We draw upon a revolutionary legacy of breaking barriers. We are the nation that gave Latin America its very first female firefighter, Enriqueta Reyes, and we formed our first all-female brigade back in 1974.

We have always innovated when others told us it was impossible. We do not take no for an answer. The architects of this siege believe that by cutting our fuels, they can turn out the lights of our sovereignty forever, but they

underestimate the creativity and the scientific spirit of a revolution. Right now, as part of our national strategy of energy transition, Cuba is accelerating a massive shift toward renewable energy.

We are constructing dozens of solar parks across the island. We are building wind farms. We are transforming our grid to end our reliance on imported fuels. We have to do it. They can threaten the shipping companies, they can sanction the banks, but no executive order can blockade the sun. No empire can blockade the wind. They cannot prohibit the daylight that falls on our island. We are using the very elements of nature to break the chains of this siege. We do not stop. We will not surrender. We have a saying in Cuba, "No nos entendemos," we do not understand each other, referring to the language of surrender. We do not speak that language. We speak the language of professional duty. We speak the language of the union. The architects of these illegal sanctions think they are winning because they can count on the barrels of oil they have stopped from reaching the Cuban shores. They think they are winning because they can see the blackouts from their satellites, but they cannot see what I see in this room.

They cannot see the bridge of solidarity that spans the Atlantic. When an FBU member stands up and says, "End the blockade on Cuba," their message is heard. It tells our people, "You are not alone." And that knowledge is more powerful than any executive order. Solidarity is a resource that no navy can intercept. It is an energy that no administration can switch off.

So what do we do now? We are in a moment of extreme peril. The month ahead will be some of the most difficult in the history of the Cuban revolution. I'm asking you today as a comrade to strengthen your solidarity. First, I urge you to let the world know that you see the energy siege for what it is: an affront to the humanitarian principles of the fire service.

Second, I ask you to continue your support for the Cuba Vive Appeal. Every contribution is a direct blow against the logic of the blockade. When you help us get medicines into our clinics, you are proving that international cooperation is more organised than forces of isolation.

And third, I ask you to use your voice within the wider labour movement. You are a union that is respected for its principles. Speak to your colleagues. Tell them that in the year 2026, it is a violation of international law and human rights to use energy as a weapon of war against a civilian population. The current escalation of illegal sanctions is an attack on the principle that any nation has the right to determine its own path without external coercion.

By standing with Cuba, you are defending the sovereignty of all people to build a society based on their own values. Comrades, I have seen Cuban fighters work 48-hour shifts without complaint. I have seen our doctors serve in the most remote parts of the globe while their own nation is under siege.

I have seen our scientists develop world-class vaccines under the shadow of the blockade and the Covid-19 pandemic. People like that cannot be defeated. And the unions in general, but in particular, a union like the FBU will always find a kindred spirit in the people of Cuba. The lights may flicker in Havana tonight and tomorrow, but the dawn is coming, and when that dawn breaks, we will remember who stood in the dark with us.

We will remember the firefighters of Britain. We will remember the FBU. We will remember every one of you. We will tell our children when they tried to isolate Cuba, the workers of the world kept the flame of friendship alive. Comrades, let us go forward with a renewed spirit. Let us fight for the fire service here and let us fight for the dignity of Cuba now and always.
Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ismara. The general secretary's going to say a few words.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, certainly. And look what a fantastic speech and contribution that we've just heard there. And look, I want to place on record the thanks of the Fire Brigades Union, the thanks of conference here today, that we appreciate you taking the time to be with us today at an extremely difficult period for the Cuban people, as we have just heard.

But our union, the Fire Brigades Union, has a proud history of solidarity with the Cuban people. FBU delegates have been visiting Cuba for almost 50 years to see first-hand the achievements of socialism and the advancements that the Cuban people have made.

In 2003, the Fire Brigades Union put forward the first ever motion to the TUC Congress, calling for an end to the US blockade and support for the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, and it was carried unanimously. Carried and taken forward by this union.

And more recently, as you have stated, we have continued that tradition of solidarity with Cuba and have supported the Cuba Vive medical aid appeal to send life-saving medical aid to Cuba, and we should be proud that we have done that, and we will continue to do that as well.

But look, we also know that the US has used its illegal blockade to try and strangle the Cuban economy for more than 60 years. But the situation has reached a crisis point this year because of Donald Trump and his cronies in Washington on the latest economic attacks.

But look, the attacks and the actions of Trump and his administration are an attack on sovereignty. They are an attack on international law, and they're a threat to the sovereignty of all countries that wish to trade with Cuba. Cuba should be an inspiration to all of us. The speech we have heard today should be an inspiration to all of us.

So I think we should all have another round of applause and our appreciation, and make sure that the Fire Brigades Union, that we do take this back into our workplaces. We do make sure our members understand what is happening over in Cuba and make sure that the Fire Brigades Union and the global trade union movement does more, and we continue to stand with the Cuban people.

When we hear the words that they will not stop, and they will not surrender, well, I know that is true, and I can confirm and guarantee that the Fire Brigades Union will stand with you at each and every step of that. We have a small gift for you, but first of all, another round of applause, please. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right, conference. Thank you, Ismara. We are going to get on with some business now. Ismara, you can stay for a little bit if that's... Take over if you want. Right, we're now moving on to Section F, Trade Union and Labour Movement, Para F1.

I now call executive council policy statement Internationalism with amendments from Scotland and London. General secretary.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Well, thank you president. Morning conference. We're going to give the AGS a bit of a break. He's been up and down like a yo-yo. Right, in moving this executive council policy statement on internationalism, I want to start with a simple but important point. Internationalism is never an add-on to what we do, it is who we are. Because the Fire Brigades Union is not just a workplace trade union, we are part of a wider movement, a working-class movement, and a global movement. And although we may be small in size, our union has built an internationalist legacy that is second to none in my eyes. We value that. You should value that.

And we understand its importance, and we pledge not just to continue it, but to build on it. So conference, from our earliest days, this union has linked arms not just across watches, not just across fire stations, but across borders. We've always known that the world doesn't end at a fire station door, because we recognise something fundamental: that an injury to one worker anywhere is an injury to all workers everywhere.

And that is not just a slogan. It's a reality and a principle that we live by. Because the world that we operate in today does not stop at national borders. Production crosses borders. Finances cross borders. Decisions taken in one country affect workers in another.

We see employers coordinating globally. We see markets operating globally. And even more than ever, we're seeing workers exploited at a global level. So in the same way that capital operates at a global level, then workers must operate globally too. Because conference, this is not distance, and it's not distant from our own experiences that we see in our job.

Firefighting, as we've heard, is a global profession. Wherever you go, firefighters face the same core issues of safety, of training, of equipment, of resources, and also the impact the job has on our health. Exposure to toxic chemicals, the growing understanding of cancer risks, the mental toll of the work that we do, that these are shared realities across our profession. And when firefighter unions work together, when we share knowledge, and when we stand together, we protect each other wherever we work, in whatever country. And by doing that, we improve the job for every single firefighter.

Conference, we also face shared challenges as workers. Climate change, as we know, is already shaping our work in our communities all across the UK. From flooding incidents to wildfires, extreme weather is taking hold and is putting our members' lives at risk. This is now fundamentally part of our job and working-class communities are always hit first and always hit hardest. So when we talk about internationalism, we're also talking about the future of the fire and rescue service and the risks that we take and face as firefighters.

But internationalism is also about what we stand for. Across the world, trade union rights are under attack. Workers are being silenced. Independent unions are being restricted. Public services across the world are being cut back, and democratic rights are being weakened. At the same time, conflict and war are devastating communities and putting emergency workers directly in danger, and we send our solidarity from this conference to any worker facing oppression or attacks whilst they do their job. *Applause*

So let us be clear. We do not stand with governments; we stand as a union with workers. That has always been the FBU way. We have always led when it comes to internationalism and international issues. We've always stood up. We've always stood there and been counted because ours is a union, if we look back at our history, a union that stood against apartheid, demanding freedom for Nelson Mandela when the government at the time described him as a terrorist, making him a member of our own union to make it clear whose side we were on.

Our union stood against oppression, being the first union to propose a motion in support of Palestine at the TUC, the first to support the BDS movement in support of the Palestinian people, something we should be extremely proud of. Our union has stood against imperialism, rallying the movement to support the people of Cuba whilst America blockaded it.

This, comrades, is a record not just to be proud of. It is a record to build on, build on today, a record which demands that today, in 2026, we state clearly and unequivocally that we will never be silent in our demands for justice for Palestine. We demand an end to the genocide, accountability for war crimes, a return of stolen lands, and we demand justice for Palestine. *Applause*

And also, conference, our union, against the background of illegal action against Venezuela, we say that if Trump from Washington and his warmongering gangsters threaten Cuba, we will stand as we always have done in unity with the Cuban people, end the siege, end the illegal blockade, solidarity with Cuba. *Applause*

So we continue, and we will build on our international tradition today. We support firefighters internationally. We stand with workers facing oppression. We speak out when we see injustice. We will not stay silent, and we will not sit on the fence. Conference, there is a growing pressure in politics to turn inwards, to pit worker against worker, and create false division by nationality, by race, and by background.

At the same time, we're seeing corporations and markets becoming more organised and more powerful across borders. That is not an accident. It is the same old story of divide and conquer in order to exploit workers. So we recognise this. So our answer must be fundamentally and absolutely clear. We reject division. We reject racism. We reject the idea that workers in one country are in competition with workers in another. They are not our opponents, conference. They are our allies.

Internationalism is not just a set of principles. It is also practical. When we defend trade union rights anywhere, we strengthen them everywhere. When we improve safety standards anywhere, we raise expectations everywhere. When workers organise across borders, we stop, trade unions stop the race to the bottom. When we fight for justice for others, we define justice for ourselves, and that makes us all stronger. That is why this policy statement matters, because it sets out clearly what we will do.

We will strengthen links with firefighter unions across the world. We will cooperate on health and safety, on standards, and on collective bargaining. We will defend the right to organise here and internationally. We will stand in solidarity and offer practical support for workers and communities facing war, repression, and injustice. We will oppose attacks on trade unions and democratic rights wherever they occur. And we will make sure that what we do reflects our commitment to solidarity, equality, and working-class unity.

But, conference, this is not new ground for us, as I have said. It is work we're already doing. But today, we're sending a loud and clear message of how we're going to strengthen it, how we're going to build it, and how we're going to be clear on our direction of travel. And that is why I am proud to say that today we're launching our new FBU booklet called Solidarity. This booklet sets out some of the international work of this union over the many, many decades. It links the links that we have built over many years with firefighter unions and other organisations, the campaigns that we have supported, the firefighter solidarity that we have that defines us.

But more importantly, it explains why this work matters. So I say to conference, use this, take it back to your branches, take it back into your workplaces, put it in front of members, let them understand the issues and the fights that Fire Brigades Union members have sat round and in conference halls like this have taken forward in the past.

Use it to start conversations. Use it importantly to build understanding of international issues. Strengthen our union by using this. So conference internationalism comes from who we are, a democratic trade union in a global profession, part of a wider movement. And in a world that is becoming far more uncertain and more divided, our answer cannot be to pull back. We have to stand taller. We have to reach further, and we have to build stronger links with workers across the world, because when we do that, we are stronger. So conference, the choice is clear: division or solidarity, isolation or cooperation, silence or action. We know which side we're on, so I urge you to support this. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. B&EMM to second.

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Is this my pen? I think it is. I'm going to take it anyway.

THE PRESIDENT:
If you had a thing like Karen on it, you'd have somewhere to put your pen!

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
President, conference, we are proud to support this motion because it speaks to a principle at the heart of our union. Every worker and every community deserves equitable treatment wherever they are in the world. Internationalism is not a slogan for us. It is a commitment to fairness, equality, and equity, especially for those facing the harshest conditions, communities torn apart by war, targeted by discrimination, or devastated by disaster.

These are the people who most need solidarity, and they deserve to be treated with the same dignity and respect as any community here at home. Firefighters know better than most that crises do not respect borders. Floods, wildfires, storms, industrial failures, these emergencies strike working-class communities first and hardest.

And in regions facing conflict or repression, emergency workers themselves are often placed in extreme danger. If we believe in equality, then we must believe that every firefighter, every worker, and every family deserves the same chance to live safely and freely, no matter their nationality.

This motion reinforces that belief. It reminds us that equitable treatment is a universal right, not something that stops at the edge of the UK. When we stand with workers abroad, fighting for basic trade union freedoms, we strengthen those freedoms here. When we support communities suffering under discrimination or collective punishment, we affirm that no community should be treated any less worthy of protection.

The FBU has a proud history of standing with people facing injustice, opposing apartheid, and repression wherever they appear. That tradition is rooted in a simple truth: inequality anywhere undermines equality everywhere. And in today's world, where nationalism is rising and democratic rights are under pressure, how dare politicians decide who gets fuel, medical aid, and who can run their own countries?

Our commitment to equitable treatment matters more than ever. This motion ensures we continue that work. It commits us to strengthening links with firefighter unions globally, defending independent trade union rights, and standing with communities facing war, discrimination, and a humanitarian crisis.

It ensures our partnerships and affiliations reflect our values of equality, solidarity, and self-determination. Conference, supporting this motion is not just an act of internationalism, it is an act of fairness. It is a statement that every life has equal value, and that our solidarity extends to all who face danger, injustice, or disaster. I urge you to support this motion. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kasey. Scotland to move their – moving all three together, Lewis?

LEWIS CLARK (Scotland)**:**
Yes, I have two.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you.

LEWIS CLARK (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, moving our amendments and supporting the policy statement. Conference, this statement continues the FBU's proud history of solidarity with people across the world, both in our profession and those facing the deadly effects of imperial wars, climate change, and the brutality of capitalism.

In moving amendment 1, this is just what we do, it's just a little bit of clarification. Amendment 2 is clarifying the difference between the civic nationalism in Scotland, which has been a positive and inclusive and progressive force across our country when compared to the blood and soil nationalism that the far right and the likes of the Tommy Robinson mob like to peddle. There is a clear distinction there, and we just want to make that.

It's never been more important to our movement and our union to stand up for what we believe in. This is what the world outside the fire station doors actually means, and I applaud the general secretary for mentioning that.

We must stand shoulder to shoulder with workers across the world, with those facing oppression, and especially those right now facing the genocide in Gaza and aggression on the working-class populations just like us in the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon, Cuba, Sudan, and Iran. We're facing the most depraved acts of cruelty and abuse that I've ever seen in my lifetime. We need to stand tall for what we believe in and support this policy statement. Conference, thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lewis. Does amendment 1 – the EC are supporting all the amendments, so does amendment 1 have a seconder? *Formally*

Thank you. Does amendment 2 have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you.

Does amendment 3 have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you.

Well done. Sorry? I do apologise. Sorry, I've got amendment blindness. Sorry, London to move their amendment. Andy, I do apologise.

ANDY WARREN (London)**:**
President, conference, this is a friendly amendment to a good and timely statement that makes important points about the centrality of class and solidarity to our movement. The resolution talks about a retreat into nationalism.

Anyone paying even the slightest bit of attention will know that front and centre of British politics at the moment is a racist narrative that blames migrants for the failures of capitalism and of successive right-wing governments. The result is Reform surging in the polls and the rising far right.

Meanwhile, there are more than 2,000 people held in detention centres in the UK. An estimated four million people are subject to no recourse to public funds and are deprived of everything from benefits to free school meals for their kids. It's not currently possible for anyone to claim asylum unless you're already living in this country, and yet there are almost zero safe or legal routes for people to get there.

That means it's a government policy that people have to get on small boats to be able to claim asylum. All of these things and more mean that migrants in this country are extremely vulnerable to exploitation, whether by people smugglers, sex traffickers, greedy employers or rogue landlords.

Our enemy, comrades, does not arrive by small boat. They arrive by private jet. The fight for dignity and justice for migrants is not just a good cause among many that we may take up. It is of a piece with the solidarity we owe all workers in struggle across industries and across borders. We win and lose as a class.

The pay and conditions of migrant workers sets the floor for the pay and conditions for every worker. If they can be exploited, so can we. While politicians and right-wing commentators will point over there and tell you that that Afghan or Sudanese neighbour is the problem, over there your fire station's getting closed down, your pay is being cut in real terms, and the cost of living is going through the roof. Taking up this fight is not just the right thing to do, it's inseparable from the class interests of all workers. This motion must be used as a tool to take back to stations and branches, to argue against the poisonous rhetoric of the far right, but more fundamentally, to argue for a political trade union and an internationalist one based on solidarity and class.

And now I want to draw attention to a couple of lines in the policy statement that I think are particularly important, which are:

"The FBU's position is clear and consistent. We stand for peace, equality, democratic freedoms, and the right of people to determine their own futures. We do not align ourselves with governments. We stand in solidarity with workers."

These are important words. Every country should have free and independent trade unions, democratic elections, the right to protest, and to free speech. We should loudly criticise any government that undermines these rights as we would our own, and a shout out to my dad, who's been arrested five times under the Palestine Action protests. *Applause*

The principles set out in this motion must be a guide to action and not lip service. They need to inform our perspectives on everything from the fight against racism in the UK to the biggest international issues of the day. Conference, I move this amendment. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy, and apologies again. Does that amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody? No?

Right, we'll move to the vote, and I now put amendment 1 from Scotland to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 2 from Scotland to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 3 from London to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put executive council policy statement, Internationalism as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right. Thanks, conference. The booklet will be handed out by the stewards. It'll be put on your tables over the lunch break. Okay? So that will be going out for putting in your packs. Right, conference. We now move on to a really relevant resolution. I now call emergency resolution 1, Solidarity with Cuba and Against External Aggression, moved by Merseyside. The executive council are supporting.

Emergency Resolution 1 SOLIDARITY WITH CUBA AND AGAINST EXTERNAL AGGRESSION
Conference condemns the comments made by the President of the United States (U.S.), Donald Trump, while speaking at an investment forum in Miami on 27 March 2026. During his speech, Donald Trump praised United States (U.S.) military successes in Venezuela and Iran as a precursor to his remarks, "Cuba is next".

In response, Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel has vowed "impregnable resistance" and stated his country is prepared to fight if the U.S. carries through with its threats.

Further to this, Donald Trump issued an Executive Order on 1st May, 2026 titled, 'Imposing Sanctions on Those Responsible for Repression in Cuba and for Threats to United States National Security and Foreign Policy.'

This Executive Order and the additional sanctions it imposes were condemned by Cuban Foreign Minister, Bruno Rodriguez, as "illegal and abusive."

This Conference notes that:
- ***Cuba continues to face longstanding economic sanctions, most notably the U.S.' embargo, which has and continues to have, significant humanitarian and developmental impacts on the Cuban people***
- ***recent rhetoric and policy signals from the President of the U.S. have included renewed threats of intensified sanctions, political destabilisation, and potential military pressure***
- ***such actions undermine the principles of national sovereignty, self-determination, and international law***
- ***working people are disproportionately affected by economic sanctions, suffering shortages of essential goods, medicine, and infrastructure investment.***

Conference is clear that:
- ***The people of Cuba have the right to determine their own political and economic system free from foreign interference***
- ***economic sanctions function as a form of collective punishment against ordinary citizens rather than political opponents***
- ***international solidarity among workers is essential in resisting unjust foreign policy and promoting peace.***

Conference resolves that:
- ***the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) oppose all threats of military intervention, regime change, and coercive economic measures against Cuba***
- ***the FBU will work with international trade union bodies to build solidarity campaigns supporting Cuban workers and civil society.***

Conference further resolves to:

- ***affiliate with and support campaigns that challenge economic sanctions globally***
- ***issue a statement of solidarity to Cuba and its trade unions affirming our support in response to President Trumps recent aggression and threats***
- ***Write to the UK government to advocate for the immediate lifting of the U.S. embargo on Cuba.***

MERSEYSIDE

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, Ambassador, conference, we once again send our solidarity to our firefighter comrades in Cuba. The people of Cuba have faced a US embargo for almost 70 years. This has undoubtedly had a massive humanitarian impact. The Fire Brigades Union has rightly and proudly stood in solidarity with the people of Cuba in their fight against the wholly unjustified sanctions that have long been imposed against them, and now the US are ramping the pressure up.

They have labelled Cuba a state sponsor of terrorism. They continue with the energy blockade that limits oil supplies to Cuba, affecting essential services such as hospitals and public transport. They've imposed Executive Order 14404, which amongst other policies, targets financial institutions and non-US individuals, particularly in the energy sector.

We've also seen continued restrictions on tourism, which is now limiting travel to Cuba and also hampering people who want to visit the US after they have visited Cuba. Comrades, let me be clear. Trump has openly talked of invading Cuba. We've seen he has already flouted international law in kidnapping the Venezuelan president and in starting another illegal war in Iran.

This madman and his handlers will not stop there. They will continue to try and impose their wildly capitalist agenda as far as they possibly can. They talk about helping the people of Cuba. Nonsense. They would exploit the people there and strip the assets of Cuba, as they have done with many other Central and South American countries.

They will impose their failed economic sanctions that have already collapsed many Central and South American, and some European countries, in their hell-bent drive to make capitalism the new religion.

Cuba has long been a proud and independent nation, the only country to export doctors to other countries through the COVID pandemic.

The Cuban people have shown solidarity with us and the world, and we must show that solidarity back to them. Cuba's leaders have rightly called the additional sanctions imposed by the US illegal and abusive. We extend our solidarity from Merseyside FBU members and from all FBU members. We call to end the blockade. We call to remove the illegal sanctions. Please support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody? Tam?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Thanks, president. Yeah, just quickly, and first of all, a huge thanks on behalf of the executive council to Merseyside for bringing this very important, very timely resolution to conference. We talked previously about the long record the Fire Brigades Union has with the people of Cuba, and our solidarity with them.

We need to turn that now into action, and I think this resolution certainly helps us do this. I've got some news for conference. At a recent meeting of the executive council, the EC agreed to explore a solidarity delegation to travel to Cuba. We didn't manage to pull it off in time for May Day, which was our aim, and that's just down to the sheer logistics, the blocks that were put in our way in order to travel there. But we do intend to carry that out. We do intend to get a delegation of FBU members to Cuba to show our practical, physical solidarity with the Cuban people at this time. That's our aim, but it's clearly a huge task because of the issues that the ambassador laid out earlier. One of the things about it, by the way, is if you travel to Cuba, there's a likelihood

that you may never be able to enter the United States of America again. So there's an added incentive to get yourself along there, as it were. *Applause*

So that's one thing that the Fire Brigades Union is doing to continue our solidarity with the Cuban people, but there's a few more that we can do. Solidarity is the trade union superpower, but we can do things practically as individuals and as groups. As individuals, please, if you don't already, join the Cuban Solidarity Campaign. You can join as an individual. Make sure that your branch is aware of the activities of the Cuban Solidarity Campaign, and affiliate as a region with Cuba Solidarity Campaign as well. A number of regions are, but not all. Please make sure that you do that. Also, there's a stand out there from the CSC.

Please make sure you go and engage, engage with the comrade that's there. The comrade has just come back from Cuba, and he can tell you the stories of what's going on out there.

Conference, and again, sending huge thanks to Merseyside for bringing this. Look, we often portray the Cuban people as, like, superhuman people for, first of all, surviving the blockade that's been going on for so long, but they are ordinary people like us. Their aspiration is the same as us, to thrive in a society of their own making. They are our people. They are working class people. Our job is to stand in solidarity with them, and the Fire Brigades Union is determined to do that. Thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Tam. I now put emergency resolution 1 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, conference, thanks for that. I'd like to once again thank Her Excellency Ismara Mercedes Vargas Walter for taking time out of a very, very busy schedule to come and address conference. So please stay in your seats while we see Ismara out, and then we've got our next guest speaker probably within the next few minutes. So thank you very much, Ismara. Thank you.

Conference, can we start taking the seats, please? Right, conference, it now gives me great pleasure to introduce Samantha Dixon, MBE, MP, also the fire minister, to address conference. Samantha has been a Labour Party MP for Chester North and Neston since 2022. She serves as Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Building Safety, Fire, and Democracy.

As part of this role, Samantha regularly meets with FBU officials on the fire service matters, including recent proposed cuts where she supported the FBU's efforts against the proposed fire station closures. Samantha chairs the Ministerial Advisory Group, of which the FBU is a core participant. This group looks to set out what reform of the fire and rescue service should look like, including two sub-committees on culture and the College of Fire and Rescue.

The Ministerial Advisory Group gives the FBU significantly more access to the decision-making process within government than the union enjoyed under previous governments. The FBU is grateful to Samantha for her commitment to ensuring the FBU's voice is heard in these processes. This is the second year running the FBU have been able to invite a Minister for Fire and Rescue to our conference, which is a stark change from the previous barren 14 years of Tory governments where we had to even fight to get heard by them ministers, and I don't know how many went through that revolving door in that period. So thank you, Samantha, for coming to join our conference. Please feel free. Thank you, everybody. *Applause*

SAMANTHA DIXON MBE MP (Fire Minister)**:**
Thank you, president. Samantha Dixon, member of Parliament for Chester North and Neston. First time speaker at conference. *Applause*

I really want to begin by thanking the FBU for inviting me to speak today. It is a real honour to be one of the very few government ministers in recent years to have talked to this conference, and I'd like to thank everyone in this room and all of your members for the welcome that I've had since I was appointed in September.

I also want to thank you for the work you do day in, day out to keep our country safe. We owe firefighters everything. You face risks that most people would never understand. 19 years ago, four firefighters died in a blaze at Atherstone upon Stour, just down the road from here. And tomorrow will mark one year since two firefighters sadly lost their lives at Bicester, and I know that there are those in this room for whom this is still very raw.

Both incidents act as a devastating reminder of what service and sacrifice really means, and the Fire Brigades Union has never let that be forgotten. For over a century, you've stood up for firefighters and control room staff, demanding safer conditions, fairer pay, proper recognition, and improved service, and that's a record you should be proud of.

That's why this government values the FBU as a genuine partner in enabling the service to work better, both for the public and for those who serve in it. We agree with you that for far too long firefighters haven't had the support they deserve, and we're here to change that through engagement, not indifference, through partnership, not by diktat.

Because only by working together can we fully address the failures of the past. And let's be clear about the challenges that we've inherited. For years, firefighters raised legitimate concerns about your health, funding levels, and service standards, but what did you get in return? Drift, inertia, ministers who didn't engage seriously with the fire service or with the unions.

And that's not a criticism of what services have been delivered on the ground. It's a criticism of governments that failed to match that effort, that left the big structural questions unanswered. Well, this government's heard you, and we're acting. In the last 12 months, we've engaged seriously and consistently with the FBU on role reform and pay reform, and we've had regular meetings to track progress.

We know that pay and conditions are a matter for the NJC, and we respect that, but reform of the role and the structures around it is where this government has a part to play, and we intend to play it in partnership with you, not in parallel. That commitment to partnership in driving reform is why we set up the Ministerial Advisory Group on Fire and Rescue Reform, the MAG, because we wanted to build reform with you, not impose it upon you.

When the FBU said firefighters must be at the centre of reform, we agreed. When you said health and the future of the role needed urgent attention, we acted. That's what having a government on your side looks like. This is our partnership in action.

The same goes for investing in fire and rescue services. 2026-27 was the first multi-year settlement for local government in a decade. This is important for fire and rescue services who, for the past decade, couldn't plan past 12 months. We listened to what firefighters and services told us, and we acted. That is how you begin to build a resilient service. That's how you work in partnership.

For this settlement, we secured almost £115 million in additional funding for standalone fire and rescue authorities compared to last year. This provided a minimum 3.8% increase in core spending powers in 2026-27, with some services seeing an increase of over 7%.

That will lead to an overall boost of almost 13% by the end of this spending review period. But I recognise that the funding formula is out of date. It's more than a decade old and doesn't reflect the current picture. That's why it's essential that we review the formula used to allocate funding to fire and rescue authorities, and why we will work together to understand the challenges fire services face.

In April, we held the first workshop with fire and rescue services, and by July, all services will have had the opportunity to have their say and help us map a way forward. Make sure your services are playing their part into the review. At the same time, on pensions, we're undertaking a comprehensive review of the Firefighters Compensation Scheme. This includes a public consultation launching shortly. Our engagement with the FBU on this issue is essential, not optional. We need your support, and we're grateful for it.

So we're listening, and we're learning. But let me talk now about what we're delivering. Firstly, a revised fire and rescue National Framework, which we aim to present to Parliament before the end of the year. The National

Framework sets out the government's priorities for the fire and rescue sector. It sets out what we expect from fire and rescue authorities. It ensures those priorities are delivered on the ground for local communities and their workforces. It's been too long since the National Framework was last updated, and the FBU's input through the MAG is playing a key role in shaping this work. It's crucial this continues.

Secondly, the College of Fire and Rescue, the cornerstone of professionalism and a key recommendation from the Grenfell Tower inquiry. I'm pleased to announce that we will be publishing our consultation on the College of Fire and Rescue very soon. This will pave the way for consistent national standards, proper recognition of skills, a clear pathway for career development.

Thirdly, clarification and reform of the Fire and Rescue Authority role, which hasn't been updated in a generation, so this better reflects demands on fire and rescue services now and in the future. And closely linked with this, as I've already mentioned, we're actively supporting the FBU's important work within the NJC.

The NJC is grasping and addressing difficult longstanding issues to put transformative pay reform within reach. I know you debated this yesterday, and I know how important it is to you. Like you, we want to see a national pay and reward structure that's fair and easy to understand and operate.
Like you, we want to see a structure that rewards the skills we're asking fire service staff to develop. We'll continue to work with you to achieve these shared goals.

Fourth, on governance, the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Act received Royal Assent on Wednesday 29th April. This will empower mayors to take on fire and rescue functions in some areas.

My assurance is this: any decisions on fire governance will be taken through engagement with sector partners to deliver the best service for our communities.

And most recently, health. We've made a serious long-term promise to make sure every firefighter gets the health and wellbeing support they deserve during their career and beyond. Significant progress has already been made to reduce risk faced by firefighters from improvements to health and safety practices, to protective equipment, breathing apparatus, and decontamination standards, but action needs to go further. Your members spend their careers risking their lives to keep their communities safe. The very least we can do is ensure they get the health support they need. We'll do this in partnership, signing a health concordat with the partners across the sector, a formal agreement to make sure it happens. Building on what already exists, the package will include regular bespoke health checks, government-backed research into long-term health risks, and recording firefighter occupation in NHS health records.

As the Health Secretary Wes Streeting said when he spoke to your health conference in April, "Firefighters' health matters. Our pledge is to protect those who protect us." I can't speak to you today without paying tribute to our on-call firefighters. Their contribution is invaluable to the local communities they serve, but the retained duty system is fragile.

We're supportive of actions needed to protect and strengthen on-call recruitment, retention, and provision, and we're funding the NFCC to identify how we can work together to make that happen, to make sure the opportunities are there for on-call firefighters, to make sure communities get the protection they need.

We know demands on firefighters and fire and rescue services are changing fast, and it's crucial we enable the service to respond. Non-fire incidents have increased by more than 50% in a decade. Climate change is causing severe flooding and wildfires. The risks your members face are becoming more challenging and complex. We must future-proof the service to adapt to those challenges as they continue to emerge.

As part of this futureproofing, we're conducting reviews into flooding and civil protection. Collaboration in government is key to us tackling climate risk too, so we're working to address the wildfire risk and are focused on increasing operational capabilities and mitigating the impacts and risks faced by frontline firefighters.

At the same time, we're looking at how we can develop our capabilities to deal with terrorist incidents, which are among the gravest threats to our national security. It was a real privilege for me to meet with Green Watch at Hendon Fire Station recently after their efforts to put out those ambulances in the recent anti-Semitic attack.

My officials are meeting with the FBU to discuss this directly. It's crucial your voice is heard. Your views help shape the path we take, which brings me back to role reform, because the question of what a firefighter does and what a firefighter could do is one we can no longer afford to defer, even if we wanted to.

With demands on our fire and rescue service evolving, we must have clarity and consistency in expectations so the system can better recognise, resource, and support these. That's why we're looking seriously at how we can achieve this, bringing greater national consistency to the service that firefighters deliver and exploring where we can make the case for a genuine expansion of the firefighter role.

The next step is to take this forward through the ministerial advisory group where the FBU has an important voice and where diverse perspectives from across the sector help our understanding. I value Steve and Ben's collaborative contribution. It's been a real pleasure to get to know them both better since my appointment in September.

They're pragmatic, they're constructive, and they're positive, and above all, they're ready to seize the moment. Through the shared leadership among national partnerships that the MAG represents and fosters, we're unlocking stronger outcomes that will benefit your members and help keep the public safer.

That's the right forum for this work, and I want us to use it well. Decisions on role reform will be taken within the next year, decisions that align with the wider reform programme and which, if supported, could require legislative change. We will need to agree a plan to implement any changes, a plan that's fair and sustainable for firefighters and your employers.

And while you wouldn't expect me to guarantee the outcomes of the next government spending review, I can assure you the Secretary of State and I will be gathering and presenting the strongest possible evidence to secure the investment fire and rescue services need to meet their current and future needs. I am determined to make the strongest case possible. Thank you. *Applause*

We recognise there is still much for us to do. But this year, we'll use the National Framework revision to lay the foundations for change so that when those decisions come, we're ready to move. Your union, like all our sisters and brothers across the labour movement, gives us our strength. You link those of us in elected office to our workplaces and to our communities. Our most popular and radical policies come when we work together. This relationship, like any family, is not always perfect, but it's always better when we sit together, working together to make life better. And through it all, we want to work with you, not around you, not through you, but with you as true partners to deliver this change. You can have confidence in that.

And as we embark on the next stage of this journey together, it's worth looking back at the progress we've already made. In 12 months, we've delivered the first multi-year funding settlement in a decade. We've laid the foundations for the most significant reform of the service in a generation, and we've announced a landmark health concordat, building on what already exists to support firefighters' health and wellbeing during service and beyond.

The FBU has been a vital sounding board as we built this reform programme, and you will be key in helping us map the journey ahead. I will not promise what I cannot deliver, but what I will promise is this: We will keep working, we will keep listening, and we will keep building, reform by reform, step by step, moving forward together with you and other partners in the sector to make the service better, to improve the lives of firefighters, and give them the support and the backing they deserve.

Previous governments left you to fight alone. This Labour government will fight alongside you. We must embrace this once in a generation opportunity for change. You have already shown you are ready for this moment, and so are we. Let's work together to make it happen. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Sam, and thank you for obviously the way you work with us as a union and your commitment to have firefighters' voices continually heard in Westminster. Steve, you going to say a few words?

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president. Look, firstly, thanks, Sam, for taking the time to join us today. I don't think there's much going on in Westminster, so I'm sure you've got nothing else to be filling your time with.

But what I will say is, from day one when you came into office and you met with me and Ben you were clear that you would commit your time to engage with us, and you've done that. And we sincerely thank you for doing that. I think the Ministerial Advisory Group, which has been discussed at this conference in the past has been a huge step forward for our sector and for our union to make sure we got a voice in that room to do that.

And look, when we talk about relationships, when we talk about working together, the bigger picture on stuff, I think there is nothing more impactful than the concordat that Wes Streeting, the health minister, announced at our health and safety summit. Whilst we thank Wes and his team for those discussions, we know you had a big role and important part that you took in that as well, Sam.

So look, we thank you for that. And, and I suppose just to say, Sam sets out some big challenges that we've got, challenges that we've talked about from resolutions that have been passed in this conference hall over many years. And look, we've got a huge thing to take on. The president talked about 14 years of being locked out the room.

We had Alex Norris here last year. He had to travel a bit further to Blackpool to be with us. But the president announced then the first time for 20 years a fire minister attending the Fire Brigades Union conference. We've now had two on the trot. So Sam, we thank you for your time. We've got a small gift to say thank you, and we'll let you get back to your day job. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right, we are now going to carry on, on Section F. I'm going to call para F2, para F3. Yep.
Hello, we've got a mic not working?

ELLA BOWKLEY (NWC)**:**
Hello. Oh, it's working now, thanks. President, conference, I would like to report on the work of the national women's committee over the past year, particularly our engagement at key conferences, including the TUC Women's Conference and the ITUC in March, and the STUC women's conference in October.

These events are not just dates in the diary, they are vital platforms where women trade unionists come together to shape policy, change inequality, and drive real change in our workplaces and across society. I'm pleased to say that through our attendance, our committee successfully moved important motions, including on domestic abuse, pay bargaining, and our Cuts Leave Scars campaign.

Both were carried unanimously, demonstrating the strength of feeling across the movement and urgency of addressing these issues. We also seconded motions and supported a wide range of others on neurodiversity, countering misogyny, and menopause, just to name a few. These topics reflect the challenges which women are facing today at work and beyond.

What's important about these conferences is not just what we pass but what we build. They allow us to raise the profile of FBU campaigns, ensuring our priorities are heard on a national and international stage. At the same time, they give us the opportunity to stand in solidarity with others and build alliances across the wider trade union movement.

Collective strength matters. When unions speak together, we amplify our voices and increase our power to secure change. Across the country, the work being done by women in our union, and the wider movement is really making a difference. It is improving the working lives of women, making working places safer, fairer, and more inclusive.

And crucially, it's helping to protect those who feel unable to speak up for themselves, ensuring that their voices are heard, their rights are defended, and their dignity is upheld. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ella. I now call para F4, para F5, para F6, para F7, Scotland. Oh, Gus sprinting there. He did the Peter Kay dad's run at the beginning!

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, the importance of the STUC to further the interests of FBU members in Scotland was illustrated again at this year's congress. First Minister of Scotland addressed congress, opening by paying tribute to the firefighters who attended the Union Street fire in Glasgow, two of which are up the back in our delegation, and recognised our members' commitment and professionalism by committing to fund role expansion in Scotland with an extra £30 million per year of the parliament. This funding opens a much wider conversation with the Scottish Government regarding overall funding for the Scottish service to prevent potential cuts equivalent to 500 wholetime firefighter posts.

Conference, across the UK we've been campaigning on this for years, and this has been longstanding conference policy. In Scotland, we came to agreement in 2022, negotiated through the NJC, and this will be the starting point for any negotiations, with a red line that not a penny of the funding for role expansion will come from core funding or on the back of our members' jobs.

Conference our affiliation to the STUC gives us regular access to the very highest levels of government in Scotland, and the FM statement at congress this year shows that consistent organising, multi-union lobbying through the STUC and relentless campaigning can pay off. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Gus. I call para F8, para F9, para F10, para F11, para F12, para F13. I now call resolution 55, Together Teesside, Building Momentum for Solidarity and Challenging Division, moved by Durham and Darlington, the EC supports.

Resolution 55 TOGETHER TEESSIDE – BUILDING MOMENTUM FOR SOLIDARITY AND CHALLENGING DIVISION

Conference notes the importance of solidarity and the continual battle against division and hate, across the UK and internationally, now more than ever.

Conference further notes the support that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has given to the Together Alliance and the day of action and celebration organised for the 28th March 2026, shows the continuing appetite for challenging inequality and building solidarity across communities throughout the UK, beyond the membership of the FBU.

Conference is aware that Together Teesside is, like the Together Alliance, a group of likeminded trade unions and local community leaders coming together to build a movement of solidarity to challenge and dismantle the division and hate that has been swelling on the streets of the UK.

Conference calls upon the Executive Council (EC) to provide support for Together Teesside, helping to build its recognition and reach within the local community of Teesside.

Conference further instructs the EC to set out a plan for further local community events across the UK, to be built with the support from national FBU, liaising with other unions and national community leaders, so that local FBU officials are both encouraged and supported in building their own solidarity events, bringing together their local communities.

Conference calls on this work to be carried out within the next 12 months with a report provided back to all regions no later than Conference 2027.

DURHAM AND DARLINGTON

ANDY MURRAY (Durham and Darlington)
Conference, president, it should come as no surprise that there is division and hate on the streets of the UK at the minute. Over the last few years, we've seen rises in far-right rhetoric permeating through society. We need to challenge this, and we need to challenge this now. Together Teesside is a movement of like-minded community groups, trade unions that are building to work to stop this rise in division and hate. We've put this motion together and put it forward because what's starting in Teesside needs to be replicated across the UK.

We need to stand up. We need to make our voices counted. We cannot do this in isolation. We need to build a movement everywhere that's going to stand up and stop this division and hate. We know that what divides us is far outweighed by what joins us together. We move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy. Does that have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody? No? Yep.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thank you, president. Look, we're grateful, the executive council's grateful to Durham and Darlington for bringing this resolution, and the executive council are solidly behind it.

Conference, you'll recall the excellent debate we had last year regarding the threat of the far right, and since then, we've gone strength to strength and played a major role in getting the national Together Alliance off the ground. And we're proud that the early meetings of the Together Alliance with Kevin Courtney, the former general secretary of the NEU, took place at our new head office in London, and we were at the forefront, and we led the march, that mass mobilisation on 28th March. Hundreds of trade unionists were present and campaigning. Some argue it was one of the largest anti-fascist marches we had seen.

We cannot contract this work out. As unions, we have to educate our own members, fight against the far right and their fascist cronies. We need to make clear to our members and to other people that if they get into power, they'll come for our jobs, our pensions, and this union.

We have to stop them, all the way from Farage and his cronies to Yaxley-Lennon, or whatever he calls himself this week. That's why we applaud the comrades in region 3 with their work on Together Teesside. Every brigade committee needs to do this work. We need to link our national projects with our local ones.

It's a huge task, but we will not shrink from our duty. So please support this resolution. The executive council does. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. I now put resolution 55 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, we're jumping about a little bit because the gen sec has had to just whip out, so I'm now going to call resolution 80, Apartheid Off Campus Isle of Man.

Resolution 80 APARTHEID OFF CAMPUS
Conference stands in solidarity with the Palestinian people and joins the global call for an urgent, lasting and meaningful ceasefire and an end to the indiscriminate killing and genocide.

Conference also stands in solidarity and unity with organisations campaigning for an end to the genocide, and for the perpetrators to answer for their crimes against humanity and to face justice.

Conference notes our longstanding affiliation with the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC). One PSC campaign is to kick Apartheid Off Campus.

Conference also notes the final demand of Merseyside's resolution passed at the 2025 Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Conference:
"Conference instructs that the Executive Council now moves into more practical support. This should include:

- ***encouraging Fire Brigades Union members to practically support these lobbies and any others that support the Palestinian people."***

Conference believes based on details published by the PSC, and is concerned that The University of Warwick have institutional ties with complicit institutions and companies amounting to £8,839,580.

In light of this information Conference is concerned that The University of Warwick is to host the FBU Conference from 2026 and consider this a direct conflict with Conference policy.

Conference therefore demands that the Executive Council look into this as a matter of urgency, that discussions take place with The University of Warwick and that if any breaches of FBU Conference policy exist, or if the PSC claims are substantiated, an alternate venue be found for future Conferences – one which aligns with our collective ethics and morals and Conference positions.

ISLE OF MAN

NICK HAYS (Isle of Man)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 80, Apartheid Off Campus. Many of us in this room will have seen the end of an apartheid regime of second-class citizens judged by the colour of their skin, not by the content of their character. I had hoped never to see this again in my lifetime. However, the people of Palestine have been the target of a relentless, sustained campaign of genocide by the State of Israel for a period now approaching three years. This is not a military conflict. This is not recompense for past wrongs. This is an ideological and religious zealotry acting out its desires for power.

Just a quick quote from Amnesty International here. International jurisprudence recognises that the perpetrator does not need to succeed in their attempts to destroy the protected group, either in whole or in part, for genocide to have been committed. The commission of prohibited acts with the intent to destroy the group as such is sufficient.

We should all be aware that the following atrocities have been proven to have taken place since 2023. Starvation through the embargoes of food and aid deliveries, the targeting of humanitarian workers, of which over 576 have been killed, indiscriminate attacks on civilians, abduction and imprisonment of Palestinians without cause, which is itself a war crime, and the death of over 73,000 Palestinian people.

The FBU stand in solidarity with the people of Palestine, and we should all abhor the events which are taking place in Gaza and across Palestine. We're repeatedly told that this union has a proud history of siding with worthy and moral causes. If that's the case, then we need to align ourselves with organisations who share our ideals, not those who pragmatically place profit ahead of purpose.

We need the executive council to ensure that this is the case, that our union is beyond reproach and continues to stand on the side of fairness, equality, and what is right. If our hosts are in receipt of donations from institutions complicit in the deaths of over 13,000 children, then it is simply not good enough. That makes us complicit. Thank you, Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Does that have a seconder?

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 80: Apartheid Off Campus. Comrades, in 2024, I had the honour to host a conference fringe event on Palestine. At that event, we had a speaker from Manchester University who spoke passionately and brilliantly on the work that she and her fellow students and activists were undertaking to try and force their university to sever links with companies and organisations linked with the ongoing genocidal attacks by Israel in Palestine.

At the same time, many other university students across the UK were carrying out the same work, the same pickets, fighting for what is right and demanding that their universities listen to them. We proudly stood in Merseyside with the students from Liverpool who set up a camp on university grounds and organised themselves as SOAS, the Students of Alareer Square.

Comrades, the threats and intimidation that these brave young people faced was despicable, yet they stood strong. At the same time, here in Warwick, the Demilitarisation Working Group of the Warwick Staff Student Solidarity Network released a report titled An Investment in Injustice. This report revealed the ties that Warwick University has with companies complicit in Israel's genocidal attacks.

This group is made up of trade unionists and activists, students and staff. The organisations that they referred to included BAE Systems, Rolls Royce, JCB, Elbit Systems, and Caterpillar, amongst others. Conference, these brave students and staff have shown true solidarity with the people of Palestine, a solidarity that has been echoed by this conference for many years. We should not allow that solidarity to be tainted, however unwittingly. We urge conference to support this resolution and for the EC to carry out the task of meeting the university to ascertain if any breaches of conference policy exist. Conference, please support this resolution. I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. That's open for debate. Left or right? He's gone right.

TIM GREEN (Kent)**:**
Kent are supporting this resolution, which has been brought to us in conference by Isle of Man. It's going to be quick. What I want to say is EC and conference need to be aware, you know, we're quick to make judgement, and quote Plymouth Brethren, but it's quite clear to see today what's in this resolution that's been put forward that, you know, we need to take a long, hard look at ourselves and maybe practice what we preach. Thanks very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks. Tam to give the qualified support.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, and once again, thanks for bringing this resolution and raising this issue. I think just to get the point across as well about how serious. Of course, we take our responsibilities seriously. Take our responsibilities very, very seriously. I can tell conference that I was actually part of the FBU delegation to the Trade Unions Congress. It was a while ago now, when the Fire Brigades Union, through this conference, raised a resolution about the BDS campaign. At that point, a very controversial campaign urging people to boycott, disinvest, etc, within Israel products. We then took that to the executive council. The executive council didn't just pass that resolution or act on it; they then took that to the Trade Unions Congress.

The delegation then went along, tabled at the Trade Unions Congress, and speaking candidly, I don't think I've encountered acts against us in that way. The intimidation and harassment that the FBU delegation to the TUC suffered during that period was truly extraordinary.

We were getting followed everywhere. We were getting cajoled everywhere we went. Every place we went to eat, people were taking the seats next to us and haranguing us. The waiters were also getting harangued as they tried to serve us. Our receipts were getting photographed with the threats of getting published. We were getting followed back to the hotels. We had to walk together as groups.

I'm very, very proud to say that the Fire Brigades Union tabled that resolution at the Trade Union Congress. And TUC, as a result of that pressure from the FBU, then brought together their own resolution, which carried at that Congress. So, the Fire Brigades Union has got an extraordinary history of solidarity with the Palestine people, and also in regard to this specific issue.

Just on the issue itself, we have looked into this, and that's the qualification, president, that the work's been done. We went immediately to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign and the trade union liaison officer, who's taken out time

to look at this issue carefully and has given us this statement. And I shared this with Nick earlier, but it's important that conference hear it.

"Hi, comrades. We thank our colleagues for submitting this motion and reiterate support for the Palestinian people against Israel's crimes of genocide, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing. We stress our continued support for campaigns calling for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions, answering the call of over 170 Palestinian civil society organisations, including trade unions, who have requested that fellow trade unions around the world answer this demand.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign are supporting workers and students across Britain to challenge complicity of universities who currently invest in companies complicit in the oppression of Palestine, and have institutional ties with complicit institutions and companies. We reiterate the call for all universities to immediately divest funds and end ties with these companies complicit in genocide, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing.

Palestine Solidarity Campaign have contacted the University of Warwick Student-Staff Solidarity Network. They have confirmed that at this time they are not calling for an all-out boycott of Warwick University. They welcome acts of solidarity. The staff are organising within student, staff, and trade union spaces to put the demands for divestment to the senior management of the university. We welcome and thank the FBU for their continued solidarity during this event."

So that's the position from the PSC. Clearly, a very controversial issue. We take our responsibilities seriously. As you've heard before, solidarity is an act that is vital to this movement, and it travels across waters. We hope conference understands how important we've treated this issue. I can also tell you that we've raised the issue directly with the university ourselves, and Adam's had to fill in a whole shedload of paperwork on the back of that. But yes, we have raised it. We take our commitments very seriously, and we always check in regard to an issue that we ourselves raised and drove through the trade union movement.

But once again, thank you for bringing this important resolution to conference. Thanks, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Tam. I now put resolution 80 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Conference, because we have got so much business to do, I am going to squeeze in one more debate. So I'll now be taking resolutions 54 and 60 in the same debate. They can carry together, so with your agreement, I'll suspend standing orders 16. Is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. I now call resolution 54, Solidarity with Palestine moved by Scotland, the EC are supporting. And if Devon and Somerset can get ready as well, and if anybody's seconding Scotland, please come down. Yep.

Resolution 54 SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE
Conference is appalled that since last year's Conference, the mass killing of civilians has continued in Gaza and that despite a supposed ceasefire, hundreds of men, women and children have been killed by bombs and bullets, by snipers, drones and fighter jets, and by illness and disease.

Conference condemns the attacks on Nablus fire station and the abduction of firefighter Sultan al-Ashqar, who has been held in Israeli detention since the raid on 16 October 2025, and sends our solidarity to all our comrades in Gaza, the West Bank and across the occupied territories.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***reaffirm the support of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) for the people of Gaza and the West Bank through our communication channels***
- ***use whatever influence they have through the FBU's affiliation to the Labour Party, to bring pressure to the UK government and the governments of the devolved nations to act to halt the actions of the Israeli regime and bring an end to the genocide in Gaza***

- ***facilitate the sending of messages of solidarity to Nablus fire station and the crews who work there, and all other emergency service workers in the Palestinian occupied territories***
- ***send a public message of solidarity to Francesca Albanese, United Nations Special Rapporteur, who is currently sanctioned by the United States government for speaking out against the genocide in Gaza.***

SCOTLAND

LEWIS CLARK (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, so we've had ceasefires, condemnations, boards of peace. What has changed? Absolutely nothing, hee-haw. Mass killing, starvation as a weapon, bombardment, and aggression still continues on as it did when this latest attack on the Palestinian people started. The Israeli death machine has acted with impunity. Evidence of the most depraved acts is met with what from our governments? A strongly worded arms invoice and arresting Andy's dad from London for wearing a T-shirt. Their aggression knows no borders, flattening communities in Lebanon, kidnapping humanitarian workers from international waters, acts of piracy with zero repercussions.

There is no option to do less. The Palestinian people are still in the fight of their lives. We have to join that fight, maintain our solidarity, and turn our rage, our rage from seeing limbless children, from seeing families that are torn apart, displaced, starving communities along the whole open-air concentration camp. We need to turn that rage into more action. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Thanks, Lewis. Does that have a seconder? You seconding?
Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Yeah.

I now call resolution 60, Solidarity with Palestine, moved by Devon and Somerset.

Resolution 60 SOLIDARITY WITH PALESTINE
Conference notes:

- ***Israel's genocide in Gaza since October 2023 has killed at least 75,000 Palestinians, the latest bloody chapter in Israel's decades of apartheid, occupation, ethnic cleansing, and systematic violations of Palestinian human rights***
- ***the International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for senior Israeli government officials for war crimes. Israel is on trial for genocide at the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which has already declared that Israel's occupation of the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, is unlawful, along with the associated settlement regime, annexation and use of natural resources***
- ***in September 2025, the United Nations (UN) Independent International Commission of Inquiry concluded that Israel has committed genocide in Gaza. This echoes the conclusions of legal experts, genocide scholars and Palestinian and international human rights organisations***
- ***Palestinian and international human rights organisations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have found that Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid through its imposition of a system of racist oppression and domination against Palestinians across all areas under its control***
- ***Palestinian civil society, including Palestinian trade unions, continue to call on trade unions and institutions worldwide to answer their calls for solidarity and demand an end to international complicity in Israel's violations of international law and Palestinian human rights.***
- ***the call for Boycott Divestment and Sanctions comes from the broadest Palestinian civil society coalition, launched by over 170 organisations, representing the consensus view of Palestinians` in their historic homeland and in exile.***

Conference believes:

- ***the expansion of land theft by Israel in Gaza and the West Bank demonstrates the continued attempts to deepen and entrench the illegal occupation and ethnic cleansing of Palestine, that the world's highest court, the ICJ, has determined to be unlawful***

- ***upholding the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people requires international allies to promote the rights of all Palestinians, including the right of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes as stipulated in UN resolution 194***
- ***Israel has ramped up its efforts to destroy Palestinian civil society, raiding, vandalising and proscribing organisations, while harassing workers using spyware, travel bans and illegal detention. We need now more than ever to show our support to them***
- ***Palestinian people require our full solidarity, and the international community must be conscious of and resistant to attempts to redirect aid and solidarity away from Palestinians living through the crimes of genocide and apartheid, and towards Israeli led initiatives.***

Conference instructs the Executive Council to continue to show solidarity with Palestine by:

- ***reaffirming our full commitment to working in partnership with our Palestinian emergency service workers, providing meaningful solidarity through aid, training and campaigning to challenge British complicity and call for an end to Israel's regime of apartheid, military occupation and ethnic cleansing***
- ***encourage branches and regions to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC), supporting demonstrations, delivering education events to members and publicising workplace days of action and worker organising initiatives.***
- ***develop our work on boycott, divestment and sanctions campaigns, working with PSC to engage members and reps across local authorities to participate in divestment campaigns, including supporting the work to divest local government pension funds from companies complicit in Israel's war crimes and violations of international law***
- ***commit to ending our affiliation to organisations who do not align with these aims and who do not meet the threshold of recognising the full inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right of return.***

DEVON AND SOMERSET

CHARLIE WOODS (Devon and Somerset)**:**
President, conference, I move Motion 60, Solidarity with Palestine. For decades, the Palestinian people have endured systemic oppression and occupation, and what we're witnessing now, as already has been said, is a live-streamed genocide.

Thousands of people, including thousands of children, have been killed. The International Criminal Court has issued arrest warrants for war crimes, and the International Court of Justice has ruled Israel's occupation of Gaza and the West Bank unlawful. When a Palestinian firefighter is targeted by a drone strike while trying to rescue those already injured, it is an attack on all of us.

Showing solidarity is not just a choice, it's everything we are, and it is the very DNA of our trade union movement. When our local government pension funds are invested in companies that manufacture the drones and missiles used to target civilian infrastructure, that is our money.

This is a matter of basic human rights, and for us, as trade unionists, it's a matter of profound industrial solidarity.

Conference, this motion asks that we reaffirm our commitment to our partners in the Palestinian emergency services, that we encourage all branches and regions to affiliate to the Palestine Solidarity Campaign, supporting demonstrations, delivering education events to members, and publicising more workplace days of action, to develop our work on boycott, divestment, and sanctions campaign, and finally, to commit to ending our affiliation to organisations who do not align with these aims and who do not align with our principles. Solidarity with Palestine, conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Charlie. Does that have a seconder? Gus.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 60, Solidarity with Palestine. Conference, we want to thank Devon and Somerset for bringing this resolution. The more voices bringing to light the brutality of the Israeli regime and the scale of the suffering being inflicted on the Palestinian, and now the Lebanese people, the better.

Conference, I know many of us will have members that ask why we support the Palestinian cause and what it's got to do with us. In answer to that, I want to pay tribute to all those emergency service workers who have been deliberately targeted, murdered in their hundreds by the IDF just for doing their job, the same job that we do, and that our comrades in the ambulance service do.

Conference, on 29th January 2024, five-year-old Hind Rajab was killed in her family's car by the IDF. They'd already attacked the vehicle in Gaza City, killing her family, and surrounded by their bodies, she was on the phone to the emergency control, who dispatched an ambulance to try and rescue her. The IDF killed Hind and the ambulance crew, putting 355 bullets in the car before slaughtering the paramedics.

On 23rd March last year, the IDF attacked emergency service vehicles, five ambulances, a fire engine, and a UN vehicle in Rafah. They massacred 15 aid workers, eight paramedics, five civil defence, that's their fire service, and one UN worker. The IDF dug a trench and tried to bury the bodies and the vehicles, but when they were discovered, a mobile phone was found to have a recording of the incident, as a paramedic had been on the phone to his mum driving up to the incident. The investigation into this by Forensic Architecture concluded that over 900 rounds had been fired at the clearly marked emergency workers, people just like me and you, executed, many of them at close range.

The report into this is in your packs, and I want to thank the EC for their incredible work on this and for presenting this report to conference. Truly inspiring work that makes me massively proud of our great union. Conference, I'm sure you'll be aware of the fire engine we tried to donate to our comrades in Nablus, part of that longstanding relationship of solidarity with Palestinian firefighters.

The fire engine was impounded for over a year, and then we were told it needed to be taken back and that the PA owed the Port Authority $16,000. The GS wrote to the Home Secretary asking for assistance, and we thank him for taking this principled stance. But following that letter, on 16th October last year, the IDF raided Nablus, targeting the fire station, ransacking it, and abducting one of the firefighters, Sultan al-Askar, who has been held in Israeli detention ever since.

We're seen as part of the targeting of emergency workers in Lebanon, with double tap strikes being policy and now third and fourth strikes aimed at killing anyone who tries to assist the dead and the wounded. Conference, when our members question why we support this cause, aside from the injustice, the oppression, the brutality, the lack of humanity, aside from that, the attacks, the targeting and murder of so many emergency service workers make it a trade union issue that this trade union can't ignore.

We've just seen today that the brutal US sanctions against the UN Special Rapporteur to the Occupied Territories, Francesca Albanese, have been lifted, so there's a little bit of hope there. Maybe it's a step closer to the start of the long journey to justice. So, conference, if anyone still needs to be convinced of why we support the Palestinian people, please just Google the Euro-Med Monitor into abuse in Israeli prisons, where you'll be faced with hundreds of accounts of the systematic use of rape and sexual abuse, torture, and most shockingly, the use of trained dogs to rape Palestinian prisoners.

Our government, our media are complicit, and history will judge them harshly. We're on the right side of that history. Don't stop talking about Gaza. Free Palestine. Conference, Scotland supports the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Gus. That's now open for debate.

FRAN McQUADE (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 54. Conference, we should use all tools available to us as a union to work towards ending the ongoing genocide in Gaza. We must reaffirm our support, send our solidarity, and use any political influence we can, as this resolution asks.

The LGBT+ community has a proud history of standing against all forms of oppression and fighting against injustice. Conference notes the Israeli government's propaganda strategy of pinkwashing. This is a political strategy attempting to paint Israel as a queer haven and exploit concern for LGBT+ rights in Gaza to downplay its actions and its crimes.

The ongoing mass killing of civilians in Palestine does not discriminate. You're not safe from Israeli attacks because you are queer. Queer liberation goes hand-in-hand with a free Palestine. There is no Pride in genocide. Conference, we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks. Thank you, Fran.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of both of the resolutions moved. Conference, last year Merseyside moved the resolution Practical Support for Palestine. We hoped that that resolution would deliver the support that the Palestinians needed whilst they tried to rebuild the devastated lands that Israel have not stolen from them.

We hoped that the genocidal attacks would have stopped. They haven't. Palestinians are still being killed today. The genocidal attacks continue. Gus has just mentioned the story of Hind Rajab, a child trapped in her family's car with her murdered family. When she called for help, that didn't come.

The help didn't come because the ambulance that was sent was also shelled, killing both of the crew members, Yusuf al-Zeino and Ahmed al-Madhoun. People killed for going to try and save a young child's life. That is abhorrent. Comrades, we have to stay solid with the people of Palestine. We have to give them our solidarity. Free Palestine. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. Andy?

ANDY WARREN (London)**:**
Okay, speaking on both motions really. So these resolutions are right to condemn Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. I'm proud of our policies opposing the genocide and the Israeli occupation. We have a proud record of direct links and practical solidarity supporting firefighters in the occupied West Bank and elsewhere.

But I do have a concern with resolution 60, which is a new element that it would add to our union's policy. I'm concerned that it would break our links with movements inside Israel that are co-led by Palestinians who are struggling from within and in increasingly adverse conditions against the war and occupation.

In 2024, the EC policy statement passed by this conference says:

"The FBU support the small but growing movement inside Israel opposing the war and calling for a just, peaceful, and democratic solution addressing the rights of the Palestinian people. The union pays tribute to those in Israel, such as Standing Together, who fight against racism and discrimination and seek to build a dialogue between – and unity between Palestinians and Jews."

Standing Together is the main force inside Israel fighting against Netanyahu's government. It's organised direct action at the Gaza border, where it sought to block troop trucks who were entering Gaza, and it's also physically defended aid convoys from settler violence at the border. It mobilises in the occupied West Bank to defend Palestinian homes from forced eviction, and it organises in Arab communities abandoned by the Israeli state.

Now, this organisation, Standing Together, is explicit in its support for justice and redress for the Palestinians expelled in the Nakba of 1948, but it acknowledges that there are a variety of ways this justice could be achieved. This resolution, by contrast, has a pretty specific strict definition, and it also states that we must break links with organisations that don't meet that definition, don't meet that criteria.

So unfortunately, my understanding is that therefore, the resolution might imply that those Israelis who put their bodies on the line to defend aid convoys and block troop trucks, who bravely organise in a highly militarised and repressive environment, and those heroic young people who are serving prison sentences for refusing to serve in the IDF and participate in genocide, this resolution may say that these people are not our allies, and if that's the case, comrades, I disagree.

Perhaps the movers – I hope so – that the movers or the EC can put me at ease with this concern, that the material impact of resolution 60 would be to weaken our solidarity with Palestine. It's important that we continue the policies that we have, solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for self-determination, including support for Palestinians fighting alongside Israelis for equality and justice. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, I'll try and be quick, president. Thanks again, once again. I know that the timing's unfortunate, but for bringing these massive resolutions. I think we just got to reflect, first of all, on why resolutions matter, and then just rehear as it were the words of the Cuban ambassador.

"We see, hear and take hope from your resolutions. Your message is heard. It tells us we are not alone." That's why these resolutions matter. It's why they've mattered throughout the previous decades, and God knows it's why it matters now. Could I just quickly on Andy's point. Look now is not the time, frankly, to have an academic discussion about division against different groups, etc. We've had a discussion. The FBU will decide who we engage with. Of course, we'll be led by PSC, but we don't just get blindly led. We will decide which groups to engage with, and if there are good left groups that are organising against Netanyahu and his government, of course, that's not something we've deviated from. But of course, we will be led by PSC.

The issue here is there's a genocide going on, a genocide that's been taking place over a number of years, a genocide that is happening in front of our very eyes, and that is why we need to be standing up and be heard on this issue. So yeah, last year we undertook some various initiatives led by resolutions from conference.

So we refer to the resolution from Merseyside. That then led to an online meeting we organised for everyone that would attend. I think it was back in last September time. We had a firefighter from Nablus who addressed that meeting online, sent a message of solidarity and support. Just on behalf of them, by the way, it's Nablus Fire Station is on Facebook. They're desperate for support, so if you've got your groups, even your personal Facebook, then please engage with them, like them and follow them on it. We then, through a lot of work, managed to get a message from a comrade who was actually in Gaza at the time, which was a pretty extraordinary thing to view. The comrade was telling about the issues they faced. I remember vividly him telling us, telling the meeting, that where he was, which is a very sort of dark place, you know, you can imagine it, his family had been killed just a few weeks before. The bodies were still buried in the rubble of Gaza, and he couldn't access it because the Israeli troops were not allowing them access to that area.

The reality of that situation, I think, had a huge impact on all the comrades that were there, present. And then, of course, the issue that Gus refers to a resolution passed by conference last year, which led us direct to engage with the issue of what happened on that day. And just a quick snapshot of that day, because it's impossible, isn't it, to almost get your head around these figures, statistics, people that are getting killed in Gaza.

So I'm going to tell you about just one snapshot of two days. On 18 March 2025, 414 Palestinians killed, including 174 children. One day, 414 people killed, 174 children. And then the day that Gus has referred to as well, just a few

days later, where the Israeli military attacked a convoy of ambulances and a fire appliance. And just in case anyone thinks this was mistaken identity, over a period of two hours, poured gunfire on that convoy. And what this report that's in your bags shows is that the troops advanced over a period of time until they were literally just over a metre away, and the last shots were fired.

Emergency service workers, firefighters, we have shown huge solidarity from the Fire Brigades Union to firefighters across the world. We stood with comrades who ran into the Chernobyl nuclear power plant knowing they were going to give their lives. We supported them because we're internationalists. We stood by the families of the 343 firefighters on 9/11 who ran into those towers and died, because we are internationalists.

And we are going to stand by the families of the firefighters that were killed on that day with a very basic, but I think hard to achieve, demand. We demand justice and accountability for our murdered comrades in Gaza. There's a fringe meeting tonight, comrades, where you're going to hear the people who compiled this report.

It's a shocking report to hear, but it's the reality. And then we don't walk away shaking our heads. We do something about it. We get involved. We're going to be running a campaign on the back of it. We all know what that could well then lead to. We all know the difficulties that we're going to face in doing it, but we are firefighters.

If we can't get through the wall, we'll go around it, we'll go under it, we'll go over it, but I tell you what, we're getting to the other side. We will continue to fight for justice for Palestine, for freedom for the Palestinian people. That's what this union is committing to. Thanks for all the delegates who have brought the resolutions. And finally, let's just say as we break for lunch, free Palestine. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tam. I've got another two resolutions yet, Tam. Have we? No, kidding. Andy, you raised concerns in your contribution. Have they been addressed sufficiently that you're not standing in opposition? Other than that, I will give Devon and Somerset the opportunity to right of reply. Are those concerns addressed?

Yep. Excellent. Thank you for that. Right, we now move on to the vote. I now put resolution 54 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 60 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

And finally conference, I now call Para 14. Thank you.

Right, we are now breaking for lunch. Could we have you back in at quarter past two sharpish? Thank you. We've still got a lot of work to do, and I appreciate you going into your dinner break. Thank you.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference can we start taking our seats, please.

Were you about to leave then Caroline? You sure? If you need the toilet, I'll wait. No? Sure? Okay, I now call the chair of standing orders, Phil Millar to give a report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, can you please turn to your delegate list. Region 9, Norfolk, remove Ruth Tolbart and replace with Jamie Hodkinson.

Conference, this morning's election to standing orders has concluded, and I'm pleased to inform you that Rebecca Savin has been re-elected unanimously. *Applause*

I'm not sure she's clapping, but yes, thank you very much for that.

There are new standing orders election forms on your desks, that's to elect a replacement for myself on the standing orders committee. So, if you could have them in the standing orders election box at the afternoon comfort break, please. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you, conference. Right, we're now moving on to para F15, Affiliations. Conference, I'll be taking the following resolutions as all part of the same debate. Emergency resolution 3, May 7 Election Results, the Fire Brigades Union, FBU, And Our Fight for The Future Of The Labour Party, moved by the EC. Emergency resolution 6, The Relationship Between The Fire Brigades Union And The Labour Party, moved by West Midlands. resolution 56, Labour Party Affiliation, moved by Merseyside, resolution 59, Green Party, moved by Devon and Somerset. I have determined that resolutions 56 and 59 stand in opposition to emergency resolution 3. So, if emergency resolution 3 from the executive council carries, those two resolutions will fall. emergency resolution 6 can carry with emergency resolution 3. However, if emergency resolution 3 from the executive council falls, and emergency resolution 6 carries, resolutions 56 and 59 both fall.

If emergency resolution 3 and emergency resolution 6 fall, and resolution 56 carries, resolution 59 will fall. I will go through that step by step as we come to the voting, because I can see some perplexed faces. And that's why I was late, because the printer wasn't working, and I wasn't going to try and remember that.

So, I now call emergency resolution 3, May 7th Election Results, Fire Brigades Union, And Our Fight For The Future Labour Party, moved by the executive council. General secretary and Greater Manchester, if you could get ready to come and second.

Emergency Resolution 3 MAY 7TH ELECTION RESULTS – FIRE BRIGADES UNION, AND OUR FIGHT FOR THE FUTURE LABOUR PARTY
Conference notes on 7 May 2026 we saw the devastating defeat suffered by Labour Party representatives in the local elections and the Scottish and Welsh Parliaments that means there has to be change and we have to shape it.

Conference notes that Labour lost almost 1500 council seats across England. Labour lost in its longstanding heartlands in Wales, including dropping to 9 out of the 96 seats in the Senedd and losing its role as the governing party. Labour also suffered losses in Scotland. By contrast, Reform UK made significant gains in Wales, Scotland and England.

Conference believes that responsibility for this defeat lies with the decisions and policies of the current Labour leadership.

These results demonstrate that working-class voters overwhelmingly have rejected Starmer's Labour and that he does not have their trust and support to be their Labour leader and Prime Minister.

Conference condemns Starmer for the disastrous series of decisions made since the July 2024 general election. These include inadequate central funding for fire and rescue services, scrapping winter fuel payments, keeping the two child benefit cap, its proposed attacks on the welfare state, the appointment of Peter Mandelson, his intervention to prevent Andy Burnham standing in the Gorton and Denton by-election, the stance on Gaza, his role in the Birmingham bin workers' strike, many of which have had to be reversed due to public outcry.

Conference believes that Starmer has failed to deliver the 'change' promised in Labour's 2024 general election manifesto. Starmer has failed to stop the rising tide of the far right across the UK and is not capable of gaining the support of the electorate to oppose Farage and Reform UK. The local election defeats will have a negative impact on fire and rescue authorities and boards.

Conference therefore is of the view it is time to change the direction of the Labour Party to win back over the electorate and that change cannot be achieved with the current leader of the party.

FBU Conference believes the Prime Minister should set out a timetable for his departure as leader that allows for a full and fair, open democratic process that allows party members and trade unions to have their voices heard and shape the direction of the Labour Party.

The factions within government and the National Executive Committee must not act in a way that denies members a democratic choice.

AFFILIATION TO THE LABOUR PARTY

Conference notes that the FBU is well placed to intervene in the election of a new Labour leader, as a result of our affiliation to the Labour Party.

The FBU played a key role in securing the Employment Rights Act, which has removed some anti-union laws and begun to implement positive rights for trade unionists, making organising and taking action easier, supporting equalities and pushing back anti-union employers.

The FBU has secured unprecedented access to Labour ministers and other politicians, to advance FBU policies. For the first time in decades, FBU officials have held regular meetings with the Westminster fire minister, be it stand alone meetings or through the Ministerial Advisory Group (MAG) and other channels.

Our current affiliation has seen our union make headway on Pay. Prior to the General Election, pay progression was an ambitious aim of the union. Since the inception of the MAG, the discussions had across governmental departments, we have seen a significant shift and a joined up approach with the Fire Minister that must now deliver investment into our service.

The FBU has secured an historic step forward in health monitoring for firefighters, following the union's health and safety summit in April. The union has a generational opportunity to ensure early monitoring and treatment of firefighters who develop cancer and other diseases.

The FBU has been able to intervene in Labour's annual conference, National Policy Forum, National Executive Committee and the Trade Union Liaison Organisation, working closely with other affiliated unions, to oppose Starmer and fight for FBU policies.

In autumn 2025, thousands of FBU members had the opportunity to vote for Lucy Powell as deputy Labour leader, who defeated Starmer's preferred candidate Bridget Phillipson.

The FBU has made progress on pay and conditions, flood duty, equalities, health and safety, fire policy and pushing back fire cuts – all through critical engagement within the Labour Party and with the Labour government at Westminster.

LABOUR LEADERSHIP CONTEST

In the event of a Labour leadership contest, around 12,000 FBU members in England and Wales who pay into the political fund will get to vote.

FBU members will have the unique opportunity to decide not only the next Labour leader but also the new Prime Minister. This is a result of the FBU's 2015 recall Conference decision to affiliate members in England and Wales to the Labour Party.

That means our members and officials, in coordination with other trade unionists, can change the direction of the party and the Westminster government.

We can only change the policies and direction of the party from within to make it what we want it to be – a true representative for the working class.

Conference believes that the FBU never walks away from a fight – and in the likely event of a leadership contest and on other issues, FBU members and officials will make a real difference.

Conference notes that neither Your Party, the Green Party nor any other current party offer a viable working class political alternative to the Labour Party. The FBU retains the same latitude to criticise Labour politicians where necessary, as we have on many occasions but importantly, retaining more channels to advance our agenda on behalf of our members than that of non-affiliated unions.

Conference's role is enshrined in our Rule Book as the sovereign policy making body of the FBU.

Conference continues to be the best democratic forum for making strategic and tactical decisions, as it has done on this matter at previous Conferences in 2004, 2015 and at the last four Conferences.

Conference therefore reaffirms that the FBU maintain its existing affiliation to the Labour Party in order to:

- ***shape and play a part in the change of direction necessary for the Labour Party and Westminster government***
- ***play a part in any future leadership contest and***
- ***maintain the current positive dialogue with government ministers on securing investment in the fire service to deliver pay reform.***

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president, and afternoon, conference. Look, the EC agreed this emergency resolution on Tuesday afternoon.

But look, the reality in front of us is 48 hours on, 48 hours since the EC debated and discussed this. We probably could have written two more given the twists and the turns we are witnessing, both inside government and inside the Labour Party itself. But what triggered this motion was the catastrophic election results last week everywhere.

In England, Scotland, and a historic level of results in Wales. So let's be absolutely clear, as I have been with the press and the media all week. The responsibility for those results, for Labour representatives losing their seats, for hardworking Labour councillors no longer being able to deliver for their communities, well, that lies squarely with Keir Starmer, with the policies he has pursued, and with the factionalism he has actively overseen since becoming the Labour Party leader.

And in their place now, what do we see? We see Reform UK, the Greens, Nationalists, and others advancing into what were once Labour heartlands. Conference, as we have seen over the past couple of days, these are results and not just another bad set of elections. They are a turning point, a turning point for our movement.

Because in the real world, where firefighters live and work, millions of working-class people went to the ballot box, and they rejected Keir Starmer's Labour Party.

And the point is this, the message has been sent, and the message is clear to Keir Starmer. He is not fit to lead the Labour Party, and he's certainly not fit to be the prime minister of this country. So that is why the executive council, alongside full-time officials, has come to a clear and definitive conclusion.

This is Keir Starmer's fault, and Starmer must go. Now, as we have all seen over the last week, the manoeuvrings have already begun. People are getting the numbers, the conversations are happening, and the camps are forming. And make no mistake, this is happening now. A challenge is coming to the prime minister.

And when that challenge comes, then we have a choice. We can duck the debate. We can fudge the issue. We can drift away from Labour altogether, or we could cosy up to another party. Or, this is what the executive council is saying, that we stay and fight. We stay in the room, and we stay in the argument. We stay where workers' voices can still shape the future of the Labour Party because when that challenge inevitably comes, and it will come, maybe today, maybe tomorrow, it will be Labour Party members, it'll be affiliated supporters, including ourselves, who decide who the next leader of the Labour Party is and therefore the next prime minister.

Around a million people could be balloted, and the Fire Brigades Union, as you probably know, affiliates around 12,000 of our members in England and Wales through the political fund. In a close contest, it'll be Fire Brigades Union members, firefighters' votes will matter in what decision and what result comes out of that.

They will matter in deciding who leads the Labour Party and what we want to see from a Labour Party, and they will matter in deciding who governs this country. But we only get to do that if we remain in the Labour Party itself. And conference, this is about far more than one leadership election. It's about our experiences over the past couple of years, and I think our decisions that have been made at conference have been vindicated.

This union took the decision to re-affiliate in 2015, a decision I think reaffirmed repeatedly by this conference ever since, including over the past few years. We have fought to improve Labour policy under Starmer in opposition. We secured commitments on consultation with the Fire Brigades Union on national standards, on Grenfell, on flooding, on removing anti-union laws.

When Labour won the 2024 general election, we engaged immediately, not because we suddenly agreed with everything the government did, far from it actually, but because our responsibility, each and every one of us, whatever role and position we are in, is a responsibility to deliver for firefighters, our members, and affiliation gives us the ability to do that.

We've engaged directly through the Employment Rights Act, through the Flood Resilience Task Force, through the Ministerial Advisory Group. Led by the president and the EC member for region 11, we took the Truth about Zane campaign all the way to Downing Street. This union did that. We've met with ministers across government, the Home Office, MHCLG, DEFRA, business, health.

Every single one of those departments have sat across the table from me or the AGS or one of the other of our officials. We have had direct access to push back on the cuts. And that has mattered. That has mattered to get Samantha Dixon in the room today. I met with her immediately after her speaking here, raising the issues that we face in our workplaces, the issues of eight station closures in Dorset and Wiltshire, the potential closure of fire station and lack of funding in Cumbria, in Kent, and in other places where it keeps rearing its ugly head, raising those issues directly with the fire minister.

So our cuts campaign has quite rightly gone to the top of the Labour Party, raised by the president, raised by me with the prime minister himself. And look at the union's health and safety summit in April. Many of you were there. For decades, firefighters have been fighting for health monitoring. Many people in this union have done a great turn to make sure that has been on the agenda of this government because the union organised, it campaigned, and it pressured and fought for it, and we forced it on to the national agenda.

So we now have that commitment to introduce it. Yes, there is a lot of work to do. Yes, there is a lot of discussions that need to take place, and I know that our health and safety committee will lead on that area of work. But let nobody pretend to you that the affiliation to the Labour Party made no difference.

It has made a difference, a fundamental and real difference to our members, a material difference to firefighters' lives and safety, whether they work in fire stations, control rooms, headquarters, or training centres. It has made a difference. And that is our job, conference, to make a difference to firefighters' lives wherever they work across the UK.

So what is the logic of saying this? We want gains for our members, but we're voluntarily going to walk away from the places where decisions are made? I ask you, what sense does that actually make? Why would we choose to stand outside shouting in instead of being inside taking firefighters' concerns directly to those in power?

Has this government made mistakes? Well, absolutely it has, and every single time, every single mistake that they have made, we have said so. The two-child benefit cap, arms sales to Israel, backing suspended MPs, minimum service levels, anti-union laws, winter fuel allowance, the Birmingham bin strike whose picket lines we stood on.

Time and again, we, the Fire Brigades Union, have challenged this government publicly and directly. The Fire Brigades Union has never stayed silent in the face of bad Labour policy, and I tell you this: we're not about to start to do that today. But the best place for us to represent our members, to demand the fire service gets the funding and investment it needs, is inside the Labour Party. The best place to fight for pay rises is inside the Labour Party. The best place to oppose the cuts that we face all across the UK is inside the Labour Party. Our union, alongside other unions, we won the wealth tax motion inside the party. We fought for the Employment Rights Act inside the party, and we won health monitoring for firefighters from inside the party.

I'll say this: you do not increase workers' influence by walking away from power. Let me also tell you this: every time, as the president said at the start of conference, every time that he or I meet with the prime minister, you can actually see it on his face, "Here we go again. Here comes the Fire Brigades Union."

Because we're making the case for firefighters with those in power. Because this union, we do not sit around in meetings with the prime minister or any minister to flatter them. We turn up to represent firefighters. And I was among one of the first union leaders to publicly call on Keir Starmer to go, and rightly so.

But look, let me deal directly with those arguing for disaffiliation today. There's a resolution from Merseyside which says affiliation should be decided by a ballot of the whole membership. But conference needs to understand what is actually being proposed and put in front of you today. This union has debated affiliation repeatedly. In 2022, in 2024, again last year, and each time, conference debated it democratically and rejected disaffiliation. Now, all of a sudden, we are told conference should no longer decide.

So it was okay for the previous three years, but in 2026, it's not your decision. That the sovereign body of the union is somehow no longer capable of making decisions. Conference, this is not expanding democracy. It is bypassing conference, it is undermining conference, and it is undermining the sovereign policy-making body of our great union.

Our rules are quite clear. Conference is the supreme government of the union. This conference, those that have sat in your seat before, in 2004 voted to disaffiliate. Conference made that decision. Again, in 2015, conference, like this, in 2015 decided to re-affiliate. But now apparently, delegates come here with mandates from the brigades that no longer matter.

That is without precedent, and it is dangerous, in my opinion. Because once you start hollowing out the authority of conference on major political decisions, political questions that we're posed, well, where does it stop? So the executive council has considered this issue carefully. We debated it at head office around our boardroom just a couple of weeks ago. And officers of our union, reps of our union, fought tirelessly inside the Labour structures for FBU policy.

The former general secretary fought hard to get national standards in the Labour Party manifesto, and now we are supposed to pretend that all that counts for nothing. Conference, what I say to you is do not surrender your sovereign role in this union.

So I turn to a resolution from Devon and Somerset, and the course and the proposed resolution and what that sets out to achieve. Well, that would effectively lead to the expulsion from the Labour Party if that were passed. If people want disaffiliation, well, let's have that debate. Let's have a reason put in front of us today. Let's have it honestly and directly. Let's not have it through the back door, because Labour Party rules are absolutely clear about that.

And we know this, and many of you know this, is because that is exactly the same thing that happened to the RMT Union. But conference expulsion in favour of the Green Party, well, I say this. Yes, the Greens have grown. Many, many people are moving towards the Green Party, largely because of disillusionment with Keir Starmer. But I'll be clear on this. They are not a working-class party. They do not have structures within their party for trade union representation in the way that Labour does. And what is their record in office? Well, you only have to look at Brighton. And we've all had discussions about bin workers going on strike.

Well, bin workers in Brighton strike against a Green administration there. So a party that talks endlessly about the environment presided over striking refuse workers, and now we're supposed to believe this is a great alternative for organised labour and the history of the Labour Party. And let's talk about their leader, Zack Polanski, a man who was praising the Liberal Democrats after the coalition government imposed austerity across this country. They imposed austerity on the fire and rescue service, that oversaw the 12,000 job losses in our industry. A man with no history actually in the labour movement, no history in our struggles, no history with this union. Nobody remembers seeing him on FBU picket lines.

So conference, we should not tie the political future of this union to political fashion, careerism or personalities. And I'll turn to the Birmingham bin workers again, and a resolution from the West Midlands, which argues that we should disaffiliate because of the Birmingham bin strike.
Well, let me be clear on this one. This union quite rightly stood with those workers from day one. We joined their rallies. We hosted the strikers here at conference last year. We raised money for those striking workers, and we condemned the role played by Labour councillors, commissioners and ministers. But even Unite the union, who represent them directly leading that dispute, have not disaffiliated from the Labour Party.

So we're being told the FBU should disaffiliate over a dispute when the union leading their dispute has not done so itself. And now there appears to be the basis for a settlement in Birmingham as well. So the resolution has simply been overtaken by events. But look, I make no criticism of that. Things in Westminster are moving particularly quickly, as we all know.

But conference, the executive council continues to believe, and our rules are clear on this, that conference is the sovereign body of this union. You are the parliament of the Fire Brigades Union. You come here with the mandate from your brigades. You debate, you decide, and then you return to your brigades accountable for every vote that you cast.

That is democracy. And I ask you today, stick with affiliation. Give our members a real say in who becomes the next Labour leader, who becomes the next prime minister, because conference, let us remember the bigger picture here. The political and economic system that we operate in is built around exploiting workers for profit. It starves public services of funding while protecting wealth and privilege, and trade unions are one of the few and only forces standing in the way of that. That is why so many people would love to see trade unions pushed out of politics altogether. Disaffiliation helps those people. It weakens our voice, it weakens our leverage, and it weakens workers' influence. It's why the communication workers have debated this at their conference earlier this week, and they've stayed affiliated to have their voice in the room.

Conference, we should not retreat from politics. We should fight harder within it. So let us stay, let us fight, let us organise, and let us continue forcing firefighters' voices into the heart of political decision-making where they belong. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Greater Manchester to second.

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, seconding the emergency resolution number 3. Conference, I stand before you today not just as a proud trade unionist, but as someone who believes deeply in what the labour movement was created to do. To give working people a voice, to stand up to injustice, and to build a country where ordinary families are not left behind.

Comrades, we do not shy away from the fact that Greater Manchester had a Labour disaffiliation resolution on this year's agenda. But as we can see, even just from the last few hours, the world of politics moves quickly. Therefore, it is important we as brigade officials are in that same position to do so. The Fire Brigades Union has never existed to cheerlead for any particular political party. Our loyalty is not to politicians. Our loyalty is to firefighters, control firefighters, emergency workers, and the communities we serve. We support policies and leaders who support working people, and we challenge those grifters that do not. For generations, working class people have looked to Labour as their political home. They believe Labour understood their lives because Labour came from those lives. It spoke with their voice, shared their struggles, and carried their hopes. Conference, I make no apologies for the pointiness of this speech. Across our communities today, too many people, too many firefighters, feel disconnected from the current Labour Party. They see division where they want unity, they hear carefully managed sound bites when they are crying out for conviction, and they wonder whether the party still truly understands the realities facing workers on the frontline.

Firefighters know what Britain looks like beyond the Westminster bubble. We see the poverty, we see the mental health crisis, we see the housing conditions, and we see the effects of cuts to local services, including our own, and we see vulnerable people abandoned long before the emergency call is made. And we know this country cannot be rebuilt on timidity. Working people are facing soaring costs, insecure employment, crumbling public services, and growing inequality, yet too often the political debate feels empty, disconnected from the scale of the challenge it faces. The Labour movement was never built to simply manage decline more politely. It was built to transform lives. That requires leadership with vision, leadership with principle, and leadership prepared to stand unapologetically with workers. Greater Manchester has seen this type of leadership firsthand. Conference, let us be honest. When workers take industrial action for fair pay, safe staffing, dignity at work, they should never feel isolated by the very party created by the trade union movement.

Firefighters do not want special treatment. We want respect. We want reinvestment in public safety. We want properly funded emergency services. We want secure pensions. We want a government that values public services, instead of treating them as a cost to be managed. And above all, we want political leadership that inspires people again. The Labour Party must never become frightened of its own values. There is nothing radical about defending public services. There is nothing unreasonable about fair pay, and there is nothing outdated about solidarity.

The public are desperate for authenticity. They want leaders who say what they mean and mean what they say. Leaders prepared to challenge corporate greed, challenge inequality, and challenge a system that too often rewards wealth, and rather ignoring work.

So when we speak about the need for a change in Labour's leadership, this is not about personalities or factionalism. It's about direction. It's about purpose. It's about reconnecting Labour with the people who built it. A Labour Party that loses the confidence of working people risks losing its soul. The trade union movement will always speak up when workers feel unheard. That is our duty. Not to remain silent for convenience, not to soften our message for political comfort, but to stand firm in defence of our members and our class.

Conference, history shows us that real change never comes from playing it safe. It comes from movements, it comes from courage, and it comes from when ordinary people decide they deserve better. That is the challenge facing the Labour leadership today. Be bold again. Be proud of our movement again. Stand with workers again. If Labour wants to lead this country properly, it must first reconnect with the people who carried it for generations and ensure it has a leadership fit for the future.

It is right that we take that fight on behalf of our members directly to government to set out those things I've spoken about, to reset the direction to make our purpose their purpose. And we're best placed to do this by carrying this

emergency resolution. Our members want us to be carrying their fight to those in power. We've got a seat at the table, and we shouldn't walk away from it.

Conference, Greater Manchester seconds this emergency resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dave. I now call emergency resolution 6, The Relationship Between the Fire Brigades Union and the Labour Party moved by West Midlands

Emergency Resolution 6 THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION AND THE LABOUR PARTY
Conference notes the results of the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Senedd and English local council elections held on 7 May 2026.

Conference further notes the possibility of changes to the leadership and policy direction of the Labour Party arising from those results.

Conference demands that a recall conference is convened within six months of the end of conference 2026, in order that conference can debate and decide upon the future of the Fire Brigades Union's relationship with the Labour Party, including on affiliation.

WEST MIDLANDS

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
Thank you, president, conference, I just want to clarify following on from general secretary's speech. The resolution from West Midlands on disaffiliation that's in your final agenda was withdrawn yesterday. So what I'm speaking on now is the emergency resolution, and the last paragraph of that is, *"Conference demands that a recall conference is convened within six months of the end of Conference 2026 in order that conference can debate and decide upon the future of the Fire Brigades Union relationship with the Labour Party, including on affiliation."*

I am moving that resolution. Conference, this debate is bigger than whether we personally support affiliation or not. This is about whether our members believe that they are being heard. Across the FBU, there is a strong feeling that the political direction of the FBU is not being decided by them.
Members are becoming more and more frustrated and disconnected. Whether we agree with that or not, it is almost irrelevant now because it exists, and if we continue to ignore it, it will grow. Our resolution is not about a victory for one side over another. It is not about anti-political campaigning. It is about a further discussion within six months of this week, not a disaffiliation debate on its own. This is a compromise position from West Midlands that gives space for everyone in the FBU. It allows every delegation returning to their brigades, no matter the range of views across the country, the ability to satisfy members' concerns about our relationship with the Labour Party. For everyone who believes that remaining affiliated is the right thing to do, our resolution allows that to continue for now.

For delegates and members who believe that the relationship with Labour has fundamentally broken down, our resolution says your concerns are serious enough that they deserve a full reassessment within six months. It is balanced, democratic, and most importantly, sustainable for the unity of the Fire Brigades Union.

If we don't have this checkpoint, many members will hear that their concerns have been parked, managed, and overridden once again. Our members are paying attention. The executive council's emergency resolution itself outlines the devastating election results, political failures, broken trust with working class communities, and the growing anger towards the Labour leadership, and then concludes we should continue exactly as we are.

We cannot be surprised when our members are questioning that relationship. Our resolution acknowledges the political reality without forcing the FBU into a position today where tomorrow, or let's face it, the next hour or two, could bring further turmoil. Conference, if the EC is right, if Labour changes direction, if a leadership contest changes the political landscape, if affiliation continues delivering meaningful gains, then the case for remaining affiliated will still exist in six months' time.

It will also give us the opportunity to ensure that the current fire minister, who we heard from this morning, is still the current fire minister. But if we refuse to even consider revisiting the issue after everything that has happened, then many members will conclude that this isn't about them or what they think is important.

Our resolution is the sensible middle ground. It protects democracy, it protects unity, and it gives every member the confidence that this debate has not been shut down. I would urge all delegates that if you oppose this resolution or any resolution that you hear at conference, get up here and tell us why. Give us the ability to exercise our right of reply. I move. Please support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Sasha. Does that have a seconder?

ADAM BARNES (Warwickshire)**:**
President, conference, standing in support and to second emergency resolution 6, the relationship between the FBU and the Labour Party. Quite simply, conference, we believe with everything that's going on and the possible changes to come, it's really important to let things transpire, then reconvene and have a serious discussion around our relationship with the Labour Party. Conference, support the resolution I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. I now call resolution 56, Labour Party affiliation moved by Merseyside.

Resolution 56 LABOUR PARTY AFFILIATION
Conference recognises that Labour Party disaffiliation has been discussed at Fire Brigades Union (FBU) Conference in some capacity for many years and has been the subject of resolutions and/or emergency resolutions at every FBU Conference since 2022.

Conference believes that the issue raises many questions and can be considered divisive.

Conference also believes that the matter should now be decided by the wider FBU membership.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to arrange an independent ballot of all FBU members to decide if the FBU should remain affiliated to the Labour Party. This ballot should be undertaken in whichever way proves most cost effective to the FBU whilst also remaining compliant with any applicable trade union legislation.

Conference further instructs the EC to commence this ballot no later than 1st September 2026 and for the ballot to run for a minimum of 4 weeks. This will give officials the opportunity to engage with members through the structures of this union and engage in full and frank debate on this issue.

MERSEYSIDE

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 56, Labour affiliation. I want to start by addressing some of the points made by the general secretary. Conference, we are asking for the ballot of all members to get a full reading of what our members want. The general secretary has just said that you come here with mandates from your brigades and sections, yet I have had discussions with many people in this room who have told me that they will vote against this resolution.

Yet, if it passed, the members in their brigades and sections would vote overwhelmingly to disaffiliate. Where is the democracy in that? The general secretary said we should give our members a say in who the Labour leader is but not give those members the chance to decide whether we stay affiliated or not. Where is the democracy in that?

Conference, we are not trying to get around the business of conference here. We are asking conference to show what a truly member-led and democratic union we are.

Now, I'm sure you've all had enough of me banging on about how poor this current iteration party are. I'm fed up of it too. However, it seems like they're just trying to give me new material on a weekly, daily, or hourly basis at the moment. There is one way to stop me. Pass this resolution.

Now I know that'll already be the case due to the amount of people who stood at the front of conference last year and told me that they couldn't back a disaffiliation resolution then but would be backing it next year. Well, here we are. So I have no doubt that Cleveland, Durham and Darlington, London, Tyne and Wear, Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire, Avon, Scotland and Kent will all be doing exactly what they told me they would do last year, getting up and backing this resolution. And I expect you, conference, to do exactly the same.

Now, I said last year that I'd name you, maybe in my right to reply. When we moved our emergency resolution last year, the general secretary stated that we'd be walking away without a plan, and that the resolution was not being discussed with members. I will point out that the EC brought their own emergency resolution last year on pay reform.

That wasn't discussed with members either, but it was passed. So if we're going to use arguments like that, let's at least use those arguments equitably. This is the reason that we are bringing this resolution the way we are now, so that we can have these discussions on our branches, so that our members can have their say.

The FBU is rightly proud to be a democratic and member-led union. This resolution, simply put, plays into that fact, giving all of our members the chance to decide whether we remain affiliated to the Labour Party. Comrades, we rightly exist as a union to fight for pay and terms and conditions for our members. However, we also proudly fight for many causes that affect our members and wider communities in the UK and abroad, and we've talked about some of those things earlier today. The Labour Party have fought against us on this and many issues, including the two-child benefit cap, winter fuel allowance, disability living allowance, the policy U-turn on no new North Sea oil and gas. Conference, we had the fire minister standing up here today telling us how they are providing money to our friends, the NFCC.

Do we want to carry on with that? The massive U-turns they made on the New Deal for working people in order to placate big business. The U-turns and frustration of process in passing the Hillsborough Law policy, where they deliberately changed the wording to protect those who should be held accountable for the massive injustices carried out by those in public services. The Labour Party thoughts were not with the Hillsborough victims and their families. They were not with the victims of the contaminated blood scandal, the Post Office sub-masters wrongly imprisoned, Grenfell victims and survivors and their families. They were all secondary to this Labour Party when they did that.

And of course, they continue to provide weapons to Israel in their genocidal attacks on Palestine. Those are just a few of the policies we have stood in direct opposition to them on. And that was before we look at the cuts, both proposed and realised, of station closures and the loss of firefighter roles that locally and nationally the Labour Party have enforced on our members.

We note the EC emergency resolution 7 on the future of the Labour Party. Conference, I share the frustrations on Starmer, but that emergency resolution gives him too much credit. Starmer may be the current leader of the Labour Party, but the rot within the party does not stop at him. The vast majority of that party are compliant in the decisions and direction that Labour have taken.

When we first moved this affiliation resolution in 2022, it was because of Starmer. We were right then. We don't like to say we told you so, but in four short years, we told you so. The talk of us being able to vote in the next Labour leadership, well, seeing who's going for it, us being involved and being part of that discussion, and bringing in another leader who will undoubtedly continue on the same path makes us appear like two bald men arguing over a comb. How many times are we going to hear that next year will be the year that we disaffiliate?

Conference, last week, many people in the UK took to the ballot boxes to show that the Labour Party are no longer the party for working people. It is now our duty to ask our members if the Labour Party is the party of firefighters, because by remaining affiliated, what we do is endorse each of the policies that the Labour Party pursue.

We endorse the killing of Palestinians, we endorse the proscribing of Palestine Action, we endorse the continued austerity imposed on ourselves and our communities, because no matter how often we wring our hands and tell people we don't like these policies, whilst we continue to support the Labour Party through affiliation, through funding, and through the reflected standing they enjoy with our affiliation with them, we endorse those policies. Conference, support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. Does that have a seconder? Do I have a seconder? Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Conference, I don't think I said it, the EC are seeking withdraw or they oppose, and they oppose the amendment to resolution 6 as well. I now call resolution 59, Green Party, moved by Devon and Somerset. EC oppose.

Resolution 59 GREEN PARTY
Conference is aware that the Fire brigades Union (FBU) rule book states:
"… Fire Brigades Union is part of the working-class movement and, linking itself with the international Trade Union and Labour movement, has as its ultimate aim the bringing about of the socialist system of society."

Conference believes:
- ***as part of this endeavor the union has historically had strong links to the Labour Party and is currently affiliated to them***
- ***although not explicitly calling itself a socialist party, under the leadership of Zack Polanski, the Green Party of England and Wales has many of the same values and policies as if it were one***
- ***since this renewed focus on socialist policies, it has gained over 200,000 members and overturned a large Labour majority to win the recent by-election in Gorton and Denton, showing itself to be a viable alternative for the left.***

Conference calls upon the Executive Council to build closer ties with the Green Party of England and Wales and open discussions on a formal relationship with the FBU.

DEVON AND SOMERSET

CHRIS GRANTHAM (Devon and Somerset)**:**
President, conference, in relation to what we've heard today and discussions that have taken place, we'll be withdrawing resolution 59. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that. Right, conference, that's now open for debate.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, speaking on emergency resolution. This debate is about power, direction, and who gets to shape the future of the Labour Party, and that matters deeply to our community. We understand why this motion has come forward. The election results were devastating. Confidence has been shaken. And yes, change is needed. But conference, we talk about potential leadership contests, we must also talk about what kind of leadership comes next. Because not all change is progress. And for the LGBT+ community, particularly our trans and non-binary siblings, there is real concern about the direction Labour has already taken.

We cannot ignore that. We have seen decisions taken that have caused deep anxiety and harm in our community. The continuation and then the extension of the ban of puberty blockers for young people has been one of the most painful examples. That decision, taken under Labour, has been widely criticised and linked to significant distress among trans and young people and their families. We have seen rhetoric that diminishes our community, statements questioning the validity of trans identities, including assertions that trans women are not women and that trans men are not men. We have seen proposals around healthcare, including suggestions of segregated spaces or restrictive interpretations of single-sex spaces, that organisations have warned are unworkable, discriminatory, and potentially harmful.

Conference, this is not abstract. This is about whether our members feel safe, whether they feel recognised, whether they feel that their union and the party we are affiliated to will stand up for them when it matters most. Conference, let me bring this closer to home. Our trans and non-binary siblings are not some abstract concept on a policy paper. They are here. They sit among us, in every brigade, in every station, at every meeting, and conference today. I stand here as an ally, but many do not have the privilege of speaking without that personal stake. And the decisions we make in this room, the direction we choose, the leaders we support, they're not theoretical. They have real daily consequences for real people, for someone sat next to you right now, for someone who works alongside you, for someone who just wants to feel safe and respected and to be themselves. So we look forward to the possibility of a leadership contest, and names are out there, but we ask to proceed with caution.

They must be better on equality. They must show clear, unwavering commitments to rights. They must have a rhetoric beyond balance and debate. We say we cannot be an afterthought when these decisions and discussions are being made. We must be at the table because we bring the lived experience, we bring the expertise and the voices.

If this union is to play a role in shaping the future direction of the Labour Party, then that role must include us. Not symbolically, not superficially, but meaningfully, because a Labour Party that cannot clearly stand for LGBT+ people is not a Labour Party that we can truly stand for as working people.
Conference, we support. *Applause*

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in reluctant opposition to resolution 56 and supporting the EC policy statement. Well played, Lee. Well played, mate. Excellent points as always, and you're right. Yeah, last year we did say we'd bring a resolution on disaffiliation if there hadn't been significant progress made on pay reform.

And everything we heard yesterday and today, I think we are – well, I don't think, I know – that Scotland are of the opinion that that progress has been made. So, apologies to my mates and comrades in Merseyside, but we're going to hold our nose again and oppose your motion and support the EC policy statement. Cheers. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Gus.

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
Conference chair, conference, I rise to speak on the emergency resolution from the EC. Firstly, let me say clearly, many of the criticisms outlined in this motion will resonate with members across our union. The election results were deeply concerning. Working class communities are frustrated, disillusioned, and increasingly looking elsewhere because they do not feel listened to. I also believe it is fair to say that the current Labour leadership has at times appeared too distant from the values and the priorities that built the Labour movement and the trade union movement in this country.

However, conference, despite those concerns, I support maintaining our affiliation to the Labour Party, not because I support the right wing of Labour, I definitely do not. I support affiliation because I believe trade unions should fight for influence where decisions are made, not isolate ourselves from the political arena altogether.

The reality is our union has secured access, influence, and progress through engagement. We have moved issues like firefighter pay progression, health monitoring, flood duty, employment rights, and the fire service investment further forward through pressure, organisation, and political engagement.

If we walk away, we surrender that influence, we surrender our voice, and we leave the future direction of the Labour Party to those we disagree with most. Conference, I believe the answer is not retreat. It is to fight harder for the soul of the Labour movement. The FBU has always been at its strongest when it has been independent-minded, principled, and prepared to challenge governments of any colour.

Affiliation should not mean blind loyalty. It should mean organised influence, constructive challenge, and working-class representation. I welcome the recognition in this motion that members themselves should have a democratic

say in any future leadership contest. That is important. Trade unionists helped build the Labour Party, and working-class voices must never be sidelined by factions, internal management, or parliamentary manoeuvring.

I want a Labour Party that unapologetically backs public services, organised labour, firefighters, NHS workers, and working-class communities. I want a Labour Party that confronts inequality and the rise of the far right with courage, not triangulation. But conference, we will not achieve this by standing outside the room. We achieve it by organising, influencing, and fighting for change from within. So whilst I do not support the direction taken by Labour, I do support this union maintaining affiliation, influence, and maintaining the right for a Labour movement that truly represents working people once again. Conference, I support. *Applause*

LUKE FOWLER (Oxfordshire)**:**
Conference, president, speaking in support of emergency resolution 3, not because it's easy, but because it's honest. In our movement, honesty matters. We meet at a time when working people are turning away from Labour in their thousands, not drifting quietly, but walking away, because they do not see themselves reflected in the choices being made in their name.

And when that happens, we have a duty not to turn away ourselves, but to ask why and to act. Now I want to say something clearly. While we have serious disagreements with the direction of the national leadership, we have also seen what real Labour values look like closer to home. In Oxfordshire, during the recent fight against the cuts to our fire and rescue service, Labour MPs stood with us.

They listened, they spoke up, and they used their voice in Parliament and beyond to support our communities and our firefighters. And that matters because it shows when Labour is at its best, when it stands with working people, when it defends public services, it has still the power to make a difference.

That is the Labour Party we believe in. But let's be equally clear. Our members are not fools. They can see the gap between that kind of support and the direction coming from the top. They can see the decisions that don't make sense, keeping policies that hurt families, failing to properly fund essential services like ours, and drifting away from the very people Labour was created to represent. And when confidence is lost, it is not regained through slogans, it's regained with change.

Conference, this resolution is about that change. It is about saying that the leadership is not right. It is a responsibility, and when that responsibility is not met, it must be renewed democratically. But this resolution is also about something deeper. It is about where we stand as a union. We do not walk away from the Labour Party; we help build it. We are part of the history, and we must be part of its future. Because if we're not in the room, others will be. If we do not shape the direction, it will be shaped without us. And if we do not speak for firefighters and working people, who will?

Our affiliation is not a gift, it's a tool. A tool to organise, a tool to challenge, a tool to win. And we are already using it in Oxfordshire to get firefighters' concerns heard at the highest political level, to strengthen our campaign with allies inside and outside of Parliament, and stand up against the cuts, just as we did in Oxfordshire.

Conference, the lessons from those local fights are simple. When we stand together, the union members, communities, and Labour representatives who still believe in the values, that we can push back. But to win nationally, the Labour Party must change direction, and that change must come from its members, from its unions, and the very people it was founded to serve.

So let's be clear and confident. We support this resolution because we believe in democracy. We support it because we believe in accountability. And above all, we support it because we believe the Labour Party can and must once again become the true voice for working people, not by walking away, but stepping forward. Oxfordshire support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Luke. Yep.

HAYLEIGH MARKS TALABIS (Northamptonshire)**:**
President, conference, I, like many in this room, have my own very, very strong opinions on Labour. I joined control when regional control was a thing. We all know how that went. But this is not about my personal views. This is about our membership and their working rights, and the fact that no matter how you look at it, I think we can all agree the clock is ticking.

Whether they last until the next scheduled general election, no matter what Reform think, it is scheduled for a few years' time. The time will run out. It may run out by the end of the day. We'll all keep watching the news for that. But anyway we have a lot on the to-do list. We want to build on the recent announcements of health screening and hopefully build to full presumptive legislation. We want a fire service college, national standards for crewing, for appliances, and in our control rooms. We want a statutory duty for flooding in England. We want justice for Grenfell. And we want to bring about pay reforms, which is a chance that isn't going to come again for a very long time. All of this is easier if we have a seat at that table.

We can challenge their poor decisions, and that is a lot easier in front of ministers. Having our say is a lot easier in that ministerial advisory group. I'm from Northamptonshire. We have a long memory. We remember Stephen Mold. We remember Peter Bone. They are headlines for Tory corruption and Tory disasters. We are not going to forget that any time soon. I tried for years to get face-to-face with MPs. I've had more face-to-face meetings with MPs in the last twelve months than I had in all the years of Tory MPs in Northants. Labour always respond to me, even if I don't like the answers they give. We need to be in the fight, not on the sidelines.

Conference, let's fight for our members, and let's fight to win. Northants supports the emergency resolution from the EC. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Hayleigh. Tim?

TIM GREEN (Kent)**:**
I am opposing the Merseyside resolution last minute. President, conference, this time last year I stood at this very podium, well, actually in Blackpool, and asked you not to support a Merseyside resolution for disaffiliation from the Labour Party. And I said clearly that if I saw no change or movement in the 12 months since, I would be back here supporting Merseyside's call to break that link.

Today, I stand here having made the decision at last minute and with a heavy heart to oppose the resolution, even though I was due to second it. I want to be honest with conference. In the last 48 hours, I've felt the immense pressure and strain that this resolution brings with it. I'll not dress this up.

It's made me feel ill. That's how seriously I've taken this decision and how heavily it has weighed on me. I also want to say this clearly; I've great admiration for my Merseyside comrades and for Lee for bringing this resolution. Merseyside FBU has a clear record of organising and speaking out on behalf of its members, and this resolution has come from a place of principle, frustration, and wanting better for our union.

I do not question for one moment the motives behind it, and I do not doubt for a second the commitment of those supporting it. But for me, this has come down to the consequences for the members I represent. I live and I work in an area where the real threat of Reform exists. In Kent, that is not some abstract political talking point.

It's real, it's growing, and it's something that carries serious consequences for our members, for our communities, and for the future of public services. Reform UK is led by a grifter, a pound shop Enoch Powell. They won control of Kent County Council in 2025, taking 57 of 81 seats, which underlines the scale of that political threat in Kent, and we have a large number of Reform FBU members. That is why, despite all my frustrations, I do not believe this is the right time for us to disaffiliate. This is not because all is well; it's not. We still have every right to demand more. We still have every right to insist that Labour listens to the Fire Brigades Union, respects trade unions, and delivers real change for working people.

But at this moment, I want to trust the executive council, and I want to trust all of those on this stage that opposing disaffiliation is the right decision for my members in Kent and for everyone in this room. And let me say this well, we need a left leader, and if, and I stress if, this union can still help influence that direction, then I cannot support Merseyside's resolution today.

The same goes for the firefighter screening. Yes, it's welcome that the government has announced regular health checks, cancer screening support, and a firefighter's concordat on health and wellbeing. But let us be clear, this is not some gift that firefighters should be expected to be grateful for in exchange for political loyalty.

The union has already treated cancer screening as a serious policy issue because of the occupational risks firefighters face. Protecting firefighters' health is the responsibility of every government. It's a basic human right. Conference, this is not an easy position for me to take. I reiterate I was seconding this resolution, and I was prepared to back it, but leadership is not about staying fixed in one position when the stakes become clearer. Leadership is about having the courage –

THE PRESIDENT:
Time is running out, Tim.

TIM GREEN (Kent)**:**
Okay. About having the courage to say that at the last minute, and after reflection and feeling the weight of what this means, it's not the right road for us to go down. So I say this to conference for today, with a heavy heart, I ask conference to oppose this resolution. Kent opposes, but I also ask Labour and our own leadership to understand the warning that comes with that decision. And at some point, if this doesn't work out, Kent will be back. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tim.

JAMES SUDRON (Cleveland)**:**
President, conference, speaking to support emergency resolution 3. Conference, we all saw last week, and our comrade is right, that the clock is certainly ticking for this Labour government. Unless something dramatically changes, we will shortly be dealing with a Reform government.

So what that also means for us, conference, is that the clock is ticking for us. We will soon be back to a culture of like it or lump it, and we will be faced with many attacks just for being trade unionists. We have to put our personal feelings aside and get what we can while we can. Cleveland brought reaffiliation resolutions to conference for nearly a decade. We got knocked down year after year. We were successful after many attempts to reaffiliate in 2015. To briefly reply to my comrade from Merseyside I'm not sure what promises he had with Cleveland last year, but I wasn't there. But having spoken with Cleveland members and our committee, I know that we still believe that being inside that room is the place we can make change and get the best results for our members.

We have to listen to those that we elect to represent us who are in that room and negotiate on our behalf. Conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jim. Yep.

MARK DOWTHWAITE (Northumberland)**:**
President, conference, it seems there's only one political party that supports the working people of this country. Of course, people are desperate for change and at a much quicker pace. The Labour Party has repealed anti-trade union laws, renationalised the railway network, has introduced the Employment Rights Act, and is having discussions on the Employment Rights Act version two. MPs need the support and solidarity of the FBU and the other unions. We face tough challenges ahead and can only meet these challenges in a united front. Of course, it's tough, but remember, the Tories despise the unions, and Reform have voted against every single piece of progressive legislation regarding working people. Conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Mark.

CHRIS COOK (Tyne and Wear)**:**
Conference president, speaking in support of emergency resolution 3 and in direct opposition to resolution 56, Merseyside. Simply put, dynamic risk assessment. We do not look at risk a year ago. We have to be dynamic on our feet with it. I'm not making this argument from a political point of view.

I'm going to make a health and safety argument. We know that firefighters are significantly more likely to suffer and die from cancer. There is nothing more important than the health, safety, and welfare of our members. Nothing is more important than the lives of our members and their families.

Conference notes, and honestly, I was very privileged to be there, the first health and safety and welfare summit, which truly commits this Fire Brigades Union to being a safety-first Fire Brigades Union. Apologies. The summit secured a commitment from the Labour Party. It was Wes Streeting. I'm not sure what his role is or where he's going, but it was a commitment to health monitoring, right, by 2027 for firefighters, all firefighters. We've heard that commitment has been solidified today on this rostrum, and that's really, really important because that's where we're coming from. We're coming to looking at the health and safety of firefighters, and, like I said, there is nothing more important. We've had the promises from the Labour government, right? We've got a Concordat, so we can hold them to them promises. To disaffiliate now is absolute madness. It risks the lives of our members, and it's not a price worth paying. We'll put aside our local issues with Labour and our national issues with Labour and a toxic doorstep leader, but if remaining in the Labour Party saves one firefighter, detects one cancer early, and helps the family of one firefighter when the worst has happened, this is a price worth paying a thousand times over.

Cancer is not part of the job, right? And it's our job to ensure that that's not part of it. I see that the only way to do this is through affiliation with the Labour Party. Thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Chris.

ANDY MURRAY (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, Green Party member. I'm speaking in support of emergency resolution 3 and in opposition to Resolution 56 and emergency Resolution 6. Conference, why are we here? Why are we here? We're here to represent our members, to get the best for our members.

We spoke this morning about the wider implications in society and internationalism, and while that's important, we are here to represent our members. If we leave the Labour Party, are we best representing our members? Are we getting the best for our members? We've got three years potentially to get as much as we can from a Labour Party before whatever happens, happens.
We need to do that. We can only do that from within the room. We can't stand outside the room shouting at a closed door. We had 14 years of talking in empty rooms. We've got to be at that table.

We cannot walk away from that table now. I thank the comrade in Merseyside for naming Durham and Darlington in his speech, but I will remind him that the caveat was if we had not made progress.
We have made progress. You've heard from many speakers today about the progress that has been made, so I will not labour that point. What I will labour is that our members sometimes have the ideas that are going to make their lives worse, and we've got to be there to remind them what the implications of that will be.

We need to stay within the Labour Party. We support emergency resolution 3. We are speaking against emergency resolution 6 purely based on the fact that yesterday we heard about the financial constraints that this union is in. Recalling conference has a major financial impact. Why not wait another six months on top of that to make sure that the decision's being made in the right way and that we haven't cost our union money that we do not have? Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy. Conference, do you agree to suspend standing order 16 to finish this debate? *Agreed*. Thank you. Yep.

HARRY BRANT (LEICESTERSHIRE)**:**
Conference, president, speaking to support the EC's emergency resolution and opposing emergency resolution 6 from West Midlands and resolution 56 from Merseyside.

Firstly, to address my brother from Merseyside, we reluctantly opposed disaffiliation last year, and we felt if improvements weren't made in our relationship, we would support disaffiliation next year. Well, here we are. For us, we've seen enough that it is in our members' best interest to remain affiliated due to the progress on pay reform and the promise of the Firefighters Concordat.

Conference, I urge you to support the EC's emergency resolution as it is in our members' best interests for improved terms and conditions to remain affiliated despite the valid emotive points my brother in Merseyside raised. Also, I want to thank my brother from Kent for his emotive response to that, and we are in Leicestershire in much the same position.

In regards to emergency resolution 6, I'll just echo Andy's points on costings to the union and just waiting that additional six months to bring it back next time. So, Conference, I support the EC's emergency resolution and oppose emergency resolution 6 and resolution 56. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Harry.

MATT SENIOR (Avon)**:**
Speaking in opposition to resolution 56 and support of the executive council emergency resolution. Again, a year ago, like many others, I mentioned that continued support for the Labour Party affiliation would be dependent on progress as an affiliate member in the interests of our members, and I second the comments from my comrades previously who have already offered words to that effect.

Progress is being made. Yet I still remain, as many of you are, predictably and hugely disappointed in the way this Labour government has behaved up till now. You only have to look at the, whilst welcome, Employment Rights Bill, yet how that has been watered down before passing until it barely resembles what was campaigned for within the Labour Party, within the trade union movement. We still have to recognise that being an affiliate member does help our members. The only way they know that is if we can discuss that openly with them, respectfully, explain it to them without patronising them, invite discussion and criticism openly and comradely. And that's how I want to come on to the last paragraph of resolution 56.

That is something I've tried to do over the last 12 months, tried to open dialogue with members about Labour Party affiliation, tried to respond to comments, tried to respond to the actions of members who want to leave the political fund. When I have discussions with them, and I'm a little bit reticent to talk to you about these because they're not part of minuted branch meetings, these are comments made to me directly in conversation with members. I asked somebody, "Well, what do you know about affiliation?" "It's giving money to Labour." And I go, "Anything else?" I don't really get a response. And it's not a criticism of members. I lose sleep over the things that I have to do and consider and represent for members. I do it gladly. But it is very difficult when you try and call branch meetings to discuss these issues and no one turns up. When you ask for comment on issues people have said is important to them, and they don't come back to you. My fear is that if a ballot were to run for four weeks, it wouldn't be engagement between elected officials and our members, it would be engagement between members and the media.

And it's a debate that would be stacked against us, those of us with knowledge and experience of the issues and of the reasons for and against affiliation. We won't have a voice in the fight. It'll be us versus GB News. For that reason, and the others I've mentioned Avon opposes the resolution, supports the EC emergency resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Matt.

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of emergency resolution 6. Um, I wasn't going to get up and speak, but I've just sat here and listened to a few of the comments being made. Now we've said that we're here to represent our members, and that we should protect our members when they're going to make a bad decision.

As a brigade secretary, I'm mandated by my members on what my decision should be. I don't listen to their decision and then come here and go the opposite direction. I'm mandated by my members to make a decision that they want me to make. When we start talking about finances around recall conference, who says it needs to cost a load of money? It's one item. It's one topic. Do we have to have a big stage? Do we have to have all these seats? Do we have to even come to a hotel? During COVID, we did it over Teams. Do we have to have a conference like this? Does it have to cost so much? That's up to the executive council to decide. So before we start talking about finances and stuff, all we're asking here for resolution 6 is to come back and have another conversation when everything's settled down.

If the Labour Party changes tomorrow and they go even more to the right to try to appease Reform and all their voters, are we really going to support the Labour Party? I don't think we should in that instance, but we should at least have a conversation about it and come here and talk about what our members want us to do, not what we think we should do for our members instead. Thank you. Support resolution 6. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Martin. But just for clarity, the standing orders of this conference say that any recall conference should be run along the same lines as far as possible. Oh. Pardon? *(From the floor*) No worries. Okay. Right, that concludes the debate. We now move on to rights of reply, so Steve first.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Well, thanks, president. A lot to come back on there. But look, what I will say, it was a fantastic debate, wasn't it? And the right place to have those debates. Rightly, we had those debates in 2004, just like this. Rightly, we had those debates in 2015 when delegates decided to re-affiliate. And look, we've heard from speakers from across the UK in this debate, from Scotland, from the northeast, from the southern regions, and the southeast, eastern, northwest, east Mids, west Mids, and the southwest.

But also, the executive council debated this in April, 13 regions discussing the political situation that they were faced with. And I think that's one of the fundamental issues that we're looking at here. London didn't get up, but they've got a decent relationship with a Labour mayor. They're doing all right.

In Kent, there's a Reform council, probably not going to do so well. So when we start putting the vote back into members' hands, which I see the logic to if you think that's democratic, but it'll be shaped by the local politics. And yes, we've got a job to do in local politics. Many people have got up here and said about the relationships that they've built up with MPs.

Well, I doubt you had relationships with Tory MPs, but you have got relationships with Labour MPs. Many have come and spoken on this platform. Many come to our parliamentary group, where we get to speak directly to those MPs that back our positions, that take the questions into parliament. And we're doing a bit of a job around that, making sure that our members see the work that is being done on our social media by Alanna and the comms team, making sure members understand that when we are saying we're the voice in the room, that voice is then going into the House of Commons, into the House of Lords, by the likes of Lord John Hendy, who speaks out on a number of occasions around employment rights, around workers' rights, around fire service issues.

So that's what it means when you're in the room. It's not just sitting there being a patsy to Keir Starmer or somebody. And I'll go back to that point. You are the leaders within your brigades, within your regions. You are the ones that are aware of the political situation. There'll be fire stations across the UK right now, I don't blame them, oblivious to what is going on inside the Westminster bubble.

But we have to be. We are political. We're a trade union affiliated to the Labour Party. We need to understand that. We need to speak out. We need to debate it. This is the place to do that. Members don't live in the Westminster bubble. They live in communities that have been ripped apart, ripped apart by a Conservative government over 14 years, that the general secretary before me took that fight on, was kept out of the rooms that now me and Ben sit in.

Took the fight to the Conservatives, for a Labour Party to be in number 10. Monumental, actually. Yeah, we don't agree with Starmer. Lee talks about the policies. I've never endorsed a bad policy that has been put forward by Keir Starmer, but I've spoken out about them. I've spoken about them in branches, in brigade committees, at conference, in the media, on BBC, on Channel 4, because we stand up for firefighters and we stand up for the working class.

That is our job. Our job is to represent firefighters, to get better deals, better things on the table, on pay, on health, on terms and conditions, and make sure that we have our say in those rooms. Let's not walk away from that.

I'm not denying we've got big political problems in this country. Keir Starmer's one. When we help get rid of him, he will be gone. His family will be packing their bags as we speak. There will be a leadership contest, which we will be part of. I agree with Maria when she talks about how we have to be there to shape it. We shaped the manifesto three, four years ago. We can shape who goes through the doors of number 10 now, what they stand for.

Not necessarily about personalities. Let's get in the room with other trade unions. There's many trade unions out there that would die to be in the position that we are. We're not bankrolling the Labour Party. We're a thorn in their side. We're a stone in Keir Starmer's shoe, and we need to stay there. We need to fight for our policies, policies that are passed at this conference, from our trade sections, from our equality sections, shaping what I say in those rooms.

That is the sovereignty of this conference. I don't speak on behalf of Steve Wright. I speak on behalf of the Fire Brigades Union every single meeting that I go to. So let's not do things that are going to jeopardise the lives of our members, and let's take it back to the fundamental work that the AGS is leading on.

When the AGS and the president went and visited every single region and talked about pay reform, and I know the words that would have come out of both of their mouths, that if we weren't affiliated, we wouldn't have been progressing that work as well as we have been. On pay, the commitments we've got on health of firefighters, something this union, all of you, have campaigned for decades on.

Let's not walk away from that. Someone mentioned, in the eastern region I think it was, around the soul of the Labour Party. You don't have to look back in too many books to look at the history of the Labour Party, where it came from. Trade unions. Well, I'm not one to walk away from a fight, and I don't think any of you are.

The debate has been fantastic in here today. Let's take that fight outwards. Let's change the Labour Party into delivering what we want to see. I think the points that were made from the comrades in West Mids, the debate is happening now. It is not happening in six months' time. It's probably changed by the time I've finished speaking today and we close this debate and we vote on it. It will have changed. It is happening now. Let's be part of it now. Let's shape it. Let's deliver for our members right now. We cannot wait and see what happens in six months' time.

The cost is one thing, but we'd have to deal with that. It's not a cost issue for me. This is about dealing with the issues in front of us now. That's what we do as trade union reps. That's what we do in our workplaces, in fire stations, control rooms, every single day. We deal with the problems in front of us today, so let's deal with this one. Let's not walk away from the long-term programme of change that we're trying to deliver. Samantha Dixon talks about that plan and that programme of work. We're heavily invested in that. Why would we walk away from the opportunities that we have built, we have fought for, and we work endlessly, tirelessly, day in, day out to do that?

On the Merseyside resolution, and look, fair play, Lee. We'll see you next year, I'm sure. (*Laughter*)
But what I say to you, Lee, is, and you talk about the positions that people said that they would back disaffiliation this year. This is this year's debate. We're not talking about last year's debate. We're not talking about yesterday's debate. We're talking about what we're here to debate and decide on today.

But look, I applaud you for bringing it back. And I'm not going to rehash the arguments I've already made around this being the place to make those decisions. I do think it undermines conference. I think it undermines the work that you put in, the mandates you've got to come here today. And I think on Martin's point that he made around his position is set by his members. If that's the case, we could save a hell of a lot of money next year if you all just send your positions in in advance.

But what the value of conference brings is to be able to listen to the debate. Listen to Tim when he come out and changed his position. Rightly so. People get a little bit annoyed, I think, when they've been lobbied. Well, that's what we do. That is conference business. You have those debates, you have those discussions, you see how it affects one region, one brigade, one section. It all affects people in different ways. Let's have those debates. Let's have it on the conference floor, and let's do it today.

So look, let's not step away from the debate now, over the next few weeks, over the next few months, or even the next few years. There are many unions that speak out and talk about disaffiliation. I'm not going to name them, but they can't disaffiliate at a drop of a hat, potentially, like a recall conference like us. Many of the larger unions will spout everything that they do about how they may disaffiliate. Well, they can't do it for three, four years in some cases due to their rules.

If something changes in six months' time, the head office, the executive council, the 13 representatives from the regions decide that it's got that bad, well, we'll recall conference. We'll have the president sat here, and we'll take those decisions there and then. But what I want to do is be in there and shape it.

What I want to do is make sure that we've got a government that delivers for our members on pay, on cuts, on safety, on members' health, and I'm sure that you want that, too. I want to stand, and I think our union should proudly stand with other unions in our movement who are arguing for those same things for their members.

So let's work with the affiliated unions. Let's work with the MPs on our side. Region 3 do that particularly well. They've got some decent MPs. Ian Lavery that came to the health and safety summit chairs the APPG on Health and Safety in the Labour Party. Ian doesn't like everyone in the Labour Party, I'm sure, but he gets in the room and makes deals for working people.

So we want a government that steps up. Steps up when there's closure to fire stations because our union is proud to punch above its weight. Our president proudly sits on the NEC, takes that fight every single time he sits in those meetings. I've been selected as one of the Labour unions' vice chair of the National Policy Forum, for my sins.

And we've made sure that our voices are heard, our influence counts. This isn't a separate issue to our day job. It is our day job. Those aims, those aspirations, that voice, that influence are gone if we don't stay affiliated. We'll let down other unions, in my view. We'll let down the wider working class. And most of all, closing the door and turning our backs on the party, I think we seriously let our members down. So now is the time to make the decision. Not leave it to members. Let's do it today. Don't undermine your sovereignty. Not kicking the can down the road, not begging the Green Party to see if they'll speak to us.

The time is now to carry this emergency resolution. Stay affiliated. Support emergency resolution 3. Oppose the emergency resolution 6 and oppose resolution 56. Thank you, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. Right of reply, West Mids.

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
Just realised I've forgotten my glasses. Conference, president, recall conference would give this issue the time and attention it deserves. We were told yesterday by the AGS that recalling conference is never an issue if it needs to be done. Democracy sometimes costs money.

To be clear, you can support the executive council emergency resolution and support the emergency resolution from West Midlands. They complement each other. They are stronger together. You can agree with everything that the general secretary has said and support us by having another conversation in six months' time, so we know what's been going on.

Support both the executive council emergency resolution and support the West Midlands emergency resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Sasha. Merseyside, right to reply. You are alternating, aren't you? Every debate

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, I can't withdraw this resolution. I did that last year, and Graeme and I had to go back and tell our members that we'd withdrawn it. And then this year, we went through the democratic process of putting our resolutions through our brigade committee, and this is one of the resolutions that our brigade committee passed.

So I'm not going to withdraw it and go back and have to have that conversation with them again, because it was hard enough last year. Now, if you do vote against this resolution, I want each and every one of you to go back to your branches, to go back to your sections, and I want you to tell them that you voted against this resolution. You voted for them not to have the democratic right to choose over affiliation and I will be checking.

Now, if you can't back this resolution. Then back the West Mids emergency resolution. Because I think that in six months, this will still be an issue. Because it looks like those standing to be the next leader of the Labour Party, they're not going to drag us to the left. We may go further to the right.

On Durham and Darlington's point on the cost of recalling conference, we can't base such decisions on cost. We base them on what is right for this trade union. And on Avon's point, in our resolution, the ballot wouldn't open until 1st September, so we would have plenty of time to go and talk to our members in that time.

Conference, this resolution offers the chance for each and every one of our members to have their democratic say in this matter. Do not take that away from them. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Lee. Conference, as a reminder that if emergency resolution 3 from the executive council carries, resolution 56 will fall. Emergency resolution 6 can carry alongside the EC emergency resolution. I now put emergency resolution 3 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*. As such, resolution 56 *falls*.

I now put emergency resolution 6 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That falls*.

Right conference. Oh, sorry. Pete's just reminded me that 59 was withdrawn. Okay. Look, conference, that concludes that debate. There were 19 speakers in that debate. That is a fantastic bit of work by the union and by you on behalf of your members. I want to thank you for the comradely manner in which you conducted that. We all know we leave here; we have got a job of work to do. We've got to make the Labour Party the party of the working class for the working class, and I better do it quick because the working class, as we all know, they are looking for alternatives because of the void left by the current Labour Party leadership, the policies, the direction that they have been going in. So we've all got a job of work to do on that one. But thank you for that debate. It was excellent. We're now going to break for 15 minutes, conference. We'll have you back in the hall for. I'm going to be even more generous, quarter past, please. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, can you please take your seats? Right, conference come to order. Thank you for that. Conference, you may notice we are missing the general secretary. He's not gone to celebrate winning that emergency resolution. He come to see me. We have been given the opportunity for him to go on other union business, which I have agreed, and we are shifting the business around a bit so we can accommodate that. So he will be missing for this last session on other union business. Can't tell you what it is, but watch the telly tonight. And it's not Strictly. *Laughter*

And he's not playing for Hull City neither. Right, conference. Look, we've just had an excellent debate. We had 19 speakers. However, as you can imagine, that has put us further behind, and we've still got 37 resolutions left, one EC policy statement, three emergency resolutions, and two guest speakers to accommodate.

So at this moment, we don't want to drop speaking times, but we may have to look at that tomorrow. But after speaking with the chair of standing orders and the standing orders committee, with your agreement, I'm proposing we suspend standing order 16 tonight and continue business until 18.00. I know. And then obviously we're going to delay the start of the fringe till 18.15. That would hopefully stop us cutting the speakers' time. So is that agreed, conference? *Agreed*. Thank you. I know that's reluctantly. There was no enthusiasm in that, I know. "All right. Yeah, agreed." Right. But what I will say is, can you all stick rigidly to the speakers' times? If someone has said what you were going to say, please don't just get up and repeat it. Only get up on the paragraphs if it's absolutely necessary. Up until now, the VP has been very generous with his red light. and then we've not even come in. We've given a lot of leeway, but that will no longer be happening. So when you get the red light, you know that if you don't wrap it up within 10, 15 seconds, I will be coming in and wrapping it in for you and silencing you. Okay? Right. Thank you. Right. We're now moving on to Section C, Operations, Health and Safety.

I now call resolution 24, Gender-Specific Health Recording. It has been remitted with the right to speak from the national women's committee.

Resolution 24 GENDER-SPECIFIC HEALTH RECORDING
Conference notes the growing body of research demonstrating that women firefighters experience distinct health risks, including increased incidence of reproductive health issues, breast cancer, thyroid disorders, musculoskeletal injuries and menopause-related impacts.

Conference further notes that current health recording systems across UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) and national data sets such as the Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry (FCDR) do not consistently collect, record or analyse data in a gender-specific way. This results in gaps in understanding, under-reporting of women's occupational health issues and missed opportunities to identify trends and mitigate risk.

Conference recognises that:
- ***women are under-represented in the UKFRS workforce yet face unique exposure and health patterns***
- ***lack of gender-specific data contributes to poorer workplace adjustments, reduced early detection, and missed preventative interventions***
- ***national and international evidence highlights a pressing need for gender-granular health monitoring to support improved policy, PPE design, occupational health provision, and presumptive legislation***
- ***meaningful gender-based analysis is essential to achieving equity, safeguarding women's health, and ensuring that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) can effectively represent all members.***

Conference believes that a strong evidence base is essential for campaigning, negotiation, and future health protections for women firefighters.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***campaign for UKFRSs to implement gender-specific health recording, including tracking injury types, cancer diagnosis, reproductive health impacts, menopause-related issues and musculoskeletal trends!***

- *work with the FCDR and academic partners to expand data categories so that women-specific occupational health outcomes can be monitored, analysed and published*
- *develop national guidance for brigades on collecting and reporting gender-granular health data in a consistent, ethical and confidential manner*
- *lobby for the inclusion of gender-specific health reporting in National Occupational Health Standards and National Fire Chiefs Council aligned frameworks*
- *provide an annual report to the FBU Women's School and Conference 2027 summarising national findings, emerging trends and priority areas for action.*

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

AMENDMENT 1

Change 1st paragraph to

'Conference notes the growing body of research demonstrating that women and ethnic minority firefighters experience distinct health risks, including increased incidence of reproductive health issues, breast cancer, prostate cancer at an earlier age, thyroid disorders, musculoskeletal injuries, menopause-related impacts, sickle cell anemia, hypertension, stroke and heart disease.'

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 2

Change 2nd paragraph to

'Conference further notes that current health recording systems across the UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) and national data sets such as the Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry (FCDR) do not consistently collect, record or analyse data in gender-specific or ethnicity-specific way. This results in gaps in understanding under-reporting of women's and ethnicity occupational health issues and missed opportunities to identify trends and mitigate risk.'

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 3

Change 1st bullet point to

- *'women and ethnic minority members are under represented in the UKFRS workforce yet face unique exposure and health patterns'*

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 4

Change 2nd bullet point to

- *'lack of gender-specific and ethnicity-specific data contributes to poorer workplace adjustments, reduced early detection, and missed preventative interventions'*

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 5

Change 3rd bullet point to

- *'national and international evidence highlights a pressing need for gender-granular and ethnicity specific health monitoring to support improved policy, PPE design, occupational health provision, and presumptive legislation'*

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 6

Change 4th bullet point to

- *meaningful gender-based and ethnicity-based analysis essential to achieve equality, safeguarding women's and ethnic minorities health, and ensuring that the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) can effectively representing all members.'*

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 7

Change 5th bullet point to

- *'campaign for UKFRSs to implement gender-specific and ethnicity-specific health recording, including tracking injury types, cancer diagnosis, reproductive health impacts, menopause-related issues and musculoskeletal trends'*

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 8
Change 6th bullet point to
- ***'work with the FCDR and academic partners to expand data categories so that women-specific and ethnicity-specific occupational health outcomes can be monitoring analysed and published'***

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 9
Change 7th bullet point to
- ***'develop national guidance for brigades on collecting and reporting gender and ethnicity granular health data in a consistent, ethnically and confidential manner'***

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 10
Change 8th bullet point to
- ***'lobby for the inclusion of gender specific and ethnicity specific health reporting in National Occupational Health Standards and National Fire Chiefs Council alignment frameworks'***

B&EMM

AMENDMENT 11
Change 9th bullet point to
- ***'provide an annual report to the FBU National Women's School and Black and Ethnic Minority Members School and Conference 2027 summarising national findings, emerging trends and priority areas for action.'***

B&EMM

NICOLA McSHERRY (NWC)**:**
President, conference, speaking on this remitted resolution, gender-specific health recording. The national women's committee want to be absolutely clear about why the content of this motion still matters and why it cannot quietly fall down the agenda. This resolution is about something fundamental, whether we truly understand and therefore are able to properly protect the health of women firefighters.

Right now, the honest answer is we do not. We know that women firefighters experience distinct health risks, real evidenced risks: higher incidence of certain cancers, including breast cancer, reproductive health impacts, thyroid disorders, musculoskeletal injuries linked to equipment and working practices, and the often overlooked but very real effects of menopause in demanding roles. These are not niche concerns. They are occupational health issues. But despite this, our data systems have not caught up. Across fire and rescue services, and even within the national work, like the Firefighters' Cancer and Disease Registry, data is not consistently collected or analysed in a gender-specific way, and that has consequences.

If we don't record something properly, we don't see it properly. If we don't see it properly, we don't act on it properly. That is how gaps become normalised. That is how risks go unchallenged. That is how members' health falls through the cracks. Conference, women are still under-represented in our service, but that cannot mean that their health is under-prioritised. Because without gender-specific data, we cannot identify trends early. We cannot design effective interventions. We cannot argue as strongly as we should for better PPE, better policies, and better protections. And crucially, we limit our own strength because everything we do, every campaign, every negotiation, every demand for improved safety relies on evidence.

We need to improve how data is recorded, to work with researchers to expand what is measured, to create consistent guidance, and to ensure national standards reflect the reality of our workforce. The risks do not pause because a motion is remitted, and the experiences of women firefighters do not become less important while we wait.

So I use this opportunity to say that this work does need to start. Our members' health and safety must remain a priority for this union. Every firefighter, every single one, benefits from the same level of understanding, protection, and care. Conference, remitted does not mean that we don't need this work to happen. I urge the executive council to recognise that this is work we cannot afford to delay. Conference, I remit. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Nikki. I now call resolution 31, National Safety Standards For Water-Based Training, moved by Northamptonshire. The EC support. Can I also ask if you're at the back of the hall that you sprint down to the front just to save a bit of time as well?

Resolution 31 NATIONAL SAFETY STANDARDS FOR WATER-BASED TRAINING
Conference recognises that firefighter health, safety and long-term wellbeing must be paramount in all training environments, and that the level of protection afforded during training must be no less than that provided at operational incidents.

Conference believes no firefighter should be exposed to avoidable or unmanaged risk arising from inadequate environmental controls, poor water quality management, or insufficient decontamination procedures associated with water-based training exercises.

Conference demands that the Executive Council negotiate nationally agreed and enforceable minimum standards that must be established and applied across all UK Fire and Rescue Services, governing:
- ***regular and transparent water quality testing, monitoring and reporting***
- ***the safe handling of contaminated run-off and training ground residues***
- ***the mandatory use of appropriate and fit-for-purpose Personal Protective Equipment during all water-based training activities***
- ***immediate, effective and properly resourced decontamination procedures following exposure***
- ***access to clean welfare facilities, including suitable washing, changing and segregation of contaminated equipment.***

Conference demands that robust health surveillance, exposure recording and long-term occupational health monitoring must form an integral part of any exposure management framework, recognising the cumulative risks associated with repeated participation in water-based training.

NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

HELEN DURMAN (Northamptonshire)**:**
Conference, president. I move this resolution on firefighter safety during water-based training exercises. Conference, as firefighters, we all accept that risk is part of our role. We face danger to protect our communities every single day, but there is a clear difference between unavoidable operational risk and preventable exposure caused by inadequate training environments. Training should prepare us for the job, not create unnecessary health risks of its own.

This resolution is about ensuring that the standards protecting firefighters during training are no less than expected at operational incidents, because whether exposure happens at a fire scene or on a training ground, the impact on our members' health can be exactly the same. Across fire and rescue services, water-based training environments can involve contaminated water, polluted runoff, chemical residues, and exposure to hazardous materials, yet standards remain inconsistent. In some areas, there are robust systems in place. In others, there are gaps, uncertainty, and worrying lack of transparency. Conference, that is not acceptable. No firefighter should be expected to train in conditions where water quality is not properly monitored, where contaminated residues are poorly managed, or where adequate decontamination facilities are not available.

No firefighter should have to question whether the PPE they are issued is fit for purpose, and no firefighter should leave training carrying a contaminant home to their families because proper cleaning, decontamination, and welfare facilities are not provided. This resolution demands nationally agreed enforceable minimum standards across every fire and rescue service, not guidance, not recommendations, standards that are mandatory, transparent, and accountable, including water testing and reporting, safe handling of contaminated runoff and residues, proper PPE for all water-based training, effective decontamination procedures, and clean welfare facilities that protect firefighters both during and after exposure.

But Conference, this resolution also recognises something equally important, that exposure risk is cumulative. Firefighters do not just face one exposure in a career. These exposures happen repeatedly over years of service, and we still do not fully understand the long-term health implications associated with repeated contamination exposure during training activities. That is why robust health surveillance, exposure recording, and long-term occupational monitoring must become standard practice, because if we fail to record exposures, we fail to protect our members. If we fail to monitor long-term health impacts, we fail future generations of firefighters. If we fail to act now, we risk repeating mistakes we have seen too many times before across the fire service.

Conference, firefighter safety cannot stop at the incident ground gates. Training environments must reflect the same commitment to health, safety, and wellbeing that we rightly demand operationally. This resolution is about prevention, it is about accountability, and ultimately, it's about protecting our members throughout their entire careers and beyond. I ask conference to support this resolution. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Helen. Does that have a seconder? Yep. Also, if people know they're seconding, if they can follow up the mover of the resolution, we can save 30 seconds. They all add up.

DUNCAN DANDIE (Nottinghamshire)**:**
President, conference, second time conference, first time speaking. *Applause*

Thank you. Nottinghamshire seconds this resolution, not simply because of the principles behind it, but because in Nottinghamshire, we've already seen why this is necessary. This is not hypothetical. This is not a precaution for the sake of bureaucracy. This is a real and ongoing firefighter safety issue affecting our members right now.

We've had countless members become unwell following training exercises carried out in poor quality water without adequate welfare provisions and with insufficient means of proper decontamination. And for some of our members, the consequences have been far more serious than a tummy ache. We have seen firefighters left hospitalised following confirmed cases of waterborne diseases linked to exposures during training activities.

Conference, this should alarm every single one of us because these were not operational incidents carried out in unpredictable emergency conditions. These are in controlled training environments, environments where risk should have been identified, managed, and reduced as far as reasonably possible.

Conference, our concerns were repeatedly raised, the risks were repeatedly highlighted, and yet the venue in question remained in use, the venue being the National Water Sports Centre in Nottinghamshire. Ultimately, the decision to remove use of that training centre was taken out of the service's hand following multiple personal injury claims via Thompsons and with numerous awards for our members, which led to us being banned from the venue anyway.

Too often across the fire service, meaningful action only seems to happen once injury, illness, or legal liability becomes unavoidable. But firefighter safety should never rely on compensation claims before standards improve. Unfortunately, the problem did not end there. We have now moved back to a training venue on a public stretch of the River Trent, and members are once again navigating contaminated water, animal waste, discarded fishing lines, and other uncontrollable hazards. Once again, firefighters are left without adequate welfare facilities or effective decontamination arrangements afterwards. Conference, we are asked to demonstrate professionalism, discipline, and courage every single day. It's not unreasonable for firefighters to expect the same professionalism from the systems designed to protect them.

No firefighter should finish training unable to properly clean themselves, no firefighter should wonder what contaminants they have been exposed to, and no firefighter should be placed in avoidable danger during an exercise intended to improve operational safety. The resolution matters because it removes ambiguity.

It establishes that firefighter safety during training is not optional. It cannot depend on budget pressures, it cannot depend on local interpretation, and it cannot be ignored until more of our members become ill. National minimum

standards are needed because firefighters deserve consistency, they deserve transparency, and above all, they deserve protection.

Conference, this resolution is practical, proportionate, and long overdue. I urge you to support it. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Duncan. Right, that's now open for debate. Anybody?

GUY LAWES (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, standing in support of resolution 31. The points that have been outlined by our comrades stand up for themselves, but we thought it would be remiss for us not to come to the podium to speak vaguely on a resolution that we brought to conference a few years ago. The resolution calls for safety standards within water-based training, but we can't forget that safety standards have been eroded in all water-based activities. When our resolution fell a few years ago, it was based on water rescue not being part of the role map and the role map not being able to be opened.

Well, now that it's being opened and things are being discussed, we must remember that safety standards are set in this country for water rescue activities by the DEFRA document, not by the National Fire Chief Council's boat code. Durham supports the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Guy.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales)**:**
President, conference, water rescue is a statutory duty in Wales and has been for a while and we carry out regular water training for re-qualification on a regular cycle, as well as a fair bit of ad hoc training. I would urge everyone in this room to watch Dirty Business, which is a three-part drama true story, and I think it was originally screened on Channel Four, and it's shocking. I really urge you to watch it.

The waterways and coastal areas of the UK are full of raw sewage. We've had water courses postponed in the white-water centre that we use in Cardiff when they're aware of a dump within the forty-eight-hour period. And even beyond forty-eight hours, have you really got confidence that you want to get into that water for training? It's bizarre. You can't be confident the water isn't full of disease, and I echo what our brother said in the first instance. And there's no confidence in the water companies, and their practices are totally unscrupulous, to say the least.

I mean, this might be for future, well, it will be for future conferences as this goes on, but I think maybe do we need to go further? Safety standards would not be exposing firefighters to any number of untold diseases in training. Water training would need to be in a sort of sterile or as sterile as possible environment such as a swimming pool or something like that, really.

We will obviously take calculated risks on incidents to save life, but our training should guarantee that firefighters are not exposed to potentially fatal diseases found in raw or untreated sewage. And without that guarantee, then we shouldn't be doing it, simply. But this resolution is well worth supporting and any steps in the right direction that you guys need when it comes to water training is worth getting behind. So conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you very much. Okay, no more speakers on that one? No, he's going for the door. Right.

I now put resolution 31 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para C2. Conference, I'm now going to take the following two resolutions in the same debate. They can both carry together. So I'm calling resolution 25, Decontamination For Officer Members, moved by the officers' national committee, the EC is supporting. And I'll also be calling resolution 29, national standards for decontamination, provision of washing facilities on all fire stations, moved by Cheshire with amendment from Merseyside.

So I now call resolution 25, Decontamination For Officer Members, moved by the ONC.

Resolution 25 DECONTAMINATION FOR OFFICER MEMBERS
Conference commends the internationally recognised Fire Brigades Union (FBU) DECON campaign and notes Officer National Committee (ONC) Resolution 47 (2023), which called for additional decontamination control measures for officer members.

Conference notes that officers are routinely exposed to contaminants while lone working and spend extended periods in operational vehicles that may later be used with their families. Current policy does not adequately reflect these specific risks.

Conference believes officer members should expect standard and agreed control measures, including routine vehicle cleaning, dedicated decontamination bags, dignity when changing contaminated kit at incidents, and sufficient time to decontaminate where return to station is not possible.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to seek to secure UK-wide, consistent decontamination standards that protect officers and their families from avoidable contamination exposure.

OFFICERS' NATIONAL COMMITTEE

PETER JOHNSON (ONC)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 25: Decontamination For Officer Members. Conference, we should be proud of the internationally recognised DECON campaign led by our union. It has changed the conversation around firefighter safety and contamination exposure.

But while progress has been made, officer members remain at risk. Officers are routinely exposed to contamination whilst attending incidents and within specialist roles like fire investigation, HAZMAT, and DIM roles. Officer members spend extended periods in operational vehicles, vehicles that are often later used in our personal lives with our families.

I've previously left incidents dirty with the familiar smoky smell in my car, a smell that has a basis in contamination and a smell that my daughter has commented on a few days later. With fire appliances being able to be decontaminated and a robust personal decontamination procedure for firefighters, it leaves officers routinely overlooked.

When I get in my car with my family, I do not want the incident I attended the day before to have an impact upon them. I do not want the vehicle or PPE that I keep in my car and that I need to protect me to have an impact upon those that I love. Following incidents where firefighters can change and exchange PPE at station and rightly have access to showers and ablutions, ONC members are pressured to return to provide an operational response without exchanging PPE or taking time to decompress and follow correct decontamination procedures.

This is not just about policy; this is about people. It's about officers leaving incidents contaminated without the dignified opportunity to decon and putting fire gear into the boot of a car and move on to the next incident, and it's about bringing harmful substances home to the people we care about the most.

Conference, this resolution calls for consistent control measures, routine vehicle cleaning, dedicated decontamination provision, dignity when changing contaminated kit, and the time needed to properly decontaminate. These are not luxuries; these are basic safety standards. I accept and I adhere to our current procedures.

My family should not be placed in harm's way due to the role and the contamination that I bring home in my car or on my PPE. Listening to the heartbreaking stories heard this morning on conference floor and sadly around the mess table across all of our brigades, the danger to us all is all too real, posed by the job that we do.

Conference, this resolution is about protecting our colleagues and ensuring the risks on the incident ground are not brought home to their families at the end of a shift. Thank you, Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Pete. Does that have a seconder? Yep. Conference, if I could remind seconders to come down when the movers do. Pardon? Yeah, if you know you're seconding the motion, if you could just come down and it'll just speed up the process. Thanks, Tim.

TIM GREEN (Kent)**:**
Speaking in support or seconding the resolution 25, officers' national committee. President, conference, I speak in support of the resolution on decontamination for officer members and want to ground it in the real experience of one of our own.

Danny Barratt is Kent fire brigade secretary. And like Danny, I stand here as a flexi-duty officer with real concerns about what the service has done and is still doing to our health. Danny has been an operational firefighter for thirty years. For the last eight years, he's been an officer working alone, traveling to operational incidents in service response vehicles incident after incident, and he's been exposed to smoke, chemicals, and contaminants in the same way as thousands of officers across the UK.

He did that work because he believes in this job and the people he serves. Dan has also had bowel cancer, and thankfully, he's now in remission, but he should never have to look back over three decades of service and ask, "Did my job, did my vehicle, and did my contaminated kit play a part in this?"

No firefighter and no officer should be left with that question hanging over them. And I'll be honest, conference, I'm asking myself exactly the same questions about my own health and my own future. This resolution recognises a simple truth. Our officer members are routinely exposed to contaminants the same as everyone else while working alone and spending extended periods in operational or personal vehicles that may later be used with their families, as Pete said.

Officers like Danny and myself attend multiple incidents in a shift, moving from one job to the next, with limited opportunity to change or properly clean down. We then get back into those same vehicles to drive home, sometimes with our children in the back seat the next day, and current policy does not adequately reflect those specific tasks and risks.

We've made progress through the FBU Decon campaign, and conference has rightly backed stronger decontamination standards for the watch or on station, but we've not yet matched that with clear, consistent standards for our officer members. Think about the reality. How many officers' cars are regularly deep cleaned, like Pete said, after dirty jobs? And how many have dedicated bags or containers for contaminated kit, proper wipes, proper cleaning materials, and procedures that are actually followed? How many officers are changing in car parks, in the dark at the side of the road with no dignity, no facilities, and no time?

After 30 years in this job, it's not unreasonable to say that the aim is to finish a career and enjoy retirement without wondering whether the cab of a car is slowly making them ill. Conference, this resolution does not ask the earth. It asks and calls for standard agreed measures, routine vehicle cleaning, dedicated contamination bags, dignity when changing, and enough time to decontaminate properly when returning to station is not possible.

It instructs the executive council to seek UK-wide consistent decontamination standards that protect officers and their family. That is not excessive. It's the minimum any of us should expect. Using Danny's experience, it's not about singling out one comrade. It's about recognising his story could be any one of us in this room.

We know contaminants kill. We know the human cost. We have the power through this resolution to insist on proper standards and back our officers with more than words. On behalf of Danny, on behalf of every officer working alone out of a car, on behalf of their families who sit in those vehicles and wash those clothes, I urge you to support this resolution. Thank you, Conference. Kent seconds. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Tim. Can I ask Cheshire to come down to move resolution 29, National Standards For Decontamination, Provision Of Washing Facilities On All Fire Stations? Merseyside, can you start coming down here as well to move your amendment?

Resolution 29 NATIONAL STANDARDS FOR DECONTAMINATION – PROVISION OF WASHING FACILITIES ON ALL FIRE STATIONS
Conference notes the increasing evidence linking exposure to fire effluents, toxic particulates and other contaminants to higher rates of cancer and serious illness among firefighters. Guidance from the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) has highlighted the dangers of secondary contamination and made clear that firefighters should not be expected to take contaminated clothing home to wash.

Conference further notes that structural firefighting kit is not fully particulate blocking and harmful substances, including per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS), can contaminate undergarments and personal clothing. Despite this, provision of proper washing facilities remains inconsistent, with some firefighters still required to launder contaminated duty wear in their own homes.

Conference believes that sending firefighters home with contaminated clothing is unacceptable and represents a failure in employer duty of care. Workplace exposure must be controlled at source and providing washing machines and washing products on every fire station is a simple, practical and necessary safeguard.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to lobby through the National Joint Council to introduce national standards, requiring the installation of appropriate washing machines on all fire stations and to press employers to implement contamination best practice guidance in full.
CHESHIRE

AMENDMENT
After final paragraph '..best practice guidance in full.' Add 'The Executive Council should report back, no later than Conference 2027.'
MERSEYSIDE

THE PRESIDENT:
Sounds even better. James, go.

JAMES MEREDITH (Cheshire)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution, national standards for decontamination, provision of washing facilities in all fire stations. In 2021, UCLan in partnership with the FBU released a contaminants interim best practice report, a document providing guidance for both employers and employees.

Five years on, we're still waiting for some of these recommendations to be implemented. It costs too much, it's not in the budget, we'll wait and see what the NFCC say, we're continuously told, as if the recommendations aren't already available. The title of the report is Minimising Firefighters' Exposure to Toxic Effluents. Minimising. So why are we still expected to do things to put us and our families at unnecessary risk?

One of the recommendations in the report is that firefighters should not launder work wear at home in their own washing machine where they wash their personal items and where their family wash their personal items. No doubt, like many of you, I've been washing my duty rig at home in my own washing machine for far too long. I'll be honest, it's got to the point now where if an item of my duty rig is contaminated, I'll dispose of it rather than take it home with me. As we all know or should know, our structural fire kit does not stop particulates from passing through and contaminating our clothing underneath and so our skin.

The skin is the largest organ in the body, and one of the main routes of carcinogenic exposure is absorption. With a five-degree rise in body temperature, skin absorption rates can increase by 400%. Is it not enough that we are at

risk of exposure before, during, and after the event, but that we can't even leave it at the fire station and must risk contaminating our own homes and even our family?

It's important to recognise that some employers have implemented more of the recommendations than others, and efforts have been made and are being made to keep firefighters safe. However, we unfortunately still have a way to go. The recent announcement by the Secretary of State at the FBU's first ever Health and Safety Summit that firefighters will receive health monitoring from next year was a welcome one and an incredible milestone for our profession, and I commend the efforts of our officials and thank them for their hard work on making this happen. It will no doubt strengthen further preventative measures to protect firefighters.

There is still more to be done, and so much of it is well within reach and can be implemented immediately. So to the employers still dragging their feet: you should be protecting your firefighters with every possible tool at your disposal. This is one of them. Stop expecting firefighters to take the risk home with them. You wouldn't do it, so why should we do it, conference? I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. The amendment from Merseyside? *Formally* Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate.

TILLY JAMES (NWC)**:**
President, conference, firefighters accept risk as part of their job, but exposure to unavoidable, unmanaged carcinogenic contamination should never be one of them. The growing body of evidence could not be more clear. Repeated exposure to fire effluents, toxic particulates, and contaminants significantly increases the risk of cancer and serious illness among firefighters. This is not speculation, it's fact.

The UCLan guidance has made clear that secondary contamination represents a serious danger. Firefighters should never be expected to take contaminated clothing home to wash, yet in many services, this is exactly what's happening. Structural firefighting kit is not fully particulate blocking. Harmful substances, including PFAS, now widely recognised for their links to cancer and other diseases, penetrate outer layers and contaminate our undergarments and personal clothing. When firefighters leave the station wearing or carrying that contamination, it does not stop with them. It is taken into cars, homes, and shared living spaces, extending the risk to families and those that they live with.

Conference, that is simply unacceptable. Our employers have a duty of care to control workplace exposure at the source. Sending firefighters home with contaminated clothing is a failure to meet that duty. It shifts responsibility from employer to employee, from the workplace to your home, and it does so despite clear guidance warning against exactly this practice.

It's indefensible as the solution is neither complex nor costly. Providing appropriate washing machines and laundry products on every fire station is a simple, practical safeguard. It is basic occupational hygiene. In any other high-risk industry, the absence of such facilities would not be tolerated for a moment, yet provision remains inconsistent.

Some firefighters have proper facilities. Others are forced to wash contaminated duty wear alongside their family's laundry. This postcode lottery puts health at risk. We must set a national minimum standard, one that protects every firefighter in every station without exception. Best practice guidance should be implemented in full, not selectively.

Conference, firefighters deserve better than ad hoc measures and half compliance. They deserve workplaces that take their health seriously, not just today, but decades in the future. Supporting this motion is about prevention, dignity, and accountability. It is about recognising that cancer is not an inevitable consequence of serving our communities and taking action to reduce that risk. Conference, I support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tilly.

OLLIE BALDAM (NRC)**:**
Conference, president. speaking in support of resolution 29. For too long, firefighters have accepted that contamination is simply part of the job. We have all worn the smell of smoke and fire as a badge of honour, but we now know better. The evidence is now overwhelming. Cancer rates and serious illness among firefighters cannot be ignored any longer. The research from UCLan and other bodies has made it absolutely clear that secondary contamination is real and is a dangerous occupational risk. And yet, despite all of this knowledge, firefighters in some brigades are still expected to take contaminated clothing home to wash.

For retained firefighters, the challenge is often even greater. Many retained stations simply do not have the facilities, the space, or the investment needed to properly manage contaminated PPE. Retained firefighters regularly leave incidents, return to stations with limited decontamination provisions, and then go straight back to their primary employment or their home life carrying those contaminants with them.

In rural and smaller stations especially, firefighters are often expected to improvise around systems that should already be in place. Safety standards cannot depend on whether you're whole time or retained. Every firefighter faces the same hazards at the incidents, and every firefighter deserves the same protection afterwards.

No partner unknowingly should handle contaminated clothing because an employer has failed to provide the basic washing facilities at stations. This is not a luxury request. It is not unreasonable. Washing machines, proper contamination procedures, and access to suitable cleaning products are simple, practical safeguards that should already exist in every fire station in the country.

Conference, firefighters accept enough risk in protecting the public. Taking contaminated PPE home should not be one of them. Please support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ollie. No, that's it. I'm now going to move to the vote. I now put resolution 25 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. That's carried.

I now put the amendment to resolution 29 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 29 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 30, National Standards On Fire Station Design, moved by Cheshire with amendment from the NWC. And if there is already a seconder, please come down as well.

Resolution 30 NATIONAL STANDARDS ON FIRE STATION DESIGN
Conference notes the continuing absence of consistent national standards for the design and layout of fire stations across the UK.

Conference also recognises that standards vary widely not only between different fire and rescue services, but in some cases, within the same service.

Conference is concerned that a number of new-build and recently refurbished stations have not been designed in a way that properly supports effective contaminant control and that opportunities have been missed to incorporate practical, modern design features that reflect current understanding of occupational health risks.

Conference believes that fire station design is a workplace health and safety matter and must be treated as such. The lack of clear and enforceable standards risks creating inequalities in working conditions and undermines efforts to reduce exposure to harmful contaminants.

Conference further believes that principles such as effective clean and dirty zoning, appropriate decontamination and storage facilities and proper separation of welfare and operational areas should be standard in all new developments and refurbishments.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to campaign through the National Joint Council for the introduction of national minimum standards for fire station design and layout, with a clear focus on contaminant control and firefighter health and safety.

CHESHIRE

AMENDMENT
Last paragraph, 3rd line after 'layout,' insert 'in adherence to the Fire Brigades Union Best Practice Facilities document'

NATIONAL WOMEN'S COMMITTEE

JAMES MEREDITH (Cheshire)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution, national standards on fire station design. Many of us in this room have probably had the luxury of working at a broken down, dilapidated old fire station that looks like it's trapped in a time warp. Now, don't get me wrong here, conference, some of these old fire stations are wonderfully charismatic and have walls that tell tales of other eras that I'm sure plenty of us have romanticised at times.

And when maintained, structurally sound and practical, they can be great places to work. But in many of them, and indeed even in some new build stations, we are lacking basic health and safety controls when it comes to the spread of harmful contaminants. Stations that lack the ability to properly clean up after a job, stations where crews have to walk through living areas, locker rooms, and office spaces before they can even get out of their contaminated clothing and get to a shower, as well as no suitable storage for contaminated PPE.

I've heard of some stations in some brigades that don't even have a shower, and some even without running water, giving firefighters no choice to not only prolong their exposure but also cross-contaminate their own homes and spread the risk to members of their family. This is not just unacceptable, it's unnecessary.

I recently attended the first FBU Health and Safety Summit in Birmingham, and we were privileged to have Alex Forrest, former president of the Manitoba International Association of Firefighters, talk to us about presumptive legislation, among other things. One of the things that stuck out for me was that he mentioned all stations in Canada have diesel exhaust extraction. It's just the norm there. I don't think I've been in a single fire station in this country with a diesel exhaust extraction unit, and I've worked for more than one service in my time as a firefighter.

Diesel particulates contain benzene, a class one carcinogen that is known for causing cancer in humans and has the ability to cause mutations in human DNA, and yet we are regularly and routinely exposed. You'll probably appreciate the way this particular issue was addressed. It's pretty cold in Canada, and so when the crews refused to pull the trucks inside, leaving them outside to freeze until said diesel extraction units were installed, it gave their department a pretty strong toe up the arse, and extraction units went in almost immediately. That's what the power of a union can achieve and why we're all here together this week.

The gap between some stations in this country and the conditions some firefighters work in compared to others needs to close, and it needs to close fast. It doesn't matter whether it's within the same service or from one service to another, and it doesn't matter whether it's at a busy city centre station doing two or three thousand calls a year or a quiet rural station doing two or three hundred. Every firefighter deserves the same level of protection.

Conference, how can we expect anyone to take their job seriously if their health and their life isn't taken seriously in return? Firefighters throughout the UK fulfil their role to the highest possible standard because anything less just isn't acceptable.

So let's end the postcode lottery on health and safety, and let's have every single fire station in the UK brought up to a standard befitting those that work there. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. EC are supporting and they support the amendment. Seconder? Yep.

DANNY CAMPBELL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 30 from Cheshire. Firstly, I need to make an apology to Gus because, and I forgot to say yesterday, first time speaker, so he gave me a row last night. *Applause*

Conference, Scotland fully supports this resolution, but we have to understand just how far away we are in Scotland. We've said this before about stations in Scotland not having running water, let alone facilities for decontamination. Two years ago, Gus and John visited Shetland to carry out inspections of some of the stations on the island.

An example of what they found is what I'm about to tell you. The station is a small breeze block shed just big enough to fit the mini fire engine in that they use. For their drill night, they have to move said fire engine outside, close the door, and go back in and fold the table down from the wall to do their training.

The crew do lectures and training regularly. Throughout the winter, they've reported wind, rain, snow blowing under the doors, and there is no heating. One of the crew members said it used to take him two hours to heat up in the bath after a drill night. There is a Portaloo at the side of the station that is strapped to two big concrete blocks. There's no lights in it, there's no sink, and there's nowhere to wash your hands, let alone change any sanitary products you may need. We've reported the service, to the Health and Safety Executive, and they have, to their credit, started to make progress, but we're years away from what this resolution asks. Nipping round the side of the shed is not good enough. Conference, let's support this. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Daniel. NWC.

EMILY HOLLANDS (NWC)**:**
President, conference, moving the amendment by national women's committee and supporting the resolution on national standards on fire station design. Conference, this resolution rightly highlights the continued absence of consistent national standards across the UK, and the very real consequences that has for firefighter health and safety.

Too often, new build and refurbished stations look modern on the surface but fall short where it really matters: contaminant control, occupational health, and safe, workable design. We know the risks we face. Contaminants don't stay neatly on the fire ground. They travel back with us on to our kit, into our stations, and into our bodies.

When stations are designed without proper clean and dirty zoning, without adequate decontamination facilities, and without clear separation between operational and welfare areas, that exposure is increased. That is not an accident. It is the direct result of poor design choices and the lack of standards.

This is also an equality issue. When standards are left vague or optional, it is women who so often feel the impact first. Conference, increasingly, we are seeing stations built with shared facilities such as locker rooms without proper thought being given to how those spaces actually function in practice.

In reality, they become male-dominated changing areas. Men will naturally use them as locker rooms, changing openly. I don't know how many times I've walked into a shared locker room to see men standing there in their underwear. Women cannot do that. Women will carry their clothes into the shower pods and change in confined spaces, because it is the only way we can maintain dignity and privacy.

That is not equality. That is poor design creating unequal working conditions. The minimum workplace facilities best practice guidance by the FBU clearly states that toilet facilities, washing facilities, rest facilities, and locker storage areas should be separate rooms for men and women. And as we know, new FBU guidance is imminent to make this more inclusive.

Conference, this is why national minimum standards matter. Fire station design is a workplace health and safety issue. It should not depend on which service you work for, who the architect was, or how tight the budget happened to be. Clear standards will protect firefighters' health, reduce inequality, and stop the same mistakes being repeated again and again. Conference, I move the amendment. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks Emily. Seconder? Have I got a seconder? *Formally*
You could have done it, Maria. You can get longer; you get more time. Right, Maria.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
Thank you. Conference, president, we support this resolution because fire station design's not about infrastructure, it's about people, dignity, and our safety.

And if we're serious about firefighter health and wellbeing, then we must also be serious about who gets considered when these spaces are designed. From an LGBT+ perspective, we know that redesign and refurbishment can come with risks as well as opportunities. Too often, changes are driven by cost-cutting, and what gets lost in that process are the very facilities and protections that workers rely on, particularly those already marginalised.

For our LGBT+ siblings, and especially our trans and non-binary colleagues, the design of workplace is not a neutral issue. It affects privacy, safety, and whether someone feels able to be themselves at work without fear or discomfort. That is why consultation is absolutely critical. Any redesign, whether new build or refurbishment, must include meaningful engagement with all equality sections, including ours. Not as an afterthought, but from the very beginning, because designing about layouts, welfare facilities, and zoning have real lived consequences. And conference, we must also sound a note of caution. While we wait for the guidance, like the EHRC code of practice, this should help employers get this right. We have serious concerns that the direction it is taking may not support, and may in fact undermine, the inclusion of our trans and non-binary siblings. At a time when our community is already facing increased scrutiny, we cannot rely on frameworks that risk excluding people from fair and equal access to workplace facilities.

So while we support the drive for national standards, those standards must go beyond the minimum. They must not inadvertently entrench exclusion. They must actively support inclusion, dignity, and safety for everyone. Because something as simple as station design is never just about buildings.

It's about who's being seen, who is heard, and who is protected. Get it right, we create workspaces where everyone thrives. Get it wrong, and we risk deepening inequality.

Conference, we need a clear commitment for inclusion to all, a clear inclusive review of the FBU best practice facilities document, and that is agreed upon from every section to reflect any changes, and that it reflects all of our members' dignity. We support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Maria. Right, I now put amendment to resolution 30 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those, all those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 30 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call Para C3.

RUTH BATEMAN (North Wales)**:**
President, conference, we acknowledge and thank those involved in engaging with Westminster government around the DECON campaign and our demands. I'd also like to put on record the progress that's been made in Wales. Our regional secretary has actually worked quite hard over the last 12 months engaging with Plaid Cymru, having recognised the growing support for the party ahead of the Senedd elections.

Plaid Cymru committed to include annual health screening for firefighters in their manifesto, as well as a commitment for investment for improvements to support DECON policies. So Plaid were successful in the recent Senedd elections earlier this month, and we look forward to holding them to those commitments. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ruth, and well done. Is it on here on this one or C4?
Next one. C4. Yep.

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking on Para C4. Conference, it's important to continually put on record our thanks to Professor Anna Stec and her team at UCLan, who, despite relentless challenge from industry to undermine the FBU funded independent research, they have continued their work to produce and defend that research to protect our health.

Conference, FBU Scotland officials were made aware that Professor Anna Stec is due to end her tenure at the University of Central Lancashire later this year, moving to the University of Leicestershire. This move raised concerns over the impact it may have in relation to the long-term continuation of the DECON project, the research and study on occupational exposure to toxic chemicals such as PFAS, health monitoring linked to occupational cancers, and the ongoing viability of the Firefighter Cancer and Disease Registry.

FBU Scotland have spoken with head office officials this week on this emergency issue, and we welcome the reassurance given that steps are being taken swiftly to seek to protect this research and the project's longevity. Thank you. *Applause*

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, Seona, thank you for raising that, and I'll come on to that substantive matter in a second. But I think it's also an opportunity actually just to talk about obviously some of the work that we are doing as a union in relation to our fight on cancer, and obviously Professor Anna Stec has played a huge and pivotal role within that.

But obviously, last year, April 2025, we released our final best practice report, a report that's been referred to in recent resolutions in this session. We've also secured FBU reps attending every inspection completed by the Health and Safety Executive that have started now right across the UK in every single fire and rescue service workplace.

That is something that we've brought about through our campaigning over many years under the DECON campaign. We've also heard many times today about the health monitoring provision that has been spoken about in this conference by the Minister for Fire, also delivered by the former Health Secretary at our health and safety summit.

We've also heard many times and used by many of you in here today, so hopefully I don't need to explain what a concordat is. I had to Google what that was, when I first heard it. But a concordat that looks and establishes and maintains the standards of firefighters' health, safety, and wellbeing for the job that we do.

These are significant gains that we've made, in the last 12 months following extensive years of campaigning on the fight on cancer. We've also had Anne Davies in my eyes, a treasure of the FBU, fighting for justice that she has faced, and her late husband faced, Jeff Simpson, who died of cancer related to the role of being a firefighter.

But not only fighting for their own justice but also advocating on behalf of every single firefighter across the UK that faces the very real risk of getting cancer, just like the World Health Organisation has said, that it is likely that firefighters will get cancer doing the job that they do. So the work that Anna Stec has done has been incredibly important. The work of the University of Central Lancashire up until this point is incredibly important, and that is why the executive council will take time to consider the next steps on what we do now that we know that Anna Stec is moving to the University of Leicester.

It has been spoken about this week, it was spoken about at the executive council this morning, and we will take the appropriate next steps to ensure that our DECON campaign continues that fight on cancer to continue seeing improvements that we've seen in the last 12 months, to ensure that we get presumptive legislation, the important legislation that protects firefighters going forward and provide the necessary safety arrangements that they deserve, so thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Point of order?

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
Just a point of order, president, that the English health secretary announcement doesn't cover the devolved countries.

THE PRESIDENT:
Sorry, Seona, what was that?

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
The English health secretary doesn't cover – the announcement doesn't cover – devolved countries.

THE PRESIDENT:
Point taken. *Applause* Have you got your phone?
I now call para C5 – oh, sorry.

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thank you, president, well pointed out, Seona, and, rightly pointed out. During our conversations with the health secretary and his extensive team over the past couple of months, we also ensured, as you say, doesn't represent Scotland and the devolved nations. We also ensured that those conversations were happening from Westminster into those devolved nations on this very point. And obviously, I know the work that's been spoken about in Wales as well. That's certainly what we expect to see in those devolved nations on this very matter. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Adam. Right, I now call para C5, para C6, and I now call resolution 26, Officers' Workloads Following Traumatic Incidents, moved by the officers' national committee, the EC are supporting.

Resolution 26 OFFICERS' WORKLOADS FOLLOWING TRAUMATIC INCIDENTS
Conference notes that flexi-duty officers carry significant operational and managerial responsibilities. Following major incidents, deaths in service, or serious injuries, they face significantly increased workloads and prolonged demands.

Conference understands that during such periods they often work in isolation and their existing workload continues to accumulate while becoming the single point of contact for families and crews.

Conference believes that the cumulative impact of trauma-related responsibilities and excessive workload creates foreseeable stress risks, threatening member welfare, decision-making, and operational safety. This is a clear health and safety issue.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to seek UK-wide recognition of these pressures, look to negotiate additional qualified officer support during periods of acute organisational stress, and seek to ensure that every UK Fire and Rescue Service adopts and enacts the Health and Safety Executive guidance 'Tackling Work-Related Stress' using the 'Management Standards approach – A step-by-step workbook'.

OFFICERS NATIONAL COMMITTEE

PETER JOHNSON (ONC)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 26, officers' workloads following traumatic incidents. Conference, flexi-duty officers carry immense responsibility operationally and managerially. But it is in the aftermath of traumatic incidents that these pressures escalate to an unsustainable level.

Following major incidents within local areas, serious injuries or our most tragic response, a death in service, officers are expected to do more at the very point that they are personally affected by those events. The workload increases significantly during this time, demands are prolonged, and crucially, that workload does not stop elsewhere. It continues to build.

Officers are often working in isolation during these periods, working behind closed doors under intense pressure to deliver for the watches and for the stations. Working alone, suffering alone, working far past their contractual hours to ensure those that need support are provided with it. They become the single point of contact for families, for crews, and for the organisation, while continuing to carry their existing responsibilities.

Conference, this is not just about a temporary increase in workload. This is about unmanageable pressures and stress. The impact of this is entirely foreseeable. Increased stress, reduced wellbeing, and potential consequences for decision-making affecting personal and operational safety. All this against the backdrop of no structured training or additional support for officers to do this vital role in the most difficult circumstances.

During this increased workload, it was also impossible for members to process personal grief and to grieve due to the expectations on them to deliver. This is not simply a welfare issue. This is a health and safety issue. This resolution calls for practical and necessary change. UK-wide recognition of these pressures, additional qualified officer support during periods of acute stress, and a proper adoption of health and safety executive guidance on work-related stress. Specifically, using the management standards approach, a clear structured framework to manage these risks.

A recent stress survey in my brigade for the officer section produced heartbreaking results where members highlighted the unmanageable workloads demanded upon them in standard day-to-day work. These pressures are only amplified when major incidents, injuries, or death in service occur, pushing members past breaking point.

We cannot accept a situation where officers are expected to absorb trauma and increased workload without proper support, training, or concern for the individual. Protecting our members must include protecting their mental health, their wellbeing, and their ability to carry out their role safely. It is about ensuring that no officer is left to carry this burden alone. Thank you. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Pete. Tim?

TIM GREEN (Kent)**:**
Tim Green, Kent, seconding resolution 26. Apologies. I did have a bit of a long speech, but I'm cutting it down. So basically, we just want to make you aware that when the crews have gone home, officers, they walk back through the front door often into the early hours and are expected to step straight back into family life, back into the bed beside their partner, and back into the home where normality's waiting for them.

It's not a minor detail of the job; it's a serious occupational risk. That isolation as well which was mentioned of the drive home, and that sudden shift from command of a traumatic scene to silence and then moulding back into home life can really take hold. It can show itself in disturbed sleep, mood changes, and other things that Pete mentioned.

It's a welfare issue, but it's also a clear health and safety issue. Conference, this resolution matters because officers are not somehow protected from trauma by their rank or their role. They're still people, still parents, still partners, still colleagues, and they carry a burden of command, as was mentioned, long after the incident's over.

And they go home with the what-ifs, the second-guessing, and the weight of decisions that others may never fully understand, and of course, completing all the other paperwork which is expected of them. So when services fail to provide structured support, decompression, and welfare after traumatic incidents, they're not only failing individual officers, they're creating risk across the organisation.

Officers who are exhausted, isolated, or carrying unresolved trauma are more likely to become unwell and more likely to struggle at home. Kent second this resolution because the service cannot continue to pile trauma, responsibility, and excessive workloads onto officers and leave them simply to get on with it alone. Officers need recognition, qualified support, and proper welfare arrangements that will reflect the reality of their role. Kent second this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Tim. That's open for debate? Nope.

REBEKAH UDEN (North Wales)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of this resolution from the officers' section. As a firefighter on the watch, I was completely oblivious to the issues that the officers had. I'm ashamed to say I did actually just think it was firefighter problems and control, until I took on the brigade secretary role.

So I've had very much a front row seat to this, and some other issues that they've been fighting in North Wales. There is real low morale out there amongst our members who are officers, and there's many reasons for this. Some of the things that have gone on in North Wales which add to obviously the sentiment behind the resolution.

We've recently seen an outright disregard and disrespect for their hard-earned operational rank markings. The CFO recently gifted area manager rank markings to non-operational blue book managers. We've seen multiple middle management seminars where our officers' concerns have fallen on deaf ears, concerns such as are outlined in the resolution.

Regarding culture, our recent culture review highlighted problems at middle management level and as we all know, middle management includes Green Book staff. But regardless, it left our FDS cohort shouldering the blame for what was certainly senior leader failings. A recent internal survey called the Fire Family Staff Survey showed that officers were the lowest scoring and the unhappiest of all staff across North Wales.

And a recent restructure across the service saw an increased workload to officers and many placed in roles with little to no previous experience, expected to complete and pass courses and qualifications, given unrealistic deadlines. And that's on top of their already heavy workload and FDS commitments, as well as all the other things that are too long to list really, like the fire investigation, accident and injury and they manage the availability of crews and everything else.

But on top of all this, after traumatic incidents, officers in North Wales and across the UK leave the scene, and they do not get to go back to a fire station and sit with their crew. There's been no offer of external critical incident debriefing when there should have been, and there's been no adjustments to their workload.

Work-related stress sick leave is on the rise, and they have stated to me personally that they feel alone, overloaded, and ignored. North Wales wholeheartedly supports resolution 26, and we believe that officer welfare should be addressed as a priority. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Rebekah.

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
President, conference, standing up here as officers' rep for Norfolk. As a serving group manager, this motion speaks to something I've seen firsthand repeatedly over my 38 years in the fire and rescue service. When the public see a major incident, they rightly focus on the crews on the ground, the firefighters committing themselves

in difficult, dangerous, and traumatic circumstances. But behind every significant incident, there are also officers carrying an enormous and often unseen burden. Following a fatal fire, a firefighter injury, a prolonged rescue, or a major multi-agency incident, the work does not stop when the last appliance leaves the scene. In many cases, it's only just beginning. Flexi-duty officers become the link between operational command, senior leadership teams, grieving families, partner agencies, welfare support, investigations, the media, and our own crews who are still trying to process what they have witnessed. And we do this whilst maintaining day-to-day operational cover, staffing resilience, performance demands, prevention work, training commitments, meetings, reports, and endless administrative pressures.

The reality is many officers carry these responsibilities in isolation. The phone keeps ringing, the emails keep coming, the workload continues to build, and the expectation is that we simply absorb it, but we are not machines. We are human beings carrying trauma, responsibility, and accountability simultaneously.

Conference, there is a dangerous culture within parts of the modern fire and rescue service where workload pressure has become normalised. Being exhausted is seen as a commitment. Being permanently available is seen as leadership. Working excessive hours is treated as dedication rather than a warning sign.

That is not sustainable, and more importantly, it is not safe. Because when officers are mentally exhausted, emotionally drained, and overloaded with responsibility, this does not just impact welfare, it impacts operational decision-making, risk management, and ultimately firefighter public safety. I'm going to cut a bit out of this because my light's changed.

I also strongly support the adoption of the Health and Safety Executive guidance, Tackling Work Related Stress. This crucially gives us something important, a structured evidence-based framework to challenge unhealthy workloads and organisational cultures before people break. Conference, supporting this motion is not about lowering standards. It is about protecting the people who carry enormous responsibility on behalf of our service and our communities. So I urge conference to support this motion, not just for officers today, but for the future health, safety, and resilience of our fire and rescue service. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Alan.

STEVE MARTIN (Cumbria)**:**
President, conference, if I was more switched on, I'd have put an amendment into this. I think we've missed a trick. Like, there's other people who return straight home after jobs, and that's the on-call duty system or retained now. We had a traumatic job last year in Cumbria where an SM had to go back home himself. Two dead kids, two dead parents, caused by somebody driving the wrong way down the motorway. It took the FBU to step in to make sure he was all right. We also had retained crews who their words were, they picked the dead people out the car and then had to serve bread in Morrisons. They go straight back to work. They don't get the luxury that we get on station. So I would ask the EC to add in anyone on the on-call duty system as well into this as a late amendment, if possible. Also, anyone who responds to a pager.

THE PRESIDENT:
I'll get the national officer to respond to that one. Yep. Cheers, Steve. *Applause*

HAYLEIGH MARKS TALABIS (Northamptonshire)**:**
President, conference, I wasn't going to get up and speak on this one because I'm not a flexi-duty officer, and I fully appreciate the challenge of traveling home from jobs. But at the back end of 2024 into 2025, I probably had the worst six months of my career. We had some serious incidents in Northamptonshire, and we supported colleagues over the border.

I did so much work alone, and if it wasn't for the support of my flexi-duty officers in service and members, I probably would've left service. I worked so much alone. I supported my four watches in control. I listened to all the fire calls. I attended all the debriefs. I supported the crews. I did so much work, and I did it all solo, and there was no welfare

for me at all. And that's just the way it is for all officers, I think. We are just left to get on with our day jobs, and I worked late. I came in early. I did it all. But I didn't have to get in a car and go out to jobs early in the morning. I didn't have to go out and see what I saw on station. So I wasn't going to get up and speak, but then I heard everything the officers have said, and I just wanted to get up and just express that solidarity that we all do need to just be together on this and support each other because we are all going through the same thing.
So yeah, Northamptonshire supports this. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Hayleigh. Adam, are you going to respond to that point?

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Yeah. Thank you, president. Apologies, Steve and Cumbria. I couldn't respond immediately. I had to turn around and get the nod of approval from every executive council member. But yes, we do approve your recommendation to include the retained, firefighters in this resolution. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Adam. I now put resolution 26 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Conference, I'm now going to take the following two resolutions in the same debate. They can both carry together. That's resolution 28, National Standards Of Occupational Health Provision, moved by Northern Ireland, the EC support. And also resolution 33, Workplace Stress Risk Assessments from Cambridgeshire with an amendment from B&EMM. The EC are supporting both the resolution and the amendment. So first of all, resolution 28, National Standards Of Occupational Health moved by Northern Ireland.

Resolution 28 NATIONAL STANDARDS OF OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH PROVISION
Conference is concerned about the varying standards of Occupational Health provision throughout UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs).

Conference understands that employers have a duty of care and should ensure consistent and suitable Occupational Health provision across all UKFRSs, resulting in an improvement in and safeguarding of our members` mental health and wellbeing.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to raise with the national employers, that a consistent best practice and fit for purpose National standard of Occupational Health provision should be applied across all UKFRSs

NORTHERN IRELAND

JAKE DRINKWATER (Northern Ireland)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 28, national standards of occupational health provision.
Conference, region 2 are concerned about the lack of standardisation in occupational health provision in UK fire service. A few members work in an occupation that routinely puts them in harm's way, dealing with incidents and seeing things that most people never see in their lifetime, never mind on a weekly or sometimes a daily basis.

The physical demands our work puts on our bodies, including muscular skeletal injuries, broken bones, is a real hazard for all members. Alongside that is the impact on mental health that prolonged exposure to incidents has on firefighters, firefighters' control, officers, and our retained members. This leaves as many scars as physical injuries and has a very real effect on members.

The provision of care should be the same standard across all UK services, and the quality of this care not left to individual services to dictate. Region 2 asks that the EC through the NJC start work to standardise occupational health provision throughout the UK fire and rescue services. The incidents we attend and the impact they have are exactly the same no matter which service or brigade we serve in.

Our support from our occupational health when we need it should also be the same and not a lottery. Please support. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jake. Does that have a seconder?

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Amendment.

THE PRESIDENT:
Pardon? Amendment? Not yet.

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Oh, no, it's 26. 33. Are we not there?

THE PRESIDENT:
No, not yet. Thanks for trying to save time, Kasey. I know you're getting tired, and you need feeding and all that. Right. So we're still on resolution 28. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you.

Right, I now call resolution 33, Workplace Stress Risk Assessment moved by Cambridgeshire.

Resolution 33 WORKPLACE STRESS RISK ASSESSMENT
Conference expresses concern that while the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has published practical guidance for employers to manage work related stress, these are often overlooked or not even considered in UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs). The pressures associated with fire and rescue service work, including shift working, operational demands and workplace pressures can negatively affect wellbeing if not properly assessed and managed.

Conference acknowledges that while some UKFRSs have included these requirements in guidance documents or policies, these stress risk assessments may not always be applied in a consistent and meaningful way across all roles.

Conference further notes that the HSE encourages employers to use the Management Standards as the framework for stress risk assessment. These Standards help identify 6 primary causes of work related stress which are recognised as the main factors that can cause stress if not properly controlled.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to address the systemic failure of UKFRSs to carry out role-based stress risk assessments across all roles. The EC is tasked with:
- ***raise through the National Joint Council, the need for employers to assess and manage the risk of work-related stress in line with the HSE Management Standards***
- ***campaign for role-based and activity specific stress risk assessments where appropriate, reflecting the particular pressures faced by fire and rescue service workers in all roles***
- ***ensuring these assessments are done in consultation with employees, and involving them***
- ***supporting the ongoing mental and physical health of members through effective stress risk management.***

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

AMENDMENT
Add bullet point after 4th bullet point
- ***'stress risk assessments should also consider the impact of discrimination, workplace isolation, and culture pressures where relevant, recognising these as contributing factors to workplace stress'***

B&EMM

MARK HARRISS (Cambridgeshire)**:**
Thank you. President, conference, moving resolution 33, workplace stress risk assessments. Conference, we all know what stress is in our profession. We experience it ourselves, and we see it in our colleagues. For our firefighters in control, it could be after that third horrific call in a row where there's been no break because there's crewing shortages or staffing shortages. For our officers, it could be turning up first on scene, met immediately by screaming families begging for reassurance when you know that the resources just aren't there. I think that a better example is sort of given by my comrade from the ONC in Norfolk. For frontline RDS and wholetime crews, it could be the trauma, could be the shift patterns, could be the constant expectation to go above and beyond at every job, even when you're running on fumes.

Now, as a sector, we risk assess an awful lot of stuff, including individual pieces of equipment that we use for our jobs, but far too often, we don't look at the stress that comes with doing the job itself. Now, the good news is the Health and Safety Executive have already told our employers what they should be doing. But across the UK fire and rescue services, stress risk assessments are hit and miss and sometimes not even happening at all, and our members deserve better than that. Conference, Cambridgeshire welcomes and supports the amendment from our B&EMM section and thanks them for raising it because stress doesn't land the same on everyone.

If someone is feeling isolated on their watch or workplace or trying to fit into a culture that wasn't built with them in mind, that is also stress. It affects people's health just as much as doing the job does, and it needs to be recognised properly. So this resolution with the amendment is about looking after the people who look after everyone else. It's simple, it's fair, and it's what we deserve. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Mark. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. B&EMM to move the amendment.

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Yes. Am I at the right bit?

THE PRESIDENT:
You're at the right bit.

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
President, conference, we support the intent of resolution 33 in recognising workplace stress as a key issue. However, we do believe the current wording is a little bit too narrow and does not fully reflect the lived experience of all its members. So we are proposing that the additional wording be added in. This would ensure a more inclusive, realistic, and effective approach to managing workplace stress. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kasey. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate.
A delegation can only speak once in a debate. No, you can only have one speaker from a delegation in a debate. Sorry. Okay, next one.

JAMES SALT (NRC)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of 28 and 33. Just quickly wanted to give a few examples of workplace related stresses and wellbeing challenges unique to the RDS role and thanks to the colleague earlier that came up and spoke on the previous resolution.

Just an opportunity for me to give a few other examples and the reason why we support these resolutions. So for retained firefighters, we suffer from sleep deprivation. Most RDS staff are fitting hours of cover in, in between their primary employment, often on call while asleep in between shifts at the job that pays their mortgage, so there's little to no time to catch up on sleep during busy periods.

Work-life balance is more challenging as we have two lots of strict work commitments to juggle. Most people have second jobs and part-time jobs because they need the money. A lot of secondary part-time roles are on a

casual basis, but for myself and many others, as a wholetime firefighter whose second job is RDS this secondary employment is actually more restrictive on my life than my primary employment.

This can put huge pressure on family life, subsequent day-to-day stresses. Additional pressures from working in our own community, especially if outcomes from incidents are not positive. There's no escape from the jobs. We can be in and out of the station on a daily basis, and we're living in and around the areas where we have been working.

There's less opportunities for decompression and group reflection following traumatic incidents due to not being on shift. We're likely to know individuals and/or families of people affected by traumatic incidents that we've attended, and also, we are and we've all experienced being asked about such incidents when we're out and about in our local communities.

There's more pressure in terms of the wide range of skills, increasing incident types that we attend with only two hours per week training and also managing this around family life and a primary employment. Often standalone retained stations have said that they are in a little bit of their own bubble and can feel isolated from other broader support within their own brigades. So for these reasons, conference, we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. Anybody else? No. Right, we're now going to go to the vote. I now put resolution 28 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment to resolution 33 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 33 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right. Conference, just in order to clarify a point and stop our standing orders committee probably having kittens. I know, Steve, you asked for an amendment from the rostrum when you were speaking on it. That is not how we can do business. We can't accept amendments so although the national officer and the EC did say we will look at it, explore it, conference, don't start thinking you can amend from the rostrum. So I know you'll try anything, but we can't do that. I know. Sorry, but that's how it is. Right, I now call paragraph C7. Yep.

LUKE FOWLER (Oxfordshire)**:**
President, conference, speaking on Para C7. As we approach the anniversary of the tragedy at Bicester Motion tomorrow, where we lost sister Jennie Logan and brother Martyn Sadler, I want to take a moment to reflect on that loss and the impact that it continues to have on so many people. I wish to take this opportunity to thank conference for the continued solidarity shown to everyone affected.

It has meant a great deal to our members, to our friends and families of those we lost, and to all of those still dealing with the consequences of that terrible incident. The messages of condolence and support from every corner of our national union have been deeply appreciated, and they have reminded us all of the strength and compassion that exists within the unity of the FBU.

On behalf of Oxfordshire Fire Brigades Union, I want to place on record our sincere gratitude. It would also be wrong of me to not recognise the tireless work of our officials, particularly our brigade secretary, John Shuker, and our brigade chair, Lee Newport, in responding to this tragedy. They've carried the pain of this loss alongside our members while continuing to provide support with selflessness, professionalism, humanity that define the very best of our union.

I would also like to extend our sincere thanks to all the other officials who offered to support both on the evening itself and in the difficult period that followed, whose commitment and care and solidarity have been invaluable throughout. Thank you, conference. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Luke. I now call Para C8. Para C9. I now call resolution 35, Role Appropriate Personal Protective Equipment, PPE, moved by Berkshire. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 35, ROLE APPROPRIATE PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT (PPE)
Conference recognises that structural firefighting PPE is designed to provide high levels of thermal protection for breathing apparatus (BA) operations in fire conditions.

Conference further recognises that the majority of incidents attended by fire and rescue services are non-fire incidents, including road traffic collisions, flooding and other special service calls.

Conference notes the increasing frequency of heatwaves and wildfire incidents in the UK, as identified by national bodies such as the UK Climate Change Committee and the Met Office.

Conference is aware of the additional physiological strain placed on firefighters operating in extreme temperatures.

Conference is concerned that in many services the same structural firefighting PPE is routinely worn for all incidents, regardless of risk, including by personnel undertaking non-BA roles such as incident command, entry control, pump operation, casualty care and technical rescue.

Conference believes that the routine use of structural firefighting PPE for non-fire and non-BA activity:
- ***increases the risk of heat stress and associated cardiovascular and physiological strain***
- ***restricts movement and operational effectiveness***
- ***may contribute unnecessarily to contaminant exposure***
- ***can make operational tasks more difficult for some member groups due to weight, bulk and thermal burden.***

Conference recognises that forthcoming national PPE frameworks include provision for technical rescue or role-specific PPE designed to provide appropriate protection while improving mobility, comfort and heat management.

Conference believes that financial pressures must not be used as justification for failing to provide PPE that is appropriate to the role being undertaken and which minimises avoidable health risks.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***develop and adopt a national position in favour of role-appropriate PPE for different operational activities***
- ***engage with the employers' side of the National Joint Council and relevant national bodies to promote the provision of technical rescue or equivalent PPE for non-BA roles and non-fire incidents***
- ***promote the principle that all PPE procurement must ensure suitability for the full diversity of the workforce***
- ***integrate this work with the Fire Brigades Union existing campaigns on contaminants, cancer prevention and equality.***

BERKSHIRE

JAMES HUNT (Berkshire)**:**
President, conference, I want to start with a simple question. When you arrive at a road traffic collision in the peak of summer with no fire, no smoke, and you're helping to free a casualty, managing traffic, or acting as an incident commander, what are you wearing? In many services across the country, the answer is structural firefighting PPE designed for BA operations in fire conditions. Kit that protects us because it keeps the fire out, but also keeps the body heat in. Conference, the world our members are working in is changing. The UK Climate Change Committee and the Met Office have both identified the increasing frequency and severity of heatwaves in the country.

We're attending more wildfire incidents; we are working in temperatures that previous generations did not have to plan for and doing it in many cases in PPE that was never designed with those conditions in mind. We know the

cardiovascular and the physiological strain that comes with wearing structural PPE. In fire conditions with BA on, that's an accepted part of the job. The protection it provides is essential.

But at a flood incident, at a technical rescue, providing any number of incident command roles in 30-degree heat, that burden becomes an avoidable risk, one that does not affect all of our members equally. For smaller statured firefighters or for those managing health conditions, that burden is even more disproportionately felt. Lighter and more mobile role-appropriate PPE is not just a health and safety matter; it's also an equality matter There's also a further dimension to this. We know that one of the pathways by which our members are exposed to carcinogenic contaminants is through this PPE, which absorbs combustion products on the fire ground that our laundry processes are unlikely to ever fully remove. And that's to say nothing of the PFAS that we know this kit is made with.

Role appropriate PPE for the non-fire incidents is not just about heat stress and mobility or quality, it also means fewer occasions where contaminated PFAS-containing kit must be worn when it does not need to be, and therefore fewer unnecessary exposures for our members. Conference, national PPE frameworks will soon include provision for technical rescue or role-specific PPE. The question is whether our members will actually get it. Financial pressures cannot be used as a justification for failing to provide our members with the right PPE for the right task, and it must not become a postcode lottery for our members of whether their service is willing to spend the money.

This resolution asks that the executive council develops a national position in favour of role-appropriate PPE, engages with the NJC to push for its provision, ensures that all PPE procurement reflects the full diversity of our workforce, and that they connect this work with our existing DECON and equality campaigns. Conference, PPE is not uniform. Please support the resolution I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. Can I have a second there? Are you seconding?

GEMMA BETTS (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, I've shortened my speech as best I can because lots of it has been covered already. So female trans, and non-binary along – we support, sorry, I've skipped that bit.

THE PRESIDENT:
You're seconding it?

GEMMA BETTS (LGBT+)**:**
Female trans and non-binary, along with anyone else not considered the standard firefighter body, already face anxiety over PPE provisions not being right for them. And as the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, along with the PPE Work Regs 1992 state, this is a legal responsibility for the employer to provide. As the LGBT+ section, we want to emphasise the importance of thorough PPE testing on different sexed mannequins and across a wide range of bodies.

You may have noticed the terminology I used here. Sex-differentiated testing is the correct approach, and not gender, because sex relates to physiological characteristics and body composition, whereas gender is a social construct. We need to move away from the terminology of gendered PPE and move to differentiated by sex.

Evidence from PPE testing has shown that structural firefighting gear requires different air pocket spacing and fit, depending on the body of the person wearing it. Poorly fitting PPE is not just uncomfortable. The resolution is clear in its risks it causes, and this can disproportionately affect women, trans members, non-binary members, and anyone else whose body does not match the assumptions built into traditional PPE.

Conference, every firefighter deserves PPE that fits properly, protects properly, and reflects the full diversity of our workforce. We urge you to support this motion. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks Gemma. Yep

KATIE ALLENBY (NWC)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 35. Following discussions, we've decided to withdraw our amendment regarding the third bullet point in the last paragraph. This is due to not all PPE being differentiated by sex, such as BA face masks.

However, we want to put on record that where there is sex-specific PPE available, it should be the standard. The FBU fought to get sex-specific firefighting PPE following the death of Fleur Lombard in 1996, and 30 years later, the national women's committee are adamant this should remain the standard, with all firefighting kit being tested on both the Ralph and Sophie mannequins. Role-appropriate PPE should not be controversial. The national women's committee supports this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Katie. Right, I now put resolution 35 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para C10, para C11. We're now moving on to Section D, Fire and Rescue Service Policy, para D1. I now call resolution 38, Productivity Recording Systems, moved by Tyne and Wear.
The EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 38 PRODUCTIVITY RECORDING SYSTEMS
Conference notes our terms and conditions are once again under attack, this time in the form of 'productivity', or productivity targets. Apps or other recording systems are being introduced into some fire services and members are being instructed to account for their time and actions.

Conference recognises this as another insult to our members and a tactic to attack our terms and conditions while they are under negotiation.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to investigate the practice of recording time in the name of productivity and, if necessary, challenge this practice through our structures. Work should start immediately following Conference and progress should be reported back to members no later than the closing of Conference 2027.

TYNE AND WEAR

MATT LAIDLER (Tyne and Wear)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 38, productivity recording systems. Many of us here today will be aware that an emerging tactic used by our employers to chip away at our working conditions and practices is coming under the guise of productivity.

There's many slightly different definitions of productivity, but in short, it refers to how much output can be produced within a given set of inputs. Productivity increases when output is increased with the same amount of input or less. It is used as a rating of efficiency. Fire and rescue services are now introducing productivity targets and apps and other trackers and recording systems, and our members are being instructed to account for their time and actions.

Conference, this is an insult to our members. Recording time in the name of productivity does not belong in our industry. It has no place in our profession. We don't produce goods or products. We are firefighters. We exist to respond for the public when they phone 999 in dire need of our help. You cannot put a rating of efficiency on saving a life.

The daily positive life-saving impact we have in our communities is not measurable or quantifiable in this manner. So why is it being introduced in the fire and rescue service? It boils down to this. Measuring productivity and accounting for our time is about, yet again, the employers wanting more from our members for less. Conference, I say we're already doing our fair share of more for less, and we don't need to account for our time every shift in 15-minute increments on an app to prove it. We're responding to more and a wider range of incidents now than we have for years, with less funding, with less fire stations, less fire engines, staffed with less firefighters who are, in real terms, on less money.

We believe this productivity measuring model started by government but is being pushed and supported by the NFCC and the HMI and is being imposed by fire chiefs.

Conference, we are concerned that productivity targets and tracking practices are a strategy by the above named that is undermining our ongoing negotiations on pay, pay reform, and our terms and conditions. We must be alive to this and challenge it. And yes, I know the irony of the HMI calling on our members to justify ourselves and our work. Let's be honest, if any player in the fire sector should be called upon to justify themselves, it's the HMI.

We therefore instruct the EC to investigate the practice of recording time in the name of productivity and, if necessary, challenge this practice through our structures. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Matt. Does that have a seconder? Oh, yep. Go ahead.

GUY LAWES (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, seconding the motion from Tyne and Wear. MHCLG's guidance with regards to increasing productivity and efficiency, 3% and 2% year on year, is all well and good unless you already produce to a high standard. We are a brigade that has aimed for a top end of target acquisition with regards to community safety activities, and, in some league table, we're very near the top.

The increases that are required with regards to productivity from the governmental level down decrease our operational training time. They decrease our theoretical training time. The conflict between productivity and operational readiness is very, very clear. It's something that we all need to be aware of because the more that you attempt to produce based on these invented targets, the less safe we are all going to be. In addition to this, it's worth the room knowing that Durham are currently trialling an AI productivity planning application. So now AI tells us how to be productive. It tells us what time of the day we should do things, and it tells us how much of the things we should be doing at that time. We are currently resisting it forcefully. Durham seconds. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Guy. That's open for debate. Anybody?

OLLIE BALDAM (NRC)**:**
Conference, president, firefighters already work in highly accountable environments. We train, we respond, we maintain equipment, and we carry out prevention and protection work. We remain operationally ready for incidents that can occur at any moment. Much of what we do cannot be reduced to a spreadsheet or a performance dashboard.

Retained firefighters already balance service commitments alongside primary employment, family responsibilities, and community life. Many RDS members provide significant availability, attend training, and complete station duties, maintaining competence and responding to incidents, often with limited time and flexibility compared to our wholetime colleagues.

Introducing these productivity monitoring systems into the RDS environment risks fundamentally misunderstanding how the retained availability works. You cannot meaningfully measure the value of a retained firefighter by minutes logged on an app or visible activity within a station. The value of RDS is readiness, commitment, and the response capability. A retained firefighter can spend hours remaining available to protect their community without a single incident occurring. Please support. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ollie. I now put resolution 38 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Last one for today, I now call resolution 41, Use Of Long-Term Acting-Up Arrangements, moved by Lancashire. EC are giving qualified support. Lancashire. Could shout formally, Kev. I'm kidding. I'm kidding.

Resolution 41 USE OF LONG-TERM ACTING-UP ARRANGEMENTS
Conference notes that UK Fire and Rescue Services increasingly rely on long-term acting up arrangements to fill vacancies across operational roles.

Conference is concerned that prolonged acting up creates instability, uncertainty and stress for staff, as vacancies cascade through roles.

Conference believes that sustained reliance on acting up undermines workforce planning, morale and wellbeing and should not be used as a substitute for proper recruitment and promotion processes.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to campaign for time limits on the use of long-term acting up arrangements, to press employers to fill substantive vacancies in a timely manner.

LANCASHIRE

KEV WILKIE (Lancashire)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 41, use of long-term acting up arrangements. Conference, acting up arrangements have a place within the fire and rescue service. They can provide short-term cover, operational flexibility, and development opportunities for members seeking progression. That is exactly what it is intended to be, short term.

What we are increasingly seeing across the UK fire and rescue service is employers rely on acting up arrangements, not as a temporary solution, but as a long-term staffing model. Members can find themselves in an acting up position not for months but for years. This problem cascades throughout the service. It's like purchasing a house with a record-breaking chain. A station manager acts up as a group manager role. A watch manager acts up as a station manager role. A crew manager acts up as a watch manager role. A firefighter acts up as a crew manager role. Eventually, fire and rescue services are operating in a constant state of uncertainty.

This is not good workplace planning, and it is not fair on our members. Members who act up for prolonged periods are often left carrying out additional responsibilities without certainty, without transparency, without any clear timescale for substantive recruitment. It leaves our members feeling trapped in limbo, expected to perform the role, but without the security of actually holding it. Many feel they have a foot in two camps, their substantive watch and their acting up watch, knowing that at any moment they can revert back. That can impact committed annual leave, personal commitments and family life. That creates stress, affects morale and has financial implications.

Conference, this resolution is not opposed to acting up itself. This resolution respects that temporary arrangements will sometimes be necessary. What we oppose is the normalisation of temporary arrangements becoming permanent practice, because when employers rely on acting up, they avoid dealing with the real issue, properly filling vacancies through fair and timely promotion processes.

Limits on long-term acting up arrangements would create accountability. They would force employers to properly recruit, properly plan, and properly support their workforce. And ultimately, conference, that benefits not only our members but the service we provide the public. Lancashire asks conference to support resolution 41. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kev. Seconder?

MATTHEW BLACK (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, my section second this resolution. On paper, my substantive role is a firefighter on blue watch. However, for over a year, I've spent time acting up as a crew manager on red, and now I'm acting up as a crew manager on white at a different station.

Don't worry, it's not a quiz on this. I know the president wants to wrap up conference. I'm just making the point that my position is not secure. It's a rolling twenty-eight-day temporary arrangement, and any point I could be told I'm

going back to blue watch as a firefighter. I want to do my crew manager role, and I'm happy to do it, but the long-term temporary arrangements come with real consequences.

I'm a father of two, but my family life becomes difficult to plan. Annual leave feels temporary, commitments never feel hundred percent secure, and you're constantly living with uncertainty about where you're working. Instability doesn't just affect the firefighter; it affects the family. If brigades are relying on rolling out temporary contracts for months and years, then this is not workforce planning, it's plugging gaps.

Members deserve proper recruitment process, stability, and certainty. Conference, we second this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Matthew. That's open for debate. Yep.

STEVE MATTISON (Cumbria)**:**
I do it every year. Conference, president, I've lost where I am. I'm just going to use this to touch on a resolution that –

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate, can you say your name?

STEVE MATTISON (Cumbria)**:**
I'm just going to touch on a resolution that I submitted five minutes late that was rejected, yet we seem to start five minutes late as a minimum every time we come back.

So we have actually lost an hour and a half in two days. *Applause* So I value my position as a brigade secretary.

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate. Can you move it on?

STEVE MATTISON (Cumbria)**:**
Just to touch on what Brother Wilkie said there. Our resolution stated there's two brigades in this room now. We share the same common denominator. We have retained that come in and act up on temporary contracts to crew manager, and they don't have access to the fire service pension. So we want to see an end to the practice of long-term acting up, because we've got managers turning out that have no access to the pension, no compensation scheme. They get put in the LGPS.

So I just want to say we support that, and please be back on time for conference. That's all. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. AGS?

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, this qualification, I'm afraid, conference, is extremely long and very detailed. It's not really. First, Kev, Matt, thanks for commenting on this resolution. It's certainly a really important one. It's one of those things we've seen that's slowly becoming more and more of an issue in the fire and rescue service.

The qualification is fairly minor actually and that is that where there are vacancies sometimes, they're described as vacancies, but they're because of long-term absences. Sometimes that could be from maternity provisions, but it could equally be where we've got comrades in this room on long-term trade union release arrangements.

For those, we don't believe they are substantive vacancies, but I think your motion covers that to a point. So maybe it's applying a greater amount of clarity to the debate for what we'll look to achieve in line with the motion. But again, Lancashire, thank you very much for bringing it. That is the end of this, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ben. Right, I now put resolution 41 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, that concludes today's business. I've just got a reminder, the fringe Palestine Solidarity 6.15 in the Tiered Lecture Theatre in the Scarman. It's got speakers from PSC, Earshot and Forensic Architecture and will give an overview of the investigation into the incident in March 2025, in which Israeli forces targeted and killed 15 emergency workers, including firefighters, in an attack in which some of the victims were shot execution style at close range. Hear first-hand from the people who carried out the investigation and discuss what trade unionists can do to support that.

So get into that one. And then conference, just before you all dash out, I have got an update on Brother Geoff Miller. He's now back. He does need to go get checked out locally when he gets home. It wasn't a heart attack, I've got in brackets, so thankful for that. He's asked too can I pass the thanks on to the standing orders committee, the AGS, and Duncan Stewart-Ball, who stayed with him while he was at the hospital.

So thankfully, Geoff seems to be on the mend and hopefully he'll get checked out and everything will be all right.

Conference, thank you very much for your efforts today. You've been brilliant today. Thank you. See you tomorrow morning, bright and breezy. And Steve, if you've heard the saying, "Do as I say, not as I do." *Applause*

Conference adjourned

MORNING SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, can you start taking your seats, please? Conference, take your seats, please
Morning, conference. How we all feeling? Fine? Fresh? I never was when I was a delegate. Since been doing this one, I'm feeling fine and fresh. Right, thank you. I now call the chair of standing orders to give his report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Morning conference. Conference, hopefully you've all checked out of your respective hotels. However, if you haven't, can you please take care of that at the break? Can you please turn to your delegates list? So Region 4, West Yorkshire, remove Matthew Green and replace with Martyn Bairstow. Region 7, Warwickshire, remove Matt Hibbert and Adam Barnes and replace with Neil Stuart and Will Maddern. Region 8, Mid and West Wales, remove Dave Ricketts and replace with Chris Eyton-Jones. In Region 10, London, remove Brian Flanagan and replace with Sam Trowsdale.

So conference, yesterday afternoon's election to standing orders has concluded, and I am pleased to inform you that there was a clear winner. There were three names put forward. Rebecca Savin added further to her tally from the first election – and came third with two extra votes. *Applause*

Somehow, I came second with nine votes. *Applause* which is either very flattering or very worrying. Let's go with flattering on that one.

And the outright winner was Stephen Hanley from Northumberland with 28 votes. So can we have a round of applause? *Applause*

So wherever you are on the conference floor, Stephen, come and see us at the break and we'll introduce you to the gang.

So, conference, on a more serious note, in relation to the remaining business of conference, the standing orders committee have some concerns about completing all of the business before conference finish time of 5.15 today.

We're contracted with Warwick University to finish at 5.15. There's no going past that. So for your information, we currently have 26 resolutions left, three emergency resolutions, one EC policy statement, and two guest speakers. So let's be clear. I'm not stepping down this year as the only chair of standing orders where conference doesn't complete its business.

So initially, we will be restricting speaker times by one minute. So movers will have six minutes instead of seven, seconders four minutes instead of five, and each subsequent speaker two minutes instead of three, and the same will apply for moving amendments, etc. To be fair, guest speakers, of which there are two, will be restricted to 15 minutes and 20 minutes instead of 20 minutes and 30 minutes respectively, and the general secretary to 15 minutes instead of 20 minutes to move the EC policy statement.

Speakers' times will be constantly under review and may be subject to further reductions via subsequent standing orders reports, depending on the speed at which business is progressing. So please be conscious of this when speaking on paragraphs, etc. However, for perspective, what I would say is you moved 11 resolutions in approximately 90 minutes in the last session yesterday, so this is doable.

Conference, last year a card vote was called, and some of you may recall, on the very last resolution on the final day of conference, and it became apparent that six brigades had left conference to return home without informing standing orders. Leaving aside the implications that the six brigades leaving had on the outcome of the resolution, and it did have an influence, I'm sure you'll be conscious from both a fire and a health and safety perspective that it is far from ideal that in the event of an emergency people we have every reason to believe are in the building are actually on the train on the way home.

So can I ask conference that any delegation that is leaving conference early, and the mood music I'm hearing is that there is that you come to standing orders and let us know. To also assist with getting through the remaining business, lunch today will be a packed lunch, and depending upon where we are with business, the president may ask for a suspension of standing Order 16 to reduce the duration and move on with business/resolutions. But we'll keep you informed on that. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. Is that report agreed? *Agreed* Thank you. Conference, it's exactly one year ago today we saw the tragic events unfold in Bicester where we lost two of our members, sister Jennie Logan and brother Martyn Sadler. On Wednesday, we remembered both of them in our obituary section and in the minute's silence. And yesterday, Luke paid tribute to both of them and to all of those who have assisted in the aftermath of that tragedy.

I'd like to pass on the thanks of the national union to all of those who carry out that important work in the serious accident investigation because ultimately, we want to learn lessons to avoid any other firefighters' families going through what Martyn and Jennie's family went through a year ago.

Conference, as we've stated we've already paid our respects on Wednesday in our obituary section, but I thought whilst we were all here today, it's important that we do acknowledge that one-year anniversary and let Jennie and Martyn's family know they are still in all of our thoughts. Thank you.

Conference, I also updated you yesterday on Brother Geoff Miller, who unfortunately felt unwell again last night after he come back here. So as a precaution, he's now returned back to hospital, and he's under their care at the minute. We wish Geoff all the best.

Conference, as you've just heard from the chair of standing orders, we have 26 resolutions, one EC policy statement, three emergency resolutions, and two guest speakers to get through. So as I said yesterday, please be disciplined in your contributions. We are having to reduce speakers' times as Phil has outlined so that we can hear all of the resolutions. So, as I say, stick to those times rigidly because we will be. I also want to say, please, we shouldn't be vacating conference early. It's in the standing orders. You should be here until quarter past five. It's not fair on those that get put back to the end of the last afternoon that they're speaking to a half-empty conference hall. So please show conference that respect and not take off early.

I've got a couple of last things. There was a raffle in the shop. General secretary, if you want to pick two tickets out. First prize is a £25 voucher to spend at the shop, and by the way, they are packing up after morning tea break, so you'll have to go there quick and spend your voucher. And you also get, woo, a book and it's got a fire hose cover, and it has been decontaminated, I can assure you. So the first number is 46. Anybody? Yeah. Yep, come forward. Quick. *Applause*

There is one thing about these books, they really do smell. Come on up. And the second prize is 36. *Applause* So if you go to the shop – Yeah and just say, "I won the raffle," and they'll tell you where the £25 to spend is. That's great. That's worth more than the voucher, mate. Cheers. Thank you. 36 anybody? No? Redraw Steve, 36. Yeah. Well, if it's you, Tam, sorry. Too late. 172. Redraw. I'm going to keep going till we get to your number. We have a winner. *Applause* I'm going to have to pretend I'm presenting you a voucher now. Can you just sort of tell people a little bit about that after 2026?

Right, thanks everybody. So that is the raffle completed. One last thing before we crack on, I've got to give some sincere apologies to Dwight. Yesterday, obviously I combined, two resolutions in a debate, which means that the speaker can only speak once. Kasey got up quick like a coiled spring as usual, moved her amendment, and I had to cut Dwight back.

So sorry, Dwight, on that. I do apologise. Right, I'm going to shut up as we're wasting valuable time. So we're now moving on to Section K, organising and membership, Para K1. I now call executive council policy statement Independent, United and Strong moved by the gen sec.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
President, conference, in moving this executive council policy statement, I want to start with where we were last year. Conference will remember the policy the executive council brought in 2025, unity and strength in the workplace. At that conference, my first as general secretary, I said there were no easy answers or quick solutions. I said that rebuilding our union could not be done by words alone, nor by documents, nor by wishing for change, but by organising, by engagement, and by action. And I said that if we were serious about putting the Fire Brigades Union back where it belongs, in the workplace and focused on our members, then we would have to end the culture and make decisions, sometimes difficult ones, and then commit to seeing them through.

Conference, over the past 12 months, that is exactly what we have done. Not talked, not delayed, but acted. And we took that commitment, and through a driven programme of engagement, listening, and honest reflection, turned it into a programme of work across the whole of our union. Conference, this was a serious review. Not cosmetic, not superficial, but a root and branch look at how we operate, how we make decisions, how we communicate, and ultimately, how we serve our members. But let's be honest, this work has not always been easy. It has required us to challenge how things have been done. It has required change, and it has required investment.

But what we have done, is we've done it in the right way, through our democratic structures, through engagement with officials, through the executive council, and always with one purpose in mind: to build a stronger, more collective, and more member-focused Fire Brigades Union. Conference, this policy statement sets out where that work has taken us and where we go next. It's about modernising our union, strengthening our structures, and making sure that we, as a union, are fit for the challenges ahead.

Because the reality is this: the world around us is changing at a pace never encountered by previous generations. Technology is changing how we work and how we communicate. Politics has ruptured under the pressure of popularism and the super-rich. The fire and rescue service, already cut to the bone, remains under continued pressure. Pay, conditions, safety, all remain under attack. And at the same time, we're seeing a strategy of division generated by forces that seek to set worker against worker, weakening trade unions and undermining the unity the working class depends on.

So, conference, standing still is not an option. If we do not adapt, we fall behind. If we do not organise, we will be weakened. If we do not fight, we will lose.

So what have we achieved so far? Well, we have modernised how we communicate, moving away from ridiculously outdated systems and opening up new forums where our members can access information in a format and at a pace which makes it relevant but also effective. We've introduced new technology and electronic systems to improve transparency and make our union much more efficient and also secure. We're introducing electronic balloting, something called for from this conference previously, widening participation and making it easier for members to engage in the democratic structures and life of our union.

We are strengthening financial accountability and financial transparency, making sure that every pound, every penny that is spent is justified, and that every pound and penny that is spent delivers for our members. We're transforming and building on our excellent education programme, building on the past but with a new focus on providing our officials, you, with the training and skills that have been called upon that you need to represent members in the workplace. And we will make this a priority because a modern union needs trained, confident, capable reps at every level to take on the fights that we have. And crucially, we're investing in a programme of on-the-ground organising, targeted recruitment, support for brigade organisers, a focus on the retained duty system, building our density in every region, every brigade, and every branch. Being ballot ready.

We've seen being ballot ready in Oxfordshire, it can work and it can win. We're going to make sure a recognition that the best organising does not come from the top down, but by providing support to officials already in place. Conference, this policy is about building our power, real power, workplace power, collective power.

But alongside all of that, we're strengthening our democracy and trying to build true collectivism across our structures. This means addressing the running sore of sections being absent from the executive council. The

previous removal of sectional voices from the executive council has for too long created division and ongoing resentment in our union.

We can no longer allow the perception that our sections are not full, valuable part of our structures of the union. This is why we are acting on conference policy regarding the equality sections and recommending a clear pathway to reinstate previously held equality executive council seats, moving towards embedding them properly within our union, making clear that equality is not an add-on. It is central to who we are.

We will also engage with our trade sections, working with them at their pace to explore how best to strengthen their voice at the executive council and within our union. Because conference, be clear about this, an injury to one is an injury to all, and we mean it. We're also sharpening how we operate.

Clearer roles, better reporting, faster responses to issues affecting jobs, safety, and conditions. And for the first time, ensuring that decisions on political funding reflect the views of our members at a local level, a resolution brought from region 3 last year, and we're delivering on that.

Conference, this is what a modern, democratic, accountable union looks like. But let me be absolutely clear. This programme of transformation is not just about structures for their own sake. It is not just about systems. It's not just about process. It has one purpose and one purpose only: to put the Fire Brigades Union back into the workplace, agreed by this conference last year when you passed that policy statement, and focusing on our members in every region.

Because everything we do, every reform, every decision, every investment must serve that goal. Stronger branches, organised workplaces, confident members, a union that is ready to act. So conference, we should be proud of what has been achieved over the past year. I place on record my thanks to national officer Tam McFarlane for leading on this work, for the executive council for their engagement, for officials from the sections, trade sections, and across the regions who have played their part in this work.

But we must not be complacent. The challenges we face remain serious. Our service still faces cuts and under-investment. Our members still face pressure on pay and conditions. Our safety and the safety of the public is still at risk, and we know that without a strong, organised union, those pressures will only increase.

But we also know that when we fight, we can win. So I ask every FBU official who is facing cuts at a local level to remember what I said in Oxford when representatives from every brigade responded and turned out on the streets of Oxford to send a loud and clear message: to the firefighters there that we stood with them; to the county council, to the government, that if you take on one service, you take on the whole of the National Fire Brigades Union.

So let's take inspiration from what we have done and what we have achieved over the past year. To members in Avon and Leicestershire that ran campaigns, to Scotland who are running a fantastic campaign to push back against the proposals to cut firefighter numbers and close fire stations there, that all these examples, and there are many more, comrades, the fact that any budget that is set by politicians can be reversed, that no political decision can't be overturned, and no so-called apathy that can't be turned around through engagement, leadership, and determination by our members. We can never predict victory when we fight, but I'll tell you this, we can guarantee losing it when we don't. The example of our comrades requires every official in every brigade and region to reject cuts, organise and campaign through the union to fight them. Of course, yes, that is hard. Hard graft, hard work, and it's you doing it day in, day out, but it's time-consuming, and there are no guarantees, but it's what we must do as FBU officials.

So draw inspiration now, not just from the past year, but also from past generations of FBU members who, like my dad, fought, struggled, and went on strike to protect the service and hand their job over to a new generation. That is the legacy and the duty we must accept as FBU officials in 2026 in our branches and in brigades.

So I throw down the challenge to everyone in this hall. No cuts go unchallenged. No campaign goes unfought. No fight is too hard. It's time to end the finger-pointing, the internal bickering, the endless navel-gazing. Our members need and demand a strong, fighting Fire Brigades Union. I intend to deliver it for them. I want you to join me in doing so as well. The real enemy, comrades, is outside of this union, and it's time we squared up to them and not each other.

Comrades, we are building for the future whilst ensuring that we remain what we have always been: an independent, industry-specific trade union led by firefighters for firefighters.

We are not, and as long as I am general secretary, will never be a general union. We are not an add-on. We are the Fire Brigades Union, and we stand on our own two feet, independent in our voice and in our decisions, united in our workplaces and across our structures, strong in our organisation and our ability to act.

And let me say this clearly, our strength has never come from head office. It's never come from one individual. It has always come from organised members standing and acting together. So this policy is not the end of the process. It is the continuation of the work we started last year, work that says we will modernise where we need to. We will reform where we must. But we will always remain rooted in our core principle, collective strength through workplace organisation.

So Conference, last year we said we needed to change. This year, I think we can say we have begun to deliver that change, and now we must finish the job. So I ask Conference, support this policy, back this programme of work, and let's continue the work of building an FBU that is independent, that is truly united, and is stronger than ever. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. Derbyshire.

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire)**:**
Morning, president, conference, seconding the EC policy statement on a Fire Brigades Union that is independent, united and strong. Conference, I second this EC policy statement because I believe it is what the members of Derbyshire would want and would support.

The policy statement provides a lot of direction and information on how the union will operate, organise and engage. It's about providing FBU members with what they need to engage with the FBU, and it is what conference has previously asked for. We must engage the membership in a way we have never done before.

I've spoken about this at many past conferences to keep the FBU relevant in an occupier space that thousands of our members spend a lot of time in. There is a lot in this policy statement that FBU members in Derbyshire would support. They want social media advancement. They want good relevant communication, and they want to build on the famous mantra of safer, stronger together.

Brigade organisers are pivotal for the future of the union, and they require the support contained within the statement to map the membership, grow the membership and sustain the future of the FBU. We need up-to-date and detailed recruitment, and that can only be a good thing. We must aim to provide content that will get the attention of firefighters and FBU members. That content will be difficult, but it will make them hear the arguments that they need to defend the fire and rescue service.

The development of the FBU app has engaged more members, and it now provides a platform of engagement for our union. Podcasts are becoming a part of the union strategy, and I have asked for this previously at conference.

Members want financial transparency, and our society demands it. In Derbyshire, we want to build on the work of our EC member and develop systems to share and access information which is relevant to meetings and the work of the union. We want electronic balloting, clarity on canvassing, both things that I have brought to conference, and other delegates have done the same.

We have an increasing number of FBU members concerned about political donations and financial support to politicians. FBU members want to know and have the opportunity to decide where their money goes when it comes to political donations. FBU members need to understand and be able to engage with the Rule Book.

In its current form, that is difficult. The language and content predates them. A branch and root review will still provide conference with the ability to decide on those changes. Now, whilst I might not agree with everything that's

gone in the recent past, the decisions made, or have the complete picture on every aspect, I don't believe this EC policy statement seeks conference endorsement of those matters.

They are decisions for the internal workings of our union, as detailed and laid out before the executive council over a number of months. We have elected FBU members to positions within our structure to take decisions on behalf of FBU members and deal with those aspects. Conference simply cannot govern all of the union's decisions.

There is no difference here between brigade officials within respective brigades. I believe this is about reporting the work that has been done and what the FBU will do to provide an engaging future for FBU members to influence and further strengthen their union. The general secretary has stood on this platform of accountability and transparency, and that is what your members voted for. This was reported to conference in 2025 under the task and finish groups. This is the finish of those tasks.

Conference, support this policy statement to support the continued discussion on improving all these aspects, all of which conference has asked for in one way or another over many years. As a delegate to this conference, I have to assess the content, the intent, and the wording of resolutions and statements, and in doing that, I conclude that Derbyshire can support this policy statement.

We are given all the tools to elect officials democratically at every level. In accepting those elections to post comes a responsibility of accountability to all members and officials within the union. Delegates, come to the rostrum, question, clarify, seek the qualifications that you need, and get it on the record. But then in the end, if you have what you need, support the policy statement and let this be the item that we can all go away with and invest in strength and unity in everything that we do, exactly what the title states.

I'll end on this. Top of page two, the policy statement, first sentence, *"All decisions in relation to this work will be made in accordance with the democratic structures of the FBU and reported in the same manner."* I trust that to be the case. I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Chris. That is open for debate. Anybody wanting to speak, please come down. Remember the amended speaker times? Yep.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales)**:**
President, conference, I rise to speak in opposition to the EC policy statement. There's nothing anyone in this room has heard today from the general secretary and our brother from Derbyshire that they don't agree with, and I'm in exactly the same position. Absolutely passionate, brilliant speeches.

But we're all officials, and we all know that written words matter. So let me be absolutely clear from the outset, this is not opposition to change. Our union must modernise, we must adapt, and it must strengthen itself in the workplace, but we have a responsibility to do that properly. Because we wouldn't accept a policy as it is written currently from our employers, we can't accept it from our own union. The document presents itself as reform. It talks about modern systems, organising, communications, structures, and increased capacity. On the surface, those are all things we support. But when you strip it back, what we're actually being asked to approve is something far more concerning.

It's broad commitments without defined limits, structural change without clear outcomes, increased responsibilities without assessed capacity, and financial and organisational decisions without full transparency. That's not reform with substance, that's reform without safeguards. We're told that this will strengthen the union, but conference, strength does not come from ambition alone. It comes from clarity, it comes from resourcing, it comes from knowing what our officials are already carrying out before we ask them to carry out more. And that fundamental question is missing from this document. As brigade secretary of –

THE PRESIDENT:
Start winding it up, delegate.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales)**:**
Sorry?

THE PRESIDENT:
Start winding it up.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales)**:**
Okay. Conference, we are a trade union. We hold employers to standards of fairness, consultation, proper planning, and accountability. We challenge them when they make changes without proper assessment or resourcing. So we cannot, in good conscience, lower that standard when it comes to our own structures.

For those reasons, I believe this policy is just not ready. It's too broad, too undefined, and too open-ended to be safely supported. We should not be asked to sign a blank cheque.

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate, can you wind up? Yeah. It's two minutes. That's all you're getting for speaking time now. Thanks.

MICHAEL ALEXANDER (South Wales)**:**
Okay. We should expect better, and we should demand better. I urge opposition. Conference, I oppose. *Applause*

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in opposition to the EC policy statement. Conference, I wish we didn't have to do this, but here we are. I want to thank Chris for the points he made seconding this and the conversation we had yesterday. I've got a huge amount of respect for Chris and his opinions. I appreciate the direction set out by the GS. For Chris and for many others in here, this looks like a great idea. On education, for example, the ability to have courses tailored to your needs, organising gives regions the ability to have someone paid to spend six months doing branch meetings targeting recruitment of membership, all that. Good, great, agreed. But why did Scotland see it differently? This isn't a policy statement.

On Wednesday night, there was a meeting of regional and sectional sections to discuss this, as the EC had heard that there was opposition to it. In that meeting, I was told that those of us who have concerns must be wrong. We must have conflated the outcomes of a previous staffing review and the content of this. We were told that we need to be behind this and that we should unite behind it. After all, it says united in the title. A position that came to rally in the troops by the GS, president and Tam. And conference, I had to point out that surely, we should be debating it on the conference floor, not in that room.

I even had to point out that it's all right, that we have the right to disagree, right? We even had it highlighted by the equality sections that none of them had had a chance to read the report. They have no EC member, but some of them not even having a chance to have the report in their swanky bag, and that kind of highlights the big problem we have with this.

This report that we are being asked to rubber stamp today, was only presented to conference when we arrived. None of you, us, have really had the chance to properly digest and scrutinise it, and there are parts that need scrutiny. And while the EC will say this is a report of the work that they've done, to enact previous conference policy, that's fine. There is a lot of good things that have been laid out in that. I want to make that clear. We brought resolutions last year for clear canvassing rules, election timetables. It's encouraging to see that set out, but that's not the point.

In Scotland, we've played little or no part in any of the working groups, despite the fact the impact that decisions have on us. There's been little to no consultation with the region that represent the whole country. In Scotland, we put over 200 learners through education in three years, developing members and the branch reps, activists and all that, and our delegation is packed with these people. President, I will quickly get to the last point, um –

THE PRESIDENT:
You need to, Gus.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
Look, last year when the gen sec moved ECPS on the unity and strength of the workplace, the gen sec said, and I quote, *"We need to shift our focus from the current top-down approach within our union."* And a year on, this is where we've got to. This isn't a policy statement. It doesn't ask conference to do anything.

It doesn't say conference affirms. Conference instructs the EC to do that. It doesn't mention conference once.

THE PRESIDENT:
Gus, come on, wind it up.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
Yep, okay. Uh, yeah, conference, this is not an EC policy statement. It's a report that should be presented on that.

THE PRESIDENT:
No, Gus, I mean wind it up. Thank you.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
Okay. Yes, president. Scotland, we oppose. Thank you. *Applause*

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
President, conference, speaking in opposition to the EC policy statement. I just want to be clear right at the beginning, I'm talking today as a critical friend in the interests of unity. Let's just put most of those words on this paper to one side for a moment and ask ourselves a simple question, what are we actually being asked to approve today? Because the document talks about reform, modernisation, ongoing work, reviewing structures, but nowhere does it clearly define what it is that the executive council can actually do under this programme, and that is problematic for each and every one of us here today.

The policy statement tells us that a task and finish review was undertaken across six areas. It tells us that that review work produced 51 recommendations, 51 recommendations that most of us only saw when we arrived here on Tuesday in our delegation bags. And it tells us that many of those recommendations have already been implemented by the EC, and there's no concern here for the general administration in between conferences for the EC to do that.

But conference is supposed to be the supreme authority of this union, not the executive council, conference. As delegates, we're elected by our members to scrutinise, debate, and decide major change, and this paper is not asking us to vote on clear proposals. It's asking us to endorse a process.

Last year, conference agreed the EC policy statement on unity and strength. Remember the words that were said in that: democratic, transparent. Because we all need to ask ourselves, has this process actually been transparent? I don't believe it has. Instead, we're being asked to trust an ongoing programme without the detail, and we know how that works in our brigades. If the EC could not deliver a transparent process promised in 2025, then delegates should be extremely cautious about handing over even broader authority today.

What delegates today are being asked to approve is fundamentally different from what happened in 2015. I came with receipts. Time is short, you're not going to get them. I come with receipts. We're not being given the detail that we need, and I urge you, do not surrender your sovereign role in this union. Not my words, general secretary yesterday. *Applause*

RICHARD BEEBY (Suffolk)**:**
Conference, president, speaking in opposition of this policy statement. Conference, when this policy statement was first circulated, we requested the full list of all the recommendations referenced within it to allow us to make an educated decision as to whether or not to suggest any amendments to this statement.

Until Tuesday, we had not seen them. This meant that we were going into this policy statement blind and being asked to sign off on a blank cheque, something which we had been educated not to do. This does not feel

transparent. As we were told on the first day of conference, it is important we do not rush, but it is equally important that we move in the correct time frames through the correct orders.

And conference, only sharing this document with us on Tuesday, here at Conference, very much feels like we are being rushed.

There are also aspects of this that from a brief read, because that's all I've had time for, that emerge such as hiding the knowledge of how your EC member voted is not good. Voting records are an important part of a democratic structure to be able to hold people to account. We scrutinise our MPs' voting records, and we do not see why this needs to be different here. This again does not feel like transparency. Conference, for these reasons, Suffolk will be opposing. *Applause*

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Be tactful and go last but it's not quite happened that way. President, conference, so Chris from Derbyshire mentioned some really good points about modifying, moving with the times, and how a lot of our membership don't understand a lot of the documents that are sent out. The language in them is really confusing, and he mentioned a lot of really good points. The premise of this document is fantastic. Like, it's simple to read to those who don't attend conference, that those that don't get the emails, those that don't attend meetings and understand the language and stuff. So the premise of the document is really good. Yeah, we only received it on Tuesday. Yes, it's not great. But the policy comes from a lot of work done that's been done behind the scenes with our sections and trade sections. We were separate as well, so the equality sections had an input, and a lot of really good, meaningful, productive time was spent in those working groups.

Okay, there was a bit of a gap. There was a lack of communication and the updates was – we were lacking. So we have had reassurances from Steve that communication does need to improve. There was a massive breakdown there. Yes, Scotland were not included in the working groups. However, it was for the sections, and it was for a separate session for the equality sections for under-represented groups.

I'm going to repeat that. It was for the under-represented groups which again I have to point out we are. You can clearly see it, okay? We want to improve communication, continue to consult with the equality sections and not to simply implement recommendations because you as mostly white males feel that it's the right thing to do, so please do consult with us.

Okay? Equality is a priority as stated. We must emphasise equity. We highlighted right back to before the campaign was even launched for equality matters that equity matters. All right? So can – oh, skimming through it, it's on red. How can we unify, our union, how can unifying our union be a bad thing? Improving and moving with the times and modifying is not a bad thing. That's sometimes –

THE PRESIDENT:
Can you start wrapping up, Kasey?

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Firefighters don't like change, but we don't like how things are done.

THE PRESIDENT:
Kasey? Point of order, come forward.

KASEY LeGALL (B&EMM)**:**
Should I just finish? B&EMM urges you to support this policy statement. B&EMM have a voice. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kasey. Point of order Gus.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, I appreciate all the points you said there, Kasey, but this report wasn't for the equality sections, it's for the whole union. And so for Scotland not to be included that's the point of order. This was for the whole union. But I do appreciate the point you made.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks for the point, point taken. Next one.

ANDY MURRAY (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, we are supporting this. We support it because it calls for unity. We support it because it calls for transparency and accountability. If you oppose this, you are opposing those. All the things that people have talked about have not been happening.

I haven't seen that. If you've not been informed, you have to ask why. We've had full and frank discussions in our regional committee about everything. We have been informed in region 3. If that's not happening across your regions, ask the questions why that's not happening. We support this, we support unity, we support moving forward, we support accountability, and we support transparency. We support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, next one.

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, the LGBT+ section are in support of the executive council policy statement. We welcome the direction set out, its clear intention to strengthen our union, modernise our structures, and crucially, put the FBU back into the workplace and back into the hands of the members.

The focus on unity, democracy, and equality is something we strongly support. We recognise the scale of the work undertaken and the ambition behind it, and we want to see this programme continue and succeed. We have some concerns around education, but with full dialogue and communication with the executive council and the working groups, we want reassurances that we will be included throughout the education pathway. We recognise that equality considerations are clearly embedded within the statement, and we welcome the explicit commitment to enhancing representation, strengthening equality sections, and ensuring that we have a voice, not just here, but on the executive council. The inclusion of equality is a core FBU priority, alongside commitments to challenge discrimination, improve representation, and embed sections within the structures.

Conference, we support. We welcome, but we ask to be included so that together we can make this programme not just strong, but truly equal. We support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Next one. Yep.

DANNY BARTLEY (Mid and West Wales)**:**
President, conference, speaking in opposition of this EC policy statement. Conference, following on from some of the great points raised by our brothers and sisters, nobody here is arguing against change, but the real question is not whether we change, it's how we change, at what cost, and with what clarity?

What sits before us today is not just a set of proposals, because the instant we pass something like this, we move from defined policy into delegated implementation without clear thresholds, benchmarks, or points of return. It gets interpreted, it gets implemented, and it can be expanded beyond what was originally intended, not out of bad faith, but because the safeguards are not clearly set.

We've heard arguments about efficiency, modernisation, flexibility, and those arguments sound reasonable until you ask very simple questions. Where are the minimum protections, the thresholds below which capacity release or support cannot fall? And where are the guarantees that increased expectations will be matched with increased resource, not absorbed by those of us already stretched to breaking point?

We have lost a valued official already from such consequences. Conference, those answers are not here, or at the very least, they are not defined in a way that binds implementation. Conference, we also have to consider what our members will see outside of this room. We are told this policy strengthens organising, communications, and

education, all vital areas, but members are not blind to the reality that the heads of those very departments have recently left under the shadow of redundancy.

On Wednesday, we were told to have it out on the conference floor, but then call emergency meetings to try and debate EC statements out of earshot behind closed doors. That contradiction creates a credibility gap between stated ambition and demonstrated capacity, and until that gap is addressed with clear resourcing commitments, members will question whether this is expansion or redistribution of pressure.

Conference, we know from negotiations, from organising, from experience, detail without guarantees still leads to risk, because what is not measured cannot be defended, and what is not protected will be tested, and those consequences are carried by our members and by our official. Let's be clear. We would not accept this from an employer. We would not accept reform without defined resource commitments, measurable delivery standards, and protections that trigger when capacity is exceeded. So we should not accept it here.

This is about standards, not just what we want to achieve, but how we achieve it, and whether we remain a union who lead by example –

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate, please wrap that one up, please

DANNY BARTLEY (Mid and West Wales)**:**
So the choice before conference is not change versus no change.
It is defined, measurable, properly resourced change with clear safeguards or reform that contains activity and intent but lacks enforceable guarantees on workload, capacity, and delivery.
Conference, not like this, not yet, not with clear safeguards.

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate, can you wind it up, please?

DANNY BARTLEY (Mid and West Wales)**:**
Conference, I urge you to oppose. Conference, I move. *Applause*

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, this policy statement does offer some very good and needed policies. We support that. However, I'm now going to speak in opposition of this policy statement. We cannot support this policy statement. I agree with Gus, this isn't a policy statement, it's a wish list.

Conference, this policy statement doesn't empower members. It lets the EC instruct and then report the decisions made. I spoke yesterday on the importance of being democratic. I can't see the democracy in this. The general secretary spoke yesterday about not surrendering our sovereign role in this union when we discussed affiliation.

He spoke about the danger of hollowing out the authority of conference on major decisions. Conference, it is our view that this policy statement takes at least some of that away from us. Comrades, please oppose this policy statement. *Applause*

KERRY McCRONE (NWC)**:**
Conference, president, opposing the EC policy statement. This is not about resisting progress, and it is not about opposing the work that has been done in the summary report and task and finish groups. It is about defending the democratic processes of this union and ensuring that conference remains the sovereign decision-making body.

The statement as it stands does not ask conference to decide anything. It does not present proposals for debate or approval. Instead, it reads as a report of actions, changes that have already been implemented.

Many of these decisions are significant. Many of them concern the governance of our union and should be brought back to conference for decision, not made by the EC. We are being asked, in effect, to endorse a body of work without being given the opportunity to properly analyse it.

The statement references a review of FBU processes and practices, a review that produced 51 recommendations, but those recommendations have not been presented to conference in a timely manner to allow for genuine scrutiny and debate.

How can we be expected to agree to something that we have not been given adequate opportunity to examine? This should have been brought back to regional and sectional committees to allow genuine informed debate at this conference. If this policy statement is directly connected to this report, they should both have been made available to us prior to conference.

I also want to address the line that states, *"This work will put the FBU firmly back into the workplace and back into the hands of members."* So what does that mean? To our reps and officials, the very people who work tirelessly to keep members informed, organised, and engaged, that sounds like a kick in the teeth. Our reps are in the workplace. They are the connection between the union and the members, and they are the ones encouraging participation, building strength, and keeping the union alive at local level.

To suggest that the union is somehow not already in the hands of members risks diminishing this work and undermining those who deliver it every single day. Conference, by agreeing this statement, we are not simply noting it, we are legitimising it. We are giving our approval to a process that has bypassed proper democratic scrutiny and reads as an overstep of the executive council's authority and governance of the union between conferences. We believe that if this work is to shape the future of our union, it must first come back to conference –

THE PRESIDENT:
Kerry, can you start winding up, please?

KERRY McCRONE (NWC)**:**
... in a forum that allows full transparency, proper debate, and proper democratic decision-making. The NWC oppose. *Applause*

MATT LAIDLER (Tyne and Wear)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of the policy statement. This policy statement highlights and celebrates all of the work, hard work, that this union has done over the last year to build our structures to modernise and to enhance unity. It sets out a direction for where this union is going and what we are doing to achieve that.

It is what our members need now more than ever. There is scrutiny of the lack of detail, but it is the overall direction of this policy statement, it is what our members need to see. They need to see this work. They don't necessarily need to see the detail. It is the direction that is important. We come here with a mandate to conference.

There is nothing more democratic than conference. We come here with a mandate from our members to make decisions on their behalf for their benefit. This policy statement will benefit them. It is a commitment to being better, a transparent commitment to being better. United and strong, two of the three words in the title of that policy statement.

Unity and strength. To oppose this statement today on conference floor is to oppose unity and strength, to oppose a united and strong union. What message does that send to our members? We must support this for unity and for strength. Support this statement, conference. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Matt. No more speakers, general secretary, your right of reply.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president. Thanks, conference. A fair bit to come back on there, but important points raised, nonetheless. I'll start by referring to this document. I'll start by referring to page one. Look, it clearly states, *"Some of the recommendations require further discussion and debate. Any future decisions will be subject to the structures of the union, including the executive council."*

They've been elected, as has been rightly pointed out, but where necessary, annual conference. So let's look at why we're here. Last year it was referenced to me a couple of times, buzzword bingo was being played, and rightly so, because I started talking extensively about task and finish groups. And people were saying, "Well, what does the finish line look like?" Well, what we've tried to do, what Tam's tried to do in pulling this work together, is tell delegates exactly what work has been going on over the past 52 weeks. All of the issues that are in here – communications, raised at every branch that I visit, every brigade committee meeting I go to.

Ballots, making our union more accessible to our members. This is the work that we're trying to draw upon, that you've asked us to deliver on. That Tam, although his young, youthful good looks he's been around a lot longer than many of us. And he said this is the most open and transparent piece of work we've ever done.

So when there's criticism that Scotland were not involved, your EC member was involved in some of these working groups. But we certainly can't have a task and –

THE PRESIDENT:
Point of order? Come to the front.

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
Point of order, president. Yeah. Yes, our EC member was involved in the assessing regional structure group. However, there was no reach out from any other of the task and finish groups to Scotland.

THE PRESIDENT:
Say that again. Sorry, I didn't.

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
There was no reach out from any of the other groups to Scotland.

THE PRESIDENT:
It's not a point of order, but thanks. It's not a point of order. *Applause*
Thanks, Seona. Right, general secretary, carry on.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president. So as I was saying, Tam's youthful good looks. The most transparent, look, a report on the conference floor around the task and finish groups. A report to conference, first time ever in our history. Every resolution that was passed last year, the actions taken by the executive council.

You sit here, and you tell the executive council what to deliver over the next year. They tell me, and then we as national officers try and deliver that. Some things we haven't made particularly great progress on, but we've detailed that for once. We've said we need to do more work, we need to go further, but it's all there in your hands, much like the task and finish groups.

And, and look, there has been reach-out. The executive council have had updated detailed reports at every meeting from a national officer leading and focusing ultimately on this work over the last year. And, it was me and Tam, for open and transparency, when we discussed this, we said it was important for people not to reflect on last year of what did task and finish groups mean, what did they deliver.

I know that the communication back into branches, back to you, isn't great, and we're trying to fix that. We've undertaken reviews. We're trying to build those structures up, making sure the sections do get the right feedback that they need. So look, I understand the concerns, but I refer back to that.

Decisions will be taken through the structures of our union, structures that we all support, but we want to make sure that we build and build upon those so that every decision that is made is focused on our members through the democratic structures. There's no blank cheques that we're trying to write here.

We're putting everything in front of you. I'm putting everything in front of the executive council. If you think that 13 EC members are going to give me carte blanche to do what I want, come and observe one of those meetings sometime. They certainly don't. They will hold me to account, rightly so. They will report back to you, I hope, on the decisions and discussions and their views on things.

When we talk about education and training and development, we have got a fantastic education programme. But if you look at what the national officer who oversees education now, and organising, sent out probably three weeks ago, we want to build on that. We want to make sure we've got the best-trained officials in every part of the UK, that actually we're a bit more reactive to the issues that we're facing because they are different in different areas. They're different for the sections, trade sections. We want to build on that. We want an organising strategy. All of this is trying to encompass what you have asked us to do so we can deliver on it.

I'll repeat again, every decision, the big decisions, the key decisions will come back to this conference. I stand by my statement yesterday. This is the forum to make the big decisions. Yes, we need to communicate better. We're trying to build that. We're modernising. I don't necessarily like that word, but we are trying to deliver on that. We'll continue, as Maria asked, to engage with the sections. If you heard what I said at the start, there is a pathway to do that.

Listening to what has been called for over the last decade since seats were taken away from our equality sections. Words matter, someone said. Words do matter. Well look at the words of this statement, and yes, it may be a bit of a departure from what you're normally asked to come here and agree.

Recommendation one, two, three, and four. It is a departure from that, but we are changing. I want to be open and transparent with the executive council. I want to be open and transparent with you at conference. So look, we have got some big battles to fight. Let's not sit here and fight yesterday's battles.

Let's be here now. Let's be here and take on the issues that we face. Tough decisions. I knew that would be the case. As a firefighter who joined 25 years ago, I never thought I'd be stood here representing firefighters across the UK. Immensely proud of doing that. Immensely proud to speak to you as delegates.

But I know I've got to make some tough decisions, but I know I've got a fantastic executive council. I want to enhance that voice there. I want to make sure that we are showing true equality across the executive council. It's been pointed out the flaws that we have at the moment. I want to enhance that. I want to make sure we make the best decisions at the right time for our members. Thank you, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Steve. I now put executive council policy statement independent, united and strong to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*

Calls for a card vote

Morning, Kate. Conference, please keep in your seats. Chair standing orders. Phil, yep.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS:
Thank you, president. There's a surprise. We've been here before, conference, so I'm going to ask all those in favour of supporting the EC policy statement to bring your voting card up and place it in the box, please.

Thank you, conference. Can I now ask all of those against to put your voting card in the box, please?

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference take your seats as quickly as possible. Right, we'll take that away and get that counted. Please take your seats because we are now bringing our guest speaker. Right, conference, it gives me great pleasure to introduce our next guest speaker, Lucy Powell. Lucy has been MP for Manchester Central since 2012 and Deputy Leader of the Labour Party since October 2025. Lucy served as education secretary under Jeremy Corbyn and Leader of the House of Commons under Keir Starmer.

In the 2025 deputy leadership election, the FBU executive council voted to nominate Lucy, who was also nominated by the CWU and ASLEF. Lucy sits on the Labour Party's NEC and was the only member of the subcommittee to vote in favour of letting Andy Burnham stand to be Labour's candidate in the Gorton and Denton by election.

Since her election to deputy leader, Lucy has been in regular contact with FBU officials, including speaking at our executive council. Lucy is a friend to the union, has backed the FBU for calls for investment in the service and restoring firefighter numbers to pre-austerity levels. Conference, give a big welcome to Lucy Powell. Thank you. *Applause*

LUCY POWELL MP:
Thank you so much Ian, for that lovely introduction. Thank you to Steve and Ben and the whole team for having me here today. I wanted to come as Labour's deputy leader primarily to say thank you. Thank you first of all for nominating me as deputy leader of the Labour Party, and thank you for the decision that you took yesterday to stick with Labour.

I'll say a little bit more about that, in a minute. And I know that when you backed me as deputy leader, when you nominated me to be deputy leader, it wasn't a straightforward decision. I think you were choosing between me and not nominating anyone at all, and I wanted to be here today to just repay that support back to you and tell you a little bit about how I've been working with the FBU and the trade unions across the Labour Party to make sure that your voice is really heard at the top of the party.

I have been doing this role slightly differently to my fantastic predecessor, Angela Rayner. She was in government whilst also the deputy leader of the Labour Party. I've chosen not to go into government but to do this job entirely politically, which means that I can work directly with you, our movement, our members, and I'm in the political cabinet but not the formal cabinet, helping to shape Labour's sort of political story because I think, let's be honest, we need to get the politics sharper, don't we, and get the politics back into what we are doing, and I hope I've been doing that.

I've been working very closely with TULO. In fact, Steve and I have got a TULO meeting straight after this with the prime minister and others to talk about how we can make sure that working people are absolutely at the heart of what Labour does, and I've been heavily involved in the implementation of the Employment Rights Act and making sure that the priorities of your members are at the heart of what the Labour government does.

Because our links with the trade union movement really are our superpower. Without you, we are nothing. With all of your members and all the members from all the other affiliated trade unions, that's a million more people who are affiliated to the Labour Party in every workplace, in every community right across the country, and no other party, no other campaigning force comes close. And we do share values, desires, and we share an agenda. So can I just really underline my thanks for the vote and the decision that you took yesterday to continue your affiliation to the Labour Party. It does mean a huge amount to me and to the Labour Party in general.

And look, I know that it wouldn't have been a straightforward decision because we haven't got everything right. We don't always get everything right. We've made some mistakes as well. But I think it's worth just taking a moment to just think about the things that we have done together because of you, because of what you've done, because of the manifesto that you shaped for the Labour Party, and because you keep our feet to the fire in making sure that we deliver on those promises that we have made. Because without you, some of these things just would not have happened. We wouldn't have put rail and buses back into public ownership, something that has now happened because of you and because of the Labour Party working together. We wouldn't have given such big pay rises across some of the public sector workers.

If we'd still had the Tories in power, we all know what would have happened there, and that has happened because we've got a Labour government. We're lifting children out of poverty. We've ended the exploitative zero-hours contract and ending fire and rehire and given everyone rights to sick pay from day one, a really transformatory policy.

We're building more social housing than ever before. And just a few weeks ago, we've ended no-fault evictions and make sure that rents now are going to be stabilised in the coming years ahead. We finally kicked out hereditary peers from the House of Lords, something that I know many supporters of the Labour Party feel is long overdue.

And we've introduced Hillsborough Law, a really important piece of legislation which will be fully enacted, bringing a duty of candour to all our public servants. And these are just a few things that we've actually done together. But also, I think it's worth just remembering, and I know you heard from Sam Dixon yesterday the Minister for Fire Services. We've been working together with the FBU on the agenda that matters to you and your members. In Oxfordshire recently, you know, because Steve and Ian had raised it directly with me, directly with the prime minister, we called out the cuts there that they were proposing to local services, and I'm pleased to see that has at least been paused for now.

And we'll make sure that we continue that fight and work with you on those types of issues. And the work we've been doing together in the Department of Health, and I know you had Wes Streeting when he was still the health secretary working with you on wellbeing issues at work as well. And Sam talked, I read her speech, and I heard it had a warm reception here yesterday, about the partnership working that's absolutely critical to the future of the fire service to make sure that we've got the proper investment in fire, that we've got that real work happening about how the service can evolve and develop and be invested in and expanded into the future. And I think that's absolutely critical.

Because of this link, we've got the voice right at the heart of government. And I just want to say a little bit as well about my own constituency in Manchester Central. I've worked really closely with Andy Burnham, and I'm going to just say something about Andy in a minute. We had some real challenges over recent years, with proposed cuts to fire services in Manchester, and we stopped those, and Andy has done, I think, a really good job in Greater Manchester at making sure that we invest in our fire stations and our fire services because there is an evolving threat which you are all at the forefront of, whether that's building safety, whether that's terrorism, whether that's wildfires growing as a threat as well in my region. And I'm really proud of that work that I've done with Andy in Greater Manchester.

And can I just say on Andy Burnham, because I know he's someone, that you are keen on, rightly so in my view. Look, the election results that we had recently in the Labour Party were very difficult and painful. And the aftermath hasn't been all that edifying either. We could have further to fall as a party, and we absolutely need to come back together as one team because we've got to take the fight to Farage. We are at real risk of Nigel Farage walking up Downing Street in a few years' time, and we can't let that happen.

But we've got to do our politics differently. We've got to end the factionalism. We've got to embrace all the different traditions of the Labour Party, all the different voices, and bring one team back together, and that means having Andy Burnham as a key player in that team, in my view. He has now expressed, since you've been meeting at this conference, his view, his desire to come back to Parliament. There's now a vacancy. I supported Andy last time he wanted to come back to Parliament, and I fully support him wanting to come back to Parliament again. And just to be clear, I've got it on good authority there's going to be absolutely no attempt to stop him from doing that again. So we will have him as the candidate, I'm sure. *Applause*

And I've just been asked actually in the last 24 hours to be the political lead for that by-election, so that means a sort of politician involved. So I'm really going to ask you, especially those of you in Greater Manchester and nearby this is going to be a tough by-election for us to win against Reform and if Andy is selected as the candidate in the coming days let's see what happens there, we are going to need all of your help in that by-election. So if you will come along and help us there, I think that would be really great.

But look, I think I just want to say a couple of things about the way forward for us, and then I'll leave you to your debates thereafter. There's absolutely no sugarcoating in my eyes what's happened to Labour in the recent elections, and that's been coming for a few years.

We might have lost more seats to Reform, but we've actually lost a lot more voters to parties to our left because we know that out-reforming Reform is not a way for us to go in politics, and we can't, do that. People have voted time and again for change. They voted for Brexit. They voted for Boris Johnson. They voted Labour in 2024, and it really is now incumbent on us for them to see that real change in their communities, in their jobs, in their lives from having a Labour government. Because all these crises that have come, from the '08 crash to austerity to COVID and everything else, they have not been weathered equally.

You see that. You see that on the front line. You see the ordinary people time and again pay the price while a wealthy few get off scot-free. You know, we bailed out the banks in 2008, but ordinary people then paid the price with austerity while bankers continued to get bonuses. When COVID hit, a few benefited from the VIP lanes, or fast lanes, or they defrauded the loan scheme whilst everybody else saw their living standards fall. And in the energy shocks, we saw the energy companies taking these big excess profits while everybody else paid higher bills. This kind of economy is what people want to see changed, and that is absolutely what we have to put right. We have to re-engineer the country and the economy in the interest of the many and not the few.

And we made some mistakes early in office as well, whether it was the winter fuel payment, whether it was the proposals on disability benefits. It didn't give people the right impression about whose side the Labour Party is on, and it left people confused. So we've got to turn this around, and we've got to come back and work together because it's not only about protecting people from these global shocks, but it's about giving people the simple things in life, isn't it?

And that's what a Labour government should be about. For a decent, well-paid job, a secure, affordable home, an opportunity for their kids and their grandkids to do better than they currently are, and taking the pressure off people in the cost of living crisis. And we have to call those out who don't agree with that.

We've got to show whose side we are on much more strongly and show that we're on the side of justice and fairness. So we will be, and we need to call out bad bosses who say that workers' rights will lead to fewer jobs. That is an argument we should be having. Or those who say that renters' rights or leasehold reform will crash the market. They're just wrong about that.

Developers and freeholders refusing to remediate unsafe buildings. We've got to take that task on and unafraid to do so, or Tory and Reform councils cutting vital services like fire services as well. We have to show that we are unafraid, and we wake up every day to tackle these big issues because the stakes are really, really high if we don't get this right, if we don't prove the model that progressive mainstream politics really can bring about the change that people want to see, they are going to increasingly turn to Nigel Farage and others for the easy answers. And that is not something that I think any of us can let see happen.

And let's not make any mistake. Nigel Farage is no friend of working people. I describe him as the love child of Margaret Thatcher and Enoch Powell because that's exactly what he is. He is a Thatcherite on the economy. That's why he voted against workers' rights. He voted against renters' rights. He believes in trickle-down, failed economics that have not served this country well, and we need to call him out for what he is. *Applause*

So we have to stand together, and that's why I'm so delighted that we continue to stand together as the Labour Party, a Labour government working with the FBU to tackle these big issues that your members face and your communities face, because we have got to get this right. The challenge is that great. So thank you so much for having me here today, and I look forward to continuing working with you. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you for that, Lucy. Steve's just going to say a few words.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president. And, thanks, Lucy for being here. Busy week – I'm sure. But look, back in October of last year you were the first politician to come to visit our new head office in King's Cross. And I had the opportunity, you had the unfortunate experience, of being interviewed by me. And you made some commitments there about opening doors for us and certainly getting us in the room to have some discussions, and you've certainly delivered on that. We're still waiting on the 5,000 new firefighters that I asked you for, but hopefully we can deliver that over the next few years.

But look, you also joined the executive council and took questions directly from EC members that represent all our regions. And they didn't hold back, but you didn't hold back. And I think the executive council certainly, respected that. It certainly gave me and Ben an hour's break from being questioned from the executive.

So I think you've been bold in your answers at the executive council about what you want to do. And we're at a point in time; we had that debate ourselves yesterday. And whilst we have many criticisms of decisions that have been made by the Labour Party, we're staying affiliated. We think our voice is within the party, and hopefully we can achieve more than we have done.

So happy to keep working with you, Lucy, and thank you for your time today. Thanks, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Thanks, Lucy. We have got you a small gift.

Right, conference, I now call the chief scrutineer, Kate, to come and give us the results of the card vote.

CHIEF SCRUTINEER (Kate Yhnell)**:**
Due to timing constraints and budgets, I'll leave the dramatic pauses and the drum rolls and lighting for next year, but it is a little request if possible. The EC council policy statement independent, united, and strong. For 12,195, against 20,732, therefore the executive committee policy statement *falls*. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kate. Before anybody shouts out, I need to go to Specsavers. It is really difficult because of the varying numbers of delegates what are on it, obviously in the card vote. Right, conference, that was a great debate. Anyway, there was, I think, 11, 12 speakers in that again. And again, that's what our union's about, it's the democracy of the union.

Right, we are going to carry on with some business. I now call resolution 72, Introductory Branch Representative Pack moved by Cleveland. EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 72 INTRODUCTORY BRANCH REPRESENTATIVE PACK
Conference recognises that members who step forward into representative roles for the first time may benefit from clear and accessible guidance on the structures, rules and responsibilities of the Fire Brigades Union (FBU).

Conference acknowledges the important role brigade officials play in supporting and mentoring new representatives, often alongside significant workloads.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council (EC) to develop an Introductory Branch Representative Pack to be issued to all newly elected branch officials. This pack should provide clear guidance on:

- ***the structure and rules of the FBU***
- ***the roles and responsibilities of branch officials***
- ***members conditions of service contained within the Grey Book.***

Conference also instructs the EC to update the Branch Officials Handbook so that it reflects current FBU structures, guidance and values.

CLEVELAND

GLENN WATSON (Cleveland)**:**
President, conference, moving motion 72, introductory branch representatives pack. Conference, we all know the strength of our union doesn't just come from our history and our policies or even our victories. It comes from our members, and it comes from our branches. When a member steps forward to become a branch rep, they do it to represent their colleagues, to stand up for their workplace, and to carry the values of this union forward.

But let's be honest, stepping into a branch representative role for the first time can be a daunting experience. You're expected to understand structures, rules, procedures, conditions of service, often very quickly alongside maintaining a demanding job and juggling personal lives. New reps can sometimes be left to find their own way, which is where we see them all too often drop away.

We of course, have incredible brigade officials who step forward to support them, to help mentor and guide them, and it's one of the best traditions of the FBU and the trade union movement. But those officials are already carrying substantial workloads, and they shouldn't have to reinvent the wheel every time a new rep comes forward.

That's why this resolution matters. What we're asking for is simple, practical, and long overdue. A clear and accessible introductory branch representatives pack for every newly elected official. Not something complicated or theoretical, but something helpful and informative. This pack should provide clear guidance on the structures and the rules of the FBU and how it operates, the rules and responsibilities of branch officials and, crucially, members' conditions of service contained within the Grey Book.

Because if we want confident reps, we need informed reps. If we want active branches, we need well-equipped and supported officials. And if we want a strong union, we need to invest in the people who make it work day in, day out.

Conference therefore instructs the executive council to develop an introductory branch representatives pack to be issued to all newly elected branch officials.

Conference, this is about giving new reps the tools to succeed from day one. It's about consistency across brigades, and it's about strengthening the foundation of our union for the future. Please support this motion. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. It's now open for debate.

ASH HAYCOCK (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference. LGBT+ section supports resolution 72. The world is changing, and the way we support and represent LGBT+ members within our union must continue to evolve with this change. LGBT+ members deserve to see themselves represented properly by the language we use in our policies and official documents that we create, such as an introductory branch reps pack.

As an LGBT+ rep, many of us often wear more than one hat. We may sit on committees, not only as the LGBT+ rep, but also as health and safety reps, branch reps, or in other roles. But that is why it is important that the EC involve all relevant equality sections from the very beginning when developing materials such as the introductory branch reps pack.

We also support the update to the branch officials handbook, as an outdated or unclear branch officials handbook could risk leaving members unsupported, at the very moment they need the union the most. I urge conference to support this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, yep.

DANNY CAMPBELL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 72. We're all here as union members. A lot of us joining the FBU will have been the first experience of being in a union. I joined the FBU on my first day as a firefighter and definitely didn't know what the union did for us. Attending branch meetings, and as far as I could see, it was the older, more experienced firefighters, they were the reps. Moved to my current station, and it turned out that I'm the older, more experienced firefighter. So time to stand up. I met a few other officials at a demonstration in Edinburgh, and they persuaded me to get a proper branch structure at Motherwell, and I'm not afraid to admit it, I had no clue what a proper branch structure was.

Through their help, and probably a lot of phone calls, we managed to get a good structure. We brought a resolution asking for this handbook to be updated, the branch rep handbook in 2022. That's four years ago. It's still not been done. Conference, we support this resolution, but whatever is decided, get it done and give our new reps the tools they need. Conference, we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Danny. Anybody else? No. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thanks president and conference. This is a qualification that is going to bring joy to your hearts and fire to your souls. Hold onto your seats, steel your nerves. Stewards, get the smelling salts ready as I introduce the new and improved branch officials handbook. *Applause*

Danny said it's taken a couple to a few years, but perfection, you know, you need to get this right. Look, it's got colours, it's got pictures in it, it's got wee diagrams. If this isn't in there, you don't need to know it. No, so the qualification is the pack is going to primarily be based on the branch officials handbook.

Just a shout-out, by the way, if you go on to the FBU website, you'll see there's a resources pack you can follow. If you go into the organising section, where we have got posters, you can then email into the membership team if you want the posters. You can put the posters on your notice boards. Notice boards are so important in branches, aren't they? You know, shows it's our union branches. And that then makes it a union workplace. So other resources are available, but primarily, it's going to be in this wonderful new document.

Now, it's not quite finished, conference. Now the main reason for that is because the much welcome changes in the Employment Rights Act are still rolling through, and they're in sections in the branch officials handbook which refer to facilities, time off for trade union work. There's currently consultation underway. I believe it comes into fruition in August. There's also elements in there in regard to elements of the Employment Rights Act that come in in October time as well, such as electronic balloting, etc. So it's going to be a work in progress as we develop it.

It'll be primarily online. And when we're talking about a pack, look, we've got the FBU app, and the Grey Book is going to be in the FBU app as well. So we're hoping that our branch officials can access it there. But there it is.

Now, we can't always get things entirely right, as I think we've just found out. So there's going to be a select group of officials that I'm going to pull together and ask to go through this in some detail. I'll certainly make sure the equality sections are a part of it. I think the point that the comrade made was very important. I'll certainly make sure that Scotland are a part of it as well. Ooh. *Applause*

But look, just to show you, this is work that we are continually developing. We're continually building resources because we are truly of the belief that the FBU must be alive in our workplaces. That's where the union genuinely gets its strength, and everything flows up through the structures there. But that's another part of a project that is definitely determined to make us safer and stronger when we stand together. And one year, that's going to catch on. But that's the qualification, president, yeah. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tam. I now put resolution 72 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Right, conference, we'll be breaking for tea break in one minute. Just to let you all know that the book stall will be packing up either just after tea break or after lunch, so if you do want any books from there, go now.

Also, there will be a QR code displayed on some of the screens throughout the morning and afternoon sessions. That is a link to the Dorset and Wiltshire Cuts Campaign. It gives you the details of an online petition which we want everybody to sign as quick as we can because I think it closes soon, about the campaign materials, about the station closures and the 96 jobs that are threatened there.

And one last thing what I want to do, conference, before we break, our staff, we always try to get them on the road before lunch because they're traveling back down south. And at the end of conference, I always do a vote of thanks, and they always miss it. So I'm going to do a preliminary vote of thanks at this moment in time to the fantastic staff of the FBU. When I was a brigade official, I used to think there was about 2,000 staff working FBU

head office. And then when you see the skeleton staff we do have and what a fantastic job they do do and what they produce and do for our members, it's fantastic. So massive well done to the staff. Thank you for all you do for this. *Applause*

Conference just doesn't happen. They do a fantastic job of preparing and everything else to do throughout the year. So, right, tea break. Back in here for 11.15, please. Thank you.

Break for tea

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, can you start taking your seats, please. Conference, take your seats, please, including EC members.

Right, conference. We are getting back on with business, and the first one is the chair of standing orders his first report spoke about reducing the hour the lunch, dinner time. I nearly said lunch, didn't I, then? He'll be laughing because he's a lunch man; I'm a dinner man. So reducing the time that you eat your dinner or lunch. It's been proposed that we go half an hour, 1.15 rather than 1.45. There will be packed lunches outside on the tables ready for that. Is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. Right, conference. We now move on to our second and last guest speaker of conference, and it gives me great pleasure to introduce Paul Nowak.

Paul has been an active trade unionist and campaigner throughout his working life. He first became a union member aged 17, doing a range of jobs on temporary and agency contracts. Paul was one of the first intake to the TUC's Organising Academy in 1998. Age 26, he became an organiser for the BIFU, the financial services union, and is now part of Unite.

In 2000, Paul joined the TUC staff, becoming regional secretary for the North of England, and then head of organising. In 2013, he was appointed TUC assistant general secretary, and in 2016, deputy general secretary. In 2022, Paul became the TUC general secretary. He's a very busy man and a strong supporter of the FBU.

So please put your hands together and give Paul a very warm welcome. Thank you. *Applause*

PAUL NOWAK (TUC)**:**
Well, thanks, Ian, and thanks for that welcome, and thanks for the opportunity to say a few words. It's always an honour to speak at your conference and to bring solidarity from everybody at the TUC. Our 47 unions, 5.3 million members, one trade union family united by a single aim to win for all working people.

I want to start by thanking Steve for the brilliant job he's done since he became your general secretary last January. Steve has the FBU literally in his DNA. His dad was a firefighter. He's a firefighter. His son was a firefighter. He's been a fantastic champion for your members in our general council, influencing government, and as we saw last night, star of stage and screen on Question Time as well.

But as well as standing up for FBU members, he's been at the forefront of wider campaigns as well, including that campaign for justice for Zane Gbangbola, the seven-year-old who died as a result of toxic floodwater from a landfill site. It's a campaign that I know the FBU and Steve have driven with passion and determination.

So today, let's reaffirm our commitment to win Zane's Law so that no parent ever loses a child in those circumstances ever again. *Applause*

Listen, I think Steve and the entire top table would be the first to acknowledge they are part of a much bigger team. Each and every delegate here at this conference, every single FBU activist back in stations and in control rooms across the country can be proud rightly of what this union achieves for members every single day. And you've got a clear illustration of that in your Cuts Kill campaign, which I was proud to help you launch just over two months ago. You have turned that slogan into a reality. This union fought the cuts in Avon, and you won. You fought the cuts in Leicestershire, and you won. And you fought the cuts in Oxfordshire, and you won. That's the power of a union. That's the power of solidarity. Congratulations to everybody involved in that campaign. *Applause*

You know cuts kill, and they make an already difficult and demanding job even more dangerous. Today marks the anniversary of that terrible fire just down the M40 at Bicester Motion, and I know Steve will be attending an event later this evening. I want to pass on my condolences, the condolences of the whole of the TUC family as you remember your members, Martyn Sadler and Jennie Logan. Two firefighters who paid the ultimate price in the service of others. As your red plaque scheme shows, the people of this country owe an enormous debt to your members, and it's why we owe it to you to fund your service properly, and why we need a debate about proper building safety and regulation. For too long, cost cutting, putting profits before people, the cult of deregulation has put lives at risk.

We saw that at Grenfell, and today almost nine years on, our movement continues to demand justice for Grenfell. Justice, yes, for the survivors, the bereaved families, the residents, but also your members who endured that terrible night. Grenfell, never forget, and never ever again. *Applause*

What Grenfell underlines is the overwhelming need for a properly funded fire and rescue service. Now, the Labour government, and I'll say a little bit more about the political situation in a moment, has made some progress and some important pledges. And you've heard, I know, from Sam Dixon, the fire minister, establishing national standards for the fire and rescue service, a commitment to provide a better service for the public, setting up that ministerial advisory group with a key role for the FBU.

But like so much this government has done, we need to go further, and we need it to go faster. And we need commitments to proper funding and investment to safe crewing levels and secure firefighter jobs and pay progression for your skilled and dedicated members.

So today, I challenge the government to do the right thing. Invest in our communities. Build a fire service we can all be proud of, because this should never be about saving money. It should only ever be about saving lives. Now from public services to our economy, we are meeting at an absolutely critical time. In the UK, we've got a cost of living crisis that continues to hammer millions of families.

The Mandelson scandal has left trust in mainstream politics absolutely hanging by a thread, and we've got the rise of Reform at the ballot box and the far right literally on the march in our streets and in our communities. And that complex and volatile and dangerous environment extends right around the globe.

The White House unleashing chaos from Venezuela to Greenland to Iran, a fragile and very, very deeply flawed peace in Gaza, and Putin's war in Ukraine now in its fifth year. And I think we have a collective responsibility in these uncertain, dangerous times to give people hope, to show that things can get better, and that we can build a fairer, more equal, more just future.

So let me just set out three priorities for the TUC and our unions over the coming year. The first one is simply this: making sure the government delivers on its commitment to make work pay. On 18th December last year, our movement won an historic victory when the Employment Rights Bill became the Employment Rights Act, and that was the culmination of years of hard work and campaigning and lobbying by our unions.

Because of that Employment Rights Act, millions of workers got sick pay from day one for the first time just four weeks ago. Over a million workers on zero-hours contracts will get the right to guaranteed hours, so they know from one week to the next how much they're going to earn, and millions more will get the right to work flexibly, to be protected against sexual harassment, and the right to time off when they lose a loved one.

Crucially, unions will get the right to access workplaces for the first time ever, the right to access and contact workers digitally, and ballot electronically. And for the first time in my trade union lifetime, and I think everybody in this room, a government has actually repealed anti-union legislation, the 2016 Trade Union Act and that 2023 Minimum Services Level Act.

Let me just say this, conference, about that Employment Rights Act, because I think this is the most important thing. That didn't happen by accident. It didn't drop from the sky, and we didn't get those improvements in employment

rights because someone clever in a think tank wrote a report. It happened because of our unions, and the collective effort of every rep and activist across our movement, and the collective endeavour of the whole of the labour and trade union movement. That's something to be proud of, and it's something we delivered, and that's what we need more of from a Labour government. So the Employment Rights Act is important. It's not the whole of the story. There's a huge amount more that they need to do to deliver on that Make Work Pay agenda, from a new right to disconnect, the review of employment status, and the critical issue of public sector insourcing.

And on that, let's be clear. It is time to stop rewarding failure. It's time to stop handing the likes of Capita billions of pounds to screw up our public services. Let's bring those jobs and those services where they belong, back in public sector, back in the public hands. *Applause*

Second TUC priority, that's ensuring the government we've got right now delivers the change that people voted for back in July 2024. Now, there has been progress. The Employment Rights Act I've just mentioned, increased investment in our public services, a new industrial strategy, bringing British Steel back into public ownership, action on energy bills for households and employers. Our railways finally coming back where they belong in public ownership. And as Lucy Powell mentioned before, thanks to our campaigning, lifting that two-child benefit cap that will take hundreds of thousands of kids out of poverty. That's the difference a Labour government can and should make.

But if we're being honest, a lot of that good work hasn't cut through, it hasn't been communicated effectively, and a lot of it has been overshadowed by the government's self-inflicted mistakes, and simply put, frankly, it's not been enough. And we had the proof of that with those election results last week, which were a disaster for Labour. I think they just reflected the fact that for far too many people, change, which was the one word on the front of Labour's manifesto in July 2024, still feels like a slogan rather than a lived reality.

Now, the TUC isn't affiliated to the Labour Party. You had that debate yesterday. We've never been affiliated to the Labour Party. Our job is to engage with the government of the day, whoever's in Downing Street, on your behalf. I've had to sit in the room with Theresa May and Boris Johnson and all the others. So we won't be involved in the Labour leadership contest, if indeed there is a Labour leadership contest, in the way that you are. And I'm not really interested in playing Number 10 top trumps. What I am interested is in a government delivering for working people, their families and communities. So my message to the prime minister and whoever is in Downing Street, and whoever is in government next week, next year, in five years' time, is it's time to show working-class people in this country that you're on their side. It's time to deliver the manifesto commitments Labour was elected on, and it is time to be bolder and more ambitious.

So deliver the rest of Make Work Pay in full, invest in our public services, build closer ties with Europe, and kickstart growth, trade and good jobs. And one more thing: have the courage to ask those with the broader shoulders to pay a fairer share, because if Jeff Bezos can spend hundreds of millions of pounds firing Katy Perry off into space while he is union-busting workers in Coventry just down the road, he can pay more tax in this country. *Applause*

And if banks can post record profits and pay themselves as they did last year, record bonuses, £24 billion in the city of London, they can pay more tax. *Applause*

And if an offshore crypto millionaire can gift Nigel Farage £5 million, he can pay more tax in this country as well. *Applause*

So my overriding message to Labour is it's time to deliver the change that you promised.

And this takes me to my third and final point. We have to get the government to deliver that change if we are serious about stemming the rise of the populist and far right. Because our political opponents have been absolutely ruthless in promoting divisive narratives and feeding off economic insecurity. And we saw last week just how successful they've been. We know many trade union members would have voted for Reform. Lots more probably thought about voting for Reform. And, and I'll be up front. I don't think it's my job or the job of the trade union movement to tell people they voted the wrong way or to patronise them or suggest somehow that they're racist because they voted Reform. But we do have a responsibility to point out the chasm between what Nigel Farage says he stands up for and what he actually does and what he actually votes for.

So on employment rights, where they have been very clear that they will repeal that Employment Rights Act, they voted against it time and time again in Parliament. On public sector pensions, we have the spectacle of a multimillionaire like Richard Tice saying he'll scrap pensions arrangements for firefighters, for nurses, and for teachers. On equality, again, they've been very clear. They'll get rid of the Equality Act, effectively legalising discrimination in workplaces up and down this country. On British jobs, where we know Farage spends more time hanging around Mar-a-Lago and cheerleading on Donald Trump, whose tariffs put at risk thousands of good quality British jobs. And on public services, this final point. I have to tell you, that programme of austerity that they have set out would make George Osborne look like a big state socialist. It would take an axe through all of our public services. The evidence is clear. Farage and Reform do not, never have, and never will speak up for working class people. That's our job, and we've got to raise our voices and make sure working class people know that. *Applause*

So we do have a job of work to do collectively to expose Reform's hypocrisy and engage people where they are literally and metaphorically. And for unions, that means talking to our members in workplaces about the issues that matter to them: living standards, workers' rights, decent jobs, public services we can be proud of. And yes, what a fair values-based approach to migration looks like. That's why at the TUC we are working with unions to train reps to have difficult conversations at work around politics. It's why we recently launched our Unity Works campaign; a new national initiative aimed at engaging trade union members.

And our asks are rooted in the stuff that matters to our members: better jobs, better rights, better services, fair taxes, and cleaner politics. And that includes more transparency and more accountability in our politics and our political funding. One of this government's mistakes, I think, was appointing Peter Mandelson as our ambassador to the US, but that Mandelson scandal has shown how wealth and power and money subverts our democracy and our political discourse. We should all be worried when a Thai-based crypto millionaire can make £12 million worth of donations to Reform. We should all be worried when billionaires own social media platforms that promote racists and misogynists like Tommy Robinson, and we should all be worried when those same social media platforms we know drive profits by amplifying hateful and divisive messages.

So it is time to clean up our politics, and it's time to make politics actually work for working people. Let me just finish on this point. We've got some big priorities and some big challenges ahead. Every single union has got big challenges ahead, and the union movement collectively has got big challenges ahead. But in the face of those challenges, our responsibility is to rise to them. I am not a fatalist. I refuse to believe three years out from a general election that somehow it's inevitable that Reform will form a government. I refuse to believe that the majority of decent, fair-minded people in this country can't be won to a message of hope rather than a message of division. And I refuse to believe, actually, that the only way you take on Farage and his ragtag bunch of former Tories is to somehow ape them, to out-Farage, Farage. We are better than that, and our members are better than that, and I think Britain is better than that. So let's work together, let's deliver the change that people need, and let's together win a better future for workers. Solidarity, conference. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Paul. Steve?

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president, and thanks, Paul, for a fantastic speech. What I will say and place on record is the Fire Brigades Union's thanks for the work that you've done and the TUC have done to spread the message of the Cuts Kill campaign. Paul was there when we made our political launch, but further than that, Paul sent the message with me, I think, around the general council, of what this meant to every trade unionist, to every worker that is represented at the Trade Union Congress.

Because we know that that campaign was not just about firefighter safety, it was about safety of the public, safety of workers represented by all 48 trade unions that are represented there. That is a public safety campaign, and we thank the TUC for the help and support they've given us. We are winning, and we'll keep fighting because we've got some big battles to come, Paul, and we know that you will be there to support us. So thank you for that. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right, conference. Thank you for that, Paul. Right, we're now going to get on with some more business. Conference, I will now be taking resolutions 73 and 74 in the same debate. They can both carry together. I now call resolution 73, Enough is Enough, moved by Cleveland with amendments from Scotland and Merseyside. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 73 ENOUGH IS ENOUGH
Conference notes that in 2015, Cleveland Fire Brigades Union (FBU) wrote a CRMP response titled 'Enough is Enough' in response to proposed cuts within Cleveland Fire and Rescue service. In that document the Cleveland committee drew its line in the sand with regards to no more cuts.

Conference urges the Executive Council (EC) to put the FBU back on an industrial footing by putting our employers on notice by emphasising the FBU will not sit by and allow any further cuts to UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) and that any cuts to frontline jobs will be met with the steadiest of resistance locally, regionally and nationally.

Conference instructs the EC to not only continue with the campaign of 'Cuts Kill' but to build on the campaign and to make sure that UKFRSs are under no doubt the FBU will fight tooth and nail, up to and including strike action if needed, to defend our jobs and defend our profession.

CLEVELAND

AMENDMENT 1
2nd paragraph, 1st line
Delete 'the FBU back on an industrial footing by putting' so that content reads: 'to put our employers on notice'

SCOTLAND

AMENDMENT 2
Paragraph 2 remove the words 'steadiest of' replace with 'strongest'.

MERSEYSIDE

JAMES SUDRON (Cleveland)**:**
President, conference, moving motion 73. Comrades, in 2015, Cleveland FBU drew their line in the sand when told that cuts were to be implemented. When faced with these cuts, we said enough is enough. Not just as a slogan or as the title of our response, but as a warning. A warning that there comes a point when further cuts stop being efficiencies and start becoming something far more dangerous. Conference, that was over 10 years ago, and the truth is this: those cuts didn't stop. They didn't slow down, and in many areas things have gotten a lot worse. Across the UK fire and rescue services have been cut to the bone. We've lost firefighters, appliances, stations, and vital resilience. Every single cut has consequences, and we are the ones who see those consequences first-hand. We see it on the fire ground, we see it in our response times, and we see it in the growing risks to firefighters and to the public we serve.

Conference, this cannot go on. This resolution is about putting the Fire Brigades Union back on an industrial footing. It is about sending a clear and unmistakable message to our employers and to this Labour government. We will not accept any further cuts to the fire and rescue service. Not one more firefighter, not one more control operator, not one more appliance, and no more compromises to firefighter safety or to the public's safety.

And let's be absolutely clear about this. This should not just be rhetoric. This must be action. If employers continue down this path, they must understand that they will be met with the strongest resistance locally, regionally, and nationally. Now, conference, as I am stood in a room full of people that advocate for transparency, I will be honest with you. Steadiest was not the word I was going for when I wrote this resolution. It did get through standing orders, but believe it or not, the word I was meant to write was sturdiest. My brain did fail me, not for the first time, and it won't be the last. So of course, we do welcome the amendment from Merseyside. Thank you.

Conference, we already have a powerful campaign in Cuts Kill, which has had a fantastic start. I am proud to say that I was at its launch in Oxfordshire with a delegation from region 3, and this union can be very proud of the result it's had there and in a growing number of regions across this country where they are facing shameful cuts.

But this motion says we must go further. We must build on it, strengthen it, and make sure that there is no doubt about our resolve. We are not asking politely anymore. We are clearly stating that enough is enough. Therefore, conference instructs the EC to not only continue with the campaign of Cuts Kill, but to build on the campaign and make sure that fire and rescue services are under no doubt the FBU will fight tooth and nail up until and including strike action if needed to defend our jobs and to defend our profession, because if we don't fight for the future of the service, who will?

Conference, this is about safety, this is about dignity, this is about drawing a line in the sand once again and meaning it. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. Have a seconder? Have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Scotland to move the amendment. Yep. thanks, Seona. Conference.

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
We fully support this resolution from our comrades in Cleveland. Very short, the amendment we submitted was to remove the FBU back on industrial footing because we feel it implies that we're not already on an industrial footing. Thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Seona. Does that amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Merseyside to move the amendment. *Formally* Thank you. Does that amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate.

Sorry, apologies. Not open for debate yet. I now call resolution 74, Industrial Action Early Engagement moved by Avon, EC support. Apologies, conference. Apologies, Avon. Otherwise, I could have called you earlier and you'd have been down here.

Resolution 74 INDUSTRIAL ACTION EARLY ENGAGEMENT
Conference recognises the need to build an evidenced based case when campaigning against proposed cuts to UK Fire and Rescue services (UKFRSs).

Conference also asserts the importance of early membership engagement to achieve industrial action when fighting frontline cuts.

Conference further recognises the crucial role that an early declaration of potential industrial action played in the defeat of proposed cuts in Avon Fire and Rescue Service in 2026.

Conference encourages all Fire Brigades Union (FBU) brigade committees to undertake early engagement with FBU members on industrial action when campaigning against cuts to UKFRSs.

AVON

SIMON LAWSON (Avon)**:**
Mr president, conference. In 2024, we faced a threat of impactful operational cuts in Avon when forty firefighter posts were tabled to be removed. Members fought back hard because we believed at the time the service hadn't even explored any other options and were taking the easy route, which would have had a hugely detrimental impact on our members and our communities.

At a time with the pressure applied by the FBU members, the fire authority authorised the use of reserves to avoid making those frontline cuts. This was enough to see us through 2024 without losing any firefighter posts. However, we knew they would be back. Moving forward to 2025 with pension, National Insurance contribution shortfalls, budgetary cutbacks and inflationary price of living pressures, Avon once again tabled the removal of firefighter posts, this time up to seventy-two.

So we began our local campaign by organising, agitating and mobilising our members. From day one, consistent lobbying of the Fire Authority, MPs and the councillors, informing them of the magnitude of these cuts and effects that it would have on public and our firefighter safety. A motion was then put forward by one of our branches to explore industrial action if these cuts were not taken off the table.

This motion was agreed unanimously by the committee. This show of strength from our members led to the chief withdrawing the paper to the fire authority asking for the removal of frontline firefighter posts. This action gave us more time to lobby hard, and subsequently the service received an additional government funding secured to the value of £3.5 million.

The show of strength from our members in 2024 and '25 showed the service that we will not accept these cuts without a challenge. We also believe the demonstration of the strength of feeling in Avon and the strength of our union is what led to successfully avoiding the removal of up to seventy-two firefighter posts, which in Avon amounts to an entire watch.

Looked at nationwide, other services have had similar successes, and some are in dispute now, and we hope that these will also be as successful as ours. We joined as firefighters to make a difference, and we are trade unionists to make a difference. And whilst it sometimes might feel like an impossible fight, if we work together, we can absolutely win. Unity is strength. Conference I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Simon, and a big well done to the members in Avon and the officials. Right, does that have a seconder? Yep.

KAYLEY BRIDGES (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, first time conference, first time speaker. *Applause*

Frontline cuts not only affect every fire service, but every member of our communities. We cannot sit down and allow our services to be eroded. The longer we wait to engage our members, the longer the fight drags on. A strong and early show of industrial strength is crucial to putting pressure on the employers and central government.

This strong position is a valuable tool that has proved vital in pushing back frontline cuts. We cannot be scared to take action. We need to show our commitment to our cause. This alone can be enough to reverse these cuts. We second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kay. That's now open for debate. Steve.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president. conference, look, the EC wholeheartedly support both of these resolutions, including the right to say enough is enough. A decade of cuts have left the fire service decimated. So let's leave this conference all united, making sure that every employer is on notice wherever they try to make proposals to lessen our safety.

And look, Avon absolutely right, you saved jobs, you kept firefighters safer, and you made the public safer by your campaign, and you did get on an industrial footing. And I agree, we are there now, we'll continue to be there, and we continue to do our job fighting every single cut, and we'll do that in Dorset and Wiltshire.

So make sure you do fill in from the code that was given today and make sure we send a loud and clear message to Dorset and Wiltshire. Eight fire stations being closed, that will affect fire safety, firefighter safety, and public safety. So let us keep fighting. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. Conference, I now put amendment one to resolution 73 to the vote.
All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put amendment 2 to resolution 73 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 73 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, if you could raise the steadiest of hands, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 74 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para K2, para K3. Conference, I will now be taking resolution 70 and 71 in the same debate. They can both carry together. So resolution 70, Fire Control Media Campaign, control staff national committee. The EC are giving qualified support. And also resolution 71, Valuing Control Firefighters moved by Scotland. CSNC. Thank you.

Resolution 70 FIRE CONTROL MEDIA CAMPAIGN
Control Staff National Committee note that their profile has heightened within the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) and welcome the greater awareness and acknowledgement of Fire Control Staff nationally.

That said communications are often firefighter centric.

Conference instructs the Executive Council that a targeted media campaign be implemented to further raise awareness around reduced staff numbers within Fire Control's against ever increasing call volumes and workloads, and to promote this at all opportunities and levels. This work should be concluded by Conference 2027 enabling the campaign to be fully embedded within the FBU communications strategy.

CONTROL STAFF NATIONAL COMMITTEE

NIKKI HAXTON-JONES (CSNC)**:**
President, conference, CSNC note that the profile of the section and our issues have been heightened within the FBU of late, and we welcome the greater awareness and acknowledgement of fire control staff nationally. However, we can do more.

Communications are often operationally based and firefighter-centric. It's hoses, overhead sets. We respond together in different ways. We can't work without each other. We can't deal with those incidents without each side. We ask for its hoses and headsets. CSNC would like to work with the EC to formulate targeted campaigns to promote and increase awareness of ever-increasing workloads and call volumes, and an effort to promote this at all levels.

This work to be conducted and implemented by Conference 2027. Please support. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Nikki. Does that have a seconder? Yep, is seconded? *Formally* Thank you. I now call resolution 71, valuing control firefighters moved by Scotland. EC are supporting.

Resolution 71 VALUING CONTROL FIREFIGHTERS
Conference recognises the vital, safety critical role of our control firefighters, who are the first point of contact for the public in emergency situations and provide essential operational support to our frontline crews.

Conference notes with deep concern that many operational fire control rooms continue to operate below agreed crewing levels and believes that under crewing creates unacceptable pressure on control firefighters, impacts their health and wellbeing and poses a serious threat to public safety.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to lead a campaign for an end to the practice of operating fire control rooms below agreed crewing levels and in doing so promote the recognition of control firefighters as equal, professional and indispensable members of UK Fire and Rescue Services.

SCOTLAND

DAWN FORREST (Scotland)**:**
Good morning. President, conference, first-time delegate, and first time speaking very quickly. *Applause*

Conference, speaking to move resolution 71, valuing control firefighters. Let us be clear from the outset, our control firefighters are not optional, they are not auxiliary, and they are not a luxury. They are a core safety critical component of every single emergency response that the UK fire and rescue service responds to.

When the public dials 999, it is the control firefighters who carry the weight of that terrified caller. It is control firefighters who extract vital information, make split-second decisions, mobilise resources, and who support our operational crews throughout the incident. And yet, despite this indispensable role, too many fire and rescue services continue to operate control rooms below agreed crewing levels.

Conference, this is not just unacceptable, it is dangerous. Under-crewing is not an efficiency measure. It is not a temporary inconvenience, and operating with under-crewed control rooms is a calculated risk taken by those who will never personally bear the consequences. It places intolerable pressure on control firefighters, forces them to work beyond capacity, and shoulder workloads that no professional should be expected to manage.

Under-crewed control rooms also increase the risk of mistakes, which can expose operational firefighters and members of the public to unacceptable danger that can cost lives. In my 33 years' service, I have lost count of the amount of times the excuse of, "There's nothing we can do", or, "Every control room's in the same boat", has been cited as if it's an excuse to not make any improvements.

We would never tolerate frontline appliances being routinely crewed below safe levels. We would never accept sending firefighters into hazardous environments without the right number of personnel, so why should we accept it within our control rooms? These are the very nerve centre of our emergency response, and it's being left short-staffed, overstretched, and undervalued.

The answer is quite simple: we should not, and we will not. Control firefighters deserve the recognition as equal, professional, and indispensable members of our service. Their expertise is not negotiable, their safety is not negotiable, and crewing levels required to run safe, resilient control rooms is also not negotiable.

We cannot allow services to gamble with lives by cutting corners in controls. We cannot allow control firefighters to be pushed beyond breaking point. And we cannot allow the public to be placed at risk because of decisions driven by budgets rather than safety. Let us be absolutely clear, when control rooms are under-crewed, response times suffer. When control rooms are under-crewed, performance and information suffers. And when control rooms are under-crewed, people can die.

Conference, this resolution demands that the executive council leads a campaign to end the practice of running control rooms below agreed crewing levels. That campaign is not merely justified, it's urgent. It is a matter of professional respect, organisational integrity, and above all, firefighter and public safety. Conference, this resolution draws a line, and that line says, "Enough." Conference, I urge you to support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, and well within time as well. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Anybody? Oh, sorry. Apologies I can't see the rostrums from here. Yes, to second. Yep.

NIKKI HAXTON-JONES (CSNC)**:**
President, conference, we could fill conference today with examples of control firefighters being undervalued. I think just to summarise the importance of control, we have seen many FBU campaigns against cuts to keep appliances on the run and stations open to protect turnout times. Crews cannot be mobilised if there's no one to answer the 999 calls. Understaffed control rooms mean there's delays answering calls, there's delayed turnouts, there's reduced ability for control officers to properly assess incidents. We've got reduced ability to use judgement to order additional appliances. We've got reduced ability to provide situational awareness to crews. There's delays requesting ambulance if we can't answer 999 calls. When you arrive on scene, when there is a delay in us taking those calls, that fire is more developed, the casualties have deteriorated, you may not have oncoming appliances coming.

The ambulance may not have been requested. The public are at risk, and more importantly, crews are more at risk. Control are a key part of turnout times and keeping public safe. Let's raise awareness on this. We support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Nikki. Yep.

KIRSTY WRIGHT (NWC)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 71: Valuing Control Firefighters. As a firefighter and as a representative of the national women's committee, I want to begin by recognising something that every firefighter in this room already knows.

When the public dial 999, the first firefighter they speak to is in control. It is our control firefighters who remain calm in chaos, who gather critical information, who reassure terrified callers, who coordinate operational resources, and who support frontline crews through some of the most dangerous and traumatic incidents imaginable.

They're not secondary to the emergency response. They are not support staff. They are the firefighters. Professional skilled safety-critical firefighters. And yet across the UK, we continue to see control rooms operating below agreed crewing levels, placing impossible pressure on already overstretched staff and creating unacceptable risk to both firefighters and the public.

In South Yorkshire, this issue became impossible to ignore. From December onwards, staffing levels in control fell as low as just two personnel. Two people expected to manage calls, mobilisation, and firefighter safety for an entire service area. That is not resilience. That is not efficiency. That is a critical health and safety failure.

Thanks to the sustained pressure from the FBU officials and members, South Yorkshire was forced to act. A recruitment drive was introduced, staffing levels improved, and they are now operating above establishment. That proves something important. This issue is very much solvable. But comrades, this cannot depend on whether local officials happen to win the fight one brigade at a time. Because while South Yorkshire may have secured progress today, there are control rooms elsewhere still operating under dangerous conditions right now. This must become a national campaign. We need nationally enforced safe crewing levels, and we need fire and rescue services to stop treating control as the easiest place to cut costs.

It was all too telling at conference last year when the fire minister referred to control members as call handlers, and even more disappointing that nobody from the top table corrected him. With the loss of two EC members from a control background, we fear we are going to have to bang that drum even louder.

Conference, if we truly believe in equality across our service, then we must recognise control as equal. Conference, please support this motion. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kirsty. Harry.

HARRY BRANT (Leicestershire)**:**
President, conference, proud firefighter control. Speaking in support of both of these very important resolutions. I echo the sentiments of all the speakers in this debate. Conference, I feel we can go further than opposing below minimum level crewing in our control rooms. Control rooms need investment too. Let's build resilience and call for more investment and increase the establishments in all control rooms up and down the country. Conference, I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Harry. Yep.

HAYLEIGH MARKS TALABIS (Northamptonshire)**:**
President, conference, also proud control room member. I stood on the rostrum last year as part of the CSNC delegation and moved a resolution for a standard crewing level for fire control rooms.

It's a quick question to the EC: Has there been any progress on our resolution from last year? Thank you. I also support the motions. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Adam.

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, the executive council stands in absolute solidarity with the CSNC committee. It's pleasing to hear that actually it's recognised that the profile and status of control firefighters has been amplified, and rightly so, because they are an important part of the team that resolves the incidents that we all know too much about.

I don't think it's just about numbers. When we talk about numbers in control rooms, you have to think about the mobilising systems that aren't fit for purpose. I think these campaigns can be absolutely wider than firefighter control numbers. When you've got mobilising systems mobilising in the UK in French, when you've got systems falling over where control firefighters are reverting back to pen and paper, it's simply not good enough.

So absolutely we support both these resolutions. The qualification is in relation to resolution 70. We, we need tangible evidence to build those campaigns, and we will be relying on brigade officials and officials across the regions to supply that information. We absolutely will act quickly and get these campaigns up and running as requested in the resolutions. Thank you, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Adam. Right, I now put resolution 70 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 71 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call Para K4. I now call resolution 75, Use Of The Term On Call, moved by the national retained committee. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 75 USE OF THE TERM "ON CALL"
Conference notes that the term 'On Call' was introduced by the National Fire Chiefs Council with the intent that it would better describe the duty system to members of the public and potential recruits. Assurances were given that the term would not replace the term 'Retained' which is the negotiated National Joint Council (NJC) Grey Book term for those that work the Retained Duty System (RDS).

Conference is concerned that the term 'On Call' is now replacing the term 'Retained' across UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) with policies and procedures now refering solely to 'On Call', with some Services now introducing 'On Call Duty Systems' which could undermine the rights that were won for the Retained by our own union. But it is not just within UKFRSs that the term is prevalent. Within our own union, the term 'On Call' is now the term being used by officials and members to describe the Retained.

Conference is aware that the National Retained Committee have raised this issue with the National Officer and with the Executive Council (EC) and have been told that the position of the NJC Secretaries, and of the EC, is that the term 'Retained' is the correct term to describe our members who are working the RDS.

Conference instructs the EC to take all necessary steps to end the use of the term 'On Call' and to communicate this position to the employers, our own officials and to our members.

NATIONAL RETAINED COMMITTEE

JAMES SALT (NRC)**:**
President, conference, the term retained firefighter originates from the UK and Ireland and refers to part-time firefighters who are retained by a local fire authority to respond to emergencies while living or working within the local community. They are retained because they are paid a retainer fee to be available.

While volunteer teams have existed for centuries, modern retained duty system was solidified in the UK following the Fire Services Act 1947, which returned fire services to local authority control. As such, the term retained is mentioned forty-five times in the Grey Book Conditions of Service, including reference to those working the day crewing duty system.

There is not a single mention of the term on-call within the eighty-nine pages of the Grey Book. The term on-call has largely been driven by the NFCC. The NRC is concerned that the terms and conditions that we fought for in the Grey Book for those working within the retained duty system are at risk of being diluted by the use of the term on-call.

As the use of this term increases, a level of ambiguity remains with those working a system referred to as on-call, whose conditions of service are covered under a system referred to as a retained duty system. The NRC have been bringing this issue to the EC for a number of years. We thank them for now making their position clear, but this position now needs to be effectively communicated. We ask conference to instruct the EC to communicate this position to our employers, our own officials, our members, and following yesterday's guest speaker, our fire minister. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Does that have a seconder? Yep.

GUY LAWES (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, seconding reso 75, use of the term on call. I am a wholetime firefighter of 12 years and a retained firefighter of 16 years. I also sit on the NRC. James has delivered the resolution perfectly, and as such, there's not really a lot to say as to whether or not this resolution should be supported.

Of course it should. But the term on-call is something that didn't arrive in Durham until the last year, and in truth, it's caused some division in places both local to us and further afield. Here's some things that I've heard. "It's just a petty argument, this. Who cares? It's just a shift system. Well, you are on call, aren't you?" So what's in a name?

In 2010 and beyond, the fire service has been cut savagely. We all know this. These cuts have affected us all. Pump losses, station closures, lower response times, safety for us and the public. But cuts to staff have largely happened through things such as natural wastage. Staff have been relocated. Pay hasn't increased the way that we wanted it to or that it should have. However, the individual day-to-day cost to the worker and true reduction in take-home pay for our members has arguably been and continues to be hardest felt in the RDS. Removal of the ability to perform their own vehicle checks, minus an hour a week. Community safety requirements lowered, minus two hours a week. Community engagement cut, minus two hours. Additional training cut, minus two hours. Whole time pumps preferentially mobilised to certain incident types due to cost alone, minus a couple of hours. The list of backdoor actual pay cuts on retained members in every county in varying degrees is absolutely massive.

So again, what's in a name? The title usage is indicative of the way that a lot of RDS firefighters feel regularly, forgotten about and reduced. There may be a time when firefighters on the retained duty system choose to be identified in a different way, but it won't be because the NFCC forced us to, and it shouldn't be because this union allowed it to pass without argument.

So please, delegates and everybody up there when you leave here and head back to your brigades, stop using a term which trivialises the effort and responsibility of a huge percentage of the FBU membership and challenge its usage at every step to show RDS firefighters that they matter to this union. And as James has already said, if anyone could pass that on to the fire minister, we'd appreciate that, too. Durham seconds. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Guy. Yep. Open for the debate.

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
Excellent. Apologies, I didn't know if I should come up early or not, so. Uh, president, conference, I rise to support the resolution on behalf of retained firefighters and the protection of the retained duty system across the UK fire and rescue service. Words matter. The term retained is not an outdated terminology.

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate, can you just say your name for the record?

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
Sorry, I got into it and forgot. It is the nationally negotiated and legally recognised term contained with the NJC Grey Book. It represents national agreed terms and conditions, industrial protections, and the identity of thousands of firefighters who provide critical fire cover to communities every single day. Yes, we understand why the term on-call was introduced by the NFCC. It was intended to support recruitment and improve public understanding.

But conference, there is a very important distinction between a public-facing recruitment phrase and nationally negotiated duty system. Our concern is that some services are now replacing the term retained entirely within policy, procedure, contracts, and operational language. This is not simply a branding exercise. It risks eroding the industrial and legal framework that underpins the retained duty system.

This concern becomes even more important in the context of the Matzak judgment, which brought national attention to standby arrangements, availability requirements, restrictions on firefighters during standby periods, and the wider legal implications of retained working arrangements.

We must protect that identity. The resolution is not about resisting modernisation or recruitment improvements. It is about ensuring that in modernising our language, we do not accidentally weaken nationally negotiated agreements or dilute recognition of retained firefighters within the UK service.
Retained firefighters deserve recognition of the duty system they work and the protections that come with it.

Conference, I ask you to support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Alan. If I could just remind delegates to say your name when you do come up. It is for the verbatim report, and Alan, I did know your name, but I just call you delegate rather than say, "Alan, tell me your name, Alan."

Thank you. Right. Anybody else? No. Have we got any from here? No. Right. I now put resolution 75 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para K5, para K6, para K7. Six. Six. Sorry, back to K6.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, just would like to show our thanks for all the support that membership service gives to us. I've been a brigade organiser; I know how hard they work. They get back to us so quickly. When we've run ballots in Merseyside, we rely on them so much, and I know that'll be the same right throughout the country. The staff in membership services, the staff at head office, thank you very much. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Lee. Hopefully there's still some of them around to hear that. Cheers. Right, para K7. Right. I'm now moving on to Section D, Fire and Rescue Service policy. We're picking up again. I now call resolution 46, Standardisation Review of Institute of Fire Engineers, IFE, Qualifications Within Firefighter Apprenticeships moved by Buckinghamshire. EC are supporting.

Resolution 46 STANDARDISATION AND REVIEW OF INSTITUTE OF FIRE ENGINEERS (IFE) QUALIFICATIONS WITHIN FIREFIGHTER APPRENTICESHIPS

Conference notes the inconsistent requirement across UK Fire and Rescue Services for firefighter apprentices to complete qualifications delivered by the IFE.

Conference further notes that this inconsistency has created a 'postcode lottery,' whereby the requirement to complete IFE qualifications is determined by geographic location rather than by role, competence or national standard.

Conference is concerned that members have raised issues regarding the impact of IFE examinations and associated assessment methods on neurodiverse learners, particularly where reasonable adjustments, alternative assessment pathways or appropriate support are inconsistent or inadequate.

Conference is further concerned that failure to pass IFE qualifications in some services prevents members from being deemed fully qualified and competent, directly affecting pay progression, access to the competent rate of pay, career advancement and overall wellbeing.

Conference recognises the stress, financial detriment and perceived inequity experienced by members who are otherwise operationally competent, but face barriers linked solely to examination requirements.

Conference believes that competence should be determined by nationally agreed occupational standards and demonstrable operational ability, not by geographic location.

Conference further believes that pay progression and recognition of competence must be fair, equitable and free from discriminatory impact.

Conference also believes that assessment frameworks within fire and rescue services must be inclusive and accessible to neurodiverse members, in line with equality legislation and best practice.

Conference is clear that a national role such as firefighter should have nationally consistent qualification requirements.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:

- ***conduct a national review of the requirement for IFE qualifications within firefighter apprenticeships across the United Kingdom***
- ***seek evidence from members regarding the impact of IFE qualification requirements on neurodiverse colleagues, including data on failure rates, reasonable adjustments, delays to pay progression and financial detriment***
- ***lobby for the removal of any mandatory link between IFE examination success and progression to the competent rate of pay unless such requirements are nationally standardised, evidence-based and demonstrably fair***
- ***campaign for a nationally standardised approach to firefighter qualification and competence assessment that ensures equality of opportunity regardless of geographic location.***

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

ROB MARTIN (Buckinghamshire)**:**
President, conference, across the UK, the introduction of fire and rescue service apprenticeships is becoming more commonplace. An apprenticeship is a real job with real pay where you gain real experience, develop job-specific skills, and study towards what should be a nationally recognised qualification at the same time.

However, the reality is that fire and rescue service apprentices face completely different expectations depending on where they work. A prime example, some services require an apprentice to pass an Institute of Fire Engineer's exam before they are deemed competent. Others do not. This inconsistency is becoming a detriment to our members.

Firefighters who are fully operationally competent and have completed all the required elements of the apprenticeship framework could be blocked from progression, denied their competent rate of pay and pension

contributions, potentially extending financial and emotional strain simply because of an exam that sits in addition to the apprenticeship criteria and is not required everywhere across the UK.

For many neurodiverse learners, the IFE assessment model creates barriers that have nothing to do with their ability to do their jobs. This is not just unfair; it raises serious equality concerns. Conference, competence must be based on national occupational standards and demonstratable operational ability, and not which fire and rescue service you are in. A firefighter is a firefighter based on a national role map, and the qualification requirements must be too. This motion calls for a national review of IFE requirements and their use in determining the competence of our apprentice members. It calls for evidence on the impact on neurodiverse colleagues in those services who insist on the added stress of an additional exam.

It calls for the removal of any link between IFE examination and the transition from development to competent pay, instead following the national standards for apprenticeship completion and for a fair, consistent, inclusive approach to assessing competencies across the UK. This is not about lowering standards; it is about raising fairness. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Rob. Does it have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. Joe?

JOE WEIR (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thanks, president, and thanks Buckinghamshire for bringing the resolution. Look, it's just a small qualification from the council that this work is actually already being looked at as part of the pay reform work. The AGS made clear in his speech in delivering pay reform on Wednesday that competence has to be a fundamental part of any pay reform and pay structure moving forward.

So it's to welcome that. It is being looked at. We're looking for national standardisation, and we will keep you updated on the progress of that work. Thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Joe. I now put resolution 46 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para D2, para D3. Sorry, you want para D4? Para D5. Para D4. I think we've got the NFCC fan club.

RICHARD BEEBY (Suffolk)**:**
No fans. President, conference, the NFCC have far too much sway and power amongst our fire services. It is vital that we, as a union, hold them not only to account but keep them in check. We currently experience a raft of national operational guidance being thrust upon us by the monopoly that is the NFCC.

This is rarely consulted on and often put into practice without so much as being slid across the table for local reps to have their say on. And in fact, they seem to dictate everything except our declining response times. The NFCC does not only push its practices through NOG but also through its code of ethics, leadership framework, learning pathways, and again, all unconsulted on and largely unfollowed by the principal officers policing it, who we seem to have endless scandals around. In fact, in Suffolk alone, a recent staff survey found that only forty percent of our members actually believe that their senior leaders role model their code of ethics. This has affected our members' conditions with them being challenged and, in some cases, disciplined against a set of rules that we have not agreed and instead actively challenge.

It is easy for us to be told to hold the line and defend the Grey Book, but when we have principal officers forcing these on to an otherwise unknowing service, it becomes an incredibly unnecessary time sink on our reps. The NFCC also looks set to influence the PPE we wear, something which again, the vast majority of people involved in this organisation will never have to wear in our most challenging operational environments. Conference, thank you. *Applause*

DARREN BARRETT (Bedfordshire)**:**
President, conference, last year we saw a resolution from Cheshire carried to call for the funding of the NFCC from the public purse to cease immediately. We had speeches around the influence that the NFCC are having on policies and procedures that affect our members day to day.

Even if they are now engaging in our union and relations have supposedly improved, we are still seeing so-called guidance arrive in our brigades with little challenge except for that of the local reps. In my region, this issue is deeper. My chief fire officer had the power to veto a decision to allow the regional FBU official on to the regional project group, thus skipping a layer of union consultation and resulting in each brigade having to challenge each issue locally, essentially six times the amount of work.

Why should a chief have this power? The funding issue also certainly has not ceased immediately. An FOI, for Bedfordshire at the end of February this year disclosed that Bedfordshire alone had invoices totalling over £74,000 from 2025 to 2026, and this was similar across the whole of region 9.

We are constantly told that the fight lies with the local reps, but why is this? We are fighting those at the top that are trying to act as a governing body. Why can't those at the top of our union do more to assist us nationally? Conference, thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
AGS.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks Richard and Darren for the comments. I understand the sentiment to the comments as well, and certainly, when this Labour government took up office, we were very, very clear with them about the expectations about who they should be now dealing with as the experts and the professional voice of firefighters, and we know that is us, that is you.

We did raise immediately with Alex Norris when he took up office, and then again more recently with Sam Dixon, the issue of the funding of the NFCC, so we certainly lived up to that resolution you rightly brought last year.

But the truth is, in reality, those points we have raised have been heard. As you heard from Steve a few times yesterday, you've heard from me during this conference, and you've heard from the fire minister. When there is a concern or a query that this government has, it is us they are turning to first now. We have access, unfettered access into government now. We didn't have that, or I certainly didn't have that in my first few years as your AGS. But that is available to us now. We are the people that are turned to when there are questions.

If you'd look at health monitoring, for instance, that shocked and surprised the NFCC, and rightly so, you know. That was a campaign that we had been leading and been in discussions with government, and I have no doubt that they're pretty annoyed, by their having little awareness of an announcement such as that.

So again, that is another example. There was an amendment going through the House of Lords in relation to the Devolution Bill. It wasn't the NFCC that was contacted in relation to that. It was the FBU for its position on that. That was then opposed by government. That's the extent this government's talking to us. That's the real difference we've got by being in the rooms. The NFCC's ability to sway the decision-making of government has significantly decreased, and it is no doubt the reason they're rushing through what they can do that you need to oppose locally, we need to oppose nationally, but they're doing that before they are shackled again by a College of Fire that is democratically set up and statutory underpinned.

That's what they're rushing to get ahead of, comrades, and it's our job to slow all of that down and prevent it coming into place before we've got that established. Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. I call para D5, para D6. I now call resolution 40 Ensuring Protection For All moved by Greater Manchester, the EC are supporting.

Resolution 40 ENSURING PROTECTION FOR ALL
Conference notes the collective agreements reached in London and Greater Manchester with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU), with regards to training for and responding to Marauding Terrorist Attack (MTA) incidents.

These agreements were reached after discussions facilitated by the National Joint Council (NJC).

Conference understands that whilst the training, exercising and pre-planning for MTA incidents in Greater Manchester and London has been significant there are obvious gaps when responding to a MTA incident.

Conference also understands that a recent MTA incident in Greater Manchester saw members wearing different levels of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) due to fire appliances not being equipped with enough PPE for all firefighters.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to conduct a comprehensive review of current MTA PPE provision in Greater Manchester and London, to ensure that should national agreement on MTA be reached, every firefighter is provided with the same levels of PPE when responding to an MTA incident.

The findings and any proposed policy adjustments are to be presented no later than Conference 2027.
GREATER MANCHESTER

MATT FRYER (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 40, ensuring protection for all. I did have a big speech written, so I've cut it right down, you'll be pleased to know. This is essentially about better PPE for all the crews on the pumps, specifically to do with MTA. So it's a no-brainer really going forwards. This resolution came from my watch, my station. Unfortunately on 2nd October last year, turning out to a building fire, we came across the Heaton Park synagogue attack which we thought was an RTC to begin with. We parked up and the gunshots rang out and the person was shot.

But unfortunately, it's quite a dynamic situation. Our BA crews donned their MTA gear, but there were only two sets. Two sets of ballistic helmets, two sets of ballistic vests, and they are coming up for ten years old. The OIC and the driver themselves were basically peeking from behind the pump trying to have a bit of protection.

So there's basically not enough. So what we're asking for in the resolution is a full audit of MTA provision within Manchester and London setting – well, across the country really, but mainly because of the two agreements we've got, setting out a gold standard for pump and pump crews on what they should have and if there's any additions which should be made with the developments in information technology or whatever it might be. But basically giving the protections on the pumps because it could be any pump crew that finds this. It could be from anything from a water incident through to, you know, vehicles into crowds, whatever it might be. Any pump crew could come across this. So setting a gold standard going forwards and to report back to conference next year. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Mark. Does that have a seconder?

ROSS McLAREN (London)**:**
Conference, president, we're seconding this motion, motion 40, resolution 40. When you get a shout, you don't have to choose as crews, who wears a helmet, who wears a tunic, who wears leggings. When you go to a flooding, you don't choose who wears a dry suit, who wears the PFD. When you go to a fire, you don't choose who gets to wear the BA mask and who wears the cylinder. When you go to an MTA, you shouldn't have to choose who wears ballistics. You shouldn't have to decide who gets shot or stabbed. Very simple. We need to hold the employer to account to make sure their staff are protected from these incidents that are becoming more and more frequent. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks for that, Ross. That's now up for debate. No. Ben.

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, look, thanks, Matt. Thanks, Ross, for those comments. I think they're really important, and certainly the executive council support the motion. I too, like Ross, just want to pay tribute to those firefighters in Manchester that came across the synagogue attack. We certainly appreciate their efforts on that day, and I know the union will too. But the same to London members in relation to the Golders Green attacks there as well. You know, our members are actively responding to greater risks and threats, and it's important that we make sure that we fight that they are protected when they're there.

This is both a health and safety matter, but it's also a matter of terms and conditions in relation to the local collective agreements we've got in Manchester and London.

I just want to give an assurance, Matt, that actually this work needs to be done rather swiftly rather than just prior to conference next year. It's obvious serious failing of those agreements that needs to be readdressed. We will do that pretty quickly. We've got a regular catch-up scheduled anyway in relation to the agreement in Manchester, and we'll pick it up as part of that.

But I will also raise it directly with the national employers in relation to those agreements soon after conference. Thanks very much for the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. Thanks, Matt. I now put resolution 40 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para D7, para D8, para D9, para D10, para D11, para D12. Right, that's D completed. Conference, I do apologise if I'm jumping about, but as you can see the general secretary has had to shoot off to a TULO meeting, but he will be back, so that's why we're just jumping about a bit, so we've got the right responder in.

We're now moving on to Section J, legal report. That's para J1, para J2, para J3.

KIAH MIDDLETON (NWC)**:**
Point of order is that D is not complete. Three resolutions have been missed from Section D.

THE PRESIDENT:
Okay, well done. I mean, it's completed on my sheet. The general secretary wanted to be in on that one, sorry. So we've just moved it about. So very good point of order if I've misinformed conference. *Applause*

Why wasn't it 100 point of order then? It should have been 100 points of order then. No, thank you for that. Right. Para J3. Para J4. I now call resolution 7, On-Call Time And Working Time moved by South Yorkshire with an amendment from Scotland. South Yorkshire. The EC are seeking South Yorkshire withdraw or they oppose it.

Resolution 7 ON-CALL TIME AND WORKING TIME
Conference recognises that the Retained Duty System (RDS) continues to operate under terms and conditions that fail to properly reflect the reality of the commitment placed upon our members.

Conference believes we cannot remain complacent in maintaining this position in light of the legal principles established in the ruling of the Matzak v Ville de Nivelles relating to working time.

Conference notes that this case raised fundamental questions regarding whether periods of on-call availability, where significant restrictions are placed upon an individual's ability to use their time freely, should properly be considered working time.

Conference believes this issue is directly relevant to the RDS.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council (EC) to:

- ***commission a legal report examining the potential implications and possible outcomes of legal action seeking recognition of RDS on-call time as working time***
- ***ensure this report fully explores the risks, opportunities and strategic considerations of pursuing such a case***
- ***that the findings are given full consideration by the EC***
- ***communicate that consideration to the membership no later than Conference 2027.***

Conference believes this work is necessary to ensure the union is fully informed and strategically prepared to challenge outdated retained duty arrangements where appropriate.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

AMENDMENT

4th bullet point, 1st line:

Delete 'to the membership' and replace with 'through the unions internal structures' so that content reads: 'communicate that consideration through the unions internal structures no later than'.

SCOTLAND

STU SMITH (South Yorkshire)**:**

President, conference. Moving resolution number seven on-call time and working time. Just to make it clear, the phrase on-call on this title is just regarding the time and not our retained members. I'll start by talking about the reality of the retained duty system, not the theory, not the paperwork, but the lived experience of our members. The reality is that the retained firefighters are expected to organise their entire lives around availability, often under significant restrictions, and yet that commitment is still not properly recognised within current terms and conditions.

Conference, this motion is not asking for immediate legal action. It is asking for something far more measured and responsible, a properly commissioned legal report, a report that examines the implications, the risks, and the opportunities of pursuing recognition for on-call time as working time. Because whether we like it or not, the legal landscape has shifted.

The Matzak ruling raised a fundamental question. When a worker's time is heavily constrained by their employer, is that really rest time, or is it in fact working time? That question goes to the heart of the retained duty system. Now, I believe the executive council will oppose this, and which we just heard they will. They may say a similar case has already been tried and lost at tribunal. But let's be clear, a tribunal decision is not binding case law. It does not settle the issue. It does not close the door. It simply reflects one set of arguments at one point in time under one set of circumstances. They may also say that Matzak is different, that the worker in that case could not leave home. But let's not pretend our members are free in any meaningful sense. When you have to remain within a tight radius, when you have to respond within minutes, when your ability to socialise, to travel, or even relax is restricted, those are real constraints. Different in detail perhaps, but not in principle.

And I suspect the real concern sits elsewhere. If this were successful, it could have wide-reaching implications for the retained duty system across the country. But since when has that been a reason for inaction? Since when did we as a union decide to avoid asking difficult questions because the answers might just be inconvenient?

We cannot pick and choose which parts of employment law we are prepared to engage with. We cannot champion legal protections when they suit us and ignore them when they challenge the status quo. That is not consistency. That is not leadership.

This motion is about being informed. It is about being prepared. It is about ensuring that we, as a union, understand the legal position fully before deciding whether to act. Because doing nothing, simply accepting that things are as they are, is not a strategy. It is complacency.

Conference, our members deserve better than that. They deserve a union that is willing to explore every avenue, to test assumptions, and to challenge outdated arrangements where there is a credible basis to do so. This motion does not commit us to a course of action. It commits us to knowledge, to clarity, to be strategically ready.

And frankly, if the case against this is as strong as some suggest, then a legal report will confirm that, and we lose nothing. But if there is an opportunity here, if there is a chance to properly recognise the reality of the retained service, then we owe it to our members to at least understand it.

Conference, this is a reasonable, proportionate, and necessary step. I ask you to support this motion. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Stu. Gus?

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution seven. Conference, we 100% share the concerns of the EC around this resolution. And while Matzak might be legally pursuable in the UK, the success of any case could result in a significant reduction of RDS roles across the UK.

In Scotland, it's foreseeable that maybe dozens of RDS stations could potentially be closed as the RDS would become exponentially more expensive to run. That said, maybe there is something that can be done, though. And this resolution only calls for the commission of a legal report into this issue.

It's raised at repeated conferences and, if we're being honest, it's raised at every RDS branch meeting that we go to. Additionally, our amendment's there so the resolution doesn't mandate the EC to publish any potentially damaging legal advice. So conference, I move the amendment and urge you to support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Gus. That's open for debate.

OLLIE BALDAM (NRC)**:**
Conference, president, the NRC recognises and fully understands the concerns raised in this resolution. Retained firefighters across the UK continue to work under arrangements that place significant demands and restrictions upon their personal lives, and those concerns are both genuine and valid.

However, following discussions with the AGS and after careful consideration, the national retained committee is asking that South Yorkshire remit this resolution. Our concern is not with the principle behind the motion but the potential consequences of commissioning a legal report. The production of such a report could create unintended difficulties for the union and our retained members nationally.

We have been involved in these discussions with the national employers on the RDS working group.

Conference, this is a complex issue involving working time law, contractual arrangements, employer responses, and the future of our retained duty system itself. We believe this matter requires further engagement and development before conference commits the union to a course of action that may ultimately prove damaging rather than beneficial.

The NRC absolutely agrees that retained members deserve proper recognition for the commitment placed upon them, but we must also ensure that any approach taken by this union is carefully considered, coordinated, and capable of delivering a positive outcome for our members. For those reasons, the national retained committee asks this resolution to be remit, or unfortunately, we oppose and support the EC position. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ollie. AGS?

ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks conference. Certainly a difficult one, and it was quite a significant discussion at the executive council meeting when we were going through positions. And understand the sentiments to this, especially when you start reading into the Matzak case in Belgium. You can start to see there are some parallels.

But conference, I had a pre-conversation with Stu, and I certainly didn't want to do this to you on the floor of conference and on the record, but there are significant risks even doing what this asks, even with the amendment Scotland bring. Because the truth is, whether you like it or not, Stu, there was a hearing in the UK, and it has made a determination that does matter and can't be ignored.

We have commissioned our lawyers to look over this repeatedly. The former assistant general secretary, Andy Dark, did and brought a report to the executive council. I've looked at it, and the lawyers are still in the same place. The problem with it is a significant part of the judgment is what you highlighted.

It says, *"In this case, unlike in Matzak, the claimant was not required to remain at home during his on-call shifts or at the workplace or any other specific place."* That's quite a different approach in terms of working time legislation in the European Union, and we believe it would be here, too. So frankly, having to bring arguments forward in a public arena, even if that is just conference next year, that would diminish our ability to use something as a bargaining chip, even though we don't have the greatest legal strength to it, will diminish our ability in collective bargaining structures.

We have seen an improvement to pay and conditions in the retained duty system in recent years. First time in 30 years, I think, Paul. And Paul Revill and Paul Farman were part of those discussions and applaud their efforts in those rooms. And it's important we listen to the NRC. They've taken a very pragmatic approach to this.

They understand the risks to their members of blundering into a process for which we could jeopardise the very system that they work under. Frankly, the RDS system as we know it needs long-term, strategic, and seismic change to deliver better terms and conditions, not the quick ripping off of a sticking plaster like this would be.

So conference, I urge you if South Yorkshire do not choose to remit/withdraw, that you oppose the motion on that basis. It doesn't mean we won't keep discussing the merits of case law. We will. We've done that each and every time. But it appears that South Yorkshire see this as some sort of golden egg or silver bullet. And comrades, I'm having to tell you now, unfortunately, not wanting to particularly, that it isn't. But we can use it as a bargaining chip if we can keep legal considerations fairly tight. So I, kind of implore South Yorkshire to do something here for which we can continue to use this case in that way. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ben. South Yorkshire, right to reply.

STU SMITH (South Yorkshire)**:**
President, conference, listening to arguments and the comments from the NRC member and again, that I don't feel as though exactly that's what we were asking for in this. You know it was just about gaining the knowledge, being able to explore the, you know, like I said in there, like it says in the resolution, explore the risks and the opportunities.

We weren't asking for any action. That's all. Just asking for the knowledge and the clarity. But I have heard you, and on this occasion, South Yorkshire will remit. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks Stu. I now call resolution 69, Injury Or Worse Due To 3 Person Crew moved by Cumbria. EC are seeking withdrawal or oppose. If that's got a seconder, if you could come down.

Resolution 69 INJURY OR WORSE DUE TO 3 PERSON CREW
Conference notes the stance taken by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) in relation to 3 person crewing. The FBU have rightly called the practice dangerous and pointed out the risks that it presents to firefighters and the public.

Conference further notes, that some UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) around the country continue to deploy crews of 3 to a wide range of incidents.

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to adopt a policy, whereby, should any firefighter be injured, or worse, when deployed to an incident in a crew of 3, that the FBU will immediately engage solicitors to pursue a legal claim against the UKFRS involved. The EC will also write to all UKFRSs, informing them of this policy.

CUMBRIA

STEVE MARTIN (Cumbria)**:**
President, conference, I stand here to move resolution 69 injury or worse to three-person crewing. The intent of this resolution is to seek a national position of requesting a merits assessment on every occasion where the crew of three firefighters are involved in either an accident or injury happens. This is what is meant by engaging solicitors. By engaging solicitors, it does not mean it binds us to running legal costs where we have no prospects of success. So I repeat, it's a merits assessment is what we're asking for. The national campaign against the dangerous practice of three-person crewing has been ongoing for a number of years now with mixed results nationally.

It presents numerous risks physically, mentally, and morally, with crews responding to all types of incidents with little to no caveats such as RTCs, water rescues, and persons reported house fires, building fires, often as the first appliance in attendance with little to no specific occupational guidance or procedure.

This leads to dangerous practices, sometimes ops discretion or if you're fortunate enough to change it to the NFCC's new title of professional judgment, you do that. On top of that, we've recently learned that the NFCC's tactical firefighting group are looking at now posing the question to brigades whether you need a dedicated BA entry control officer.

That's for five people, let alone three, so it's going to open the door for no BA entry control officer. So let's put them on notice that we won't accept three-person crewing, and we will engage solicitors on a merits assessment to see if it's a worthwhile cause.

It seems the last few days that many resolutions are receiving opposition based on hypothetical situations by the top table. Now, these aren't hypothetical. There are crews riding with three people all around this country, and it's a matter of time till we have a serious injury or worse comes to worst. We've had the anniversary of today. I reiterate, this is to adopt a policy of immediately referring any incident to a solicitor for a merits assessment and nothing other than that. We need to put the employers on notice and let them know we'll no longer accept this. It's abhorrent, and it's out of practice. I want to ask you all the question: Do we strive for five? Like, honestly, we're striving for five. Why are we accepting three? Why will you not put them on notice when they're injured that we will expect a solicitor to be involved?

That is why I ask – if you don't support this resolution, I would like to ask why are you not striving for five?
Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. Seconder?

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President and conference, we support and second this resolution. This resolution strengthens our fight against riding three. Merseyside fought off the riding of three a couple of years back, but we know that in our region and across the UK, that hasn't been fought off everywhere.

This strengthens our fight by the FBU to eradicate the riding of three everywhere in the country. We need to tell chief fire officers that we will not do it, and if they carry on doing it, we will take them to court and we will win, because Thompsons will do that for us. Conference, please support this resolution.
I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. That's open for debate. No. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Thanks, conference, and thanks, Steve. You're talking to firefighters here, by the way. And just to make the point, first of all, it's good to speak on an issue about operational firefighting and one that directly affects our members in the workplace. I've got personal experience of this in regard to turning up at an incident and being faced with a classic firefighter's dilemma.

So, yeah, the executive council and I know all about this issue. We are all from the fire and rescue service as elected officials. We know the dangers of three in a pump. In my own situation that I faced, can I just tell you, that was at a time when there were national standards of fire cover, and still they were doing this. That was in a special. We tipped out on a special over a border, but the pump that was meant to be at the other end wasn't there. How we dealt with that was refusing to tip out in that special again unless a pumping appliance came with us from the same station. That's how that was resolved. First of all, in regard to why don't we appoint lawyers, we will always appoint lawyers when members get injured.

Last year, we won £5.95 million in personal injury claims when members got injured. Surely the point is to stop the members getting injured in the first place by fighting this at that level. We heard from Lee about how he managed to eradicate, as he put it that way, three on a pump. I think that's how we learn the lessons.

I've got to say, why aren't we striving for five? Why aren't we demanding five? Why aren't we in our workplaces demanding safe crewing levels? This is an issue, I think, that is front and centre of everything that we do. Merits assessments. Yes, we could get merits assessments. Can I just say, think of the impact when a merits assessment doesn't succeed. Think of the message that sends out in regard to that. It could well have the opposite impact that the mover of the resolution is seeking to achieve.

But again, making the point, this is talking about after the event. Surely the aim of the Fire Brigades Union, if we stand for anything, it's about the safety and protection of our members. And conference, please, on the back of the organising strategy that we've set up, on the back of everything we've said about putting this union in the workplace, please don't put us in a situation where if chief fire officers in this ridiculous NFCC tactical firefighting group, when they come up with these dangerous policies, please, as FBU officials, don't be put in a situation where we say we are going to call our lawyers.

Surely, we call our members. We organise in our workplaces and our brigades, and we eradicate this policy, not hand over to Thompsons looking for a law. Do you know who writes the laws? The bosses write the laws. The people that Paul Nowak talked about funding Farage fund the people to make the laws. The laws aren't always in our favour, comrades.

We have to shape our own future. The safety of our members is in our hands, and it's the hands of our members. Don't hand it over to lawyers. So I just think there's a total misconception, first of all, about the position of the executive council in this, but also about the manner in which this resolution, is written.

So yeah, on that basis, and hopefully this understanding, that everyone is not just against three on a pump but demanding that we eradicate it across the UK fire and rescue service. I hope with that reassurance Steve will be able to withdraw this resolution. If not, yes, we would ask conference to vote against it. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tam. Steve, right to reply.

STEVE MARTIN (Cumbria)**:**
So I understand what you're saying, Tam. I won't be withdrawing. I understand it's for us to fight the three-person crewing, but surely this resolution strengthens our fight for five-person crewing. I mean, I won't do a show of hands to see how many brigades have three-person crewing. I'm not on about specials. In Cumbria, we've got three-person crewing. We fought it. We fought it. But again, as you speak from past experience, we've had firefighters that have been 40 years that have done it before, but telling them not to do it anymore was, I won't use the language I would be tempted to use, like, because I'm not very eloquent, am I?

But it's not a strive for five, it's the fight for five. But again, the NFCC have got there. And if we put them on notice with this, it strengthens our fight to try and get out as a duty system. I hope you support it. No one's come up and spoke against me other than big Tam, so appreciate it. Right. Conference, thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Cheers, Steve, I'll let him get back before I call the vote. It's a big hall, this one, isn't it? Right, I now put resolution 69 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That falls*.

I now call para J5. Yeah.

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, speaking on para J5, personal injury at work. Conference, Greater Manchester officials want to place on record their thanks for the assistance and support given to us by Thompsons following an incident involving Brother Johnny Hoy last September.

Brother Hoy was firefighting at Pioneer Mill in Radcliffe, Greater Manchester, when the mill suddenly collapsed and buried him under tons of rubble. Johnny suffered significant polytrauma and spent many months in hospital. It wasn't until the intervention of local FBU officials, with the support of Thompsons, that he was seen at home and an immediate needs assessment was carried out just before Christmas.

Today, approximately £30,000 worth of rehabilitation has been recommended, which the employer's insurers previously weren't agreeing to pay, but now they are. It will have a huge impact on his recovery whilst helping the family with day-to-day chores, some of which we take for granted. Without the intervention of the FBU and Thompsons, Brother Hoy would not have received the level of care that he has.

Brother Hoy has a long road ahead of him, but he's been given the best start possible that will hopefully see him make a full recovery and return to the profession he loves. Comrades, it's incumbent on us all to promote the benefits that come from being a member of the FBU. You never know when you might need it most. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dave. I now call para J6. Para J7. We're now moving on to Section E Government policy and legislation, para E1.

I now call resolution 39, Term-Time Leave – Exceptional Circumstances, moved by West Yorkshire, the EC are supporting.

Resolution 39 TERM-TIME LEAVE – EXCEPTIONAL CIRCUMSTANCES
Conference notes that UK Fire and Rescue Service (UKFRS) personnel are subject to operational demands that routinely restrict annual leave during school holiday periods due to minimum staffing requirements and emergency response obligations.

Conference further notes that, under the document 'Term Time Absence for Service Children', the section on Exceptional Circumstances states: "When shift patterns only allow leave to be taken during term time." This recognises the unique constraints placed upon members of the armed forces.

Conference believes that UKFRS personnel face comparable constraints arising from shift systems and operational cover requirements, and that fairness and consistency require similar recognition.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to campaign for amendments to national education guidance and local authority policies to explicitly recognise UKFRS personnel as eligible for 'exceptional circumstances' consideration where operational requirements or shift patterns prevent leave being taken during school holidays.

WEST YORKSHIRE

JIM DAVIES (West Yorkshire)**:**
President, conference. Firefighters and firefighter control staff are given their leave allocation and in many cases are unable to request changes that would take this leave into term-time holidays. Term-time absence fines for removing children from school time results in a fine of £80 per parent.

Conference believes that any decision made by our members will be a balanced decision based on the pros and cons of the reduction in the child's education and the parents' need for meaningful rest and quality family time. Conference shows any parent making that measured decision the respect. Military personnel are exempt from this fine under the element of exceptional circumstances due to operational constraints. Conference believes our members should be afforded the same flexibility without financial detriment. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jim. Seconder?

ROBYN RICHARDSON (NWC)**:**
President, conference, our members work demanding shift systems that are built around operational need, emergency response and minimum staffing levels. We all know the reality, annual leave during school holidays is often heavily restricted, and in many services, it can feel almost impossible to secure.

Women in the fire service continue to carry a disproportionate share of caring responsibilities within families. Many are balancing work with childcare, school arrangements and family life. And when leave cannot be taken during school holidays, families are left with impossible choices: unaffordable childcare costs, relying on relatives, or risking punitive school absence action simply to spend time together as a family.

Our members work unpredictable and inflexible shift systems. Our members miss birthdays, holidays, weekends, and family milestones in order to protect their communities. This reso does not ask for special treatment, it asks for equal recognition. And as women in this union, we know that family-friendly policies are not a luxury, they are essential if we are serious about equality, retention, and inclusion within the fire and rescue service.

Conference, supporting families is not anti-education. Children also benefit from time with their parents, especially parents whose work regularly takes them away from their home at evenings, weekends, and holidays. This motion sends a clear message: firefighters' control and firefighters, (see what I did there) deserve the same consideration and respect already afforded to other public servants facing operational restrictions.

Conference, the national women's committee is proud to support this motion. I urge you to support it, too. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Robyn. That's open for debate? Yep.

JAMES SALT (NRC)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of this resolution for the following reasons. As retained duty firefighters, we have additional challenge of having to align two lots of annual leave during term time or outside of term time with our primary employment alongside our RDS commitments.

Appliance availability can restrict opportunity for us to take leave when we need it for family time. RDS don't have even the option to cover with overtime or shift swaps like whole time might be able to. And again, as I said yesterday, this isn't pitting one shift duty system against the other. It's just saying why this particular resolution is really important to the RDS.

It's also more restrictive for retained firefighters to do anything during school holidays. Whole time roles and, and a wholetime firefighter myself, I'll still get four days off out of eight during school holidays. Retained commitment means you might not get any, dependent on your declaration.
This can also be an issue with regards to family days out and even childcare, not just holidays away. For those reasons, conference, we support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. No more. I now put resolution 39 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 48, Updating Of The 2007 Critical Attendance Standards, CAS, Model moved by Humberside with an amendment from Scotland. EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 48 UPDATING OF THE 2007 CRITICAL ATTENDANCE STANDARDS, (CAST), MODEL
Conference notes that the 2007 CAST model and associated Integrated Risk Management Plans (IRMPs) guidance were developed nearly 2 decades ago and do not reflect the modern risk profile facing UK Fire and Rescue Services.

Conference recognises the growth of high-rise and complex buildings, lithium-ion battery incidents, climate-related flooding and wildfires, terrorism preparedness requirements, and other emerging hazards.

Conference believes that reliance on outdated modelling risks underestimating community risk and undermining operational resilience.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to campaign for the development of an updated national risk modelling framework and to support branches in challenging IRMPs that rely on outdated assumptions.

HUMBERSIDE

AMENDMENT
4th paragraph, 3rd line
Delete 'branches' and replace with 'brigade committees' so that content reads: 'and to support brigade committees in challenging'

SCOTLAND

KIREN THORPE (Humberside)**:**
President, conference. First time conference, first time speaker. *Applause*

I stand to move the resolution on updating of the 2007 CAST model. Conference, the key issue here is the risks facing our communities today are not the same risks we faced nearly 20 years ago. The original CAST document rightly recognised that emergency planning must reflect the real world risks firefighters face.

But the real world has changed. Today, we face increased high rise and complex building fires, lithium-ion battery fires, climate-related flooding, large scale wildfires, and increased terrorism preparedness demands, yet many services still rely on a model developed in 2007.

Conference, the original document also made clear that effective procedures depend on accurate risk assessment. That matters because if the model is outdated, the planning based on it becomes outdated, too. We all know what will follow: cuts to appliances, cuts to staffing, which leads to a reduced operational resilience, all justified through flawed assumptions.

The CAST document warned against placing firefighters in situations where they are motivated or pressurised to act unsafely in the interests of saving life and protecting property. Firefighters will act. That is the reality of our profession.

Conference, this resolution is not about rejecting risk modelling. It's about demanding modern risk modelling for modern risks. We need a National Framework that reflects today's operational reality, not the reality of 2007. We must support our brothers and sisters in challenging IRMPs built on outdated assumptions. Conference, this is about firefighter safety, public safety, and protecting operational resilience. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kiren. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Scotland to move their amendment. *Formally* Thank you. Does the amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. No, Joe to give the qualification.

JOE WEIR (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thanks, president, and thanks, Kiren, for bringing the resolution. Yeah, look, it's a very minor, qualification. The executive council welcome the resolution. Originally, as you know, the CAST modelling was done by the government, following the pathfinder trials. So we will look to progress it via the same format because of the costing through the College of Fire and the Ministerial Advisory Group. So that's the qualification. Thanks.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Joe. I'm now going to put that to the vote. So I now put amendment to resolution 48 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 48 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 50, Defending The Public UK Fire And Rescue Service – No Private Sector Encroachment, moved by Suffolk, the EC are supporting, Norfolk to second. Ah, Alan's here already. Remember your name.

Resolution 50 DEFENDING THE PUBLIC UK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE (UKFRSs) – NO PRIVATE SECTOR ENCROACHMENT
Conference notes the trend of the last 16 years of private corporations seeking to embed themselves within publicly funded emergency services through direct funding arrangements, infrastructure provision, and partnership models.

Conference notes the development of a potential public fire station assumed to the new nuclear power development at Sizewell C involving Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service is the latest example of such approaches. Arrangements such as this, risk establishing a dangerous national precedent whereby private capital gains influence, direct or indirect, over the provision, location and configuration of UKFRS assets.

UKFRSs exist to protect communities based on risk, not profitability or corporate infrastructure needs.

Conference therefore resolves to reaffirm unequivocally that the Fire Brigades Union will oppose any form of private sector involvement in core UKFRS provision.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***conduct a national review of any agreements between national employers and private corporations involving funding of stations, equipment, or personnel***
- ***provide support to affected members and branches where such arrangements are proposed or implemented***
- ***develop a national campaign exposing the risks of corporate influence over emergency services***
- ***to lobby government, Fire Authorities and local elected members to guarantee that UKFRSs remain fully publicly owned, publicly funded and publicly accountable***
- ***to oppose through industrial and political means any attempt to introduce private control, private operational influence, or corporate-driven restructuring within the UKFRSs.***

SUFFOLK

RICHARD BEEBY (Suffolk)**:**
Conference, president, moving resolution 50. Conference, 44 years ago, one of my predecessors, Ken Seager from Suffolk, stood on this rostrum and spoke about a nuclear power station in Suffolk causing concerns. 44 years later, conference, and Suffolk have returned to once again do the same. In Suffolk, we recently saw off an attempt from Sizewell to take a public fire station and place it inside of a private compound.

Amongst a myriad of other issues, this would have seen a public fire station with our Grey Book members serving to protect nothing other than a private business. Our members in Suffolk rallied together against this issue, and we were able to see it off for the time being. But, conference, they will be back in one form or another.

Ever increasingly, private corporations have attempted to establish footholds within our services, an influence for decisions that we, as a public organisation, make. This is not a problem unique to Suffolk, but one seen up and down the country. Our fire services exist to protect everyone and should always do so without prejudice.

This means that we will be there whether you are a private corporation or a public estate. But we must not be influenced as to where we position resources, where we receive funding, or what incidents we prioritise. Conference, it is vital that this is enshrined as policy of our union to reject these private interests threatening our fire services and that we ensure the bosses serve everyone equally as we have joined this job to do.

This work can only serve to ensure we keep our public fire services just that, public. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Richard. Alan.

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
President, conference, I second the resolution from Suffolk. Conference, the Fire Brigades Union has always stood for one simple principle: fire and rescue services exist to protect the public, not to serve private profit. That principle matters now more than ever.

Over recent years, we have seen an increasing trend of private corporations seeking to position themselves closer and closer to the heart of public emergency services. Sometimes it's through funding arrangements, sometimes through infrastructure projects, sometimes through partnership language that sounds harmless on the surface but carries long-term consequences.

And conference, let us be honest about what is at stake here. If private corporations begin influencing where stations are built, how assets are configured, or how resources are allocated, then we are moving away from a risk-based public protection and towards corporate-led priorities. That is a dangerous road.

The proposed arrangements connected to the Sizewell C development are not simply a local issue for Suffolk. They raise national questions for every single fire and rescue service in the UK because once a principle is established, once corporate funding becomes normalised, it becomes easier for future governments and employers to argue that private involvement is acceptable, efficient or even necessary.

We have seen this before in other public services. We were told privatisation would improve rail. We were told outsourcing would strengthen health services. We were told market forces would deliver efficiency. Instead, we often see fragmentation, reduced accountability, declining public trust, and services shaped around contracts and commercial interests rather than communities.

We protect life, we protect communities, and we do so as a publicly accountable emergency service. That independence matters. The public trust us and know that our decisions should be based on operational risk, professional judgement and public need, not commercial influence. This resolution rightly calls for a national view because members deserve transparency, branches deserve support, and this union should be absolutely clear in opposing any creeping privatisation of core fire and rescue provision.

The Fire Brigades Union was built on solidarity, public service and collective protection. These values are fundamentally incompatible with allowing private interests to shape the future of emergency response. Conference we must send a clear message today. UK fire and rescue service must remain publicly owned, publicly funded, publicly accountable and free from private sector control or influence. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Yep.

JAMES SUDRON (Cleveland)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 50. In Cleveland we know better than anyone of the dangers of privatisation and how important it is to fight becoming a John Lewis style mutual fire service. In 2012, the Tory party and the fire minister at the time, Brandon Lewis, awarded £95,000 to our ex-chief fire officer to support his plan to become a mutual.

Francis Maude at the time praised the entrepreneurial staff for taking that bold step, and this was just the beginning of their journey. Well, conference, let me tell you that journey did not end well. This union and the Cleveland members through Davey Howe and Karl Wager fought hard and said a resounding no to privatisation and in the end fought it off.

However, sadly it was the taxpayer that footed the bill, with HM Revenue and Customs said to be owed nearly £680,000 in unpaid debts and numerous creditors said to be owed approximately £1.2 million. £80,000 was somehow owed to Cleveland Fire Brigade, that was wrote off as a loss. Those figures are shameful.

The end result is always the same: public services weakened, accountability reduced, and workers paying the price. This union has always been clear; fire and rescue services are not commodities to be bought and sold. They are an essential public service, and public safety must always come before private profit. Profit has no place in an emergency response because when corners are cut in our service, it is firefighters and the public who bear the consequences. Cleveland supports. *Applause*

ASH HAYCOCK (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, the LGBT+ section supports resolution 50. Fire and rescue service should serve the community, not profit. Privatisation risks undermining the national agreement, equality standards, and protection for the LGBT+ fire service staff rely on.

Through the FBU, we have fought hard to secure representation, equality policies, and safe workplace practice. Privatisation fragments services, weakens collective bargaining, and creates inconsistent workplace culture where discrimination can become harder to challenge.

Private companies are not held to the same level of the public accountability. Cost-cutting too often comes before welfare, wellbeing, and inclusion. That puts equality initiatives and support structures at risk, especially for minority groups, including the LGBT+ workers. Concerns previously raised around private PPE suppliers and groups such as the Rapid Relief Team also highlighted fears in the LGBT+ section that private sector involvement may conflict with the values of equality, diversity, and inclusion expected in our service.

The RRT is a charitable branch of the Plymouth Brethren group, and past resolutions have condemned fire service use of them due to their core values and beliefs, yet brigades are still frequently using them, a cost-cutting measure. Conference, equality cannot be left to the market. Public-delivered fire and rescue services provide the transparency, accountability, and union protections needed to defend inclusive workplaces for all. I urge conference to support this resolution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ash. I now put resolution 50 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 51, Statutory Duty For Flooding – Training And Equipment, moved by London with amendment from Scotland, the EC are supporting.

Resolution 51 STATUTORY DUTY FOR FLOODING – TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT
Conference notes:

- ***flooding is and has been for some time an increasing and foreseeable risk across the UK***
- ***UK Fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) are routinely mobilised to flooding incidents***
- ***there is no consistent UK-wide statutory duty for flooding, creating a postcode lottery in training, equipment and capability***
- ***firefighters are being asked to undertake hazardous flood operations without a national standard.***

Conference believes:

- ***flood response is now a core part of emergency response and must be reflected in law***
- ***any statutory duty must be matched by proper funding, training, equipment, and safe systems of work.***
- ***firefighters should be provided with appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), training and specialist equipment.***

Conference resolves:

- ***to campaign for a UK-wide statutory duty for UKFRSs to respond to flooding and flood rescue***
- ***to demand ring-fenced funding across the UK nations to deliver this duty without cuts elsewhere***
- ***to insist on UK-wide minimum standards for flood response, including training, PPE and equipment.***

LONDON

AMENDMENT
8th bullet point, 1st line
Delete 'UK-wide statutory duty for UKFRSs' and replace with 'statutory duty for English Fire and Rescue Services' so that content reads: 'to campaign for a statutory duty for English Fire and Rescue Services to respond to'

SCOTLAND

ANDY WARREN (London)**:**
Hello? Yeah. President, conference, the climate crisis is accelerating. Storms, floods, and extreme weather events are increasing in frequency and severity. Fossil fuel use still makes up eighty percent of total energy, and their use rises year on year. The failure of governments to reverse this trend is an appalling dereliction of duty.

We, as the FBU, must improve how we use our unique position on the front line of response to the effects of climate change. But with so much change now inevitable, our thoughts have also turned to the adaptive measures needed for our societies and communities to be resilient.

Flood response is a core duty and should be treated as such. The need for a statutory duty that outlines the proper funding and training, equipment, safe systems of work that we need gets more urgent and pressing every year. If we're to be capable of rising to the historic challenge of rising tides, worsening storms, and bigger risks, we need the funding and standards to do so.

This isn't really a new issue. We've had this before at conference floor, but there is a secondary increasing pressure on this, which is that, as previously discussed across the conference, we have an increasing risk of a right-wing Reform government in three years' time, so there is a ticking timeline on these things now.

If we think that that's a government that is going to be... They've, they've made very clear their opposition to anything net zero and this ties in with that. So if we're going to achieve this, we've got a window to do it. It's really got to be in this parliament, so the clock is ticking.
Let's get cracking. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andy. Seconder. Yep. Are you seconding it and moving your amendment?

DANNY CAMPBELL (Scotland)**:**
I can second it, aye. President, conference, speaking to move our amendment and support of resolution 51, and seconding it. As conference will know, Scotland is a devolved country and therefore this national statutory duty is unachievable.

We therefore ask that this is amended to statutory duty for English fire and rescue services to provide the correct level response from our comrades south of the border. Conference, we all know that flooding and water-based incidents are not unusual in these times. We face these types of jobs more and more regularly, and they have become some of the most dangerous activities we face.

Facing these incidents requires knowledge, skills, training, experience, and the correct equipment to carry them out to a successful conclusion. A successful conclusion is the safe return of our members and members of the public. Asking members to attend these incidents without the appropriate training will absolutely lead to accidents happening.

Furthermore, asking these same members to attend without the required minimum standard of PPE is unacceptable. At the moment, across the country, firefighters can and will respond to incidents in other brigade areas where their comrades could have different resources and equipment to deal with the situation.

We cannot let this continue. We ask conference to support this resolution and bring all fire service or brigades up to the highest standard through training, PPE, equipment, and safe systems of work to ensure that wherever we are required, we can carry out the task safely. Conference, Scotland moves our amendment and supports this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Danny. Just for clarity, you did nod your head and agree that you were seconding as well. Thank you for that. Does the amendment have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. No? Right. I now put the amendment to resolution 51 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 51 as amended to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. That carries. Right, conference, we will now break for our dinner, lunch to some. See you back in here at 1.45. Thank you.

Break for lunch

AFTERNOON SESSION

THE PRESIDENT:
Conference, could you start taking your seats, please? Right, conference, we are going to crack on. We're doing good but still be disciplined. If you're seconding one, make your way down. Remember, the speakers' times have been amended, and let's get through this.

I now call the chair of standing orders to give his report.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, can you please turn to your delegates list for the last time?
Region 10, London, remove Vicky Shaw and replace with Paul Thomas. And region 12, Oxfordshire, remove Luke Fowler and replace with Lee Newport.

So conference, for your information, there are 11 resolutions left and three emergency resolutions. So if you keep the pace that you've set this morning, there should be no need to further reduce speakers' times, which would make this my last standing orders report as chair of standing orders. I just want to thank you for how you've conducted yourselves, not only this year but in previous years, and it's been a pleasure. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Phil. And as you just said, we've got 11 resos and three emergency resos to go, and the remaining paragraphs. So as I say, we've got to keep discipline. Right, we're now moving on to Section L: Internal Administration. Para L1.

I now call resolution 77: Social Media Comments, moved by Scotland. The EC are giving qualified support.

Resolution 77 SOCIAL MEDIA COMMENTS
Conference is acutely aware of the impact of social media in shaping the discourse in modern society, and how toxic the content of some posts on many social media platforms can be.

Conference believes that as a member led trade union, with established structures, the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) social media platforms should be used solely for informing members, and not as a forum for debate.

Conference further believes that the correct forum for debate within our union is in fire stations and control rooms, in branch meetings, at brigade, area and regional committees and at Conference.

Conference therefore instructs the Executive Council to take the necessary steps to review and implement appropriate moderation settings, including disabling comments where necessary, to ensure FBU social media platforms are used for communication rather than internal debate.

SCOTLAND

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 77, social media comments. Conference, social media has changed the way we communicate, organise, and engage with politics and trade unionism. And whilst it can be a useful tool, allowing us to reach members quickly, promote campaigns, and challenge misinformation, we also know the reality of what many online spaces have become.

Too often comment sections on social media platforms descend into hostility, abuse, and personal attacks, and instead of strengthening our union, they damage it and drive people away from it. And disproportionately, it's women, LGBT+ members, and other minority groups who bear the brunt of that toxicity.

Many of us will have seen examples of women in the fire service being dismissed as quote, "quota firefighters" or told they're only in the job because of diversity policies. We have seen homophobic comments directed at LGBT+

firefighters, with members mocked for Pride events, derogatory remarks about inclusion initiatives, and comments suggesting LGBT+ issues are somehow not legitimate trade union concerns.

We have seen social media posts where a debate quickly moves away from disagreement into ridicule, bullying, and intimidation. And when those exchanges happen under official FBU posts on FBU platforms, it reflects on all of us and is not the culture or values that should be tolerated.

Conference, this resolution is not about suppressing debate or silencing members, and it's not about weakening democracy within the FBU. It's about defending meaningful democratic discussion because social media comment sections are not democratic structures. Our union was built through collective discussion in workplaces, branch meetings, brigade committees, regional committees, and on the conference floor, spaces where members can debate meaningfully, challenge each other respectfully, and make democratic decisions together.

Those structures matter because they are organised, accountable, and rooted in collective trade unionism. Conference, FBU social media platforms should be seen as an alternative means to provide information to members and the public, to share campaigns, industrial updates, safety information, political messaging, and union activity.

No member should open an official FBU post and be met with misogyny, homophobic racism, or personal abuse in the comments underneath it. No rep should face intimidation for carrying out their role, and no member should feel discouraged from participating in our union because online spaces have become hostile and toxic.

Conference, this resolution simply asks the EC to review and implement appropriate moderation settings, including disabling comments where necessary, so that our platforms remain effective tools for information rather than arenas for damage and toxicity. FBU Scotland seeks conference to support this motion. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Seona.

KERRY McCRONE (NWC)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 77. Conference, we all know that social media is now a central part of how we communicate, organise, and engage as a union. It has huge benefits. It connects members, shares information quickly, and helps us campaign effectively.

But this resolution asks us to confront the other side of that reality, the part that is often ignored. Social media is not a neutral space, and it's not a safe or respectful one either. Women, our B&EMM members, LGBT+ members, all within our union know this too well. Dismissive remarks, mockery, outright misogyny, homophobia, and racism, and this doesn't just stay online. That kind of rhetoric shapes culture. It discourages minority members from stepping forward, from believing that they belong within our union. Social media should be a tool for informing members, not a free-for-all forum for debate that allows toxic and harmful views to spread unchecked.

This is not just about external comments. This is about our own platforms. There has been an increasing trend of political posts shared through our union channels. Now, our union has always been political in the best sense. We stand up for workers, for public services, for fairness and internationalism. That is right, and that must continue. But when posts are put out in a way that invites open-ended debate online, what often follows is something very different.

We see members arguing in ways that divide rather than unite, and we see space being given, whether intentionally or not, to rhetoric that aligns with far-right narratives. Far-right views have no place in our union. When those views appear in the comments sections unchecked, unchallenged, or poorly moderated, they do damage. They create an unwelcome environment for women, for Black and minority ethnic members, for LGBT+ members, and for anyone who does not fit that narrow worldview.

Our committee was asked to do a piece for FBU socials this conference on the resolution on misogyny, but no one wanted to be on the receiving end of the toxic comments. We have agreed to do it, but we made sure the comments were switched off. This is not about shutting down discussion. Healthy debate has its place in branch

meetings, in committees, here on the conference floor, spaces where discussion is structured, respectful, and accountable. Social media is not that place.

It is immediate, it is public, and without proper moderation, it can quickly become harmful.

This resolution is both necessary and reasonable. It calls for clarity, that social media platforms should be used to inform members, not to host internal debate. It calls for responsibility, that appropriate moderation settings are reviewed and implemented, and where necessary, it calls for stronger action, including disabling comments to prevent harm.

Conference, that is not censorship. It is leadership, and it is about setting standards for how we communicate as a union. It is about protecting our members, and it is about ensuring that our platforms reflect our values, not undermine them. Every time hateful or far-right rhetoric's allowed to sit unchallenged, it sends out a message, and that message it sends is, "This space is not for you." Conference, we must send a different message. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Kerry. That's now open for debate.

KAYLEY BRIDGES (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, I speak in support of resolution 77. Social media can be an incredibly powerful platform for information-sharing when correctly utilised. However, this platform creates a space where it empowers people to say things that they would never say in person.

LGBT+ members are disproportionately targeted online, and I personally have been a victim of this in the last 12 months, where I received death threats when a Pride video from my service was shared online. This isn't something we are conjuring from thin air. I've had to amend my speech this morning, as there are transphobic, homophobic, and anti-equality comments aimed at members of this very delegation on the FBU Facebook profile page. *Applause*

There are transphobic, homophobic, and anti-equality comments aimed at members of this very delegation on the FBU Facebook and Instagram posts about the conference we are sitting at today, and the silence is deafening. I believe there is a space for healthy debate and disagreement. However, I don't believe this is on social media.

Frequently, people engaging in these debates in comment sections are not members and sometimes not even firefighters at all. Disabling comments on social media posts help reduce the harm imposed on our members, encourages engagement through our democratic structures, where respect and dignity is prioritised. I urge you to support this motion. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kayley.

ANDRAE EDWARDS (B&EMM)**:**
Conference. Haven't written anything down, it's just off the whim, so please, just allow me. But what I will say is B&EMM 100% supports this. Reason why, my brother Corneil done an interview yesterday, which was put on the FBU social media, and there were comments on there that were utterly disgraceful.

I spoke with passion yesterday. I spoke of being a victim of what I spoke about. Corneil spoke about it as well, because I didn't really want to be on camera, so thank you, Corneil. But the comments on there didn't give me that motivation to come back and do this next year because of those things. Those things need to be policed. They have an effect on people, as the other sections have rightly pointed out. So conference, as I said, B&EMM, we support this 100%. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Andrae. Adam?

ADAM TAYLOR (National Officer)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference the executive council supports this motion with a qualification. But first of all, solidarity with all the speakers in that debate, and solidarity with anyone that has faced abhorrent, social media comments directed towards them or people they care about, and there's absolutely no place for that in our union and in wider society.

Much of this work is underway, that's been asked for in this resolution. We're developing a strategy. We're developing training in how to deal with debates online and how we respond, how we moderate, and when we block comments. The executive council don't believe that comments should be blocked, routinely across every social media post that goes out. But certainly you know, we are developing that strategy. And, as Kerry rightly mentioned the comments were disabled on the post that you referred to in your contribution. And that's the starting place for us, is actually to ask that question when we've got individuals featured in social media posts. We give them that opportunity in the very first instance as part of that wider strategy. So with that qualification that the work is underway, developing the strategies and training for social media use. We support.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Adam. I now put resolution 77 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*

Conference, we are moving on. I will now be taking resolutions 81 and 82 in the same debate. They stand in opposition, so if 81 carries, 82 will fall. I now call resolution 81, Changes To Head Office Structures moved by West Midlands. EC are seeking withdraw or oppose. West Mids?

Resolution 81 CHANGES TO HEAD OFFICE STRUCTURES
Conference notes that the Executive Council (EC) policy statement Unity and Strength, agreed in 2025, committed the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) to strengthening organising capacity, deepening representative development, enhancing communications and building an active, confident and democratic union at every level.

Conference believes that the functions of education, organising and communications are not peripheral administrative matters but core strategic capacities of the FBU, central to delivering Conference policy, supporting brigade representatives, and advancing the union's industrial and political objectives.

Conference reaffirms that Conference is the supreme government of the FBU and that structural changes which could materially affect the union's ability to deliver agreed policy must be subject to its authority.

Conference therefore instructs the EC to:
- ***produce a full report to regional committees within 3 months, setting out the rationale and process surrounding the recent changes to head office structures, including their alignment with existing Conference policy***
- ***develop a clear framework for future changes to the structure of the union, including an impact assessment process for major organisational restructuring and ensuring early consultation with brigade and regional committees, to be presented to Conference 2027***
- ***ensure that any future proposals which materially affect the FBU's capacity in education, organising or communications are brought to Conference for debate and decision prior to implementation***
- ***provide, within 3 months, assurance of how the union will protect and sustain its core strategic functions, particularly education, organising and communications, in line with the commitments of the EC Policy Statement Unity and Strength.***

Conference resolves that the strengthening of the FBU must be demonstrated in practice through the protection and development of its strategic functions.

WEST MIDLANDS

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 81, changes to head office structures. Just last year, conference agreed a clear direction for this union through the executive council policy statement, Unity and Strength in the Workplace, Prioritising Our Future Together. We backed a vision of a stronger union built through organising, education, communications, empowered representatives, and a democratic engagement with members.

We clearly recognise that the strength of this union depends on the strength of our organising capacity, and that is why many brigades are concerned by what's happened since. Three senior head office roles connected to education, organising, and communications have now gone. Whether those departures are described as redundancies or willingly leaving under terms offered by the executive council is not the main issue here.

The issue is that significant structural changes took place in areas conference had identified as strategic priorities. How do the EC implement their own policy statement of 2025 by removing the three roles central to delivering the strategic direction of it?

Conference, members are entitled to ask reasonable questions. What was the rationale behind these changes? What strategic assessment was made? How do these decisions align with unity and strength? And what was the process followed in reaching them? Those are not hostile questions. They are legitimate questions in a democratic union. This resolution is not about preventing the EC from carrying out its operational responsibilities, but we have a right to understand why this didn't come to conference.

We are asking for a report on the rationale and process surrounding these recent changes so we can properly understand why. More importantly, it's about making sure that there is a clear framework for the future so that significant structural changes affecting the union's strategic capacity are handled transparently, consistently, and with proper democratic accountability, something that has been spoken about a lot at this conference.

If the decision was taken with a view to strengthen the FBU, then explain it openly and transparently. This resolution asks for answers about what has happened so that we can understand it and safeguard for the future. Support the resolution, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Sasha. Can I have a seconder?

ROSS DAVIES (South Wales)**:**
Howdy, everyone. President, conference, here to second motion 81. Comrades, at its heart, this motion is only asking for one small thing. I'll get to that, of course. Transparency before major structural decisions weakens the union's capacity to support its members. That point shouldn't really be controversial because this isn't about personalities. This isn't about resisting change. It's not even about trying to refight internal disputes.

It's about protecting the core functions that make our great union effective: education, organisation, and communication. These are all major keystones that support our brigades and regions throughout our union. Conference has heard all week about building a stronger, more democratic, more workplace-focused union, but that can't happen if experienced people disappear from key strategic roles without proper consultation, planning, or explanation to membership. Let's be honest, everyone, many regions are already stretched to breaking point. If we take Wales as an example, we only have two fully released officials. We only have two.

So when national structures lose experience or capacity, regions like ours feel it immediately. That means less support, less organising, less communication, and less ability to engage with members in its workplaces, and that matters. And when the outcome is the loss of so much experience in such key areas, then it's not a simple admin task. That is a major structural decision affecting the union's ability to support its members.

Comrades, if these changes are genuinely positive, genuinely evidence-based, and genuinely strengthening the union, then there should be no fear whatsoever in reporting back openly to conference.

Strong unions like ours do not become weaker because members asked questions. They become weaker when members stop feeling informed, involved, and listened to. This motion is moderate. This motion is reasonable, and it's entirely consistent with the democratic principles that the union rightly prides itself on. Conference, I urge y'all to support the motion from Mid and West. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Ross. resolution 82 by Norfolk.

Resolution 82 OPPOSITION TO THE REMOVAL OF DEDICATED EDUCATION LEADERSHIP
Conference notes the review of Head Office structures agreed by the Executive Council (EC) in December 2025 and the subsequent restructuring proposals reported to the EC in February 2026.

Conference further notes that these changes include the removal of the post responsible for leading the union's education function.

Conference believes that education is fundamental to the strength of our union, ensuring that members and representatives are equipped with the knowledge, confidence and organisational skills required to defend members, advance workplace organisation and build the union for the future.

Conference further believes that the Fire Brigades Union must maintain strong leadership and strategic direction for education and training across the union.

Conference therefore resolves that the Executive Council will:
- ***report to the relevant union structures on the future delivery, leadership and strategic direction of the union's education programme***
- ***ensure that the union retains sufficient capacity and leadership to deliver high-quality education and training for members and representatives***
- ***reaffirm the union's commitment to developing and expanding education for current and future representatives.***

NORFOLK

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
President, conference, I rise to move the resolution opposition to the removal of dedicated education leadership. Conference, education is not an optional extra within our union. It is not a luxury to be reviewed away when structures are changed or budgets become difficult.

Education is one of the foundations upon which this union was built. Every strong workplace representative in this hall started somewhere, sorry. Somebody gave them confidence, somebody explained the Rule Book, somebody taught them how to represent the member properly, how to challenge injustice, how to negotiate, how to organise, and how to lead.

That does not happen by accident. It happens because the union invested in education. Conference, trained representatives protect members. Educated activists build branches. Confident officials strengthen industrial organisation, and strong organisation wins disputes. Without education, we weaken the next generation of workplace leaders before they've even had the chance to develop. This resolution is not an attack on the executive council. Norfolk recognise that every union must continually review structures and resources. We understand the pressures that exist, but what we are saying clearly is this: the removal of the dedicated education leadership sends the wrong message at the wrong time, at a time when employers are becoming more aggressive, at a time when members need stronger representation. At a time when we should be growing confidence, organising capacity and activist development, the union should be strengthening education, not reducing its leadership.

Conference, education in the FBU is far more than classroom delivery. It is about strategy, coordination, consistency and vision. It is by ensuring that representatives across the country receive high quality training development that reflects the values and traditions of our union.

If we lose strategic leadership, there is a real risk that education becomes fragmented, diluted, or treated as secondary to other priorities. Norfolk believes that this would be a mistake. Conference, many of us in this hall can point to moments when union education changed us personally. It gave us the confidence to speak, the confidence to challenge management, the confidence to support colleagues in their darkest moments, and for many, it was education that transformed ordinary members into union leaders.

That legacy matters. This resolution is therefore measured, constructive, and forward-looking. We are asking executive council to report on the future delivery, leadership, and strategic direction of the education. We are asking the union to retain sufficient capacity and leadership to provide high-quality education and training, and we're asking conference to reaffirm our commitment to develop the next generation of reps and activists.

Conference, if we want a stronger union, we must invest in education today. Norfolk asks you to support this resolution. I move. I also have a question as to why mine falls if the previous one is agreed.

THE PRESIDENT:
I can tell you, but it's too late to challenge. But the reason being, resolution 81 calls for any proposal to be brought to conference for decision and then implementation. Resolution 82 calls for reporting to the union structures, i.e. the decision's been made already. So one was calling for it to be brought to conference for a decision. The other one was the reporting for other structures after a decision's been made.

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
Okay, thank you for the clarification. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Alan. Do I have a seconder?

JAMIE McDONALD (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 82. It's my first time at conference and first time speaker. *Applause*

I've been a firefighter for six years, and a rep for a little over two of those six years. In my short time in this job, I've been at a station that lost its second fire engine in an area in Scotland that lost 60 firefighters temporarily. I then moved to a station that a little over a year later is now threatened with losing its second appliance. That station have now joked that I'm the jinx. Now, desperate not to let that label stick, I jumped on the path to becoming a rep. With not much understanding of what a rep really does, what a Rule Book is, or what the FBU can really do, other than standing on a picket line, which I did as a kid in 2002 with my mum in front of our fire station, and keen not to self-deploy, I knew that I would need someone to show me the way.

I got in touch with my local rep, who was really busy, and I was put on my first course, and here I learned what being a rep was all about. The tools I have at my disposal to help our members and community. I also learned from other experienced reps from other brigades. The content and how those courses were delivered was nothing short of amazing and gave me the confidence to get to where I am now, speaking in front of all of you.

I'm a product of the Rolls Royce education that the FBU did offer. If it hadn't been for those courses, the educators, people, and experiences, then I would not have developed the confidence or skills necessary to effectively help my comrades in getting our branch up and running. That is running our campaign against cuts right now.

I wouldn't have developed the skills to have the difficult conversations with our members on station, liaise with local politicians, and cover press interviews. Which at this moment in time, where we see the rise of the far right, is so important. None of that was possible in my eyes if I didn't get the education I did.

Conference, I say all this because we don't believe future reps will have the same quality and opportunities that I did to develop these skills through a so-called blended delivery model. Without those people who guided me and my fellow reps through my education, then our campaigning would not have been as effective as it has been.

Throughout our campaign against cuts, we sifted through many documents and statements that were written by consultancy firms using fancy terminology used to justify cuts for things that we were doing as firefighters. Why do we see the documents that read the same when talking about developing a new education framework? If it wasn't broke, why are we trying to fix it? I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Jamie. That's now open for debate.

EMILY HOLLANDS (NWC)**:**
Conference, supporting resolution 82. Education is not an add-on. It is not a Toyota Prius when it should be a Rolls Royce. It is the foundation of a strong democratic trade union. It's how we build confident reps, how we challenge inequality, and how we ensure that every member, including women and under-represented groups, can fully participate in our union.

When we look at what has happened at head office and within the education department, what we see is deeply concerning. We stand on picket lines and in negotiations arguing that cuts weaken services, undermine workers, and damage the people those services are meant to support. How can it be right that our own union inflicts cuts on the very staff who help deliver the work of this union? And from the perspective of the national women's committee, education is particularly vital. It's through education that we tackle discrimination, challenge outdated cultures, and support women to step forward as reps, leaders, and activists within the FBU. When education capacity is cut, equality work is weakened. When experienced staff are lost, knowledge is lost, and when decisions are made without the confidence of members, trust in our structures is eroded.

Has this change strengthened our union? Has it strengthened our education programme? Has it strengthened equality and representation within the FBU? Our union should lead by example in how we treat workers, in how we value education, and in how we invest in the future of our movement. We have seen the cancellation of Control School which would have been mainly attended by members of my section. What message does this send to control firefighters?

We acknowledge the circular from Adam Taylor regarding developing a new education framework. This appears to place more responsibility on our officials who are already stretched. Most equality reps do not even have access to facility time, so it remains to be seen how this will work. You cannot replace a dedicated education lead with lay officials and expect it to perform better. Conference, I support. *Applause*

WILL MADDERN (Warwickshire)**:**
President, conference, supporting reso 81 from West Midlands. I think the debate is quite simple. Last year, conference agreed unity and strength. We agreed that the future of this union should be built around stronger organising, better education, good communication with members, and supporting reps within the workplace.

Since then, three senior roles linked to those areas have gone. So naturally, we all have questions. Why? What's the plan? And how does this fit with what was agreed at conference last year? I think those are fair questions, and I don't think it's unreasonable for brigades and members to expect some answers.

This resolution is not trying to reverse the decisions that have already been made. It is not saying the EC cannot manage its own staffing or its own structures. What it's saying is that when changes affect important parts of the union, like organising, education, and communication, there should be openness to why these decisions are being made and how they fit with conference policy.

Conference, ironically, we're also running the Cuts Kill campaign. We rightly argue that cuts to services reduce capacity and weaken organisations. So members will obviously be concerned at these reductions in areas that help organise members, support reps, and communicate to the union. If the changes are the right ones, then explaining them properly should not be a problem, and if we want members to feel confident in the direction of this union, then transparency is key.

This resolution is about learning lessons, protecting the future, and making sure members understand why major decisions are being taken. Conference, please support resolution 81. *Applause*

LAUREL RAY (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 82. First conference, first time speaking. *Applause*

A dedicated education lead has given us the ability to build a greater understanding of trade unionism and learn the importance of organising and education pathways within a marginalised minority characteristic group.

It has allowed reps to develop skills and gain confidence to support members within these equality sections. Specific understanding and in-depth coverage of sectional issues and concerns further strengthened this support. The education delivered was tailored to our particular needs by a dedicated team who simply did not adopt a one-size-fits-all approach.

Education, equality, and equity all go hand in hand. Without inclusive learning structures, genuine equity cannot be achieved. Many attendees at our annual school events are not out within their workplaces, with some not even out to their families and friends. The safe space of school and the dedicated education package provided this safe space for our members to thrive, flourish, feel accepted within the union environment.

Therefore, it is important to us the EC ensure that any future education programmes and opportunities are not in a one-size-fits-all approach, and additionally, that the vital limited diversity within the EC is not reflected or replicated within future training provisions. Finally, we strongly caution that this report must include the voices of the equality sections.

A fair and transparent report to conference must be one that includes us, reflects our lived experience, and is developed with us, not one that speaks about us while avoiding our direct contribution. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Laurel.

HARRY BRANT (Leicestershire)**:**
President, conference, I oppose these resolutions. Within our region, it has been communicated the reasons why these decisions have been taken. Conference, we nominate, elect, and then employ and pay our national officers who are given remits.

The national officers of this union is a strategic level of key decision-making and departments. Why duplicate members' contributions on multiple persons being responsible for the same department or remit? The education department at the moment is on an evolution to improve, specialise, and develop, and these plans have been clearly laid out in communications from the national officer responsible for education.

Conference, I oppose these resolutions. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Harry.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, supporting resolution 81. Conference, change and people moving on in all workplaces is normal. We've all seen it within our own stations, control rooms, and offices. I think we can all also accept that a change in leadership can also lead to a time of reflection and review of whether any organisation needs to look at the way that it works.

But Conference, what's happened to head office in the last few months has not, from the outside, felt normal. An independent review of the work undertaken at head office, at least that's what I think it was, I haven't seen it, to me sounds incredibly corporate, which is not something I ever want our union to be. When we heard about this review, and parts of it were leaked out, the language did not sound like something I would ever expect the FBU

to be part of. But as I say, I'm taking all of this third-hand because I haven't had the chance to read the report. It was deemed confidential. But rumours spread, and Merseyside brigade committee were asking questions.

Were there redundancies? Who is leaving? What will it mean for education, communications and organising? And these are questions that I simply couldn't answer. So under our brigade committee's instruction, I wrote to the FBU leadership on 18th February asking to see that report so I could quell the rumours and set people's minds at rest.

We also asked for the rationale around the decisions taken in the restructure. I still haven't seen the report. I still haven't received the rationale. We've been assured that there were no redundancies. But Conference, what we have seen is several well-respected and very hard-working people leave roles in this union, and many of us still don't know why.

We are a member-led union. Independent reports have to be paid for. That money comes from us, from our members. I have received a reply from the top table, and told that we will discuss this further, but I call on them again to release the report to regional and brigade officials, redacted if necessary, so that we can have those discussions with all parties having all the information available for them.

I thank West Midlands for bringing this resolution because I've already said we're a member-led union, and when it comes to important issues such as education, organising and communications, our members and us, we all have a right to ensure that we are moving in the right direction. I'm not saying that we remove all power from the EC, but let's ensure that when these decisions are made, that there has to be accountability.

Can I know, mate? This conference is the government of our union, and yes, the EC do take over the running of union between conferences, but where the issues are so contentious –

THE PRESIDENT:
Delegate, can you wind up, please?

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
– or appear to be then it should be conference who have the final say on them. Support this resolution. Solidarity with all of our head office staff, past and present. *Applause*

ANDY MURRAY (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, we're speaking in opposition to both of these resolutions. I just want to reiterate the point that I made this morning. In Region 3, we've discussed this, we've had this information given to us. If you've not received that information, you have to ask yourselves, what has been falling down within your own regions?

2022 conference, we voted for four elected national officers. That's now been implemented. That's meant there's got to be changes to structures. Those structures have then changed. A policy statement came out from Adam Taylor around education that gives RELOs, gives regions more input into what education looks like. I'm 100% sure that that will also give the sections input into what education looks like.

I've been a RELO for over four years. I've repeatedly asked to go to meetings so we can discuss education. I've been to one, and that's only because there's only been one put on, and that was about three years ago. We've not had input into education. I've been to Scotland. I've helped implement a health and safety course in Scotland that was directly linked to Scotland. We've asked to put courses on within our own region, and that's been blocked. We are now in a position where we are able to provide education that is bespoke to our regions, to our members, to our officials.

A couple of people have mentioned facility time and full-time officials and not being able to have that. I'll just remind you we voted this morning against a policy statement that was going to fight for that. We oppose. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Point of order.

GUS SPROUL (Scotland)**:**
The comrade from region 3 just said that if we didn't have all the information, that's down to us. This was a confidential report that we've not had shared. So if you've had that shared, if you want to make it available to the rest of us, that'd be, handy in this debate. So I just wanted to clarify that. Thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Gus, I think I can speak on Andy's behalf. I don't think he was saying he's had the report, he's had the report from his EC member. Yep.

PATRICK BRENNAN (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 81. I just wanted to very quickly provide a little bit of context to a couple of the speakers that have touched on this. As we have just heard, following the review into the structures of the FBU commissioned by the EC, which was conducted by an external consultant, this produced a report which provided the recommendations that the EC subsequently agreed to. So about the context, the quote, "The FBU currently has the Rolls Royce of trade union education when what they need is an affordable Toyota Prius." Conference, we've not seen that report, again, as we've just discussed. It's not been shared with us, but I have been told that this is a direct quote. I just thought it was important to add a little bit of context and clarity on some of the points made earlier. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Pat.

DANNY BARTLEY (Mid and West Wales)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of resolution 81. Last year, Mid and West Wales successfully fought off proposed attacks on our shift patterns for 2-2-4 brothers and sisters. Changes that had they been implemented would have forced some of our members out of the career they love and thrive in due to personal care commitments. Attacks we were struggling to fight off on our own.

We were on our way to support our brothers and sisters in Oxfordshire to support them in their fight against cuts when we heard the news, we appeared to be doing similar in our own head office. Let that sink in. Let the irony of that sink in. It broke us on our way.

We were supported in our fight by a lot of our senior members in this fire brigades union, and their contributions were invaluable and long-lasting. But specifically, without the unwavering support, training, and guidance from Lindsey McDowell, Matt Partridge, and Michael Chessum, we would not had the same success, coverage, and support at a fire authority meeting at headquarters with over 250 members attending from all around the UK, sending strength and unity and sending a clear message to our fire authority and executive team that we are here, we are united, and we are strong. "Yma o hyd." We have a right to know the rationale to remove these posts. Conference, I support resolution 81. I urge you to do the same. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Tam McFarlane to give the opposition.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Thanks, president. Thanks, conference. I think first of all, I should explain why me and not anybody else. It's because national officers hold various remits. My remit, or one of my remits, is staffing, which means I am a key part of advertising, recruiting staff, supporting them when they're in head office, and also undertaking other duties.

I was going to go through the resolutions and pick out the bullet point that stands in opposition to the other bullet point, etc. But I want to thank Sasha and Alan for their honesty about what these resolutions are about. And I also want to tell conference we get it. We hear you. The executive council understands everything about this issue. We understand the references to cars, to Priuses, to Rolls Royces. We understand the T-shirts. We get the depth of feeling. We also understand that conference has previously reasserted its sovereignty very clearly and very powerfully today. I've got to tell you, conference there's no conspiracy here. No conspiracy whatsoever. Only extraordinarily difficult decisions that I had to make.

I also want to say, against the background of the references to cars and the T-shirts no one, no individual, no committee, no region has a monopoly of strength of feeling on this issue or the difficulty that's presented the Fire Brigades Union.

So here's just the reality. The EC commissioned a report, considered and debated carefully a report. Then I had to make some very difficult decisions. They were all made in good faith. Everyone was properly not just consulted with but negotiated with. And by that, I mean the staff trade union. Just to be absolutely clear, everyone at the back, past and present, they're our friends, they're our colleagues, in some cases, they're our comrades. And many people here will have worked very, very closely with them for many, many years.

The truth is, our ambitions as a trade union are, and probably always have been, far outstripping our resources. But we're determined to stay independent. We're determined to remain a strong fighting force for firefighters and firefighters' control. And that sometimes requires extraordinarily difficult decisions.

I will also say this: Chris Tapp, the brigade secretary for Derbyshire, has been around for a while as well. He referred to decision-making. Let's be under no illusion about what democracy is and its limitations and its necessity to sometimes be put in different places. You can't debate contracts. You can't make amendments to people's employment rights or status. You can't do that at an annual conference. That's why you elect an executive council.

And of course, it's a confidential report because it might not just contain the information that people are reacting to so strongly today. Of course, it has to remain confidential, because it refers directly to individuals, people which no matter how people are referring to them, people who are still close to us, who we still respect the work that they did for us and our members. We can't make that public. So as I said, all decisions were made in good faith.

THE PRESIDENT:
Point of order.

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, as a point of order, we have not asked for this report to be made public. We have asked for it to be released to brigade and regional officials only, and for it to be redacted if necessary. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
I'll let Tam respond to that.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
I don't respond to points of order, Mr president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Well, the point of order was raised that I think you may be mentioned public. He's clarified that he'd asked it for to the brigade officials, so it still applies.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Look, this cannot be an issue of contentious, or it's clear it's contentious. This can't be an issue of 'to and fro' debate. With all due respect to conference, I make the point again that no one's got a monopoly in regard to the individuals or the strength of feeling involved in this. The report is already getting quoted. As I said, the information contained within it is highly, highly sensitive, and we've got a duty of care to all our staff, and that's why we don't believe it can be released.

So as I said, all decisions have been made in good faith. All decisions have been made for one reason, and one reason alone, and that's to maintain the Fire Brigades Union as a standalone union. We've gone through issues like this previously in the past. They've all been very difficult for us. There's always a strong strength of feeling. I hope you can understand the difficulty the executive council has had at this current moment in time, trying to match our clear ambitions for the future against the finite resources we have as a relatively strong but extraordinarily powerful trade union. I also understand, and I perfectly respect, that many comrades have come here with their minds already made up. So I suppose my plea to those, actually my plea to those who have had their minds made up, at

least understand why the executive council made this decision, if you don't agree with it. For those of you who have come here able to listen, and hopefully taken onboard the points we've made, we would ask you to oppose this.

There's no reason for this issue to get carried out in such a way outside of the room, as it were. And I can just finish on this. Look, we have to be a united union. The executive council takes collective responsibility, and we always do, for the decisions the annual conference makes, whether or not we give qualified support, opposition, or whatever.

I suppose, look, in a perfect world, as Billy Bragg would say, we'd all sing in tune. But we have to deal with reality, don't we? And the reality has been a union this size versus ambitions that are far, far greater. So as I said, with the utmost respect to conference, please at least understand why the executive council made that decision. And yes, we would urge you to oppose these resolutions. But thanks, conference. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right of reply, West Mids? Norfolk, do you want to come down, right of reply?

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
President, conference, to my comrade from Leicestershire, we did ask our EC member. We did not accept nor even understand the reasons given. But even if we did, the point I made in the speech, conference decides on strategic decisions and directions of this union. General secretary said it to you yesterday. This is the supreme government of the Fire Brigades Union.

To my comrade from Durham and Darlington, you've had everything you needed. Great. We asked for the report, which is what we needed. We've already just heard that report is not for sharing. Maybe we needed more. Maybe we asked different questions, but what we got was not an answer that satisfied us.

As I stand here today, right now, I still do not know why we have lost three integral members of head office. I don't know whether it was cost. I don't know whether it was because of job duplication. I do know that if it was that there are far better ways of dealing with job duplication than getting rid of somebody. And I just want to make a point. I really appreciate that it was a difficult decision for the executive council and head office staff, but I'm afraid my sympathies lie with the three people and their families who are no longer employees of this union, after delivering nothing but exceptional professionalism in doing their jobs. *Applause*

ALAN JAYE (Leicestershire)**:**
Hello? Thanks. Can I thank my comrade from West Midlands for those excellent words? Well done. That was superb. There have been a couple of occasions where speakers have come who said that you obviously haven't been told by your EC rep. Well, I can absolutely hundred percent refute that. Our EC rep told us exactly what had happened but couldn't give us any details. Details matter, okay? That's what this is all about. The details matter. So yes, we were informed, and I'm happy to thank my EC rep, Jamie.

I'd like to thank West Midlands for their resolution, okay? And having spoken with my comrade in Scotland who I thank for seconding my resolution (that was appreciated) I am informing that we will withdraw resolution 82 to support resolution 81. *Applause*

So if I can ask you all to support resolution 81, I'll withdraw resolution 82.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Alan. Right, conference, I now put resolution 81 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. Ooh. Going to do that again. All those in favour, please show.
All those against, please show. Keep your hands nice and high.
I'll go for a card vote on that one.

Card vote called

Conference, stay in your seats, please. Delegates, stay in your seats. Where are you going?
Apart from the tellers and scrutineers.

Conference, come to order. Chair of standing orders.

CHAIR OF STANDING ORDERS (Phil Millar)**:**
Thank you, president. Conference, can those delegations that are in the for camp, can you please bring a voting card up and place it in the box, please?

Thank you, conference. Those that are against, can you please bring your cards up and put them in the box, please? Thank you.

THE PRESIDENT:
We are going to move on with business while that goes off to be counted. I now call resolution 83, Firefighter Control Members Contribution Rates moved by Suffolk. The EC are giving qualified support. Suffolk, and if that's got a seconder, if you can come down, please

Resolution 83 FIREFIGHTER CONTROL MEMBERS CONTRIBUTION RATES
Conference recognises the ongoing work to establish pay parity between our firefighter control operators and firefighters.

Conference however notes that whilst there is a difference in pay, that there is not a difference in membership contributions.

Conference proposes that the membership contributions for control members reflect the difference in pay until such time as we have achieved pay parity for all operational staff.

SUFFOLK

STEPHEN HAYWARD (Suffolk)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 83. Suffolk FBU are proud that Suffolk has brought control back into our service. From the beginning, we have had a strong control branch, overcoming many hurdles, one of these being the contribution rates. Our control members have stuck with us through all of it, and it is them that has asked us to bring this to conference.

We recognise the ongoing work to establish pay parity between our firefighter control operators and our firefighters. However, we note that while there is a difference in pay, there is no difference in contributions. Suffolk proposes that the membership contributions for control members reflect the difference in pay until such time as we have achieved pay parity for all operational staff.

Conference, we note that full-time members of all ranks, from firefighter to principal officer, contribute 1% of a competent firefighter's weekly rate of pay, and while we agree with this, we do not agree that fire control operators should pay more than 1% of a firefighter control operator's wage, which is what they currently do.

Conference, let me be clear. The pay difference we talk of is that of the national 95%, not any regional or rank differences. Concessions are already made for the retained duty system members, members on job share, and members who don't operate under Grey Book terms and conditions. All we ask is that our control members are treated fairly and have a concession to pay 1% of their competent wage until pay parity is achieved across all operational positions.

Conference, I hope we can return to our newly created control branch, bringing in fairness and unity. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks Steve. Have we got a seconder? Yeah. Yep, Seona. Cheers.

SEONA HART (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, seconding resolution 83 from our comrades in Suffolk. Conference, this debate in relation to lowering contribution rates for our control members is an issue that has been recognised by this union for years. I want to take you back to FBU Conference 2018 when resolution 78, flexible contribution rates from the CSNC was moved by our sister Kate Scott, with the executive council supporting. That resolution read:

"Conference notes that rightly the contribution rate for control members is set at the same level as whole time or job share operational firefighters. Staff who are on reduced earnings but not on an exact 50% job share split are being charged full rate, not one relevant to their earnings, which can be a deterrent to them retaining their FBU membership.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to review the application of union contribution rates and introduce a sliding scale between 50% and full contribution rate to reflect the wages being earned by our members."

Conference, this resolution directly linked contributions to earnings, and that members on reduced earnings should not be forced to pay contribution rates that do not reflect their actual wages.

The resolution instructed the EC to review contribution rates and introduce a sliding scale to reflect what members earn between job share and 100% of a wholetime firefighter salary in 2018. Sister Scott highlighted not only the financial challenges with some members on triple job share roles, working 75% contracts and paying the same contribution rates as firefighters on 100% contracts, but also the need to retain and recruit as many control members as possible and contribution rates being a deterrent.

Conference, the executive council supported it, conference supported it, and the resolution was carried. Yet here we are, eight years later, and it's still not been implemented. To bring it back to this resolution, it's only asking this union to act consistently with the principles we already agreed back in 2018 and reduce contribution rates for our control members to reflect their earnings as the pay parity issue that has also been ongoing for years has still not been achieved. Scotland strongly urges conference to support this resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Seona. Yep.

NIKKI HAXTON-JONES (CSNC)**:**
President, conference, we just wanted to make the point that this resolution reflects the frustration that many members feel about the lack of progress in pay parity. It's really important that the top table understand that. We've had some positive discussions over the last couple of days, and we hope this is now high up on your agenda.

CSNC want to make this resolution completely irrelevant. Let's not come back to conference next year to discuss this again. Let's get this achieved for control members. CSNC commit to re-energising and reorganising to coordinate to get this done. We have had initial discussions with Adam on this. Our only query is around the word in the resolution that instructs the FBU to ensure control membership contributions reflect the difference in pay. Due to differences in pay structure in North West Fire Control and London, that may mean that a small number of members may have their contributions increased to reflect that difference in pay. Can you give us assurance that no control member will be expected to pay more than maximum contribution rates?

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, delegate. Look, we've got a couple more speakers coming up. Is anybody speaking in opposition to this? You're speaking in opposition to it? All right. Yeah. The national officer who's responding might respond to that question.

NIKKI HAXTON-JONES (CSNC)**:**
Okay. If you can give us that assurance, then CSNC fully support this. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
All right. Yep. All right Conference.

HARRY BRANT (Leicestershire)**:**
President and conference, as I said before, I'm a proud firefighter control. I'm also proud that this union sees me as an equal to firefighters. Yes, this is a percentage, it's slightly more a month, but if this money is used to fight for our control staff to be seen as equal in the eyes of the bosses, then I have no problem with that whatsoever. However, I believe if the qualified support allays fears and, and increases fairness for our brothers and sisters in London and Northwest Fire Control, I will change my position accordingly. Conference, I oppose. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Harry. Sasha?

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
President, conference, supporting resolution 83. Conference recognises the ongoing campaign to achieve pay parity between our firefighter control members and firefighters. At present, there remains a 5% difference, yet despite that difference, control members are paying the same rate of union contributions. Fire control are the only role within our pay structures that receive a percentage of somebody else's salary. 95% of a firefighter's salary. Not 100% of a firefighter control salary, but a reduction of somebody else's. We don't refer to a firefighter's wage as 70% of a station commander's salary. They are standalone wages, apart from fire control.

A 5% adjustment of the trade contribution of our contribution rates would reduce the amount paid by around £1.57 per member per month. Across the entire control membership of 949 members, according to the annual report, the total cost to the union would be just under £18,000 a year.

Conference, for a national union, that is not an unmanageable figure, and when weighed against the message it sends to control members about fairness, solidarity, and recognition, it is entirely proportionate. It's important to remember the proposal is not permanent. Suffolk are not asking for conference to create a separate class of membership.

The resolution is explicitly tied to the period until pay parity is achieved. It clearly says the current situation is unacceptable. It aligns our union structures with the industrial position we already take politically. If a control member looks at their pay packet, sees that they earn less than firefighters for work of equal value, but sees no recognition of that difference in contribution rates, it becomes harder to persuade them that the union fully understands their position.

THE PRESIDENT:
Sasha, can you start winding up, please?

SASHA HITCHINS (West Midlands)**:**
I urge delegates to support the resolution. *Applause*

KATIE HOLLOWAY (NWC)**:**
Conference, president, hearing the discussions here today on this resolution, we fully support it. We just want to make a comment that our colleagues in control deserve their recognition of their title. They are firefighter control. They are not control staff or any other title. Firefighter control. National women's committee support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Katie.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, I'll do that. Yes, we would urge conference to support this as well but with one important qualification. Following discussions with the CSNC. I just want to pick up the point that was raised by region 1.

I'm not sure what quite that was about. But if we'd discussed this previously, I could have informed you. Shortly after that resolution was passed, we set up a working party to implement it. Implement that and a whole range of other resolutions that referred to contribution rates. It was based on brigade organisers.

Region 1 were represented at it, I have to say, very effectively. And that's how we come up with the three months free membership. In regard to the flexible contributions, they were tied to the contributions that are currently for non-Grey Book, as it were. And if you go on the website, it says non-Grey Book and flexible contributions, and they are in that banding range. So if you've got a member that's on a rate that's applicable within there, then you contact the membership department, and we will fix the contributions accordingly. And that banding is on the website and has been for a long period of time. So yeah, we did implement that. But back to the substantive motion.

Yes, we support it with the CSNC's clarification there. I mean, look, it's just this reality conference, and I know you'll have considered the sort of trade union and political aspect of having a different rate for firefighters' control versus an ordinary member as it were.

There has to be a rule change to implement that, because contribution rates are in the rule change. And to make it work effectively, i.e., without organisers having to chase up who earns what, as it were, because obviously the Fire Brigades Union doesn't pay our members' fire and rescue services employees' wages.

So we need to know what they earn in order to apply the correct rate. So to make that work, we would have a separate rule that would be applicable to firefighters' control, so it would encompass all firefighters control, including those who currently earn either the same as or more than an ordinary member at this moment in time.

So it would be a different tier, just be aware, a different tier, and it would change how we've done things previously, which is that there's always been a single rate in the Fire Brigades Union, and that's on the basis all our members get the same effective representation. And it's always been based on a firefighter because that's been the majority of our members.

So we've got, you know, for instance, whisper this, chief fire officers that are members of the FBU. They pay exactly the same rate as another ordinary member. So that would be that rate. The reason there is, of course you understand this, the reason there is a separate rate for non-Grey Book is because we can't represent them on a collective basis.

So that's sort of more wage based. But this would be a different rate applicable to firefighters' control. It'd require a rule change. We'd do that work this year in full consultation and discussion with the control staff national committee as well. So with that qualification, we would urge conference to support it. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tam. CSNC, addressed it? Yep. Right. I now put resolution 83 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*. I now ask chief scrutineer, Kate Yhnell, to come in and give the results of the card vote.

CHIEF SCRUTINEER (Kate Yhnell)**:**
For resolution 81 changes to head office structures from West Mids, against was 12,054. For was 19,993. Therefore, the resolution carries. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Kate. Right, I now call resolution 84, Subsistence And Mileage For Fire Brigades Union Representatives, moved by South Yorkshire. The EC are giving qualified support. South Yorkshire.

Resolution 84 SUBSISTENCE AND MILEAGE FOR FIRE BRIGADES UNION REPRESENTATIVES
Conference acknowledges that the Fire Brigades Union has a proud history of standing for fairness and respect at work, and that local representatives and officials play a vital role in supporting members and ensuring the effective functioning of the union.

Conference notes that current subsistence payments for representatives undertaking union duties are £5 for between 5 and 9 hours, and £10 for between 9 and 15 hours.

Conference understands that these payments are not intended as wages, but as basic subsistence.

Conference further notes that current mileage rates for union duties sit below HMRC approved rates, and that representatives frequently travel significant distances to attend meetings, investigations, welfare cases and other union business, often at personal cost.

Conference believes:
- ***subsistence and mileage arrangements should reasonably reflect the time commitment and expense incurred in carrying out representative duties***
- ***regular review is necessary to ensure these arrangements remain fair, sustainable, and aligned with recognised standards.***

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***review the current subsistence payments for representatives***
- ***review mileage rates with reference to HMRC approved rates***
- ***consider whether adjustments are required to ensure representatives are not financially disadvantaged***
- ***report back with any proposed revisions by Conference 2027.***

Conference affirms providing fair subsistence and mileage support is essential to maintaining a strong and effective representative structure across the union.

SOUTH YORKSHIRE

STU SMITH (South Yorkshire)**:**
President, conference. Moving resolution 84, subsistence and mileage for Fire Brigades Union representatives. The Fire Brigades Union has always stood for fairness, dignity, and respect at work. It's who we are, it's what our members expect, and it's what our reps work tirelessly to uphold every single day.

But conference, we all know the reality. Our local reps, the people who sit in investigations, support members in crisis, travel across counties for meetings and welfare visits, are too often doing so at their own personal cost. Right now, subsistence payments for union duties are just five pounds for between five and nine hours, and ten pounds for between nine and fifteen hours.

But conference, these rates have stood still for many years whilst the cost of living has moved on. The real value of these payments has eroded significantly. If I can just give you a quick real-life example. Just the other week, our brigade organiser, who does an absolutely fantastic job in arranging our red plaque events in South Yorkshire, he had to meet to get the stone plinths laid ready for the red plaques. He was out of his house for five hours, dropped his young son off at his parents for childcare, and drove approximately fifteen hours across two locations, all for a fiver. Missed a precious day with his young son for a fiver.

And our mileage rates, they sit below the HMRC approved rates. That alone should tell us a review is overdue. Conference, let me be absolutely clear. I am not here to raise expectations. I am here to ensure fairness, and fairness starts with the understanding whether our current arrangements still reflect reality.

This resolution does not set figures. It does not prejudge the outcome. It simply asks for a fair, fast, evidence-based review and bring the findings back within the next 12 months. Conference, our reps are the backbone of this union. They give their time, their energy, and their commitment to supporting members. The least we can do is to ensure that they are not financially disadvantaged for stepping up.

Supporting this resolution strengthens our representative structure, it strengthens our union, and it strengthens the principle that fairness applies to us all. Conference, I urge you to support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks Stu. Are you seconding, Ross? Thank you.

ROSS McLAREN (London)**:**
Conference, president, seconding this resolution. Over the last couple of days, we've all discussed about the importance of pay, pay parity, the impacts of the cost of living, and how that can affect our members when it doesn't move in the right direction.

We're also members, but we're members in here that do a little bit more. We're the members that have become the professional voice of a Fire Brigades Union. We've gone a bit more above and beyond what members do. You've sacrificed your time, your mental wellbeing, and your relationships in order to do this role.

You shouldn't have to sacrifice cost, financial cost that it takes to facilitate that. As the colleague said, traveling to branch meetings on multiple occasions, doing area meetings, all kind of things where you can't even claim back the full cost of fuel that it takes to get there. So this isn't about greed or seeing down on other members. It's just about getting a modicum of an increase on our current expenses in the current climate that makes us all struggle. I second. Cheers. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Ross. The EC are giving qualified support. That's open for debate. Anybody? No. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, again, thanks to you for bringing this. Just a point about the HMRC rates. Just to be clear, our mileage rates are consciously below the HMRC rates because the HMRC rates are the rate you can get, and then above that you get tax implications.

And just on that point, just to be absolutely clear with conference. You'll know the way that your subs and your mileage rate is paid. The way that all comes together and the way it goes through Dimensions access system into your bank account, it's set up that way because we had to make an agreement with the HMRC. That came about when HMRC did an audit and hit us with quite extraordinary tax implications, and it wasn't just to the union, I have to say, it was to the individuals that received allowances and received the mileage that they did. We were able to negotiate that away through our keen negotiating skills at that time, but it was a considerable period of time ago, and that agreement has been the bedrock. That's what keeps the HMRC at bay every time we have an audit.

That said, we have increased allowances previously. I have to say it was done within a cost envelope. We actually, I think slightly reduced the EC allowance. I know how they're looking here, and redistributed that as well, so it was more a sort of equalisation around allowances.

And it may well be that's what we're going to have to look at today look at again coming back. So the qualification really is that – by the way, I know the Finance and Administration Committee would be pretty annoyed if I didn't say this. I think we just need to be conscious, first of all, we had the financial report on day one. We've just reduced contributions for a group of members. But Sasha's right, it's not going to be a huge impact, but still 20K is 20K, around about that. And now we're talking about increasing allowances and mileage rate. You know, I think we always, and I know you all are very, very aware this money doesn't come from the union. We all know where our money actually comes from. We've got a duty to make sure it's spent in the right way, in the right manner. That said, yes, we will, we'll definitely review this with a view to increasing mileage and allowances to other officials, and we will report back on that. But as I said, it's going to have to be within the context of an HMRC, frankly, to protect, our officials from the potential consequences of them. But yeah, we can revisit that with them. I'll let the president do that.

THE PRESIDENT:
Will you? Okay, right. Thanks for that, Tam. I now put resolution 84 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para L2, para L3, para L4, L5, para L6. Yep.

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
Conference, president. Oops, too high. Conference, president, placing on record B&EMM regional reps incorrect prior to print and still incorrect at time of print. B&EMM National Sec will again contact relevant department to update. So thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Right. Thanks for that, Karen. Para L7. Para L8. Para L9. Para L10. Para L11. Para L12. Para L13. Yep.

SIMON LEROUX (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, speaking on para L13, FireFighter 100 Lottery. Conference, I spoke on this very para last year, but I feel that it would be remiss of me not to speak on it again. A by-product of the lottery is the ability to support and fund many great causes, one of which being the red plaque scheme, which we can all agree is a great cause.

Conference, the importance of this lottery and the associated causes it supports cannot be underestimated. I spoke with Tam to inquire about any additional uptake in ticket sales since last conference and was told unfortunately there's not been. It's stalled. In fact, as you can see in the EC report to conference, it's actually run at a deficit.

This is not sustainable. Last year, I set a challenge to everybody on the conference floor. All of us should have at least one ticket and then get back on station into your branches and get one member to sign up and get them to get one and so on and so forth and spread the word throughout friends and family.

Conference, let's keep the lottery growing and the special causes it funds able to function and thrive. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Simon. Para, L14? Yep

ALAN JAYE (Norfolk)**:**
Alan Jaye, brigade chair, Norfolk. Thank you. *Applause*

Apologies for all that. I just want to say Norfolk got its first red plaque this year. Brother Christopher Betts, who was killed in 1985 in the Chequers Public House fire. I just want to put on record the excellent work done by regional secretary Rebecca Lewington in organising and getting everything sorted. So thank you, Rebecca. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Alan. All right.

HARRY BRANT (Leicestershire)**:**
Speaking on the para L14 red plaque scheme. I'd just like to place on record my thanks to our former EC member, now national officer, Adam Taylor, and our current EC member, Mark Stilwell, and regional secretary Jed Goodfellow, for their assistance in facilitating our red plaque event held in Leicestershire for Brother Mick Bird. And that thanks comes from all members in Leicestershire, particularly Shepshed branch. Many thanks. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Harry. Tam?

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, just quickly. Thanks for the input regarding red plaques. It's always a popular feature at conference. Always comes at the end, doesn't it, yeah? The scheme's going from strength to strength. As you'll see, we've got 85 laid to date with 136 names.

But I have to say, talk about an exponential rise, conference, we've currently got 72 applications that are active. And that will have another 149 names, president. And this goes back to the point that Simon makes about the funding

of this, which comes from the lottery. Look, we've found our experience, we've got a chart that does it, it jumps following each red plaque. So for instance – a big shout-out, by the way, to Amanda Mills in Avon, who did the red plaque for Fleur Lombard this year. That was an extraordinary event as well, so just to add a name there. But we followed that. We were getting the train back from Bristol. We had seven requests for red plaques because that was reported widely.

It grows exponentially. But what happens, and if I can just get quickly give you the figures, president, it jumped from 4,677 tickets up to 7,316 tickets then and then went straight back down again only a couple of weeks later. We've currently got 2,415 players. Conference, come on. This is a magnificent scheme that honours the memory of fallen firefighters, the people who made up our remarkable profession.

But we have got to build it. We've got a duty, I think, now we've started it, to make sure we see it through, but it's got to be funded. So please, if you're not in the lottery, join it now, and if you are in the lottery, get at least three of your colleagues/comrades to do it as well. We need to fund to make sure that the memory of our fallen members is always remembered.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Tam. Right, we're now calling para L15. Now moving on to section G. G1, G2, G3, G4, G5

HAYLEIGH MARKS TALABIS (Northamptonshire)**:**
President, conference, speaking on para G5, politics education. I just want to formally place on record my thanks for everybody involved in organising, running, and attending of the two political courses, Westminster, Parliament and Politics, and tackling of the international rise of the far right.

The information and networking opportunities I gained on both of those courses have already proved invaluable within my brigade, region, workplace, and the community. The confidence I gained has been absolutely invaluable, although I'm not sure every member of my service has appreciated it. I just wanted to convey my thanks to everybody and have that recognition formalised. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Hayleigh. I now call para G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16.

And now we are moving on to section I, para I1. I now call resolution 68, Modernising The Definition Of Dependent Child Within The AIF, moved by Staffordshire.

Resolution 68 MODERNISING THE DEFINITION OF DEPENDENT CHILD WITHIN THE ACCIDENT, INJURY AND DEATH BENEFIT FUND (AIF)
Conference notes that the AIF exists to provide financial protection and security to the families of members in the event of death or serious injury.

Conference notes that the current definition of 'dependent child' within the Rule Book does not automatically include children of a cohabiting partner unless they fall within a narrow interpretation of dependency.

Conference notes that modern family structures increasingly include blended families in which members live with, support and act as parental figures to children who are not biologically theirs.

Conference recognises that members frequently undertake long-term parental responsibilities for children within their household, including financial support and the responsibilities of family life.

Conference further recognises that reliance on discretionary ex-gratia payments following bereavement creates uncertainty and inconsistency in the administration of the Fund.

Conference believes that the Rule Book should reflect the lived reality of modern family life and provide clarity, fairness and consistency in the administration of the AIF.

Conference further believes that children who have resided in the same household as a member for a sustained period and who were financially or materially dependent upon that member should not be excluded from entitlement solely on the basis of biological parentage.

Conference therefore resolves that it is the policy of the union that the definition of 'dependent child' within the AIF should be amended to include a child of a spouse or cohabiting partner who:

- ***has resided in the same household as the member for a continuous period of not less than 2 years immediately preceding the member's death; and***
- ***was financially or materially dependent upon the member at the time of death.***

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to prepare and bring forward the necessary amendments to Rule F2 at the next Rule Change Conference in accordance with Rule C12.

Conference further instructs the EC that, pending formal rule amendment, the management committee should have regard to this stated policy position when exercising its discretionary powers under Rule F2(9)(iii).

Conference instructs the EC to ensure that any proposed amendments preserve the financial sustainability of the AIF in accordance with Rule F2(9)(iv)

STAFFORDSHIRE

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire)**:**
Conference, president, this resolution is really about ensuring that the support our union provides keeps pace with the reality of modern life. When a firefighter dies, the Accident and Injury in Death Benefit Fund exists to provide security and protection to the family that they leave behind. But families don't all look the same anymore. Modern family life is increasingly made up of blended families, long-term partners, stepchildren, and households where members take on the full responsibilities of parenting regardless of biology. And the reality is this: that many firefighters in our union go home every day to children that they help raise, support financially, care for emotionally, take to school, provide for, and act as parents to in every meaningful sense of the word. Yet under the current wording of the Rule Book, those children are not automatically recognised if tragedy strikes.

Conference, that simply does not reflect the lived reality of our members' lives. This resolution does not seek to open any floodgates or undermine the sustainability of the fund. In fact, the resolution explicitly protects the long-term financial sustainability of the AIF. What it does seek to do is introduce fairness, clarity, and consistency. The thresholds proposed within it, they're sensible, they're proportionate.

The child must have lived in the same household continuously for at least two years immediately preceding the death, and they must have been financially or materially dependent upon the member. It's not about a casual relationship. It is about recognising genuine family dependency where a member has undertaken long-term parental responsibilities.

We already know these situations exist. I know that personally, and I'm sure others in here have, too. Because I've had to go through the process of appealing on this very issue because someone's children weren't going to receive unless we appealed.

In that case, the one that I dealt with recently, the appeal was ultimately upheld, and full payment was made in respect of the two children within that household. But the fact an appeal was necessary at all demonstrates exactly why greater clarity and consistency is needed within the Rule Book. And I can tell you that when families are already dealing with bereavement, they should not also be left navigating ambiguity around whether the children within that household will be recognised.

At present, situations like these can rely upon discretionary ex gratia payments following bereavement rather than clear entitlement within the Rule Book itself. But discretion also creates uncertainty, and uncertainty is the last thing that grieving families should face after losing someone they depended upon.

Families should not be left wondering whether the support will be approved simply because the relationship did not fit neatly into an outdated definition of parenthood. Because if a child has been loved, supported, housed, fed, cared for, and raised by a firefighter, then that child is part of our family too, and that child should not suddenly become invisible to the fund purely because there is no biological link.

Conference, biology alone does not define parenthood. Some people may contribute to conception and never truly become a parent, whilst others may step into that role every single day without any biological connection at all. Parenthood is shown through love, responsibility, support, and sacrifice, and this resolution simply asks that our Rule Book recognises that reality. This resolution asks the union to recognise modern family life as it actually exists, not as it may have existed decades ago.
Conference, it is measured, it is compassionate, it is responsible, and a competent resolution. I ask you to support. *Applause*

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference. Seconding resolution 68. We thank Staffordshire and Martin for bringing this. In conference last year, I introduced you all to my son, Oscar. He still loves sharks. I also promised my daughter, Naomi, that I would mention her at conference this year, and as a father, I always strive to keep my promises to my children.

I love them both equally and unequivocally. Both are my children. However, biologically, and biologically only, that is not the case. Oscar is eight on Monday, and for over seven years now, he has been an absolutely integral and adored part of our family. But the way adoption works means that he was not legally part of our family for over two years after he came to his forever home. That was partly because of COVID.

Comrades, family is family. The Accident and Injury Fund is an amazing piece of trade unionism. This resolution strengthens the fund and strengthens the work that we as trade unionists do to support our comrades and their families in their ultimate time of need.

Comrades, if the worst would have happened to me seven years ago or five years ago, I know the AIF would have covered Naomi, but I don't know if it would have covered Oscar. I do know undoubtedly that the FBU would have stepped up and taken in all of my family and supported them emotionally and financially.

But this isn't about me. It's about all of us; however our families are made up. Words are important, as has been said several times at this conference. So let's support this resolution and get the words in the Rule Book changed so that we can show our solidarity with our members and their families however they are made up. Conference, I second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lee. Yep

KATIE HOLLOWAY (NWC)**:**
President, conference, we initially intended to second this resolution, as there are clear flaws in the AIF process and criteria. The intent of the resolution is something the national women's committee truly agrees with. That being said, we have concerns that in bullet point one, it states that the child must have resided with the member for a period of not less than two years.

What if the child is under two years of age? This wording could be detrimental to our members due to its restrictive nature. We have had assurances from the AGS, Ben Selby, and national officer, Joe Weir, that this work will be carried out. The AIF criteria will be reviewed if this resolution is remitted, with full consultation with Staffordshire and the national women's committee.

We do need consistency. We do need certainty. We need a clear and fair process for those needing to access the AIF without the need to vilify your family at a tragic time. Comrades, we all call each other our brothers, our sisters, our siblings. Well, these are then all our children, and we need to protect and give security to them all.

So, Staffordshire, we thank you for bringing this resolution to conference, but we do ask you to remit it so that this work can be carried out robustly, efficiently, and so that no child misses out on the support that this AIF gives. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Katie. Yep

MARIA BUCK (LGBT+)**:**
Conference, president, three years ago, my life was simple. I had no worries, no cares, apart from my fur babies. That was my world, and I was content with it. Then everything changed. I was lucky enough to meet someone who I knew I could spend the rest of my life with, but they didn't come alone. They came as a package with two beautiful toddler boys, who are now three and five, and with them came a life I never expected, but now I couldn't imagine being without. These boys see me as their parent, not sort of, not sometimes. I am their parent. I'm the one who helps guide them, supports them, loves them, even when work takes me away, and they call out for me as their Rah Rah.

That is what family looks like for me, and that is why this resolution matters. I welcome the move to recognise children of a cohabiting partner. It's an important step forward. It acknowledges that families today don't all look the same, and it begins to reflect the lived reality of our members.

But Conference, I need to say this: it doesn't go far enough because my family does not live in one household. We are spread across two homes for financial reasons, family reasons, and for childcare. It's not always neat, it's not always simple, but it's no less real and no less a family. The love, the responsibility, the financial support, and the emotional commitment, they don't stop at the front door of a single address.

And yet, under the current thinking, that would mean my children, the children who call me Rah Rah, might not be recognised. Not because I'm not a parent in every meaningful sense, but because our lives don't fit into a single fixed definition. Love is not less valid because it doesn't follow a traditional path, and family is not less deserving because it's shaped differently.

Conference, one size does not fit all. This fund exists to provide security and protection to the family of our members, then it must recognise all families, not just the ones that fit neatly into our Rule Book. Conference, I ask you not just to support this resolution, but to think bigger, be bolder, and to ensure that no child who is loved, supported, and cared for by one of our members is left behind simply because their family looks different. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Maria.

STEVE GREGORY (West Midlands)**:**
President, conference, supporting resolution 68 from Staffordshire. Families are different. Right now, a firefighter can spend years helping raise a child, being the person they rely on every day. But if that firefighter dies, that child may still fall outside the definition of a dependent child simply because there is no biological connection.

Conference, imagine trying to explain that to a grieving family. Imagine telling a child who has known that person as a parent for years that when it matters most, they do not count in the same way. Having that conversation where two children are covered and a third isn't. This resolution is not radical. It is balanced and sensible.

The child must have lived in the household continuously for at least two years, and they must have been financially or materially dependent on the member. These are clearly established family relationships, and importantly, recognising those families does not suddenly create new circumstances or new tragedies.

It simply means that when the worst happens, the support of this fund reaches the families who are already living as a family. Conference, at the moment, too much depends on discretion after bereavement. This resolution is fair

and in line with modern family life. If a member has loved, supported, and raised a child as their own, then our union should recognise that reality. Please support the resolution. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. Joe?

JOE WEIR (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thanks, president, and thanks, Martin, for bringing the resolution. Look, we're still seeking remittance, or we would urge conference to oppose, not because the executive council don't agree with the sentiment of the resolution, not because we don't want to progress the work, but because in conversations that have already taken place, that I've had with head office staff including Sara and Joel, who administer the day-to-day administrative purposes when applications come in, we believe that the resolution, as has been highlighted by the NWC, by Maria from the LGBT+, is actually going to restrict our ability to actually make it completely inclusive, holistic, and we want to look at it from a holistic approach.

I've got two children myself. You know, it resonates with me. I may now be a head office official and no longer employed by the fire and rescue service, but it weighs on all of us, the thought of leaving people we love behind, the thought of not being able to support them or our partners if anything should happen to us.

We know it's a risky job. We know that people are contracting cancer at high rates. But we urge you to remit this, Staffordshire. I've already started the work. I give you the commitment that we will work with you. We'll meet with the NWC, the LGBT+ committee, to review this holistically in line with the staff, Joel and Sara, who do a fantastic job, so we can amend the Rule Book, so we can look at that before the end of this year and bring it back to conference with a rule change next year, hopefully from the executive council to make this inclusive and be able to move forward so that we do recognise the modern family they live in. So I urge you to remit. Otherwise, we're asking conference to oppose. Thanks, president. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Joe. Martin.

MARTIN STARKEY (Staffordshire)**:**
President, conference, Joe, I'd just like to thank you for what you've just said there, although I am a little bit confused because over the last few days you've been saying it was on the wording. You didn't say anything about it being holistic or inclusive to me.

You actually specifically said that it was because one of the sentences in there could be interpreted to mean that the parent was living with somebody for two years, not the child. So that's the first time I've heard that. I've heard what the NWC have said LGBT+. And I'd prepared almost a right of reply because of everything that you'd said to me over the last couple of days, Joe. But that's kind of gone out the window because you've not said any of that up there.

So, if we're asking people to remit things, we need to have a really honest conversation, and I don't feel like we've had that. We had a conversation in front of people where you said it was based on the wording. Now, I've stood here and I thought I listened to the NWC, LGBT+ and the issues they had around what if a child wasn't two years old, what if the child doesn't actually live within the same household as me? They're really good points. And do you know what? Actually, maybe I should have approached the NWC and LGBT+ beforehand, and I'll take that away with me and make sure that in future I do that. Because of the comments that they have made I'm torn, if I'm honest with you. I want it to be as good as possible.

I want everybody's kids to be recognised under the AIF. So for the comments made by the NWC and LGBT+, and the assurance that you have said the work will be done in conjunction with myself and those sections, then I will remit it on this occasion. But next time, can you have an honest conversation with me, please? Staffordshire remits. *Applause*

JOE WEIR (National Officer)**:**
Thanks, Martin, and thanks for remitting it. Look, I don't think I've been dishonest. I will openly say I may not have raised that point in there, reading the room and listening to the debate. I sat in front of you just about an hour ago, and I read out what I read from my screen and showed you the email. So I will just say, look, I will do the work. I will work with you and the points saying, but I'm not accepting kind of the accusation of being dishonest. I don't think that's fair, or just, personally. So thank you, President. Thank you, conference.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Joe. Conference, we should be stopping for tea right now. Do you agree to suspend your standing orders and work through? We have got eight resolutions left. Yep, is that agreed? *Agreed*. Thank you. Right. 60 has been remitted. Thank you for that, Martin. We're now finishing Section D. Yep.

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
President, conference. I could be incorrect. Please excuse me if I am. Have we totally missed out Section M, of this booklet, or are you coming to it?

THE PRESIDENT:
Section what, sorry?

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
M. M for mother, Mike.

THE PRESIDENT:
Yes, we did that the first day. Finances.

KAREN BELL (B&EMM)**:**
Apologies. I did have a change on it, but we can speak about it afterwards.
There's something incorrect on it, so apologies.

THE PRESIDENT:
No, I'm not doing it again. Sorry. Yeah, sorry, Karen. But yeah, just raise it with us afterwards, Karen, definitely.

Right, moving on to Section D, fire and rescue service policy. I'm going to take the following resolutions in the same debate: resolution 5, resolution 36, resolution 44.

Remember, conference, because they are being taken in the same debate, only one speaker from a delegation may speak. So I now call emergency resolution 5, degradation plans and cuts to front line fire and rescue services by stealth move by Durham and Darlington. Could I also ask if that's got a seconder for that person to come up also?

The mover of resolution 36 from Scotland, please come up, and if that's got a seconder, come up. And resolution 44 from London, and if that's got a seconder, come up. Thank you. Right. Durham and Darlington. The EC are giving support to 5. They're giving qualified support to 36, qualified support to 44. They can all carry together.

Emergency Resolution 5 DEGRADATION PLANS AND CUTS TO FRONTLINE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES BY STEALTH
Conference notes Fire and Rescue Authorities are increasingly using so called "degradation", "resilience" or "availability" plans to manage routine service delivery. These arrangements normalise reduced crewing and fewer fire engines rather than responding to exceptional or short-term circumstances.

Conference further notes that on the 30 April 2026, County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Service (CDDFRS) implemented a revised version of their degradation plan. This degradation plan normalises the reduction of fire cover across the county, making it an everyday occurrence, rather than using it for exceptional circumstances that are unforeseeable and cannot be planned for. The

degradation plan is being used to implement under-staffing for dates in the future, an example of this is their plan to remove a fire appliance from Peterlee Fire Station by splitting members of that crew and using them to cover shortfalls in staffing across the county. This, in effect, means that the Community Risk Management Plan, which allocates resources based on the risk data, is being circumvented, putting crews and communities at greater risk.

Conference also notes that due to low and unstable levels of staffing within fire and rescue services across the UK, the implementation of degradation plans is becoming common practice and are no longer being implemented as a worst-case scenario when all other avenues have been exhausted.

Degradation plans are often implemented by Fire and Rescue Services, without consultation with the Fire Brigades Union (FBU). They are also introduced and amended without any meaningful public or democratic scrutiny. Such plans mask the true impact of long-term underfunding and staffing cuts imposed by central and local government, whilst increasing the risk to those on the frontline and the public whom we are there to protect. Those risks are never truly assessed and mitigated against, either prior to being implemented or once cover is returned to normal levels, in the hope that the worst never arises.

Conference believes, the routine use of degradation plans, in foreseeable and avoidable circumstances, constitutes cuts to frontline services by stealth. Degradation shifts risk from employers and politicians onto firefighters on station and in control rooms and the public.

Normalised reduced availability undermines public safety, increases response times, and compromises effective emergency response. Degradation plans place unacceptable pressure on firefighters and control staff, damaging health, safety and welfare. The continued erosion of operational cover disproportionately affects working class and high-risk communities.

Conference resolves that The FBU opposes the routine or planned use of degradation arrangements to deliver permanent reductions in fire and rescue cover. Any genuine short term contingency arrangements must not be used to justify long term service reduction. Fire and Rescue Authorities must be held publicly accountable for any reduction in frontline provision rather than disguising cuts as operational necessity.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:

1. ***Support regions and branches in resisting degradation plans through negotiation, political campaigning, legal challenge and, where necessary, industrial action***
2. ***Produce national guidance to assist reps in identifying, challenging and opposing degradation arrangements***
3. ***Expose the link between austerity, funding cuts and the growing use of degradation plans.***
4. ***Campaign further for properly funded Fire and Rescue Services with safe crewing levels, adequate appliance availability and nationally consistent standards of fire cover***
5. ***Assist officials with scrutinising fire service finances, to allow for investigations to be carried out into whether Services have used their funding in the most cost effective and beneficial way for the protection of their communities.***

DURHAM AND DARLINGTON

GUY LAWES (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, moving emergency resolution five. Conference, this resolution has been brought due to the emergent nature of an issue in our county, albeit that the broad problem has been around for years. Degradation or resilience plans detail how fire and rescue services might operate during extreme low probability, high impact events.

In most cases, they were or are implemented to be a temporary measure when one of these events makes the protection of the public or allocation of resources pre-planned in a CRMP impossible. But we've seen in the last two weeks deliberate and undiscussed changes being made to degradation planning which makes them usable on a day-to-day basis in what, in our opinion, is a clear move to hide financial failings, make cuts through the back door, and make commonplace trialling of pump and specialism removal with little to no scrutiny over the impact these

reductions may cause and little to no assessment of risk by the service either prior to their inclusion in the plan or dynamically on the day that they are enforced.

This is a threat that we now know we're not alone in dealing with, and we believe the wider union needs to awaken to this dangerous practice. The way in which we're seeing these plans evolving is going to require a greater deal of inspection and argument, as if the practice became normalised as a day-to-day activity, public safety will be undermined, response times will increase, and even more pressure and risk will be applied to firefighters operationally as well as in control who will undoubtedly be the people who have to deal with the difficulties, the dangers, and stresses of managing the events that occur and ultimately suffer when the system fails.

This resolution asks for support for brigade officials to offer resistance to these plans and seeks greater pathways for more expert help when scrutinising financial appropriation where use of degradation plans are of concern for any of the reasons stated in this resolution. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Guy. Seconding.

HARRY BRANT (Leicestershire)**:**
Conference, president, seconding the emergency resolution brought by Durham and Darlington. Conference, throughout our campaign against cuts in Leicestershire, appliances were taken off the run, watches dispersed to provide cover elsewhere in the county or wholetime appliances simply sent to cover retained stations that are off the run.

This strips the resilience and cover requirements affirmed in our CRMP and is by its very nature degradation by stealth. We thank Durham and Darlington for bringing this to conference. We fully support this resolution, and we oppose cuts in whatever shape or form they take, whether presented in plain sight, masked through claims of efficiency or savings, or by stealth as identified in this emergency resolution.

Within Leicestershire, we got the proposed cuts overturned. The current crisis that accompanied this was exposed on social media through a warn and inform campaign. We got into local media outlets, we engaged with the public, politicians, and addressed the combined fire authority, all important tools in our arsenal.

This emergency resolution will establish support for all brigades affected by this very issue, and I urge conference to support. Conference, I second. *Applause*

Resolution 36 INADEQUATE AND DANGEROUS CREWING LEVELS
Conference will recall Resolution 35 'Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing Campaign' moved by the National Retained Committee (NRC) at Conference 2023 and passed with the support of the Executive Council (EC).

Conference will additionally recall Resolution 24 'Inadequate and Dangerous Crewing Levels', also moved by the NRC, at Conference 2022 and again passed with the support of the EC.

The resolutions called for:
- ***the EC to compile information from all brigade secretaries detailing how widespread practices of crewing fire appliances with less than 5 riders were***
- ***to then formulate a national strategy aimed at raising awareness of and opposing under crewing.***

Conference believes that to date this work has not been completed.

Conference therefore instructs the EC to carry out this work, and for it to be completed by the end of 2026.

SCOTLAND

SIMON LEROUX (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, moving resolution 36, inadequate and dangerous crewing levels. Conference, this resolution should not be controversial. It should not have been necessary. Yet year after year, we return to this floor raising the same concerns because the reality on the ground continues to deteriorate.

These issues were highlighted to conference in 2022 and recorded again in 2023, both by the NRC supported by the EC. And still, firefighters across the UK continue to face the consequences of under-crewing, shrinking resources, and increasing operational pressure. In Scotland, we are operating in one of the most difficult financial climates in decades.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service continues to work under what is effectively a flat cash budget. Conference knows what that really means. A flat cash budget is not stable funding; it is a cut in real terms. Inflation rises, cost rises, fuel rises, utilities rise, equipment costs rise, wage pressures rise, demand rises, but the funding does not.

And when budgets fail to keep pace, the cuts do not appear on spreadsheets first, they appear on the run. They appear in fewer firefighters available to crew appliances. They appear in delayed attendance and resilience. They appear in stations, appliances, and jobs under threat. They appear in communities wondering whether the resources they relied upon ten, fifteen, twenty years ago still exist today.

Since 2013, Scotland has seen a significant reduction in firefighter numbers. That reduction has happened alongside increasing operational expectations placed upon the workforce. Firefighters are now expected to do more, cover more risk, travel further, and absorb more responsibility with fewer personnel.

This reality is particularly stark within our emergency fire control rooms. The reduction of eight control rooms to three following the merger to a single service has meant that firefighter control staff are performing safety-critical roles under sustained pressure, handling traumatic incidents, making rapid decisions, and maintaining operational continuity while regularly working below agreed safe crewing levels, with the term below critical, if that is such a thing, a weekly occurrence.

Our frontline firefighters in control are the first voice the public hears in an emergency situation and are a calming voice at the end of the phone, often remaining on the line with callers until fire crews arrive on scene, providing fire survival guidance on probably one of the worst moments of the caller's life, and they are expected to carry out this vital role heavily understaffed with inadequate levels of personnel.

At the same time, we have the ongoing service delivery hanging over communities and firefighters alike. Conference, our members understand exactly what that means. Rationalisation, efficiency savings, reconfiguration. Different language perhaps, but always the same outcome. Fewer resources attempting to manage the same or greater risk, and this is not just a Scottish issue.

Across the UK, we have witnessed long-term erosion of fire and rescue capability. We have lost firefighters, we have lost appliances, we have lost fire stations. We have lost resilience capacity that once protected our communities and protected our crews. The danger is this erosion happens gradually enough that decision-makers hope nobody notices until the system reaches breaking point. But firefighters notice, communities notice, and eventually statistics notice, too.

Conference, under crewing is not an abstract industrial issue, it is an operational safety issue. A fire appliance leaving the station with fewer than five riders fundamentally changes capability. It changes the incident command options. It changes the speed and the effectiveness of firefighting operations. It impacts on firefighter safety, casualty care, rescues, BA procedures, water supply, and the ability to deal with escalating incidents. No firefighter should arrive at an incident already knowing they are operating below the safest and most effective crewing level, and yet that is increasingly becoming normalised.

We must be absolutely clear normalisation of reduced crewing is not modernisation. It's managed decline. Conference, the public still believe that when they dial 999, a fully crewed appliance will arrive. They believe

firefighters have the resources needed to protect them. They do not see the depleted watches, the detached duties, the excessive overtime reliance, or the constant juggling of resources behind the scenes simply to maintain minimum cover.

Our members are carrying that burden every single day. This resolution matters because it demands evidence, transparency, and a coordinated national strategy against under crewing. It recognises that the problem is widespread and systemic, not isolated or accidental. If we fail to challenge it now, we risk creating a future where dangerous crewing levels become practice rather than recognised for what it truly is, an unacceptable reduction in public and firefighter safety.

Conference, firefighters have adapted repeatedly. We have shown professionalism, flexibility, and commitment through every restructure and every budget constraint thrown at us. But professionalism cannot endlessly compensate for cuts. Commitment cannot replace crewing. Dedication cannot replace firefighters who are no longer there.

So today, we must send a clear message. Enough of the erosion, enough of the normalising risk, enough of the expecting fewer firefighters to do more with less. Conference, I ask you to support resolution 36 and instruct the EC to complete this work, expose the scale of under crewing across the UK, and stand firmly against the continued degradation of our fire and rescue service.
Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Simon. Does that have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. Now call London.

Resolution 44 MINIMUM RIDERSHIP 5
Conference notes that UK fire and Rescue Services (UKFRSs) up and down the country have repeatedly tried to reduce the minimum number of crew on front line pumping appliances.

Conference notes that the public and firefighters are placed at greater risk when initial appliances attend fires with reduced numbers of crew.

Conference believes that frontline pumping appliances should have a minimum crew of 5 as a safe system of work.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:
- ***begin a national campaign with the aim to ensure that all frontline pumping appliances have a minimum crew of 5***
- ***to lobby all UK governments with the aim to ensure that all frontline pumping appliances have a minimum crew of 5***
- ***coordinate all brigades to campaign and lobby locally with the aim to ensure that all frontline pumping appliances have a minimum crew of 5***
- ***to negotiate with our employers with the aim to ensure that all frontline pumping appliances have a minimum crew of 5***
- ***to lobby for additional resources where required.***

LONDON

JON LAMBE (London)**:**
Conference, president, general secretary moving resolution 44. Conference, we know the safe systems of work on pumping appliance is five. We know that if you've got less than five crew on it, you're putting that crew in danger, and you are also making it more dangerous for the communities we serve.

You know who else knows this? The firms. They all know, and they don't care because when it comes to safety, as long as it don't cost a pound. So we know what they're about. They're at us all the time. They're constantly trying to go places, pick us off one by one. We need to make it clear to the firms it's not a local issue how many crew you got. It is a national issue because it doesn't matter where the pumping appliance is, what part of the country, it needs a crew of five, and we need to make that clear to them, and we need to rally behind anyone where they come

for it, and we need to make it clear to all governments, whoever's in charge of them, that they need to put their hands in their pockets and make sure that we have five on every pumping appliance to protect us and to protect our communities. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Jon. Has that got a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's open for debate.

KIAH MIDDLETON (NWC)**:**
Conference, president, conference, in support of emergency resolution 5 from Durham. I'm speaking on behalf of the NWC, but I am speaking from the heart. As a firefighter at Peterlee station that was mentioned in the resolution, this is personal. My family live in that area we protect. My friends live there. My communities live there. And right now they are being put at risk because we are not covering with the two pumps the service promises the public they are. At Peterlee, crews are being split up to cover shortages elsewhere, meaning our appliance can disappear without warning.

That's not resilience. That's cuts by stealth. Management call this degradation planning, but the truth is this is now an everyday plan and our new normal. They have created their own black swan event through years of poor recruitment and retention. They should not gamble with people's lives because their management is being shoddy.

When the public dial 999, they believe the fire engines are there. But degradation plans are undermining that trust and increasing the risk of firefighters in the communities we serve. As outlined by my brother from Darlington, specialist appliances fall foul of degradation plans too. In my county, the welfare unit is such an appliance, meaning that there are occasions when welfare facilities are not available to any staff and this disproportionately affects women, but affects every worker's dignity.

And it's the firefighters who carry the increased risk. Our members are being constantly moved around, left short-handed, and expected to do more with less whilst knowing the likelihood of serious injury or loss of life is significantly higher for both ourselves and the public.

Morale is down, stress is up, and firefighters are being put in an impossible situation slowly down to chief fire officers and SLTs showing a blatant disregard for the lives and safety of our members and our communities. Back this resolution and stand against degradation plans before another community pays that price. I support. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Kiah.

HAYLEIGH MARKS TALABIS (Northamptonshire)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of emergency resolution cuts by stealth. Fire services are using degradation plans to support their low pump numbers. They're using the data provided by business system analysis, (I can never say that word), to justify these numbers.

The terminology business as usual is problematic in itself. Our business isn't usual. These terms have become day-to-day use, but conference, we aren't there for people's normal days. We're not there for their best days. We're there for those what ifs. We train for the worst, and this isn't based on what data says.

We can't predict it. There is no crystal ball. If there was, control would tip out before the calls even came in. Running at degradation isn't what those plans are there for. Those plans are there for when things go wrong. It isn't safe for us, it isn't safe for the community, and services don't even seem to be trying to keep all appliances on the run now. They're running to just above those degradation plans. It's not acceptable. We shouldn't be supporting it. Conference, we support these resolutions. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Hayleigh. Chris.

CHRIS TAPP (Derbyshire)**:**
Conference, I just want to be honest with conference. You know, I want to support the resolution from my comrade in London, Jon, thank you. But also, I don't want conference to be surprised to have a look at Derbyshire's ridership policy and find it's got my name on it that I inherited many moons ago, where they do ride four on a truck.

You know, that's the reality. Our members take their leave, our members you know, move away from that position of five on numerous occasions. So it will take a lot of work, which I'm willing to do, and I'm always willing to do, and I'm always willing to campaign. But I'm being honest with conference, it's another of them resolutions that we all go, "Hip, hip, hooray. Let's crack on." And then we come back next year and say, "Well, hip, hip, hooray. Let's crack on after that as well." And we're still here. I've been coming a long time, so you know, it's going to take some doing. I agree with it, I support it, but I want to be honest about it. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Chris. Can I see any more? No. Steve?

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks, president. Look, three important resolutions there on critical safety issues that our members face, so thanks to Scotland, London, and Durham for bringing those. And look, the qualifications that the EC have got are minor. But you've listened to a number of speakers that have set out the really important issues, and Chris covers one of those. So I will give the qualifications but let me start by saying this: putting an end to crews of three is an absolute priority of this union, is an absolute priority of mine, it's an absolute priority of this executive council. That's why it forms part of the Cuts Kill campaign. Because cuts, not just to fire stations, not just to fire engines, not just to our jobs, but it's to how many firefighters are in our control rooms, and how many firefighters sit on a fire engine.

A cut is a cut, and if it makes our members less safe, we certainly need to fight it. So we'll continue to do that. The qualification really on the crews of three is last year we put out a call; it was our comms team put out a request for information around crews of three. Services, employers, they're not going to give us this information. We rely on you to provide that information to us, and when you do, the EC member will bring it to the executive council. We will work out a plan. We will work with the regions and the brigades to take on that battle. So the request is that when we ask for that information, get on the front foot and provide us with that information to take that on.

On resolution 44 from London, Chris has covered one of the important points around it. But let me start by saying this, the executive council, are on exactly the same page. Five firefighters should be on every single fire engine. It is about firefighter safety, our members' safety. But it's also about public safety.

The small qualification, actually, is around the wording of the resolution, which says, "Begin a campaign". Well, Chris has quite rightly said, he's been coming to this conference for decades, and we probably will come back next year. So it's not a beginning of that campaign, it's a continuation of that campaign.

And then another slight word within it, it talks about negotiating. Well, look, we are trying to negotiate national standards through the Ministerial Advisory Group. We are making the case for five firefighters on a fire engine. We need to make the case for more firefighters in control rooms and at every department that our members work in.

Conference has been raising this as an issue since the 1980s, and rightly so. I know that I will never give up on fighting for five. I know that you will never give up fighting for five. But it's not just about negotiation. It's about taking that fight on in every single brigade, making the arguments because you know what the arguments are that can win, and taking that fight forward to make sure that we do have proper safety levels of firefighters on fire engines. Thanks, president.

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Steve. Right, I now put emergency resolution 5 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 36 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now put resolution 44 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

Now moving on to Section E, government policy and legislation. I now call emergency resolution 4, campaign against climate change, moved by Merseyside. EC are giving qualified support. Support. Oh, sorry, support.

Emergency Resolution 4 CAMPAIGN AGAINST CLIMATE CHANGE

This conference notes the findings from the European State of the Climate Report, published 28 April, 2026, which stated:

- ***95% of Europe's land area experienced above-average temperature in 2025***
- ***Europe experienced its largest wildfire season on record, with over a million hectares burned***
- ***the intensity of heatwaves is leading to more explosive wildfire events.***

Conference further notes that on 22 April, 2026 the United Kingdom (UK) Parliament's Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (EFRA) Committee launched a call for evidence on the growing threat wildfires pose to both rural and urban areas. The Committee spoke on how 2025 broke UK records for the most reported incidents of wildfires, surpassing the previous record of 2022; and the fact that 54% of UK wildfires between 2009 and 2021 occurred in built up areas.

Conference further notes that since the beginning of May, forecasts from meteorological organisations are predicting high probability of a 'super El Niño event', leading to record-breaking global temperatures. Climate change already increases UK fire risk from higher temperatures and reduced rainfall in summer. On top of this, from autumn 2026, El Niño would affect UK weather, and could lead to the UK again experiencing temperatures above 40C in summer 2027.

Conference notes the strength of Reform UK in the 7th May local elections; and that, like most of the rising far right globally, Reform has made climate change-denial and undermining climate action central to their message.

Conference welcomes the ongoing Year of Trade Union Climate Action, following the decisions of TUC Congress, supported by the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) delegation. We welcome TUC policy "that the climate emergency will affect all jobs and all workers [and] is a key trade union issue", as well as "an immediate industrial issue for many sectors"; and for "a rapid and just transition away from fossil fuels to prevent catastrophic climate breakdown".

Conference also welcomes the FBU support for the campaign in opposing the UK government approval for the climate-wrecking Rosebank oil field, during the year of action.

Conference recognises that climate change and environmental degradation are both an urgent issue for the whole working class, in Britain and globally, and pressing industrial issues for our members, working on the front lines of the climate crisis. We reaffirm this is a crucial priority for the FBU.

Conference believes that while our employers highlight the impact of the climate crisis, only the FBU demands the policies to address it – through majorly increased funding for fire and rescue services; a statutory standard-setting body with union representation to ensure adequate and consistent services across the country; and radical policies to tackle climate change.

Conference calls for stronger climate action by the UK and other governments. Fighting climate change requires, across economies and societies, the kind of transformation the FBU have advocated for consistently – strong government action; expansion of democratic public ownership, funding and control; and asserting workers' voice at every level.

Conference instructs the EC to establish a climate and environmental working group, with a remit including:

- ***Strengthening this element in political and industrial campaigning and education***
- ***Encouraging brigade committees to have a working group or member/s responsible***

- ***Holding a national discussion and organising meeting for members in 2026, linked to the Year of Trade Union Climate Action***
- ***Involving members in wider protests and activity***
- ***Exploring connections with international climate solidarity initiatives, including campaigns for a Fossil Fuel Non-Proliferation Treaty and to make high-emitting capitalists fund climate finance for poorer countries and regions***
- ***Encouraging engagement with labour movement-connected climate and environmental groups including: Heat Strike; Campaign Against Climate Change TU Group; Climate Justice Coalition; Greener Jobs Alliance; Workers' Planet; Energy for All.***

MERSEYSIDE

LEE HUNTER (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, the climate issue is one that we are all too familiar with. I'm sure the vast majority in this room can tell stories of how they and their members in their brigades and sections have dealt with wildfires and floodings and are now doing so on a more regular basis. There are a couple of reasons why this is becoming much more urgent now. On 28th April 2026, the European State of Climate report was published, and it stated that 95% of Europe's land area experienced above average temperatures in 2025. Europe experienced its largest wildfire season on record with over a million hectares burned, and the intensity of the heatwaves is leading to more explosive wildfire events.

Comrades, those events will affect us all personally and there is a very real chance that they will affect us and our members in the roles we perform as firefighters and firefighters in control, whether that be from increased fire and special service calls or massively increased call volumes, from appliances and national resilience vehicles being deployed out of area, or the huge logistical issues that it throws up for our control members.

Conference, I'm sure most of us here remember the 2022 wildfires in the UK where temperatures hit over forty degrees centigrade for the first time on record. Our comrades in London working to protect houses where the fires are spreading to the residential areas whilst many fire engines sat on fire stations due to staffing shortfalls.

The Met Office predicts that by 2060, under a medium emissions scenario, 2022 would be a normal summer. Comrades, climate change affects all our roles and our communities. People lost homes and businesses during those times. And they've lost homes, businesses and sadly lives due to the extreme weather phenomena that we are now facing all too regularly.

In my own brigade, in August 2023, we had the tragedy of two people losing their lives after torrential rain caused a road to flood. They drove into the water, which had gathered at the low point where two hills on a road meet, and their car was completely submerged. Philip Marco, who was 77, and his wife Elaine Marco, who was 76, drowned in that water.

Mr Marco was seen trying to carry his wife out of the car before disappearing under the water. Firefighters from my own station attempted to rescue the couple but were unable to prevent their deaths. The firefighters who entered that water were then made ill by the contaminated water. That road has now had barriers fitted to close it when heavy rainfall causes it to flood, and that is happening more and more often.

Scientists and activists are now also warning that the possibility of a super El Niño event this year. This will occur due to the rising temperatures in the East Central Tropical Pacific. The last time a super El Niño was recorded was in 1877. It led to a global famine because of destroyed crops. It is estimated that more than 50 million people were killed across India, China, Brazil, and other countries. That was around about 3 and 4% of the global population of that time. That would be equal to at least 250 million people dying based on today's population.

The other issue that we really have to address is the political one. The Labour Party made a pledge to move towards more ecologically friendly power and no new North Sea oil and gas. Well, they are now pressing ahead with the Rosebank oil field. Many, including the FBU, have opposed this. The continued use and reliance on fossil fuels will only worsen the climate crisis. And then we have Reform. They have come out as climate change deniers, and their policies do not support green energy.

Quite simply, if they gain power and implement the policies they have spoken of, we will face even tougher and more extreme conditions because climate change will be massively, massively exacerbated. There's so much more I could say on this, comrades, but I know we are short of time. We have a duty to our children and the generations that are to come to protect this planet. This resolution gives us at least a start on that. Please support this resolution but also get involved in the work and campaigning that will come after it. Let's work with Campaign Against Climate Change, to bring about real change. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT
Thanks, Lee. Do I have a seconder? Yep.

ALEC CLEAR (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, I stand here to second this emergency resolution. As members, we do not have the luxury of treating climate change as an abstract debate. We see and deal with its effects first hand on the incident ground and in our communities.

This resolution rightly highlights the increase in wildfires, extreme heat, and other dangerous weather events. We know these incidents are becoming more frequent, more intense, and more difficult to bring under control, and importantly, it's not just happening in remote rural areas. The Climate Change Committee has concluded that wildfires caused by extreme weather are now six times more likely due to climate change.

That is a major warning, and it reflects what many of us are already seeing. On more of a personal level, this resolution really matters to me. I love the outdoors, I love being in nature, and I've always been a massive animal lover, as anyone who knows me could tell you. We are seeing habitats disappear, wildlife decline, oceans warming, forests burning, and parts of the natural world that has existed for generations are being pushed closer and closer to collapse.

The Arctic is warming nearly four times faster than global average, leaving animals like polar bears struggling to survive. And a little fact for you, it is actually believed that two thirds of the world's polar bears could disappear by 2050. Nature has always been there for us when we've needed it most, yet we've allowed our natural world to reach breaking point.

As David Attenborough said, "Nature once determined how we survive. Now we determine how nature survives." I, as I'm sure many of you too, want future generations to grow up being able to experience the world as we know it now, to see wildlife flourish, to enjoy nature, and to feel connected to the outdoors.

The thought of that slowly being taken away is something I personally find really upsetting. Our members are increasingly working on the frontline of climate crisis. This means greater physical risk, greater pressure on services, and greater demand on already stretched members. That is why this resolution matters.

It recognises that responding to climate change is not only an environmental issue, but also a trade union issue, a workplace safety issue, and a public safety issue. We particularly support the call for increased funding for fire and rescue services and for stronger national coordination. Employers are quick to acknowledge the risks climate change creates, but recognition without investment is meaningless.

Members cannot continue being asked to do more with limited support while the pressure on services continues to grow. This resolution is about preparedness, protection, and solidarity. It is about ensuring our union is ready for the challenges our members are already facing today, not 10 years from now.

To quote David Attenborough again, "If working apart, we are a force powerful enough to destabilise our planet, surely working together we are powerful enough to save it. We need to work with nature, not against it." Conference, we second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. That's open for debate. Steve.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Thanks, president. Thanks, Lee, for bringing another important resolution and for Alec's contributions. We've often talked about climate change, and I think the way we frame it is a climate crisis, that firefighters are on the front line of more flooding incidents, more wildfires. That is something we're dealing with right now, and that time cannot wait. The next generation requires us to make sure that we speak out. So look, we'll certainly do that. We've attended government committees around climate change. We're raising this through the Ministerial Advisory Group, making sure that we've got the resources to deal with the frontline elements that we're faced with as firefighters.

So look, we'll continue to do that. The small qualification, I suppose, is that it's an emergency resolution. EC want to consider it a little bit more and see whether a climate environmental working group can fit into another subcommittee around some work around that, Lee. But it's an important point to raise, that is the only small qualification. Important resolution, and thanks for bringing it, Lee. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. I now put emergency resolution 4 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 52, tax thresholds, moved by London. The EC are supporting.

Resolution 52 TAX THRESHOLDS
Conference notes the importance of annual pay discussions, and the recent increases in pay secured, in order to keep members' wages in line with inflation and the general rising costs of day-to-day living.

Conference however believes that there is a forgotten element linked to pay of firefighters and other lower paid workers, which is the freeze in income tax thresholds.

Conference understands that these tax thresholds have been frozen since 2021 and the current Labour government plan to keep them frozen until 2031.

Conference notes that due to the threshold's being frozen and not increasing in line with inflation, lower paid workers including firefighters, control staff and other UK Fire and Rescue Service staff are now paying more tax on their earnings and may be pushed into the higher rate tax threshold.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to lobby all UK governments to stop the freeze in the tax thresholds and for them to be brought back in line to what they would have been if the freeze had not been implemented in 2021, placing more emphasis on higher earners who can afford to pay more.

This lobbying should be done in conjunction with other unions where possible.

LONDON

SAM TROWSDALE (London)**:**
President, conference, I'm moving the tax thresholds resolution number 52. Conference notes the good work the EC negotiators do trying to get the very best pay deal for members every year. The hard work has put more pay into members' pockets. This is being cancelled out with the unfair freezing of the 40% higher tax band, which is forcing more and more members and workers into these brackets. We often talk in this union about protecting workers' pay, but protecting pay is not just about winning percentage increases; it's also about what workers actually take home at the end of the month.

Right now, more and more firefighters and officers and other emergency service workers... Sorry, I've lost me place. I knew I should have written it down.

Not just because they are wealthy, but because tax thresholds have failed to keep pace with wages and inflation. That is wrong. The figures prove this point. The higher rate of tax threshold today currently stands at fifty thousand

pounds. For the forty percent rate to impact the same fraction of people as it did in 1991, that rate would be a hundred thousand pounds, almost double the current level.

That means thousands of ordinary workers are now paying forty percent tax purely because the government has frozen these thresholds while wages and inflation have risen. In the early 1990s, it was essentially no nurses, around 5% of machinists, and 5% of teachers paid the higher rate in tax. In other words, higher tax rate was reserved only for the very highest paid in these occupations.

But by 2027 and 2028, more than one in eight nurses, one in six machinists and fitters, and one in four teachers are set to be higher tax rate payers. That is fiscal drag, and it's hitting working people hard. Firefighters in receipt of living allowances, additional skills payments, and junior officers are also beginning to fall victim to this.

Conference, this is not a call for tax cuts for the rich. It's a call for fairness for working people. A progressive tax system only works when thresholds move realistically, with earnings and inflation. Otherwise, ordinary workers end up paying higher rates that were never really initially intended for them.

Our members do not object to paying their fair share. Firefighters understand collective responsibility more than most. But they should not be penalised simply for progressing through their careers and receiving hard-fought pay awards. Conference urges the EC to lobby the government collectively alongside other unions also affected by these tax band freezes to lift the freeze on all rates of tax and apply a fairer and progressive system for all.

Conference, unlike these frozen and static thresholds, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Sam. Scotland, are you seconding? Yep.

LEWIS CLARK (Scotland)**:**
President, conference, in Scotland, we actually did have some movements in the tax threshold and the amount that we pay. You wouldn't like them because we do pay more up there than yous do down here.

But the threshold freezes is that sneaky way to really affect the money that's in our pockets, and it does affect the lower and middle earners more. But tax is important, and as a public service, we can't really argue for lowering the amount of tax that comes in. But luckily, there's a way to address this, and the GS has been really, really, really great at calling for a proper wealth tax. So that's where we need to put the focus on. We need to focus on the top earners, that loafing class, the leeches, and use them to protect the taxation that we need to collect and the funding for our service. And it was Tam, I think, at organiser school that said, "We need to get organised and take all their money." We second this. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Lewis. That's open for debate. Anybody? No? Right, we'll go straight to the vote. I now put resolution 52 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call resolution 53, HMRC treatment of employer-funded health support moved by Berkshire, the EC are supporting. Anybody seconding that?
Good. Come up.

Resolution 53 HMRC TREATMENT OF EMPLOYER-FUNDED HEALTH SUPPORT
Conference recognises the significant psychological risks faced by firefighters and control staff as a direct consequence of their operational duties.

Conference notes that members who develop work-related Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) or other psychological injuries may require specialist counselling or therapeutic support in order to recover and return to full operational duties.

Conference is aware that in some circumstances UK Fire and Rescue Services have funded additional counselling or mental health treatment for affected members, only for those members to subsequently face a tax liability from HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) on the grounds that such treatment constitutes a taxable benefit in kind.

Conference believes it is morally wrong that a firefighter or control member who suffers any work-related injury, whether physical or psychological, and who responsibly engages with treatment in order to return to duty, should face a personal financial penalty as a result.

Conference further believes that such situations risk creating a disincentive for members to seek appropriate support and undermine the principle that employers must take full responsibility for mitigating workplace harm.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:

- ***seek specialist tax and legal advice on the current HMRC treatment of employer-funded mental health support for work-related psychological injury***
- ***explore whether national guidance or negotiated arrangements could prevent members from suffering personal financial detriment in such cases***
- ***consider whether changes to legislation or HMRC guidance should be pursued through lobbying, in conjunction with other trade unions***
- ***examine whether, where no exemption can be secured, appropriate union-supported mechanisms could be established to prevent individual members facing financial hardship as a consequence***
- ***report back to Conference 2027 on progress.***

BERKSHIRE

JAMES HUNT (Berkshire)**:**
Moving resolution 53. Firstly, quick apology. There was a resolution a couple years back that we'd drop the D of PTSD. This resolution didn't, so apologies for that. I'll change my speech, but I can't change the resolution. President and conference, our members deal with incidents that no member of the public will ever have to face.

They witness things that stay with them long after the incident is over, and for some, the cumulative toll of those experiences will lead to post-traumatic stress or any other psychological injury, not through any failing on their part, but as a direct consequence of the work they do in service of their community.

Should this happen, we would expect their employer to step in, to fund specialist counselling, to fund therapeutic support that that member needs to recover and return to full operational duties. But then the HMRC steps in. Because they treat this funded treatment as a taxable benefit in kind, that member who was injured at work, who's trying to recover, do everything right, receives a tax bill, a financial penalty for the crime of having been injured in service of the public and then accepting help.

Unfortunately, I'm not standing here talking about a theoretical risk. We are aware of at least one case within Berkshire where this has already happened. A member who had the courage to engage with treatment, who did exactly what we'd ask of anyone in that situation, and then was punished for it financially.

Think about what message that sends. If you know that seeking support for a work-related injury could leave you facing a personal tax liability, what does that do to your willingness to come forward for help? It creates a disincentive. It undermines the entire principle that employers must take full responsibility for workplace injuries.

A firefighter who is injured at work, whether physically or psychologically, who seeks treatment and who tries to return to duty should not be financially penalised for doing so. Conference, support the resolution, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, James. Can I have a seconder? *Formally* Thank you. That's now open for debate. No, I'll go right to the vote. I now put resolution 53 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call emergency resolution 2, Establishing A National Standard, Framework And Protections For Emergency Blue Light Response Driving moved by Cheshire.
The EC are giving qualified support. There's a seconder coming down as well by the look. Excellent.

Emergency Resolution 2 ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL STANDARD, FRAMEWORK AND PROTECTIONS FOR EMERGENCY BLUE LIGHT RESPONSE DRIVING

This Conference notes the recent jailing of Police Constable Mark Roberts who was involved in a road traffic collision that resulted in the death of a member of the public whilst responding to an emergency incident. Conference is also aware that a number of Fire Brigades Union (FBU) members are either awaiting criminal trials for charges relating to driving to an emergency incident or awaiting a decision to prosecute by the Crown Prosecution Service.

Conference further notes:

- ***the critical role that emergency service drivers play in protecting life, property, and public safety***
- ***the absence of a unified, enforceable national standard governing training, assessment, exemptions and ongoing competency for blue light (emergency response) driving across services and regions***
- ***evidence of inconsistent training quality, varying operational policies, and differing thresholds for driver authorisation, which only serves to increase risk to firefighters and the public***
- ***rising operational pressures, including increased call volumes, local unagreed time-critical response standards, insufficient and unagreed ridership levels, increased cross-border mobilisations and the growing complexity of modern road environments***
- ***that emergency response driving is a high-risk, safety-critical activity requiring advanced skills, judgement, and continuous professional development***
- ***that fatigue, insufficient refresher training, and lack of standardised assessment frameworks can compromise safety outcomes***
- ***that current guidance and best practice are fragmented and not consistently embedded across all employers and services.***

This Conference Believes:

- ***that all emergency service personnel and the public deserve the highest possible standards of safety during emergency response driving***
- ***that a nationally agreed, evidence-based framework would improve consistency, accountability, and risk management***
- ***that proper investment and standardisation in training, instructor capacity, and welfare support is essential to maintaining safe and effective emergency response capabilities.***

Conference instructs the Executive Council (EC) to:

1. ***Campaign for the immediate development and implementation of a national standard for emergency blue light driving, applicable across all emergency services.***
2. ***Demand a mandatory national training framework, including:***
   - ***Standardised initial training requirements***
   - ***Accredited instructor qualifications***
   - ***Uniform assessment and certification processes***
   - ***Defined competency benchmarks***
3. ***Call for mandatory, periodic requalification and refresher training, with protected time and funding allocated by employers.***
4. ***Advocate for the inclusion of fatigue management, wellbeing, and human factors training within the framework.***
5. ***Press for the establishment of a central oversight body or regulator responsible for monitoring compliance, quality assurance, and continuous improvement.***
6. ***Ensure that data collection and incident reporting systems are standardised nationally to support learning and prevention strategies.***

7. ***Work with government, employers, and sector stakeholders to secure adequate funding and resources to implement and sustain the framework.***
8. ***Place firefighter safety and public protection at the heart of all policies relating to emergency response driving.***
9. ***Seek to secure through the National Joint Council, indemnity cover, paid for by the employer, to protect FBU members facing the risk of prosecution due to incidents which occur as a direct result of responding to an emergency incident.***

Conference further instructs the EC to provide a full report back to conference on progress within 12 months.

CHESHIRE

SIMON LENIHAN (Cheshire)**:**
President, conference, moving emergency resolution establishing a national standard framework and protections for emergency blue light response driving. Conference, this resolution goes to the heart of what it means to be an emergency service worker in 2026. Every single day, firefighters across the UK are expected to make split-second decisions under immense pressure, decisions where seconds generally mean the difference between life and death. Twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year, when the bells go down, we go. We go because the public need us to go, we go because lives depend on us going, and we go knowing there is always a risk to ourselves.

But conference, what we cannot accept is a system where our members are expected to operate under extraordinary pressure without a unified, nationally agreed framework protecting both the public and ourselves. This resolution is not about avoiding accountability, and it is not about lowering standards. In fact, it is about demanding the highest possible standards, consistently applied, properly funded, independently monitored, and rooted in evidence rather than a fragmented local arrangement.

Conference, we must note the recent jailing of Police Constable Mark Roberts following a tragic collision while responding to a life risk call. A life risk call to a choking five-week-old baby. Sadly, that collision resulted in the death of Muriel Pinkney. Nothing we say in this hall should ever diminish the tragedy experienced by the Pinkney family. But, conference, even the family themselves recognise the complexity of what happened on that tragic day.

Muriel Pinkney's daughter publicly described the incident as a tragic accident and stated she did not want PC Roberts jailed. She said there were no winners in sending Constable Mark Roberts to prison, and she did not want his life ruined for just doing his job. Conference, that matters.

Conference, this resolution is not about excusing carelessness. It is about recognising the reality emergency blue light drivers face every day when responding to life risk incidents under immense operational pressure. Conference, sadly, this is not an isolated case. Across the UK, we have seen firefighters investigated and prosecuted following collisions while responding to emergency incidents.

And as we speak, there are a number of FBU members currently under investigation, awaiting Crown Prosecution Service decisions, or awaiting trial for incidents arising as a direct result of their actions whilst responding to a 999 call.

At the same time, operational pressures continue to intensify. Rising call volumes, overstretched resources, unagreed ridership numbers, and increased cross-border mobilisations, coupled with ever more congested roadways, are placing our members at unacceptable risk. Despite this fact, firefighters are still expected to meet demanding response expectations without nationally agreed protections, training standards, or competency frameworks.

Conference, emergency response driving is not ordinary driving. It is a safety critical activity requiring advanced training, judgement, continual assessment, fatigue management, and strong organisational support. Yet currently, we have fragmented guidance, inconsistent refresher arrangements, differing standards between services, different, interpretations of exemptions and varying levels of investment depending on geography.

That cannot continue because when something goes wrong, individual workers are too often left carrying the consequences of a systemic failure. Conference, we must also address the wholly unacceptable reality that in too many cases, employers refuse to provide legal support to firefighters who are investigated and, in some instances, prosecuted for driving incidents arising directly from responding to emergency calls, the consequences of which can be devastating for our members and their families. Alongside the prospect of losing their career, their livelihood, and even their liberty, our members can be left facing enormous legal costs at a time of immense personal and psychological pressure.

Too frequently, that financial burden falls either upon the FBU or upon the individual member and their families. That cannot be right. Fire and rescue services already hold insurance arrangements designed specifically for circumstances such as these, and employers should not distance themselves from our members out of concern for reputational damage or adverse publicity. They should stand firmly behind the firefighters that they asked to make difficult time-critical decisions on behalf of the public every single day. Where members have acted in good faith with the training and authority provided by their employer, they deserve full legal, professional and welfare support throughout any investigation or court proceedings.

Conference, our members do not want special treatment. They want professional standards, proper training, national consistency, legal clarity.

Conference, firefighters are not reckless. They are highly trained professionals trying to save lives in extraordinarily difficult circumstances. In the same way that the public deserves safety, firefighters deserve protection, and both can only be achieved through proper national standards, not fragmented systems and blame after the event.

Conference, let us send a clear message here today. We will always fight for public safety, we will always fight for firefighter safety, and we will not stand by while firefighters are expected to carry impossible risks without the national framework protections and support they deserve. Conference, please support this resolution. I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks Simon, Dave.

DAVE PIKE (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference, seconding Cheshire's emergency resolution. Conference, every firefighter in this room understands the responsibility that comes with driving under blue lights. Nobody takes decisions lightly. Nobody climbs into an appliance thinking about shortcuts or exemptions. We do it because somebody somewhere is facing the worst moment of their life, and they need our help. That is the reality of our profession.

Conference, when the public dial 999, they do not want hesitation. They do not want uncertainty. They need and expect a rapid, professional emergency response, and rightly so. Because let's be absolutely clear, emergency response driving is one of the most dangerous and complex tasks firefighters undertake. It requires judgement, it requires discipline, and it requires continual training. Conference, our members are expected to navigate congested roads, unpredictable road users and dangerous conditions, sometimes whilst fatigued, and all while carrying the weight of knowing that a matter of seconds is all it takes when somebody's life may depend on us.

Yet despite all of that, the systems designed to support firefighters remain fragmented and inconsistent across the country. Different standards, different training, different policies and procedures, and different levels of employer support. Conference, that is unacceptable in a modern emergency service.

That is why this resolution matters. Accountability must work both ways. Conference, no firefighter should ever feel abandoned for carrying out duties they are trained, authorised and expected to perform as part of their role. No firefighter should face criminal investigation alone. No firefighter should face financial ruin alone.

Conference, national standards improve safety. Consistent training improves safety. Proper fatigue management improves safety. Clear legal frameworks improve safety, and organisational accountability improves safety. This is about protecting the public and firefighters together, not choosing between them.

And conference, we must remember something important. Our members are not asking for immunity. They're asking for fairness. They're asking for professionalism, for consistency, and they are asking for their employers to stand behind them when they act in good faith to save lives. That is not unreasonable. That is the minimum they deserve.

Conference, firefighters will always answer the call. We place ourselves at risk to protect our communities. But in closing, let's be clear. If the employers want, need, or expect their firefighters to drive an appliance to that emergency, then they are the ones responsible for providing both the financial and the legal support when things go wrong. Conference, we second. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Dave. That's open for debate. No, Tam? Oh, sorry. Yep.

JAMES SALT (NRC)**:**
James Salt, speaking in support of this resolution, which is particularly pertinent to the NRC for a number of reasons. In the RDS, we have development firefighters being pushed through driving courses to keep appliances on the run before they're really ready.

We have some services using the driver OIC role to keep appliances on the run, which means if there's no other driver on call, the officer in charge with an EFAD qualification will drive the appliance to the incident. And I don't really need to explain the additional stresses and pressures that that puts on the person behind the wheel.

My own service are looking to bring this back and my brigade committee are currently in a battle with this. We have drivers who get little experience at quiet stations. They might only drive on blues a handful of times a year. These same drivers at times of busy county-wide operational demand could be sent to standby at and turn out from unfamiliar city stations and unfamiliar road networks.

And finally, we often drive older appliances without modern driver aids and safety features. Conference, we support. *Applause*

GRAEME JONES (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, speaking in support of this resolution, primarily on three major points for myself. First one, we need a national framework because we're increasingly working cross-border. The standards expected in Cheshire, which is obviously a brigade next to mine, are completely different to ours, as is Lancashire, as is Greater Manchester.

The second point, in our brigade at least, I'm sure in some of yours, firefighters are increasingly expected to drive through contractual obligations now. Plenty of times we've raised with the service around firefighters who aren't comfortable driving, but they're being forced to, so we need those protections.

And the third point is motion eight from last year's conference around driver protections brought by comrades from South Wales. I believe a national framework will actually help to advance the work that's already been done, and I thank the EC and national officers for the work being done on national protections, but I do believe a national framework will actually increase the chances of us providing driver protections through insurance as well. So thank you. Merseyside supports. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Graeme. Tam.

TAM McFARLANE (National Officer)**:**
Yeah, thanks, conference. And another good debate over a very, very important matter. I'm only going to deal with a part of it. I mean, first of all, the national guidance part of it. Yeah, absolutely valid points. It's a big, big ask, mind, but I'm fully supportive of it because, actually Ben will be doing the majority of work around that.

As I say, it's a big ask. I don't think he's going to get it. Might have to ping his braces at employers there. But I want to deal with, I think almost the crux of this matter, and it comes up in the first paragraph and indeed the last point, number nine. Members are either awaiting criminal trials for charges relating to driving to an emergency incident or awaiting a decision. Yes, they are. Seek to secure through the National Joint Council indemnity cover paid for by the employer to protect FBU members facing the risk of prosecution. It's in the Grey Book. And let me just read what it says in the Grey Book:

"Where an employee is prosecuted for an offence under the Road Traffic Acts, committed while on duty, the Fire and Rescue Service employer, where it considers the employee to be personally blameless, or where there are strong extenuating circumstances, may reimburse all or part of the costs awarded against the employee, including the cost of legal assistance."

That's in the Grey Book. That's as woolly as you're going to get in the Grey Book. And we do have situations where firefighters on duty – on the duty paid for by their employer, driving the fire appliances provided by their employer, responding to calls as required by their employer, and getting cut loose under that paragraph by their employer. Only in some circumstances, not in all.

Now obviously the union will not allow our members to be cut loose in that way, but it is clearly untenable for the Fire Brigades Union in all these circumstances to be the ones to provide that legal support. Not just untenable, it's immoral. Because by doing so, we would allow the employer to wash their hands of their duties as an employer towards our members.

So we could go to the employers and say, "We want to amend that paragraph that makes it absolutely clear that they will always fund the legal costs of our members" and you know they're going to ask one or two questions. They're going to ask either, "What are you going to give?" To which our answer would be, "Nothing. We've had over a decade of giving too much." And then they're going to ask, "What are you going to do about it?" And this brings me back to the point, why is it happening in some areas and not in others?

Because employers will always do what they think they can get away with. I believe this is as much an organising point as it is a negotiating point. It's as much an organising point on our officials at a local level and our members at a local level as it is for the executive council to take to the NJC. It goes back to the key point of supporting and standing by each other. Comrades, we need to take the employers on when they try to wash their hands of their responsibilities, to try to either dump it on the FBU or what else? A GoFundMe page. It is their responsibility to provide legal support to our members in all these circumstances, but we need to make them do it. If they can get away with it, they will. The only people to stop them are the Fire Brigades Union, and we do it by organising. So please, comrades, be the brigade to make sure that if this happens in your brigade, the employers know they will pick up the tab always, otherwise the FBU will be on them. Thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you, Tam. I now put emergency resolution 2 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para E2, para E3, para E4, para E5, para E6.

I now call resolution 47, Protecting LGBT+ People By Ending Conversion Practices, moved by the LGBT+ section.

Resolution 47 PROTECTING LGBT+ PEOPLE BY ENDING CONVERSION PRACTICES
Conference notes that so-called conversion practices are harmful and widely discredited interventions that seek to change or suppress a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

Conference further notes that, despite repeated public commitments from successive governments, comprehensive legislation to fully ban conversion practices has not yet been enacted across the UK.

Conference believes that ending conversion practices is a matter of human rights, equality and safeguarding, and that trade unions have a responsibility to apply political pressure in support of this aim.

Conference instructs the Executive Council to:

- ***apply sustained political pressure on the Labour government to introduce and pass comprehensive legislation that fully bans conversion practices, with no exemptions***
- ***work with the wider trade union movement and equality organisations to support and strengthen such legislation.***

LGBT+

LAUREL RAY (LGBT+)**:**
President, conference, moving of resolution 47. We don't get to choose who we are. We only get the choice to be our authentic, true selves. We don't get to choose who we love or who we are attracted to. We only get the choice to act on it. This doesn't mean that our identities or our orientations are wrong just because they are different. Conversion practices suggest that being LGBT+ is wrong or is a sin and that there is a cure. Conversion practices are external interventions with the main aim of changing or curing an individual's gender identity and/or sexual orientation. They are one-directional attempts that only damage the individuals concerned and do not affirm or support their needs. Conversion practices are performed by a range of different groups, including, but not limited to, organised religious groups and practices, families, and so-called friends, as well as healthcare providers. These practices can take various forms, such as physical, emotional, psychological, or a combination of all.

The well-known engineer and scientist Alan Turing was forced to undergo chemical castration in as recently as the 1950s. Electric shock aversion therapy was also commonly used to create painful associations with same-sex practices. All of this was done in the belief that being homosexual could be cured, as it was seen as being an illness.

Despite advances in definitions by the World Health Organisation, modern conversion therapies, which still include forms of physical interventions, are highly damaging to LGBT+ individuals. These vary from pseudo-psychological talking practices designed to suppress the individual's orientation and/or identity to more extreme spiritual practices such as exorcisms designed to pray the gay away. The results of these practices can cause serious mental health issues including, but not limited to, anxiety, depression, trauma, and increased risk of suicide within the LGBT+ community. For years, governments have said they will support a ban on such practices, but as of yet, none of them have delivered on their promises.

Enacting and enforcing such a ban would send a clear message that LGBT+ people are valued and protected. Any ban on conversion practices must include and protect trans-identifying individuals. Ignoring trans people and leaving them out of any ban on these practices would only create further division and leave some of the most vulnerable members of the LGBT+ community without protection.

Current society haven't abandoned trans people. They have actively turned on us. The 17 May is IDAHOBIT. This is the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. It will be interesting to see what this year's support level is like.

Our siblings and members deserve to feel safe. They deserve to feel respected and accepted both in the workplace and in wider society. LGBT+ members should never feel pressured to hide who they are in order to fit into the fire and rescue service and into daily life. There has been an exponential increase in right-wing, anti-LGBT+ rhetoric in more recent years. The union taking a clear stand on this is important, not only for reassurance of solidarity of our members, but for the wider communities as a unionist movement.

The FBU already has strong equalities principles which oppose discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. But conference, today, I urge you to support our section in ensuring LGBT+ people are protected from harm, have their dignity defended, and are treated equally and respectfully at all times in all walks of life. Thank you. Conference, I move. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Well done, Laurel. Yep, seconding? Yep.

KAVA FULLMAN (B&EMM)**:**
President, conference. First time delegate, first time speaker. *Applause*

To understand why we must end conversion practices, we have to recognise them for what they truly are: a form of social control masquerading as medicine. History warns us what happens when we allow identity to be treated as a pathology. In the mid-19th century, American physicians invented a mental illness called drapetomania.

They claimed that an enslaved person who desired to flee captivity and seek freedom was a disease of the mind. In 1851, the cure prescribed by Dr Samuel Cartwright was a chilling mixture of distorted religious dogma and physical violence. He argued that because the Bible commanded submissiveness, any slave seeking freedom was sick.

His medical advice: to whip the devil out of them. Today, we look back at drapetomania as a grotesque abuse of science, yet the logic of conversion therapy is exactly the same. Conversion practices start with the lie that a natural human state, being LGBT+ is a defect. They use the same playbook, weaponise faith to demand conformity and discredited interventions to break the individual's spirit through shaming, counselling, or prayer.

The goal is still to whip the devil out, to suppress the core of a person's being until they submit to a natural order defined by others. Conference, we cannot afford to wait. This is a call to action. We have had many years of broken promises. We now need the government to deliver a comprehensive legislative ban, and there must be no loopholes.

We cannot allow these harmful practices to hide behind the door of religious freedom or consent. You cannot consent to abuse, and you cannot cure a human identity. We stand for the right of every worker and every citizen to live without the fear of being corrected or fixed. Let us protect our LGBT+ members and ensure that no one is ever told again that their identity is a sickness. B&EMM seconds, thank you. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thank you. Thank you, Kava.

GUY LAWES (Durham and Darlington)**:**
President, conference, supporting resolution 47. Conference, I'd like to thank LGBT+ section for bringing this resolution to conference, and to Laurel for reaching out to talk to me about it a couple of nights ago. Prior to reading this resolution, I was personally unaware that conversion therapy was still a thing, and in my mind, and to my shame, the practice was a hateful memory from another generation or perhaps even from a different continent.

Researching into this most vile of practices, I was genuinely stunned to see that this method of torture is still allowable in this country at this time. People must be educated about it. It must be fought, and it must be stopped. The general secretary mentioned in the disaffiliation debate that in Region 3 we have a very close connection to MPs who are great friends to this union and share our values implicitly.

In this case, Durham's greatest friend is MP for the City of Durham, Mary Foy. Mary has spoken on this issue numerous times, including in parliamentary debate. We not only support the resolution but pledge to work with our local MPs, including Mary, to further apply pressure as suggested in the resolution. We support. *Applause*

GRAEME JONES (Merseyside)**:**
President, conference, I had a full speech written out for this, but most of the points have already been covered. We're speaking in support of this clearly. Thank you for bringing the reso. I think – I feel like I've said thank you to you about five times for things that you've brought.

I just have one ask of the EC on this. The political pressure that you apply, it needs to be quick. As my comrade pointed out before, people are dying. Thirty-five percent of people who are subjected to conversion torture, conversion practice, conversion therapy, whichever way you want to dress it up, 35% of them attempt suicide or complete suicide. Thirty-three percent more have suicidal thoughts. We were promised that this would be

banned by Labour. Now I know they go on and say that there's legal terms that they struggle with. If only we had a competent human rights barrister in a position of power, maybe we'd get that sorted. And they were quick enough to run a campaign discrediting the rightfully stupid comments made by Zack Polanski on things that can be done with hypnotherapy. I'm pretty sure they can be quick enough to change legislation on this before we get Shabana Mahmood or Wes Streeting, who have both shown horrific disdain for trans people. Merseyside supports. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Graeme. I'm now going to put resolution 47 to the vote. All those in favour, please show. All those against, please show. *That carries*.

I now call para E7, para E8, para E9, para E10, para E11.

PATRICK BRENNAN (Greater Manchester)**:**
President, conference. When the Labour government hailed the 2025 Employment Rights Act as the biggest upgrade of a generation, you'd be forgiven for thinking that that heralds real change. But let's look at the reality. While the politicians are patting themselves on the back, the truth is that the new deal we were promised has been decimated.

It's been watered down by corporate lobbyists and Labour Together types who care more about their business backers than the people who actually keeps this country running. They've sold us a half-finished job. That's why I'm proud to see the FBU get behind the Institute for Employment Rights campaign on Employment Rights Mark Two.

The campaign is clear. A second employment rights bill must be delivered, and we should view this legislation as an entitlement, not as a privilege. We need to focus on where the power actually lies. First, we need sectorial collective bargaining across the board, and this is key because the government rejected a mechanism to bring this in. They're terrified of workers having real industrial power. Today, only 25 percent of workers exercise collective bargaining on pay, and it's no coincidence that living standards peaked for working people in this country in the late seventies when around eighty percent of workers had the benefit of collective bargaining.

They want us fighting individual battles, but we know that wages only go up when we stand together. Secondly, we need a genuine right to strike. Repealing the minimum service levels was a start, but we are still shackled by anti-trade union laws left over from the Thatcher era. It's a disgrace that in 2026 we're still legally barred from taking solidarity action. When the junior doctors or the Birmingham bin workers, when they're being short-changed by this government, our members should have the right to stand with them without a judge telling us that that's illegal.

Finally, let's look at what this act actually achieves. It does make some progress on individual rights, but does next –

THE PRESIDENT:
Pat, can you wrap it up?

PATRICK BRENNAN (Greater Manchester)**:**
But does next to nothing to restore collective rights for working people. The 2025 Act represents baby steps. We need a Labour government, a Labour leader that stands up for workers, not short-changing them. Please support the campaign for employment rights number two. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Pat.

GENERAL SECRETARY:
Yeah, thanks Pat for raising that. I will be quick, president. We got criticisms that it didn't go far enough. Quite rightly, we're demanding more. So let's get round that table. Let's make sure that trade unions deliver on the Employment Rights Act mark two, but let's demand it of the next Labour leader.

Let's demand it of the next prime minister. Thanks, Pat, for raising it. *Applause*

THE PRESIDENT:
Thanks, Steve. I call para E12. Para E13. Para E14. Para E15. Para E16. Conference, that covers all of the paras in the executive council report, and I'll seek your agreement. Is that agreed? *Agreed* Thank you.

Right, conference, this is the last part of the day. I've got some thanks to pass out, so please bear with me. We've concluded the business. I want to thank every single one of you for your candour and behaviours this week. It's been excellent. We've had some outstanding contributions in the debates. You've all been brilliant. We've also had some very tough debates, with differing views expressed, but it was done with dignity, respect, and comradely, just as I requested. So I think you should all give yourselves a round of applause for that. *Applause*

And just before I close conference, there are some people that I do need to thank, so please bear with me. It's a long list, but you would expect putting conference on is a massive operation. So I'd now like to thank the following: the hotel staff and the conference facility staff have been absolutely brilliant, so a big round of applause for them, please. *Applause*

Also, the tech team at the back who set the hall up and got us all working with the mics and everything we have asked for in addition, they have delivered on and all that. So a big thank you to all of them, please. *Applause*

And I know I've already done it once, but the fantastic FBU staff who are, some of them still in the hall, they are the engine of the FBU, without which I don't think we would even function. So again, thank you to the brilliant staff at the back. *Applause*

Big thank you to all the stewards. They do a fantastic job. They get up early in the morning, they have to stay late on at night dealing with everything, and then they don't get the joy of coming in and seeing all the debates as well all of the time. So a big thank you to all of the scrutineers and tellers. *Applause*

And especially chief scrutineer there, Kate Yhnell, who we said you won't be busy. Unfortunately, sorry, sorry Kate.

Right, and finally the standing orders committee, without them conference just simply would not happen. Joe Weir, Tony Curry, Gareth Tovey, Gareth Beeton, and Joel, thank you for all your work this week, for starting there at 6:00 in the morning. And to finish well after we've all packed up and having our well-earned refreshments. *Applause*

And I've got a special mention of my three amigos, the vice-president, Pete Smith, who's been outstanding for me this week, keeping me on point with proceedings. Also, Rebecca Savin and Ian Hibbert of the standing orders committee. They work with me and the VP every day on my timetable, my scripts, and generally try to make me stop looking an idiot.

I do apologise to Becca and Ian on that one. They're knocking at my door at 7.00 every day to go through the day's proceedings and then stay behind well into the night to prepare for that the next morning. Conference, at this juncture, I'm going to say a special thanks to outgoing chair, Phil Millar. *Applause*

He started in that role the year after I took up the president's role. He's been outstanding for the standing orders committee. Usually in there before 7.00, and definitely the last one out of there as well. Usually around midnight, I think it was the other night, Phil, we were still in there. So Phil, on behalf of the national union and all delegates, I don't think he has ever lost a challenge. No, he hasn't. I don't know if that is down to, he's just brilliant at his job or it's his broad Northern Irish accent and a stare that can freeze water. I'm not quite sure. I just don't fancy taking him on, on that.

But Phil, you've done a fantastic job, for the union and for conference, so thank you very much. *Applause*

To the gen sec, the AGS, and all national officers who have all been – they do an unbelievable amount of work leading up to conference to get it all prepared and everything else.

And finally, to the EC and you as officials and members in this room, without doing what you do on a daily basis, the fire service would be in one hell of a state. So thank you for all of you do.

And the final one is, there is some rubbish bags in the exit reception area. Can you please take all of the rubbish off your tables with you as you leave the hall and put it in the bins outside of here? Conference, have a safe journey home. Thank you. Conference is closed. And well done, you did it in time, just. Thank you.

Conference closed

Established 1 October 1918

OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION ALONG WITH LIST OF DELEGATES

MAY 2026

OFFICERS AND OFFICIALS OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

PRESIDENT – Ian Murray
VICE-PRESIDENT – Pete Smith
NATIONAL TREASURER – Tony Curry
GENERAL SECRETARY – Steve Wright
ASSISTANT GENERAL SECRETARY – Ben Selby
NATIONAL OFFICER – Tam McFarlane
NATIONAL OFFICER – Mark Rowe
NATIONAL OFFICER – Adam Taylor
NATIONAL OFFICER – Joe Weir

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

REGION 1	Colin Brown
REGION 2	Phil Millar
REGION 3	Tony Curry
REGION 4	Pete Smith
REGION 5	Andrew Fox-Hewitt
REGION 6	Mark Stilwell
REGION 7	Andrew Scattergood
REGION 8	Gareth Tovey
REGION 9	Jamie Newell
REGION 10	David Shek
REGION 11	Dave Turner
REGION 12	Chris Wycherley
REGION 13	Dave Roberts

REGIONAL AND SECTIONAL SECRETARIES

REGION 1	John McKenzie
REGION 2	Terry McGoldrick
REGION 3	Karl Wager
REGION 4	Gavin Marshall
REGION 5	Ian Hibbert
REGION 6	Jed Goodfellow
REGION 7	Billy Holland
REGION 8	Duncan Stewart-Ball
REGION 9	Rebecca Lewington
REGION 10	Jon Lambe
REGION 11	Edward Fox
REGION 12	Mark Chapman
REGION 13	James Leslie
B&EMM	Kasey LeGall
CSNC	Caroline Saunderson
LGBT+	Maria Buck
ONC	Peter Trayner
NRC	Paul Revill
NWC	Robyn Richardson

REGIONAL AND SECTIONAL CHAIRS

REGION 1	Gus Sproul
REGION 2	Dermot Rooney
REGION 3	Wayne Anderson
REGION 4	Steve Howley
REGION 5	Lee Hunter
REGION 6	Harry Brant
REGION 7	Martin Starkey
REGION 8	Ruth Bateman
REGION 9	Kevin Driver
REGION 10	Gareth Beeton
REGION 11	Tim Green
REGION 12	David Hunt
REGION 13	Amanda Mills
B&EMM	Karen Bell
CSNC	
LGBT+	Matthew Black
ONC	Tony Walker
NRC	Paul Farman
NWC	Katie Holloway

REGIONAL TREASURERS

REGION 1	Seona Hart
REGION 2	Mark Mullan
REGION 3	Andy Murray
REGION 4	Matt Nicholls
REGION 5	Dave Pike
REGION 6	Clare Hudson
REGION 7	Sasha Hitchins
REGION 8	Gemma Thomas
REGION 9	Harry Powell
REGION 10	Adam Shaw
REGION 11	Dave Turner
REGION 12	Lee Newport
REGION 13	Kate Yhnell

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 1	**Scotland**	Gus Sproul Seona Hart Lewis Clark Jamie McDonald Simon Leroux Iain Ballantyne Daniel Campbell Dawn Forrest Neil Anderson
REGION 2	**Northern Ireland**	Dermot Rooney Ian Moore Jack Denvir Jake Drinkwater
REGION 3	**Cleveland**	Chris Porter James Sudron
	Durham	Andy Murray Guy Lawes
	Northumberland	Mark Dowthwaite Stephen Hanley
	Tyne and Wear	Chris Cook Matt Laidler
REGION 4	**Humberside**	Kiren Thorpe Lynden Young
	North Yorkshire	Andrew Los
	South Yorkshire	Stuart Smith Tom Cook
	West Yorkshire	Jim Davies Mathew Herrin
REGION 5	**Cheshire**	Simon Lenihan James Meredith
	Cumbria	Steve Ratcliffe Steve Mattinson
	Greater Manchester	David Pike Matthew Fryer Patrick Brennan
	Isle of Man	Nick Hays
	Lancashire	Kevin Wilkie Mark Hoyle
	Merseyside	Lee Hunter Graeme Jones

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 6

Derbyshire	Chris Tapp
	Tony Dempsey
Leicestershire	Kane Lucas
	Harry Brant
Lincolnshire	Daniel Taylor
	Karl Keuneke
Northamptonshire	Hayleigh Marks Talabis
	Helen Durman
Nottinghamshire	Stephen Tucker
	Duncan Dandie

REGION 7

Hereford and Worcester	David Benfield
	Gareth Taylor
Shropshire	Sam Kennedy
	Rob Cartwright
Staffordshire	Craig Elson
	Martin Starkey
Warwickshire	Adam Barnes
	Neil Stuart
West Midlands	Sasha Hitchins
	Steve Gregory
	John Sims

REGION 8

Mid and West Wales	Daniel Bartley
	Christopher Eyton-Jones
North Wales	Anthony Weston
	Rebekah Uden
South Wales	Michael Alexander
	Ross Davies
	Lloyd Price

REGION 9

Bedfordshire	Darren Barrett
	Craig Carter
Cambridgeshire	Mark Harriss
	Jordan Rowe
Essex	Martyn Wager
	Richard Maddams
Hertfordshire	Craig Snelling
	Emma Young
Norfolk	Ruth Tolbart
	Alan Jaye
Suffolk	Richard Beeby
	Stephen Hayward

LIST OF DELEGATES

REGION 10	**London**	Andy Warren
		Andy Wils
		Brian Flanagan
		Corniel Power
		Domonic Pauffley
		Dave Young
		Mark Stringer
		Paul Thomas
		Ross McLaren
		Vicky Shaw
REGION 11	**East Sussex**	Simon Herbert
		Ben Ashton
	Kent	Tim Green
		Danny Barrett
	Surrey	Rich Scarth
		Karl Jones
	West Sussex	Peter Horner
		Marc Bagshaw
REGION 12	**Berkshire**	Stephen Collins
		James Hunt
	Buckinghamshire	Rob Martin
		Kieron Thomas
	Hampshire and Isle of Wight	Dave Hunt
		Samuel Harbour
	Oxfordshire	Luke Fowler
		Will Borrett
REGION 13	**Avon**	Matt Senior
		Simon Lawson
	Cornwall	Mike Titchin
		John Walker
	Devon and Somerset	Charlie Woods
		Chris Grantham
	Dorset and Wiltshire	Alexander Davidson
		Janine McCumiskey
	Gloucestershire	Kate Yhnell
		Ben Gwyer

LIST OF DELEGATES

B&EMM	**B&EMM**	Kava Fullman Adam Ballin Robert Lewis Juan LaTorre-Cruz Geoff Miller Dwight Williams Andrae Edwards Malachi Grant-Burrell
CSNC	**CSNC**	Lyndsey Burton Nikki Haxton-Jones
LGBT+	**LGBT+**	Frances McQuade Linzi Blake Isabella Goodwin Matthew Black Laurel Ray Ash Haycock Jamie Lewis Matt Hill Gemma Betts Sam Underwood Kayley Bridges
NRC	**NRC**	Oliver Baldam James Salt
NWC	**NWC**	Kerry McCrone Nicola McSherry Kiah Middleton Kirsty Wright Emily Hollands Katie Allenby Ella Bowkley Gemma Thomas Tilly James Annabel Green Robyn Keeble Leigh Rand Frances Bird
ONC	**ONC**	Jason Kennedy Gareth Jianikos



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