

FIREFIGHTER

FEBRUARY/MARCH 2016



HELL AND HIGH WATER

When floods strike, we do our duty, come what may
It's time for the Westminster government to support us **See p8**

**SERVICE FUNDS
CUT BY A HALF**

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**EU: IN OR OUT
- THE ISSUES**

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**LIFE AS A TRANSGENDER
FIREFIGHTER**

SEE PAGE 12





MATT WRACK

POLICE TAKEOVER WOULD BECOME AN ATTACK ON OUR PAY AND CONDITIONS

Home secretary Theresa May has confirmed that the government will steam ahead with plans that would allow police and crime commissioners (PCCs) the ability to take over the fire and rescue service in England.

Sadly, this move will come as no surprise to FBU members. It is the latest example of a government that continues to demonstrate a deep hostility toward our service.

Firefighters and the police offer the public distinct and unique services that each require their own dedicated governance arrangements. Firefighters deliver a humanitarian service; the police are law enforcers.

Many aspects of the modern history of our service – such as our community engagement work, how we deal with sensitive political situations, and how we tackle civil disturbances – support and demonstrate the need for an independent role for the fire and rescue service.

This is the kind of issue that members need to actively campaign against in their local communities.

As the legislation only gives the opportunity for PCCs to take over fire and rescue services, it means FBU members can lobby their local politicians against the merging of services. For example, Northumbria PCC Vera Baird has already stated she will not be taking up the government's offer to run the service as they are already working well together.

However, the real aim of the government, under the



CARL DE SOUZA/AF/GETTY IMAGES

Holyrood government could be fully and properly briefed and did not need to resort to gimmicks.

We will continue to argue for a statutory flooding duty in England and Wales, but it is a shame that the Chief Fire Officers Association has changed its position several times on this crucial issue.

Rather than chief officers simply telling politicians what they want to hear, it would be better if (occasionally at least) we were able to make a joint professional case for the benefit of the entire service.

MEDICAL RESPONDING AND OTHER POSSIBLE NEW AREAS OF WORK

Since the last edition of *Firefighter*, the service has seen the introduction of 20 emergency medical response trials across the UK as a consequence of the NJC initiative to explore expanding the role of our service.

It is important to remember that the trials are based on decisions reached at our annual conference to explore a widened role for our service. We will monitor these trials closely and will discuss them at our next conference.

In November, the union convened a highly informative workshop of FBU members in the voluntary marauding terrorism and fire arms (MTFA) teams from around the UK.

The two-way exchange of information was instructive and is assisting in the continued discussions to seek acceptable arrangements for a negotiated and agreed MTFA response under the supervision of the NJC.

guise of efficiency savings through “shared services”, is to undermine – even perhaps dismantle – the National Joint Council (NJC), which negotiates collectively for the pay and conditions of fire service personnel.

A single local employer for both services would seriously compromise the ability of this union to fight for you. We would no doubt see an all-out assault on our pay and working conditions.

BRITAIN FLOODS, THE GOVERNMENT FIDDLES

Firefighters from across the UK worked tirelessly to

rescue, help and support the victims of the winter floods whose homes and businesses were wrecked.

It was noticeable that in England, where no one agency has overall responsibility for flood response, the government felt obliged to send in the armed forces to assist firefighters. As with previous deployments it was too little, too late.

However, in Scotland, where firefighters have a statutory duty to take strategic command of flooding, clear and established lines of communication and responsibility meant that the



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PAUL HERMANN



LETTER: THANK YOU FBU FOR WINNING FAIR PENSION COMMUTATION FOR FIREFIGHTERS

I would like to say a huge thank you to everyone at the FBU for fighting and winning the case for fair pension commutation.

I was one of the many firefighters

directly affected by the Government Actuary's Department's failure to award the correct lump sum I was entitled to when I retired from the service in 2003.

That the not insignificant sum I

was owed was deposited in my bank on 1 December 2015 is solely down to the FBU's dogged determination and excellent professional skill.

Philip Crisford

FIREFIGHTER

Published by the Fire Brigades Union
Bradley House
68 Coombe Road
Kingston upon Thames
KT2 7AE

www.fbu.org.uk

Cover image: Jeff J Mitchell/Getty Images

Design: editionpublishing.co.uk

Print: Southernprint Ltd, 17-21
Factory Road, Poole, BH16 5SN



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NEWS

IRUs AXED

Government removes terror and flood alert units from service
p6



NEWS FOCUS

Handing FRSs to police commissioners means cuts for both
p7



London firefighters protest against station closures

STEFANO CAGNONI

FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES TO LOSE HALF OF FUNDING IN THE 10 YEARS TO 2020

CUTS

New cuts of 20% will be made to fire and rescue for England from now until 2020, the FBU's research department has calculated.

They will come on top of cuts of around 30% already implemented.

The service will come close to having had its funding cut in half over the 10 years from 2010 to 2020.

The 20% cut in central government funding equates to £137m being lost by 2020.

In an area such as Avon the grim

reality is that the proposed cuts, announced in December 2015, will mean that, instead of getting the £20.1m it received in 2015-16, the region will get only £15.8m in 2019-20.

Greater Manchester will lose £9.8m, the West Midlands £9.6m, West Yorkshire £8m, Devon and Somerset £7.3m, Essex £7m and Kent £6.8m.

Nottinghamshire and Hereford and Worcester face the biggest cuts, with each area losing 28.3%, Dorset and Wiltshire will lose 27.1%, Buckinghamshire 26.3% and East Sussex 25.5%.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "We need the government to put its hands up, admit it was wrong and stop implementing more and more cuts.

"These never-ending cost-saving measures won't keep the public safe. This government is clearly content to put its austerity agenda before public safety."

County fire authorities and London were not listed within the cuts plans published in December. These authorities (Oxfordshire, for example) do not receive a specific grant for fire – they get an overall amount which they decide how to spend locally.

London has not escaped from cuts, however. The capital is set to suffer further funding losses of more than £13m until 2018.

Dr Paul Hampton, head of research for the FBU, commented: "Given the wide range of emergency work firefighters do, from fires to floods to terrorist incidents, these cuts will affect resilience and the ability of the service to serve our communities."

UNIONS COUNT THE COST OF RED TAPE IN NEW LAWS

Trade unions in the UK face a multi-million pound bill for extra running costs they will incur as a result of increased bureaucracy, or “red tape”, as a result of government legislation.

An impact assessment carried out by the government itself shows that measures in the Trade Union Bill, such as the abolition of payment of union subscriptions by the check-off system, will cost unions at least £37m over the next six years.

That figure is a combination of the £11m one-off cost for unions when the bill becomes law and £26m in cumulative costs over the next five years.

Some of the eye-watering figures identified in the impact assessment include an estimated £25m cost to switch and maintain collection of union members’ subscriptions by direct debit – the method that replaces check-off – and £6m to pay for

the running costs of the government’s official regulator of unions, the certification officer.

The TUC believes that the government’s figures could underestimate the true financial impact of the bill.

John Wood, TUC digital officer, said: “We’re worried that the £11m up front and the £26m every five years thereafter is only for starters, and it’s going to end up costing union members in increased subs or reduced support.”

John McGhee, FBU national officer, said that the government was attempting to drown trade unions in bureaucracy: “They are intentionally making it difficult for trade unions to organise in order to protect their working conditions.

“They know if we’re focusing on the bureaucratic fallout of this bill, then we won’t be able to fight as hard for our members.”



AN INSPIRATION WHO WILL NOT BE FORGOTTEN

FRANK BAILEY

Hundreds of people gathered (above) to pay their respects to one of London’s first black firefighters, Frank Bailey, who has died at the age of 90.

Frank Bailey joined the London Fire Brigade in 1955 after being told that the service would not employ black people because they were not physically strong enough.

He would later write: “I immediately recognised racism and said: ‘I’m going to

apply to be a firefighter and see if they find me unfit’. I saved a fellow firefighter’s life when he fainted while we were on the fifth floor of a ladder drill session.”

Micky Nicholas, secretary of the FBU’s Black and Ethnic Minority Members section, said at the funeral service: “His knowledge and passion for black self-organisation and progression in our society remains an inspiration to us today and he is rightly thought of as the father of black firefighting in this country and should not be forgotten.”

SOUNDING OFF

Welcome home

Jeremy Corbyn responds to the FBU’s decision to affiliate to the Labour Party once more



When I announced my campaign to lead the Labour Party I promised a new kind of politics. The news that the Fire Brigades Union voted to rejoin the party at a special conference in November is a huge milestone.

It is an honour to have some of our bravest public servants back inside the Labour Party and with your support we can build a movement ready to tackle the challenges of the 21st century, the biggest of which is this Tory government.

I recently visited Carlisle fire station in Cumbria where I witnessed some of the sterling work of the firefighters undertaking search, rescue and evacuation operations in the midst of the winter floods.

This was the same fire station that David Cameron spoke at on the eve of the 2010 general election where he promised that there would be no frontline cuts to public services.

Since then he has consistently attacked your service, implementing disgraceful cuts resulting in over 7,000 job losses.

You’ve been on the sharp end of austerity cuts. You deserve much better.

When I am the prime minister I will halt the cuts to your service, stop the closure of fire stations across the UK and will make sure your essential, life-saving service remains public.

Under my leadership Labour will be the party of public services. Welcome home.

GOVERNMENT AXES UNITS USED IN RESPONSE TO FLOODS AND TERROR

A third of all incident response units (IRUs), many of which have been deployed to assist with major flooding incidents, have been removed from service by the government.

The units were introduced after 9/11 in order to respond to chemical and biological terror attacks, but a number have played a vital role in flooding rescue operations.

A freedom of information request from the Press Association news agency to the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG)

revealed that units from Devon, Surrey, Wimbledon and East Greenwich were mobilised to decontaminate firefighters and erect dams during flooding incidents.

Units had also been deployed to 14 "hazmat" incidents in the past two years, including four occasions to decontaminate firefighters.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said the union's health and safety officials will now work to establish what action is being taken to ensure firefighters are not put at risk.



PA VIA PA IMAGES

The government has cut one third of IRUs

THOUSANDS RAISED FOR PENSIONS FIGHTING FUND

More than £19,000 has been donated to the union's campaign fund by retired firefighters and police officers who have benefitted from recent FBU legal victories.

Last year a court ruled that firefighters and police officers who retired between 1 December 2001 and 21 August 2006 were not awarded the correct lump sum payment.

They will now be given what they should have received, amounting to thousands of pounds for some.

A second legal challenge by the FBU established that firefighters who joined

the service aged between 18 and 20 and who paid into the pension scheme had been short-changed and were missing up to two years' worth of pension contributions.

A fund was set up by the union to allow those who benefitted to make donations to help continue the FBU's campaign on this and other issues.

Sean Starbuck, FBU national officer, said he was staggered by the sum donated. "To fight for firefighters still in the job we need as much support as possible," he said. "The only way we can continue to

beat this government and win cases is by sticking together.

"If you haven't already donated, please consider doing so."

Retired Nottinghamshire police officer Gary Youngs is one of those who will be compensated. He thanked the union and its members for standing up for fairness.

"So many of us put up with injustice due to a lack of knowledge, commitment or mental energy," he said.

"It's brilliant to see an organisation like the FBU fighting for what's right."

■ You can contribute at www.fbu.org.uk/donate

IN BRIEF

FBU LGBT 2016 SCHOOL APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN

Applications are now open for this year's FBU Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) School taking place from 20 to 22 April at Wortley Hall, near Sheffield. The school offers a chance to discuss strategies to keep equality at the top of the political agenda and to meet other LGBT members. Anyone interested in attending this year's school should email Yannick.Dubois@fbu.org.uk with their details.

FOOTBALL SUPPORTERS CHEER CAMPAIGN AGAINST FIRE CUTS

Firefighters in Northumberland were uplifted after a packed football crowd cheered on their campaign against cuts to local fire services. The Northern Premier League fixture between Blyth Spartans and Salford FC saw over 1,000 fans sign the FBU petition to stop plans to cut 24 frontline firefighters and close Haydon Bridge fire station.

Guy Tiffin, secretary of the FBU in Northumberland, said: "The public in Northumberland deserve and demand better than what this government are offering. Central government grants have been slashed with no regard for public opinion or safety."

■ Stay up to date with news on local campaigns via our website at www.fbu.org.uk.

FBU CAMPAIGN CHANGES MINDS OF LEICESTERSHIRE POLITICIANS

Central fire station in Leicester-shire has been saved after a long-running campaign by the local FBU convinced politicians to change course. Cllr Nicholas

Rushton, the Tory leader of Leicestershire county council who previously backed the station closure, told the *Leicestershire Mercury* newspaper that "the public pressure has been well co-ordinated".





A VERY EXPENSIVE MISTAKE

Police in the streets of Tottenham as the Allied Carpets building burns during riots in 2011

Giving control of fire and rescue to police commissioners means cuts for both services

POLICE COMMISSIONER CONTROL

Home secretary Theresa May's announcement at the end of last month (January) that the fire and rescue service is to work under the control of police and crime commissioners (PCCs) has been met with strong criticism from the union, the FRS, the Police Federation and from within the police service itself.

May announced that the government is going to legislate for changes that will allow PCCs to take responsibility for their local fire service and "hold them to account".

Smokescreen for cuts

The new minister for policing and fire, Mike Penning, makes much of having once been a firefighter, although his length of service has yet to be confirmed. He said: "As a former firefighter ... I know from first-hand experience how well the police and fire and rescue service can work together. We believe that better joint working can strengthen the emergency services, deliver significant savings and produce benefits for the public."

But Lyn Brown, the shadow fire minister, said fire officers will fear the plans are "a smokescreen for cuts" and

that the government must ensure that a statutory fire service is maintained in all parts of the country.

The Local Government Association has said it sees no "pressing need" to change the way fire services are governed, while the union's position has been clear from the outset – law enforcement and the humanitarian service firefighters provide do not mix.

Under the new arrangements, PCCs who successfully put forward a business case and take responsibility for fire and rescue will be able to form one single employer for both services, led by a chief officer in charge of all fire and police personnel. The two services will share buildings and back office functions, as has been happening in some areas for years.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack told journalists: "Firefighters need to be seen to be neutral within the communities they serve."

"Police are law enforcers, while fire and rescue is a humanitarian service with a very different remit and culture."

"Firefighters rely on the public's trust to gain access to homes and buildings for fire safety work and, of course, to put out fires, and we are concerned that this will change if firefighters are associated with police."

"There are lots of examples where firefighters have been working peacefully in potentially difficult situations, on travellers' sites for example, and the whole atmosphere has changed when police have arrived. This collaboration is a very expensive mistake."

National official John McGhee told viewers on a BBC2 panel discussion on the PCC takeover that the real reason behind the collaboration is a way to make further cuts to public services.

Different advice

On the two services sharing backroom functions and control operators, he commented: "Fire control operators don't just take a call and despatch a fire engine. They give safety advice that is tailored to a fire and rescue call."

"Likewise for police operators. They give very different advice. During trials, we have responded to calls that would otherwise have been taken by the ambulance service, not because there is a lack of response among control operators – it is because there is a lack of ambulances."

"This whole question that we need to put everyone in the same control room doesn't deal with the fact that the fire service has lost 7,000 jobs since 2010. There aren't enough resources."

FLOODS

ALL HANDS T

The most recent floods have emphasised once again the pressing need for the response to such emergencies to be made a statutory duty for fire and rescue services in England and Wales. **Lynne Wallis** investigates

West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service at work in Baildon Bridge, Shipley. It was flooded by the River Aire, which broke its banks when the water reached record levels after heavy rains over the 2015 Christmas holiday weekend. PICTURE: TIM SMITH/PANOS PICTURES

O THE PUMP



Powerful images of firefighter crews rescuing flood victims late last year after storms Desmond, Frank and Eva hit our shores will stay with us for a long time. There are firefighters up to their shoulders in water and worse. Others are carrying people out of their water-sodden homes from hard to reach top floor windows. Some are plunged waist deep into icy water to rescue stranded adults and children, carrying evacuees to safety, to dry land, to council-run shelters. It will be a Christmas to remember for those poor individuals, and for the firefighters who rescued them.

Firefighters in the North of England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland worked round the clock in the grimmest conditions imaginable to save pregnant women, children and vulnerable elderly people in care homes. The fire and rescue service in Scotland was properly acknowledged as the lead agency during the flood rescues, with firefighters from all over the country getting involved.

In Greater Manchester firefighters rescued almost 1,000 people in a single day after torrential downpours hit. In one part of Manchester where care home residents were too frail to be evacuated, firefighters had to move them to the top floor of the residential home to safety. In Wigan, a firefighter boat crew rescued people, one after the other, from 20 different houses.

Oxfordshire firefighters, meanwhile, headed north to help colleagues there, deploying a much needed high volume pump unit. Fire and rescue services may be funded from budgets drawn up locally, but when emergencies such as this hit, it is not just a case of all hands to the pump, it's all the pumps to wherever they are needed. HVPs are national resources, based all around the country, making them national assets that strengthen our national resilience during floods, in spite of the government's insistence that fire and rescue is purely a local service.

No one off limits

Quite rightly the fire and rescue service is now the recognised prime responder to flooding incidents, although some firefighters expressed understandable irritation that news reports referred to "rescue teams" or "the army" while it was clearly firefighters who were leading rescue operations.

During an interview on Radio 4's *The World at One* just after Christmas. Matt Wrack told the journalist he found it concerning that David Cameron found himself unable to utter the word "firefighter" when speaking of the recent flood rescues.

It must have been perplexing for listeners that the prime minister was unable to thank the fire and rescue service specifically. Cynics suggested he would find it harder to implement more fire and rescue service cuts whilst simultaneously giving thanks to its staff, those same workers who are employed by a service that is effectively being dismantled.

Firefighter crews have always rescued people during flood incidents, and they willingly do this work even though there is no statutory duty in

England, in other words any formal expectation, for them to do so.

Some 70% of England's fire and rescue services were involved in rescues in the aftermath of the floods of 2013-14, attending 7,000 incidents and performing more than 2,000 rescues, with more than 1,000 firefighters mobilised. The most recent floods saw 16 fire and rescue services, including Merseyside, Northumberland, West Midlands, Shropshire and North Yorkshire, provide resources in some form or another, from HVPs to rescue boats and specialist teams, to four fire and rescue services in the affected areas.

The union is demanding the introduction of a statutory duty for firefighters in England and Wales for flood response, as their colleagues in Scotland and Northern Ireland currently have. (See the links at the end of this article for information on how to join the campaign and lobby your MP.)

A firefighter wades through flood waters in York after the River Foss burst its banks in December 2015

JEFF MITCHELL/GETTY IMAGES





It is well recognised within the service and among the public that firefighters will always respond and help in any emergency or natural disaster, and some believe there is therefore no need for a statutory duty.

The point is that there is a better chance of flood rescue being adequately funded if there is a formal requirement in place. Roles and responsibilities would be clarified and it would assist in making the case for properly funded support for this essential area of fire service work.

Acknowledgement of the vast contribution of firefighters to this critical rescue work makes it more difficult for the “Fires are down” mantra that government uses to justify cuts to carry any real weight. But it is going to be a hard battle to win if leader of the House of Commons Chris Grayling’s ill-informed response to a recent Labour parliamentary question on it are anything to go by: “The idea we need to pass a law to tell the emergency services to respond to emergencies would be a waste of parliament’s time.” The union has explained

A family is rescued by the West Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Service after their home at Baildon Bridge was flooded by the River Aire

that the process would be very simple – an order can be issued by government under the existing Fire and Rescue Services Act. There is no need for new legislation.

Petition

Firefighters in Cumbria, the undisputed worst affected flood area in England, are demanding flood rescue funding and have set up a petition to urge government to make flood rescue a statutory duty. Dave Burn, chair of the FBU in Cumbria, said: “We need funding for this, enough to buy the requisite amount of equipment and also to train our firefighters to respond. We don’t have a local response vehicle that would allow us to assist Yorkshire if they need it. They and other services came and helped us out during the floods, but we don’t have the facility to return that sort of favour.”

The petition for statutory duty had just over 3,000 signatures at the time of going to press, and has gained support from several MPs. It needs 10,000 signatures to warrant a government response and 100,000 to be considered for debate in parliament. Please sign it now at: <https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/115009>. ■ Use this link to lobby your MP: <http://bit.ly/FloodingLobby>.

THERE IS A BETTER CHANCE OF FLOOD RESCUE BEING ADEQUATELY FUNDED IF THERE IS A FORMAL REQUIREMENT IN PLACE



BRAVERY OF A DIFFERENT KIND

I don't want anyone else to feel alone like I did – transgender firefighter Nic Brennan tells **William Murphy**

Two minutes into my conversation with Cheshire firefighter Nic Brennan and he's already advising me on my new year's gym routine. "You've got to focus on different muscle groups in each session and stick to a set routine if you want to see results," he tells me. If anyone is living proof of a good gym routine to build muscle, it's Nic.

Nic felt out of place in his body while growing up. Now he knows he suffered from the anxiety disorder gender dysphoria, a condition causing discomfort or distress because there is a mismatch between a person's biological sex and gender identity.

Nic was born female, but from a very early age actually identified as male, resulting in him being very isolated, angry and uncomfortable growing up, and continuing into adulthood.

Transgender people have a higher profile now than ever before. Later this month actor Eddie Redmayne could win his second Oscar for his role in *The Danish Girl* portraying artist Lili Elbe, the first person to ever undergo gender reassignment. The BBC soap *EastEnders* has introduced the character Kyle, played by a transgender actor.

Now the fire service has its own transgender



PAUL HERRMANN

harder to transition in a male-dominated workplace, such as the fire and rescue service?

"Like everyone who has gone on this journey I found it difficult, but I couldn't have wished for better treatment from my workmates.

"I was initially hesitant to come out for fear of not being understood. I thought being transgender would be seen as too much of a problem and I wouldn't be accepted at all. I worried that I'd be dismissed or harassed out of the job I loved if people knew. I couldn't have been more wrong."

Despite beginning his transition, having undergone a double mastectomy to remove his breasts and taking injections of the male hormone testosterone – causing him to grow facial hair and his voice to deepen – Nic still hadn't told his employers or colleagues.

"It all came to a head when he was called into a meeting with his station manager. "He referred to my pre-transition name and I just lost it. He got both barrels. I just blurted it out because I was so frustrated."

Expecting the worst, Nic was surprised when his manager's first reaction was to make sure he got all the help and support he needed.

Cheshire's equalities and diversity officer was in almost daily contact with him and when Nic needed time off to complete his surgeries he was granted it, no questions asked.

After coming out as transgender, Nic spent a further six months at the same station where, although he felt more at ease, there were times when colleagues would mistakenly refer to Nic as "she" or "her".

"I could understand why people would get confused, as it takes time to adapt. However, I felt a fresh start at another station would be the best move," Nic says.

Joining Runcorn fire station in 2011, Nic was able

'I AM FINALLY LIVING MY LIFE AS WHO I AM MEANT TO BE, NOT JUST EXISTING'

story to tell. "Writing my own name and ticking the female gender box felt so wrong," Nic says, recalling how he signed up to become a firefighter at Cheshire Fire and Rescue Service in 2001.

"I didn't know that I was transgender at the time. I just knew that I wasn't who I was supposed to be."

Due to this inner conflict, Nic found himself isolated and frustrated at work, which often resulted in outbursts of anger. Others may have seen him as the only female firefighter posted at Stockton Heath fire station. But to Nic, he, too, was one of the male firefighters.

It was more than seven years after he joined the service that Nic learned what the word transgender meant. "It was a light bulb moment. I had figured out the root of the problem and knew there was somewhere I fitted in.

"I remember saying out loud for the first time: 'I am transgender' and thinking to myself that this was the most momentous moment of my life."

Transitioning from one gender to another is difficult and stressful in any workplace. But is it any

If you are struggling with any of the issues raised in this article please feel free to contact members of the FBU's LGBT section who are always on hand to offer confidential help and advice.
Pat Carberry:
07825 878 885.
Yannick Dubois:
07824 319 545.

to be his true self from the outset.

Although his new colleagues were informed of his situation and were introduced to what being transgender meant, they had never known Nic other than the man he is today.

Nowadays, Nic is able to be completely open with his workmates. "It has been a long journey but I have some of the best workmates possible. At this point they're family to me.

"I am finally living my life as who I am meant to be, not just existing."

Nic strongly believes there is an urgent need for transgender role models and if he can fill that void, then so be it.

He wants other transgender people to know there are positive stories of people transitioning in the fire and rescue service and says that if he had known about the positive experiences of others himself it may have made his journey easier.

"When I first began my transition I felt too afraid to ask for help. I don't want anyone else to feel alone like I did".

LOOK BEYOND THE



The EU referendum debate: what it means for jobs, living standards and rights at work.

By **Frances O'Grady**, TUC general secretary



SPIN

The referendum about whether the UK should remain a member of the European Union is set to be one of the biggest controversies of the year.

The date is yet to be announced, but whichever date the government picks, the business and political elite will talk endlessly of which option will be “good for Britain” – when what they really mean is “good for British bosses”. As union members, we have to get beyond the spin and take a hard-headed look at what’s best for workers in Britain: remaining in the EU, or leaving and going it alone.

Which is why the TUC has independently investigated the impact of leaving the EU – and in particular what would happen to workers’ rights and to jobs.

If we left the EU, we clearly wouldn’t stop exporting products made in Britain – but the costs of selling to the EU would undoubtedly go up. And fewer global companies would decide to build new plants here if they couldn’t get free access to a market of over 400 million people. A lot of British jobs – well-paid manufacturing jobs – depend on trade with the rest of the EU. If we left the EU, many of those 4 million jobs would be at risk. That could threaten whole industries and the taxes they pay, which help to fund decent public services.

Working people’s rights will be under threat too. Most of our rights at work originated with, or have been improved by, European Union law. They provide the floor that our collective agreements build on. This includes bread and butter protection like paid holidays, family friendly rights, consultation on redundancies, and health and safety laws. As long as we’re in the EU, this Conservative government can’t scrap these rights – even though we know they would like to. But outside the EU, the government would be able to rewrite the rules that protect British workers whenever they felt like it. And the Trade Union Bill shows that the current government is unlikely to pass up the opportunity. Without the backing of EU laws and courts – gradually, over time and bit by bit – we would see essential workers’ rights cut back.

So the TUC’s assessment tells us that leaving the European Union would threaten working people’s living standards and rights at work. But that doesn’t mean we’re satisfied with the way things are now – far from it.

We want the EU to reform – just not in the same way the prime minister does. We want to see an EU that focuses on delivering fair growth and making life better for ordinary workers – not serving the interests of big business through

deregulation and privatisation. That means real reform – and the Brussels bureaucracy butting out of activities that threaten the UK’s public services.

A genuinely reformed EU would start by cracking down on corporate tax dodging, which would also help pay for the public services we need. It would put together a massive sustainable growth programme that would create 11 million good quality, well-paid jobs across Europe – something European trade unions have been campaigning for. And a reformed EU would get tough on the banks and big business, forcing them to act in the interests of the public as a whole, not just the narrow self-interest of elites.

**TO BUILD THE SOCIETY
THAT WE ALL WANT, WE
HAVE TO ARGUE FOR A
REFORMED EU – NOT GET
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THE FLAWED INSTITUTION
THAT WE HAVE NOW**

If we end up with a “Brexit” then it is very clear that workers’ rights and jobs will lose out. But to build the society that we all want, we have to argue for a reformed EU – not get trapped into defending the flawed institution that we have now.

However we vote, we must stand against unscrupulous politicians exploiting people’s reasonable worries about whether the UK’s creaking infrastructure can cope with migrants coming to live and work here. Rather than stoking prejudice and division, the UK government should be battling in Europe to stop migrant workers being exploited and raise wages for everyone. If this government reversed the cuts and put more cash into housing, schools, hospitals and emergency services, that would be a way to ease pressure on public services. Migrants aren’t to blame for cuts in real wages and services. The government and their friends in the banks and boardrooms are.

As trade union members we are internationalists. We want a system that delivers for working people regardless of the passport they hold. That’s why we must carry on fighting for a reformed EU that puts workers, jobs and public services first.



NEW YEAR NEW LOOK

It's been a busy few months for the communications department at the union's HQ. We've got a new logo, we've relaunched our national website and we've given our magazine a facelift. Get the lowdown on the new look FBU from some of the experts who made it happen.



New logo

Back in 2015 the FBU approached us with the opportunity to update its badge. It was felt that the existing FBU badge was loaded with character but posed problems in its functionality and application.

We were keen not to lose any of the union's heroic history and heritage, nor to throw away all of the character that can be seen in the old badge.

Before picking up our sketchbooks we immersed ourselves in all things FBU and, after talking to firefighters, digging around in the London Fire Brigade Museum archives and jumping on a tour of the museum itself we opened the task up to secondary research, asking members what they wanted in an identity.

A common theme that emerged was that the legibility of the badge was key. We also needed to ensure, importantly, that the general public understands that the "FBU" stands for the Fire Brigades Union.

To develop the new badge we went through hundreds of ideas, and as we did so it became clear that retaining the original helmet was pivotal throughout the process.

We liked it that at first glance of the new badge you see a fire, but then if you look more closely you can identify the iconic helmet that the old badge and FBU members have displayed for nearly 100 years.

The hose surrounding the FBU identity symbolises the unbroken dedication and security of the role continuously played by the union to its members and the general public.

We also wanted the badge to convey strength and have a bit of attitude, and to look like it was ready to stand up and fight against recent cuts.

Hopefully the new badge will help raise the support and public awareness that firefighters deserve. We hope that you will be as proud of the new FBU badge as we are.

Sam Lachlan, design director, Unreal



New website

The new FBU website was launched in December after several months in development.

Our biggest challenge was getting an effective navigation system in place. Because of the large amount of information the union generates, this website is much bigger than those of most organisations.

This means it's crucial to have effective information architecture in place.

To help members find what they need we've introduced secondary navigation (links that appear above the main navigation options), a drop down menu, and left hand navigation on some pages.

We've created a consistent taxonomy (subject list) that allows users to quickly browse content by topic and location. We've also improved the search system, and placed a greater emphasis on being able to find resources more easily. A new dyslexia-friendly mode will help users who find lower contrasts easier to read.

The resources list has now been split into five subjects: circulars, forms, publications, pay rates and policies. More than 2,400 conference policies going back to 1975 have been added to the new site, as well as a large number of circulars, news stories and publications, making it by far the largest FBU website yet.

The site is built using responsive design, so that it can easily be used on mobiles and tablets, but has also been improved for widescreens, with the site expanding on larger screens to make more use of the available space.

Simon Parry, website designer, Infobo

New look magazine

Firefighter magazine has been refreshed to reflect the new branding, incorporating the logo typeface Heroic and with a simplified colour palette, page design and layout. We hope this makes your magazine easier to read and to navigate.

Lisa Irving, magazine designer

HELP US TO IMPROVE

In order for us to remain a strong, well organised union with real muscle in our industry we need to know the most effective way to communicate with you – our members.

This month we are launching a new all members' survey to address that very point. We want to know how well we communicate with you, how you receive information and more importantly how you want to receive it. The survey will allow us to improve our operation and your input will feed into the union's communications strategy over the coming years. We'd strongly encourage you to take part.

You can complete the survey online at:
<http://bit.ly/FBU-survey>
 Daniel Celardi, campaigns organiser,
 Fire Brigades Union



**WE WANTED THE BADGE TO CONVEY
STRENGTH AND HAVE A BIT OF ATTITUDE**

HEALTH MENOPAUSE AND FEMALE FIREFIGHTERS

The FBU national women's committee explains how managements can help both themselves and firefighters experiencing the menopause

Suddenly, everyone is talking about the menopause which, of course, has been around since the dawn of humanity.

The menopause has a much greater potential impact on working women now that the retirement age is increasing – at some point female firefighters will be dealing with the symptoms of the menopause in the workplace.

For many years menopause has been a taboo subject. Embarrassment and stereotyping have led to women feeling unable to raise it as a workplace issue, leaving them to try to deal with symptoms instead of seeking support.

Hot flushes, night sweats, anxiety, depression, tiredness, heavy bleeding and migraines are just some of the symptoms of menopause, which can start small and increase at an indiscernible rate, making it difficult to decide when you “didn’t” feel like this.

Varied symptoms

Symptoms are so varied and affect women so differently that it can be difficult to identify symptoms and to know if what you are experiencing is part of menopause.

Little research has been carried out around menopause and women firefighters – and research is badly needed. We do know that the core temperature does not increase during a

hot flush, but this has only been measured at ambient temperatures of 31°C.

Currently, women can be subjected to rigid attendance management procedures that don’t make any adjustment for a condition all women go through. Persistent menopausal symptoms can mean that, very quickly, a woman member could be at stage three final written warning.

What we have to be mindful of is that, although the majority of women go through the “change” between 45 and 55 years of age (the average age being 51), some women can go through the menopause far younger – around one in 100 do so before reaching 40. The length of time for this natural cycle within a woman’s life lasts on average between two to five years.

The menopause, which is a time when a woman stops menstruating and is no longer able to get pregnant,

STEFANO CAGNONI



FBU Nottinghamshire brigade organiser and NWC rep Clare Hudson spoke about menopause at the union’s last conference

can affect her physical and psychological health.

Menopausal symptoms can begin months or even years before a woman’s periods stop and last around four years after her last period, although some women experience them for much longer. This stage is

actually known as the peri – or pre-menopausal state.

We know that improved education of employers about the effects of the menopause will improve working conditions for women.

Individual risk assessments are just one way to implement changes in a woman’s working environment to make it easier for her to cope with menopausal symptoms.

Small adjustments can make all the difference and these can be as easy as allowing access to drinking water, natural ventilation and adequate rest breaks.

Flexible working arrangements and time off for medical appointments is another area that is a quick fix for employers. Confidentiality and discretion in dealing with an employee’s symptoms will help women be able to disclose the real reason why they are off work and not feel they have to invent excuses.

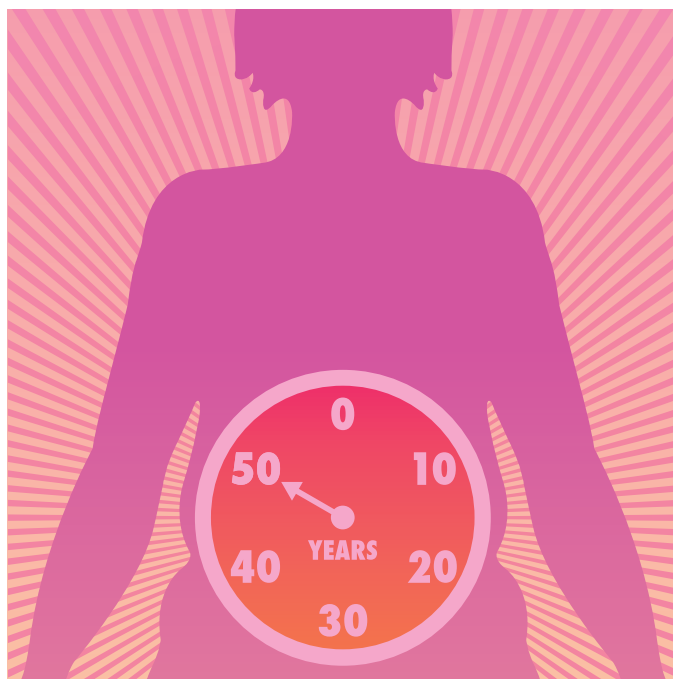
Managements work with FBU

There are examples of fire and rescue service managements that are working with the FBU to make arrangements to support women during menopause.

One of the most helpful things employers can do is to make it clear to women firefighters in the menopause that management is willing to listen.

Leaflets on advice and where to go for guidance on the intranet can also send a positive signal to a woman firefighter in her workplace. FBU officials can raise the issue with management, and the NWC can provide help if needed.

■ <http://bit.ly/FBU-menopause>



LEGAL BEAGLE

COMPENSATION FOR FLOOD TRAINING POISONING

Kevin Digby of Thompsons Solicitors explains how fire and rescue bosses wasted large sums fighting entirely justified claims by FBU members

The havoc caused by Desmond, Eva, Frank and other storms over recent months has been a stark demonstration of the devastating effect flooding can have on the UK and the importance of a fully trained fire and rescue service for evacuating properties and saving lives.

Swift water rescue training (SWRT) is therefore an important part of a firefighter's skill set. High quality training not only makes firefighters better equipped to carry out their duty in floods, it also enables them to do so in a way that minimises risk to them and their colleagues.

Safety of firefighters

The FBU and its solicitors Thompsons agree that proper "live" training is completely necessary and we accept that it is not always easy for brigades to find suitable places to carry out swift water rescue training.

But when deciding on a venue there are basic factors that cannot be ignored or relegated to save money – the most important factor must always be the health and safety of the firefighters being trained. However, in a recently concluded series of cases it seems brigades chose cost over safety.

The National Watersports Centre in Nottingham is one venue that had been identified as a suitable location for SWRT. In the past it has hosted Olympic standard

canoeists and white water rafters. But the water used at the centre is fed by the River Trent, one of the most polluted rivers in the UK.

In 2008 the Devon and Cornwall Fire and Rescue Service was one of many brigades that chose to use the National Watersports Centre for its SWRT.

The physically demanding training required FBU members to spend lots of time in the water and that inevitably led to water being swallowed, particularly by those who were weaker swimmers. Like many natural watercourses, water in the River Trent at the time of the training contained pathogens and bacteria that can cause sickness and diarrhoea.

Almost all of the trainees from Devon and Cornwall became sick and the FBU approached Thompsons to look into possible compensation from the centre's

management as well as against the brigades and authorities that agreed to training taking place there.

Unbelievably, despite letters of claim and then legal action, the centre continued to misleadingly promote itself as a safe and suitable venue for fire brigades to carry out SWRT and between 2009 and 2012, numerous fire brigades from areas including Yorkshire and Derbyshire sent FBU members there.

While the FBU consistently made it clear to brigade bosses that the health and safety of its members should be paramount in the selection of training venues, the calls fell on deaf ears and many more firefighters became sick in the years that followed.

Despite overwhelming evidence of the contaminated water causing illnesses and the evidence from the 2008 claim, the authorities and brigades for those firefighters

exposed and made ill between 2009 and 2012 decided to fight the claims all the way – their defence being that the firefighters should not have swallowed any water and even questioning the hygiene of the firefighters themselves.

Thankfully for the members concerned, these arguments eventually failed and Thompsons secured full compensation for all claimants.

Taxpayers' money

Tam MacFarlane, FBU executive council member for South West England, commented: "Rather than accepting their mistakes, bosses have fought every claim in full, wasting vast sums of taxpayers' money on legal fees that should have been invested in the service and on protecting the public. We're very grateful to Thompsons for securing compensation for every member affected."

This case is a prime example of how not placing health and safety at the top of the priority list can have devastating consequences further down the line.

The brigades involved should have made sure that the water being used was as clean as possible and, when it was found to be dangerously polluted, switched the training to a different venue.

Unfortunately for all concerned, the brigades have learnt this lesson the hard way. Both the sickness suffered by the members and the compensation which was eventually paid out to them, as well as their own and Thompsons' legal costs, could have been avoided if brigade management had simply checked the venue properly.



**FBU FREEPHONE
LEGAL ADVICE
0800 100 6061
IN SCOTLAND
0800 089 1331**

'There are so many amazing stories that need to be told'

Leigh Bishop had to work out for himself how to photograph shipwrecks at great depths. He did and now the Welwyn Garden City crew commander is part of another enterprise that demands teamwork and strong bonds

There's nothing unusual about firefighters using breathing apparatus. But Leigh Bishop, red watch crew commander at Welwyn Garden City, uses it when he's off duty – to explore shipwrecks under water.

Leigh has been diving wrecks for 25 years – as long as he's been a firefighter. He's dived hundreds off the English coast, and visited the *Titanic* and its sister ship the *Britannic*. He also takes photographs of wrecks on the seabed.

It all started back in the 1990s when he linked up with like-minded divers, keen to explore wrecks in the English

Channel – the most wreck-rich stretch of water in the world. The divers called themselves Starfish Enterprise.

"It was an amazing time," says Leigh who started out as a retained firefighter in Rushden, Northamptonshire. Starfish Enterprise divers were pioneers – among the first to use mixed gas and "rebreathers" (see caption above right) to explore wrecks off the English coast, letting them dive deeper for longer.

Leigh started shooting pictures of deep wrecks 17 years ago when invited to join an expedition to *Britannic*, *Titanic*'s larger but less well known sister



Leigh cave diving

ship, which sank off the coast near Athens in 1916.

"I got the call up and was assigned as photographer, though I was no expert and had to 'beg, steal and borrow' equipment. No one had ever photographed a shipwreck below 100 metres before. No one could advise me, so I had to work it out," says Leigh.

And he did. "We got some pictures published and that set me up." They proved a calling card for future shoots – he was diving and shooting the doomed liner *Lusitania* pretty soon afterwards.

Stunningly atmospheric

But it wasn't until the new millennium that Leigh hit on a new concept for taking striking pictures underwater. Using time exposure techniques, he came away with some stunningly atmospheric black and white shots of majestic wrecks. His images of the huge bow of the *Justicia* and the massive guns on *HMS Audacious* are hauntingly evocative.

In technical diving circles, Leigh became known as the go-to man for photo shoots on deep dive expeditions. His images have appeared on around 60 magazine covers. He uses digital colour photography too, has published over 200 articles, lectures globally and co-founded Eurotek, a UK conference



Leigh being lowered into the sea to dive the *Britannic*, Greece 2009



Leigh with his equipment – mixed-gas diving refers to any activity in which the diver breathes a mixture other than air or nitrox – nitrogen/oxygen mixture. The main reason is to avoid nitrogen narcosis. A rebreather absorbs the carbon dioxide in a diver's exhaled breath so the unused oxygen content of each breath can be recycled.

for advanced divers.

When you have dived so many amazing wrecks, it's hard to pick favourites. But, for Leigh, that first deep dive on *Britannic* back in 1998 is a contender. He recalls how "sunrays penetrated the vast depths allowing the team to see up to 59 metres ahead as we weaved our way in and out of first class accommodation and past the grand staircase".

Another top dive is his trip last year to the *Mars*, the Swedish battleship which was the biggest in the world when it sank in the Baltic Sea 450 years ago. "It is amazingly well preserved because the sea is so cold and salty Toledo worms that eat woodwork can't survive."

Last year he also explored a 300-year-old cannon site off the coast of Sierra Leone. The team were based on a remote jungle island. For Leigh, the wreck rates as "one of the most amazing pieces of shipwreck history" he's ever uncovered – involving mutiny, kidnapping and the man who wrote the anti-slavery song *Amazing Grace*. He's still chasing down the story, working with researchers in three countries.

The team had their own island adventure. There was no electricity or running water but plenty of "snakes, scorpions and massive spiders". And, as they were to learn later, island fruit bats

spreading the Ebola virus on night-time flights to the mainland.

So what drives Leigh? It's pretty obvious he loves adventure, wants to discover new wrecks, get the story out – and, of course, the pictures. "There are so many amazing stories that need to be told," he says.

Being first to dive a shipwreck is "The Adventure". "If you're not the lead dog, the view never changes," he says. But it's not about being a lone wolf. Like fighting fires, strong bonds are forged. It's vital to be a team player.

Leigh is very keen to name check fellow firefighters who dive at equally advanced levels – including "legendary" cave explorer Rick Stanton MBE, recently retired from Coventry fire station.

Caves under the desert

Rick is well known for rescuing people trapped from caves – both in the UK and around the world.

Rick and Leigh were the only Brits on an expedition exploring caves under the Nullarbor desert in Australia. Leigh also dives with Eccles firefighter Rick Waring. Another good friend, retired Sunbury-on-Thames firefighter Alan Dunster, like too many, sadly died on a dive.

Losing friends at sea is "definitely the

very worst thing about diving". Leigh lost his "best mate", renowned diver Carl Spencer, in 2009 when they were both on a National Geographic expedition exploring *Britannic* for the fourth time.

Leigh doesn't delete the phone numbers of friends who die on dives – his personal memorial.

Back in 2003, Carl led his first expedition to *Britannic* that yielded explanations to the hospital ship's mysterious sinking. The team, including Rick Waring, took pictures, showing how "watertight" doors were left wide open, explaining why she sank so much faster than *Titanic*. They also located the minefield she sailed through which caused the fatal damage.

Leigh would love to explore an historic wreck in British waters. He has his sights set on the *HMS Victory*. No, not the one Admiral Nelson was killed on, but its predecessor, recognised as one of the greatest warships of the eighteenth century. It sunk without trace in 1744, the last Royal Navy warship to be lost at sea with 100 bronze cannon. The wreck was located in the English Channel in 2008 – ripe for forensic exploration.

Leigh is also working on his own book projects – one documenting the wrecks he's dived. In the meantime, if you want to know more, try googling him ... there's a lot out there to explore.

WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT

Can you capture the essence of fire and rescue work?

The FBU's head office currently has a cold, sparsely decorated wall that needs warming up. With the help of our members' photographic skills – not to mention the prize on offer from our sponsors College Hill Press – we're hoping that the 2016 FBU photography competition will help fill it.

We're looking for a powerful, intriguing and/or educational photograph to be hung at the union's head office demonstrating what working in the fire and rescue service is all about.

Our sponsors have kindly offered £500 worth of Jessops camera store vouchers for the FBU member who submits the

best photo and the winner will be invited to the official unveiling of the picture.

OK, so we get that the best time to take a picture might not be when you're attending a huge emergency. That's why we want members to be as creative as possible and showcase the huge range of other work the fire and rescue service undertakes and what modern firefighting entails. So if it's a dramatic picture of firefighters in action, or control operators dispatching engines, or staff on downtime, working in the community, undertaking training, returning from a shout, why not submit your photo and see if you could win.



COMPETITION TERMS

The 2016 FBU photo contest closes on 30 June 2016. By submitting an entry, each entrant agrees to the official rules (see below).

WHO MAY ENTER

Contest is open only to individuals who are current FBU members.

HOW TO ENTER

You can either enter online or by post.

Include your full name, address, membership number, contact telephone number and email address. Clearly mark your entry Photo Competition and include a short description of your picture, detailing where it was taken and the story behind the photo.

Digital images must have a minimum size of 3,000 pixels on their longest edge.

Physical prints or slides must be of sufficient quality and resolution to be printed at large size. Original negatives for prints must be available.

Email: firefighter@fbu.org.uk

Subject line: "FBU photo comp"

Post: FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston-upon-Thames KT2 7AE.

CONTEST PRIZES

The winner will have their picture hung at head office and will receive £500 of vouchers for Jessops camera shops.

Two runners up will receive £100 of vouchers each to spend at Jessops.

JUDGING

The judging panel will be made up of Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, Chris Longley from our sponsors College Hill Press, Anna Zych from the FBU communications team as well as editor and designer Alan Slingsby and photojournalist Jess Hurd.

Sponsored by

College Hill Press

OFFICIAL RULES 1. This competition is only open to FBU members whose membership fees are up to date. 2. All entries must be the original work of the entrant and must not infringe on the rights of any other party. 3. Each image entered must be the work of the individual submitting it and must not have been published elsewhere nor have won a prize in any other photographic competition. 4. It is the responsibility of each entrant to ensure that any image they submit has been taken with the permission of all people recognisable in it and that the image does not infringe the copyright of any third party or any laws. 5. Copyright in all images submitted will remain with the entrant. But each entrant grants a worldwide, irrevocable, perpetual licence to the Fire Brigades Union to feature any or all of the submitted images in any of its publications, websites and/or in any other material published by the union. 6. There is no limit on the number of entries per person. 7. Entries will be considered from fire service photographers. 8. The competition closes 30 June 2016. 9. We cannot guarantee entries can be returned. 10. The decision of the judges will be final and no correspondence will be entered into. 11. Entrants must warrant that they took photograph they submit and that they own its copyright. 12. Submission of an entry will be taken as acceptance of the rules of the competition.

STATION CAT ELECTIONS? FACTS? WHY BOTHR WITH THEM?

WHY STOP AT WHAT YOU WERE ELECTED TO DO?

The Cat can't see why Matt Wrack shouldn't take on a few more responsibilities. He could be made to supervise the parks and gardens in Norbiton, near the FBU's offices, for example. Or take over the British Olympic judo team. Or maybe curate a few exhibitions at the National Gallery.

Of course, he'd probably say that he wasn't elected to do these things, having stood for the job of general secretary of the FBU. This is a regrettable attitude, as the example of police and crime commissioners (PCCs) demonstrates. When we elected them, it was to do a specific well-defined job, just like Matt.

The government told candidates: "As a PCC, you will have a responsibility to hold the police to account on behalf of the public". They would "receive all the funding relating to policing and reducing crime". All very clear.

But wait! Anyone see any mention there of taking over the fire service? No. Not a bit of it! So if PCCs can take on a few extra duties completely out of their remit or area of knowledge, why not Matt?

Alternatively, as the PCC jobs will change completely, perhaps there should be another election? The Cat doesn't think it's democratic to vote for someone who decides to do a completely different job. It's like voting for a school governor and finding that the job is actually doing brain surgery. Or better still, we could do away with

PCCs altogether. Along with the ludicrous proposal to dump all emergency services in the same box.

NEWS MANAGEMENT FOR EXPERTS

The Cat has enrolled for a night-school course in the ancient skill of Pulling Wool Over Eyes. She's looking forward to meeting the other students who will mainly be aspiring fraudsters, active con-merchants or sitting MPs.

The high-level course will be tutored by fire service big-wigs. People who know.

The first module will feature Paul Blantern, the chief executive of Northamptonshire County Council, who will explain how to announce, as he did last month, that reducing the fire service budget by £1.3m this year (the cost of five retained or one full-time station) won't make any difference.

It's a tricky one, but Paul has phrases like "fire services will be operated in very much the way they have been run for a number of years" to assist with the wool pulling. Students will learn to avoid words like "cheaper" or "worse".

Module two concentrates on polishing up bad news, and will be tutored jointly by Ipswich chief fire officer Mark Hardingham and cabinet member Matthew Hicks.

They will explain how they got away with telling a so-called "consultation" meeting that they had good news. Mr Hicks said that, instead of losing

£900,000 this year, the local fire service will only lose £400,000. Successful wool-pulling here can give the impression that the community is actually gaining half a million!

For further information contact the Oscar Pistorius Department of the Richard Nixon Institute.

'I'VE LOCKED MYSELF IN'

How often the Cat has heard that lament over the telephone! Humdrum stuff, perhaps, but all part of the job. Except last month a middle-aged woman went into the fire station in Padua to make the announcement.

But how could she be locked in if she had arrived at the station? All was not as it seemed.

The woman in question had misplaced the key to an iron padlock securing a chastity belt she had taken to wearing to "prevent herself entering into sexual relationships".

According to Italian newspaper *Il Matino di Padova*, our Italian colleagues were very quickly on the job and within minutes she was a liberated woman.

ASLEEP AT THE WHEEL

Remember the "landmark legal victory" won by FBU official Kerry Baigent against Cambridgeshire Fire and Rescue Service (CFRS) last year? This was where an employment tribunal found that she was unfairly constructively dismissed by CFRS in an exercise which he slammed as "irrational and perverse".

Mandate for change?
Conservative Sir Clive Loader, police and crime commissioner for Leicestershire – turnout when he was elected was a massive 16.36% of the electorate



RUI VIEIRA/PA IMAGES

During the three-day tribunal, management reps changed their evidence, including "misremembering" key dates, a move which didn't exactly help their credibility in front of the many firefighters in the public gallery who had turned up to support Kerry.

Now Station Cat can present an exclusive photo (*below*), taken during the tribunal, which shows area commander Nick Foster, the senior management representative of Cambridgeshire, fast asleep during the proceedings.

According to one of the firefighters present, the whole public gallery watched as area



commander Foster slipped off into the land of nod for several minutes – awaking with a start when someone coughed loudly.

The firefighters weren't impressed. "This would be funny if it wasn't so serious," said one. "For a senior manager to fall asleep during legal proceedings where a firefighter lost their entire career is absolutely shameful."

No wonder the tribunal called the service's actions "irrational and perverse". At least they were awake to hear that.

Cambridgeshire management have often been accused of being asleep at the wheel – now the Cat has proof.



25-YEAR BADGES



Gary Hoye (l), Lambeth River Boat, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Martin Doherty (r), RDS, Troon, receives his 25-year badge from Scotland District 7 secretary Ian Bryden



Chris Leeming (l), red watch, Woodside Command Unit, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Stephen Day (l), red watch, Lambeth River Boat, receives his 25-year badge from London EC member Ian Leahair



Richard Croisdale (r), white watch, Stanningley, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Dave Williams



Tony Jarrett (l), green watch, Beckenham, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack



Richard Brown (r), Skegness, Lincolnshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Dan Taylor with blue watch colleagues looking on



Geoff Hiscocks (l), Danes Castle, Exeter, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from health and safety co-ordinator Dave Chappell with colleagues from green watch looking on



John Scott (r), red watch, Bethnal Green, London, receives his 25-year badge from London executive council member Ian Leahair



Jase Hutchingson (l), blue watch, Moortown, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Vince Nickle with colleagues Stu Parkin (l) and Nick Sharpe (r) looking on



Jason Lawley (r), blue watch, Skegness, Lincolnshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Dan Taylor



Sam Lamborn (l), green watch, control, Avon, receives her 25-year badge from brigade secretary Chris Taylor with colleagues looking on



Richard Lightowler (centre l), Ops Resource Pool, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser John Iveson with (l-r) Idle red watch colleagues Phil Coleman, Dave Lofthouse and Nas Hussain looking on



Alan Renshaw (r), green watch, High Handenhold, Durham and Darlington, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Steven Hagar



Jeff Tombs (l), RDS, Porthcawl, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from CM Bevan with colleagues looking on



Steve Jones (l), Mid and West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from region 8 ONC rep Mick Higgins



Paul Landlady (r), blue watch, Kensington, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from John Maddox (l) accompanied by station members in Leeds (on John's stag night)



Si Swann (r), white watch, city centre, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Mark Rowe during a rally at Westminster, accompanied by Tommy Hughes and Les Skarratts



Brian Hurst (r), white watch, Kensington, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Mark Rowe during a rally at Westminster, accompanied by Paul Dognam and Neil Swinnerton



Richie Plunkett (l), white watch, Southport, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from Peter Grimley, with fellow watch members looking on



Sid Rankin (r) blue watch, Old Swan, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Toby Richardson



Nick Sharpe (l), blue watch, Moortown, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Vince Nickle with colleagues Stu Parkin (l) and Jase Hutchingson (r) looking on



Dave Daake (r), white watch, Old Swan, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Toby Richardson, accompanied by Mark Rowe (l) and Marvin Jackson



Dave Shanahan (r), Southport, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary Les Skarratts



Eddie Molloy (l), Whiston, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Brian Hurst during a rally at Westminster



Andrew Parry (r), Llandrindod Wells, Mid and West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from RDS regional rep Lyndon Howells



Paul Hissey (r), blue watch, Hillingdon, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Beltran Perez



Anthony Garner (l), green watch, Ilford, receives his 25-year badge from London executive council member Ian Leahair



Pete McCoy (l), white watch, Newcastle Central, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from divisional secretary Brian Waugh



Clive Didcock (l), Abingdon, Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Duncan Smith



Vince Nickle (l), blue watch, Moortown, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Stu Parkin, with colleagues Nick Sharpe (l) and Jase Hutchingson (r) looking on



Steve Angel (R), Bath RDS, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from South West regional chair Kevin Herniman with his colleagues looking on



Stu Parkin (l), blue watch, Moortown, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Vince Nickle, with colleagues Nick Sharpe (l) and Jase Hutchingson (r) looking on

25-YEAR BADGES



Brian Coulburn (r), RDS Wesham, (with 100% FBU membership), Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Harman



Geoff Hogarth (r), RDS Wesham, (with 100% FBU membership), Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Harman



Graham Chedd (r), RDS Wesham, (with 100% FBU membership), Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Harman



Grant Breed (l), branch rep, Central Fire Station, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from East Midlands EC member Dave Limer (since retired).



Steve Carrington (l), red watch, Staveley, Derbyshire, receives his 25-year badge from Mick Newman



Andy Harding (l), Chelmsford, receives his 25-year badge from Essex brigade chair Gary Critch along with blue watch colleagues



Steve Webb (r), red watch, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from station rep Kyle Webster with colleagues looking on



Craig Mallinson (r), Illingworth, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Simon Moore



John Summers (l), white watch, Erith, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Darrell George



Bob Hackett (l), Perry Barr, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from borough rep Billy Holland



Dave Holland (r), Hereford and Worcester officer branch secretary, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Gould



Graham Cooper (l), blue watch, Erith, London receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Darrell George



Andy Ord (l), Carlisle West, Cumbria, receives his 25-year badge from brigade health and safety rep Stu Forrester



Andy Moffat (r), green watch, Swansea West, receives his 25-year badge from brigade health and safety rep Richie Vaughan-Williams



Mike Palmer (r), blue watch, Swansea West, receives his 25-year badge from brigade health and safety rep Richie Vaughan-Williams



Barry Dumbreck (r), Renfrew, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from District 6 chair Alan Johnston



Jim Davidson (r), RDS, Maybole, South Ayrshire, receives his 25-year badge from Scotland District 7 secretary Ian Bryden



Iain Goodlet (l), District 6, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from officer member Jim Cavanagh



Gary Coupar (l), Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Steve Wright



Gordon Shaw (l), Calton, Scotland District 6, receives his 25-year badge from officer member Jim Cavanagh with colleagues looking on



Chris Robinson (l), blue watch, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from station rep Kyle Webster



Tyne and Wear firefighters (l-r) **Mick Mullarkey, Dave Summers, AJ Smith, Adrian Jackson, Bruce Mahan, Kev Simpson, Bryan Foster and Alfie Moon**, receive their 25-year badges from brigade chair Brian Harris



Dave Brown (r), green watch, Swalwell, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Brian Harris



Peter Hamilton (r), green watch, Swalwell Fire Station, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Brian Harris



Tony Allen (r), green watch, Swalwell, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Brian Harris



Dave Gill (l) and **Graeme Hurst** (r), Tyne and Wear, receive their 25-year badges from brigade secretary Russ King



Peter Boddy (l), Ealing, London, receives his 25-year badge from NW command secretary Dave Shek, with watch colleagues looking on



Joe Shepherd (l), Workington, Cumbria, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dave Burn



John Gray (l), Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Brian Harris



Jason Evans (r), officers' branch, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Ian Buckley



Iain White (l), Lesmahagow, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from District 6 secretary Phil McDonald

Please send digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE. Please include full details for every picture – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where and when it was taken.

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your brigade organiser of any change of address and head office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0808 100 6061

England, Wales and N Ireland

0800 089 1331

Scotland

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.

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