

Firefighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union



POLITICAL FUND BALLOT 2024

VOTE YES

Make sure your ballot is in the post
to arrive by 29 April

Unfinished business

Our long fight to defend
firefighters' pensions
will continue

See p8

HANDS OFF OUR PENSIONS

April/May 2024



www.fbu.org.uk

GIVING FIREFIGHTERS
A VOICE IN POLITICS

See p14

PFAS: PRESSING NEED
FOR REGULATION

See p16

DON'T USE ANTI-STRIKE LAW
FBU URGES EMPLOYERS

See p4

POLITICAL BALLOT

As this magazine lands on doorsteps across the UK, FBU members have just a few more days to vote in the 2024 political fund ballot. Everything that happens in the fire and rescue service – cuts, pay, pensions, health and safety – is political in one way or another. We need a political fund if we want to campaign effectively on these issues, but the law dictates that we must hold a postal ballot every 10 years.

If you have not already, please find your ballot paper, vote Yes, and get it in the post.

PENSIONS

Over the past two decades, we have campaigned, taken strike action and pursued a series of landmark legal cases to defend pensions in the fire and rescue service and across the public sector. In this edition, we bring you the story of that work.

In the most significant case, the FBU victory won £19 billion in improved benefits for firefighters and other public sector workers.

There are two immediate hooks for reporting on this now. First, we have reason to hope that injury to feelings payments will soon be making their way to

members who were part of the relevant claim. Second, we expect to hear very soon whether the Court of Appeal will reverse the government's attempts to make pensions scheme members pay some of the costs of discrimination inherent in the mishandling of the 2015 pensions changes. A lot is at stake. If our action is successful, millions of workers across the public sector will benefit.

We will keep you updated on the outcome, and in time we hope to produce more materials on pensions. The fight goes on.

ANTI-STRIKE LAWS

The Minimum Service Levels Act gives employers the ability to try and force workers to attend work on a strike day. The Westminster government hopes that by passing this law, it can effectively ban strike action in the fire and rescue service.

As we report on page 4, it is discovering that things are not that simple. Governments in Scotland and Wales have already said they will not implement the legislation, and the FBU is running a campaign to get employers

in England to commit to do the same.

MATERNITY PAY

Fight for 52, our campaign for 52 weeks' full-pay maternity leave for women in the fire and rescue service, is continuing to achieve significant results across the UK. Services including the West Midlands, Manchester, Kent, Devon and Somerset, and Royal Berkshire, have all moved towards implementing the demand. These are major inroads, but we will not stop our campaign until it has become a UK-wide policy, negotiated through the NJC.

We hope to bring you a full update in the next issue of this magazine.

FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL DAY

On 4 May, we mark Firefighters' Memorial Day. FBU representatives will attend memorial ceremonies across the UK to commemorate all those who have lost their lives in the line of duty. At 12 noon, we will hold a minute's silence outside stations and at other places of work.

Please join if you can.



Matt Wrack

Make sure your ballot is in the post on time

Did you know ...?



Back in the day of horse-drawn fire pumps, Dalmatians were US firefighters' dog of choice for their ability to keep horses calm near fires and their stamina ...



This year's FBU women's school



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Firefighter

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NEWS

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Government response to report 'too little; too late' says FBU

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MINIMUM SERVICE LEVELS ACT

FBU calls on employers not to implement anti-strike laws

Fire employers are being urged by the FBU to guarantee that they will not implement the Westminster government's latest anti-union laws.

The Minimum Service Levels Act became law in July 2023. Regulations covering the fire and rescue service in England were passed by the House of Lords in March this year.

The new legislation means that workers in fire and rescue, health, education, border security, nuclear decommissioning and rail could be forced to attend work even if they have voted democratically to strike.

In England, 73% of fire engines will be expected to be on the run on a strike day, with control rooms expected to operate as normal. Any employee not

obeying a "work notice" to come to work could be dismissed.

But, crucially, it will be up to individual employers to decide whether to issue a work notice. Scottish first minister Humza Yousaf declared in April 2023 that the Scottish government would "never issue or enforce a single work notice".

In March this year the Wales minister for social partnership Hannah Blythyn wrote to Westminster home secretary James Cleverly to declare that the Welsh government would "not be contributing to a fundamentally flawed, damaging and counterproductive" piece of legislation. As a result, the Act currently only applies to the fire service in England.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack wrote to all fire service employers in England on 12 March, urging them to publicly commit to not issuing work notices against named individuals.

In the letter, Wrack argued the legislation was "an assault on the basic rights and freedoms" of firefighters, and that "any attempt to implement the new law will irreparably damage industrial relations".

He also said that trying to implement work notices could "create serious hazards to public safety, with employers attempting to keep 73% of appliances on the run without a minimum level of staff".

The letter was sent to dozens of fire authority chairs, police, fire and crime commissioners (PFCCs) and mayors. The overwhelming majority have yet to respond.

Commenting on the letter, Wrack said: "The FBU calls on all employers to make it clear that they will refuse to issue work notices, rendering the new laws inoperable in their local fire and rescue service.

"They should agree not to dismiss or take any disciplinary action against any employee for taking part in strike action."

The FBU will launch the next phase of its campaign on the anti-union laws in the coming weeks, with members asked to lobby fire service employers directly.

Labour has promised to repeal the law within 100 days of winning an election.



FBU general secretary Matt Wrack (white shirt) with other union leaders and delegates at a special Trades Union Congress in London last December to discuss unions' response to the Act

MARK THOMAS



Firefighters rescue residents from the fire

Union calls for action after 10 die in fire linked to cladding

The FBU has called for “action and justice” after 10 people died in a fire in a 14-storey residential block in Valencia, Spain, in February. The blaze spread rapidly to an adjoining building, destroying all apartments. It was the deadliest fire in the city in modern history. Seven firefighters were among the 15 people injured.

Experts agree that the buildings were covered with highly flammable cladding, which, combined with high winds, led to the blocks being engulfed within 30 minutes. Materials used in the cladding are being investigated, with the focus on thermoplastics.

The complex was built in the 2000s by

a now bankrupt private developer, Fbex, and clad in aluminium composite panels.

Firefighters rescued residents using cranes, but were unable to reach higher than the 12th floor due to the accelerated spread of the fire.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, sent a message of solidarity to all those affected by the tragedy. “Early indications are that, as happened during the Grenfell tower tragedy, the Valencia fire spread quickly because of flammable cladding, and lives have been lost as a result.

“Once again, we see the profits of developers being prioritised over human life,” he said.

AVON

FBU wins another round in cuts fight

Councillors have pushed back on plans for cuts in Avon Fire and Rescue Service following a successful campaign by firefighters.

Avon fire authority voted to delay cutting crews on fire engines from five to four firefighters at a meeting in March.

The decision came after fire service managers were sent back to the drawing board following the committee’s decision

to reject the original plan to slash 40 firefighter posts, following warnings from the FBU that the proposals were a threat to public safety.

The plans are deferred for a year to allow the service time to explore other ways of balancing the budget and lobby the government for more funding.

“Councillors have made the right call by refusing to undermine public safety at the

expense of balancing the books,” said Dave Roberts, FBU South West regional secretary.

“Cutting crewing levels and removing firefighters from the frontline would be a race to the bottom that would put lives on the line.

“The fire authority and fire service now need to focus efforts on sourcing additional funding from the government to ensure the safety of the public that we serve.”

Sounding off



Learning lessons

Gary Ironmonger, who was a miner at Cortonwood in South Yorkshire, reflects on his experiences of the 1984-5 miners’ strike

On Sunday 4 March 1984, I attended a packed Cortonwood National Union of Mineworkers meeting to discuss the announcement of the closure of our pit. Along with 400 others, I voted to strike.

The Tory government had learnt lessons from their defeats by striking miners in 1972 and 1974. The most significant preparations were changes enabling the police to be more aggressive, which led to the police riot at Orgreave. Seventy-one miners were falsely charged with riot and 15 had to endure a 58-day trial before it was stopped due to the unreliability of the police evidence.

The Orgreave Truth and Justice Campaign is still fighting for an inquiry to expose this injustice.

Localised solidarity with rail workers and dockers refusing to move coal was fantastic, but we never saw a commitment to the strike from either the TUC or the Labour party. They much preferred trying to be mediators. Consequently, several occasions where solidarity action could have been escalated were lost.

This not only contributed to the strike’s defeat but also further defeats for other workers in following years, most notably the end of the dock labour scheme in 1989.

We are now seeing an increase in strike action across the UK and it is important for workers to learn the lessons from 1984-85. One of the biggest of these is to recognise that coordinated industrial action is more effective and strikes should be linked as far as possible.

WALES

Services in turmoil as culture reviews ordered

All fire services in Wales are under review following reports of widespread discrimination and harassment, and serious failings by fire service leaders.

An independent culture review of South Wales Fire and Rescue Service published this January found evidence that misconduct, sexual harassment and abuse had been tolerated by management.

Chief fire officer Huw Jakeway stepped down in response, and the Welsh government appointed four external commissioners to oversee the service.

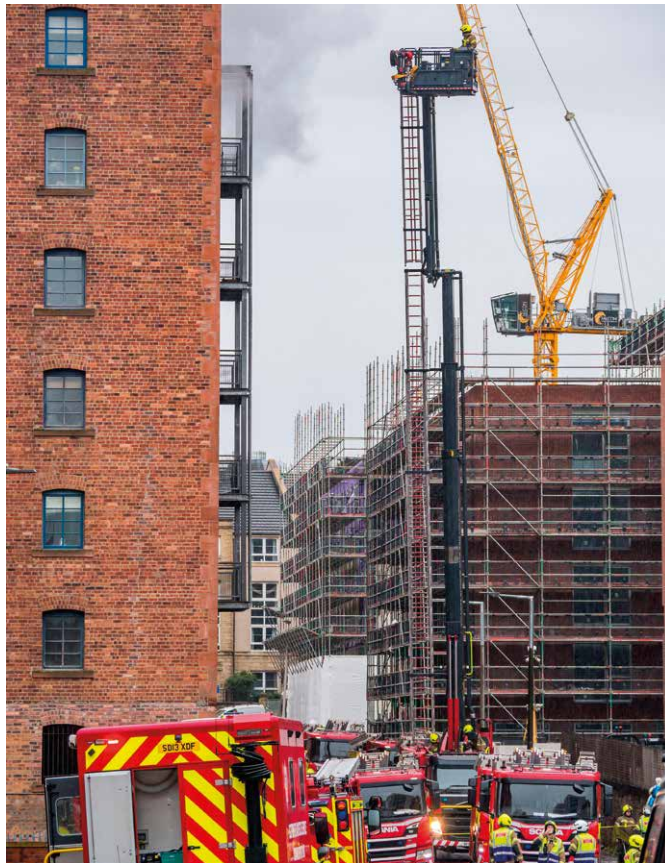
One of the first actions of the unelected commissioners was to appoint an interim chief fire officer to lead the implementation of the 82 recommendations in the report.

The appointee, Stuart Millington, was subsequently revealed to be facing allegations of bullying in North Wales Fire and Rescue Service.

The South Wales FBU brigade committee passed a vote of no confidence in the appointment, describing it as having “significantly eroded public trust” and calling for the commissioners to review the decision.

The Senedd has now announced that both North Wales Fire and Rescue Service and Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service will undergo culture reviews.

SCOTLAND



SALLY ANDERSON/ALAMY

Firefighters raise safety concerns after flat fire

Firefighters in Scotland have raised safety concerns over cuts to specialist appliances for fighting high-rise fires following a blaze in a block of flats in March.

Some 70 firefighters and 12 appliances from across Scotland, including specialist height appliances, were called to the incident in Edinburgh.

Two firefighters suffered minor injuries and more than 100 residents were evacuated.

The building has unsafe cladding, but remediation works had not begun when fire broke out.

Scotland Fire and Rescue Service reduced its appliances with high reach capability from 25 to 16 last year. The dedicated height appliance at Crewe Toll fire station, minutes away from the incident, was one to be cut.

Only two of 105 buildings

in Scotland identified as having lethal cladding have been made safe.

FBU Scotland regional secretary John McKenzie said: “This fire drives home the two-fold danger of cutting frontline specialist fire appliances and the shocking complacency from the Scottish government in tackling the building safety crisis.

“The recent cuts mean that, if the available appliances are tied up at an incident, other areas of the country are left without essential fire cover. It is clear that some lessons have still not been learnt from the Grenfell tragedy.

“We need the resources available to be able to protect the public and swifter action from the Scottish government to make buildings safe.”

In brief

Fire engine for Palestine

FBU Scotland members have refitted a surplus fire engine to donate to Palestinian firefighters. The FBU has a long history of international solidarity work and continues to call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza. This will be the third appliance donated since 2011 and will be delivered later this year.

Trans and non-binary support group

The FBU LGBT+ committee has launched a support group for trans and non-binary firefighters and fire control staff. The initiative was launched on 31 March to mark Trans Visibility Day. Email fbu_lgbt@outlook.com to join and for more information.

Firefighters memorial day

4 MAY

Please join the minute's silence at midday

Fight for 52

The Fight for 52 campaign has achieved multiple victories in the fight for fair maternity pay. Since West Midlands FRS became the first service to approve 52 weeks full pay, Manchester, Kent, Devon and Somerset and Royal Berkshire FRSs have followed suit. London Fire Brigade has increased its offer to 39 weeks.

FBU research paper among most downloaded

A research paper on firefighter cancer, commissioned by the FBU and carried out by the University of Central Lancashire, has been named one of the top 100 most downloaded cancer research papers of 2023 by the world-leading journal *Scientific Reports*.



The Home Office published high rise evacuation guidelines for fire and rescue services in February, four years after the Grenfell Tower inquiry recommended that the Westminster government produce guidance.

This was the only recommendation aimed at central government from the inquiry's phase 1 report, issued in October 2019.

The FBU has written to home secretary James Cleverly, describing the guidance as “too little too late”.

Each of the nine guidelines summarise common sense or self-evident truisms about evacuation, all of which are already well known to firefighters.

This includes outlining that two staircases improve evacuation times; that vulnerable residents take longer to evacuate by themselves; and that evacuations are quicker with alert systems and door knocking.

The guidance is based on live tests of an evacuation conducted by the London



News Focus

High-rise evacuation response: too little, too late

Fire Brigade and the National Fire Chiefs' Council.

This simulation was conducted over 10 floors of a tower block, with fewer than 80 volunteer “residents” and no smoke.

There were almost 300 residents in the 23-storey Grenfell Tower when the fire started at night. After 25 minutes, there were still almost 200 people in the building with only 30 firefighters on scene.

An hour after the fire began, when the stairwell was smoke-logged, 130 residents were still in the building.

The tests and guidelines

do not address worst case scenarios, such as the Grenfell Tower fire, where the whole building failed, with only a single narrow stairwell, no alert system, no data on vulnerable residents, no evacuation lift, and failed fire doors.

Even with less than half the number of floors of the Grenfell Tower, in the

daytime and with far fewer evacuees – all of whom were awake and knew what was happening – it took almost 29 minutes to fully evacuate.

In the letter to the Home Office, the FBU describes the guidelines as a “tick box exercise” providing little or no help to firefighters and control staff.

The government has failed to explain to incident commanders how to evacuate, and this publication offers no reassurance for residents.

Commenting on these failures, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: “It may only be a matter of time before we face another tragedy, unless there is a dramatic policy shift. Ministers must wake up and listen to the voices of firefighters and residents.”

'It may only be a matter of time before we face another tragedy, unless there is a dramatic policy shift'

October 2013:
a mass rally in London

OUR FIGHT FOR DECENT PENSIONS

FBU general secretary **Matt Wrack** looks back at the history of the FBU's recent campaigns on firefighters' pensions



Thousands of FBU members will soon start to receive injury to feelings payments as part of the FBU's 2019 legal victory over pensions.

These payments (£3,750 for the majority) are a high profile win because they are so tangible. But they are a tiny fraction of the story.

For 20 years, the FBU has fought to defend your pension.

The right to retire on a liveable pension is one of the most important rights workers have. Without it, we are forced to rely on family or to face the final years of our lives in poverty.

The job of a firefighter is physically and mentally stressful. It requires a high degree of fitness. Occupational pensions in the fire and rescue service were introduced in 1948, with the government recognising them as "a generous scheme because of the nature of the job".

In recent decades, firefighter pensions have come under attack by governments of all stripes. Most of these have been described as "modernisation", but they are about making us work longer, pay more and get less when we retire.

PENSION AT 55

Until 2006, firefighters' normal pensionable age was 55. Some firefighters were able to retire earlier under the "rule of 75", which enabled firefighters over the age of 50 to access at least some of their pension if their age and their years of service added up to 75.

But in 2005, the New Labour government proposed to raise the normal retirement age to 60. The new scheme would also introduce much more stringent criteria for achieving an ill-health pension.

The FBU opposed these changes and took steps towards a nationwide strike in early 2006. This formed part of a wave of industrial action ballots on pensions, with 1.5 million public sector workers moving towards industrial action.

After negotiations, ministers agreed to "ringfence" pensions, meaning that those already in the scheme would not have their retirement age altered. The government also backed plans to give retained firefighters access to a pension, and backed away from excluding certain additional allowances from pensionable pay. For the first time, cohabiting partners would not need to be married to a firefighter to access their pension in the event of their death.

The FBU called two special conferences to debate our next move. After consultation with members, the second special conference in March 2006 voted not to continue with a strike ballot, although this did not mean any

>>

>> agreement with the changes.

The government made substantial concessions because of the threat of strike action, but the FBU continued to oppose the changes. We were left with a two-tier pension system, with those joining the service after 1 April 2006 in the New Firefighter Pension Scheme (known as the 2006 scheme or NFPS), and those already in post retaining the old scheme (known as the 1992 scheme).

The Conservatives returned to power in coalition with the Liberal Democrats in 2010. Their time in office has been a disaster for the fire and rescue service, with one in every five firefighter jobs lost and 30% of central government funding to the fire and rescue service cut.

Austerity was a ruthless attempt to make workers pay for the banking crisis, and our pensions became a target. Following a review led by Lord Hutton, the coalition government moved forward with a massive attack on all public sector pensions: increasing employee contributions, shifting to the less generous consumer price index (CPI) measure of inflation, moving from final salary to career average, and making firefighters work until 60 regardless of when they joined the service.

2011 witnessed some of the biggest strikes in recent UK history. The largest was on 30 November, when a total of 29 unions took action. Two million people struck, making it one of the biggest single days of strike action since the general strike of 1926.

DIFFERENT TIMETABLE

The FBU vocally supported other unions, but our strikes took place on a different timetable. We hired actuaries (specialist pensions analysts) to challenge the government's assumptions about the cost of our pensions, which meant that the parameters of our dispute had not yet been set in 2011. As a result of this, the government agreed to halve increases to employee contributions for firefighters.

But our turn would soon come. In September 2012, the government included the fire and rescue service in its Public Service Pensions Bill. Under this legislation, the retirement age would move to 60 and employee contributions would rise (to 10.4% for those on the 2006 scheme, and 14.4% for those on the 1992 scheme).

Throughout the dispute, we raised concerns that many firefighters would no longer be capable of doing the job in their late 50s. Without sufficient internal redeployment opportunities, the FBU feared employers would use capability assessments to dismiss them;

the risk of "No job, no pension". Many of our concerns were backed up by the independent Williams Report, which was commissioned by the government following pressure from the FBU and published in January 2013. The raising of the pensions age would particularly hit women firefighters, who have to contend with the effects of the menopause on their health.

The FBU began preparing internally for strike action as soon as it became clear that an attack on pensions was coming. The Public Sector Pensions Act became law in spring 2013, and we moved to ballot members in England, Wales and Scotland over the summer. They voted 4-1 to strike, an overwhelming mandate for action.

DEVOLUTION

Devolution made the dispute more complex.

In Northern Ireland, strikes were averted when the Stormont government agreed to keep the pension age at 55, following a major campaigning effort by the FBU.

The Scottish government came forward with proposals that would allow firefighters to retire at 55 with a much lower reduction in their pension, and issued a guarantee that they would not be sacked for failing fitness tests. This caused considerable debate among FBU members in Scotland, with 55% voting to suspend industrial action.

Between 2013 and 2015, the FBU undertook the longest period of strike action in our history.

Welsh firefighters joined for most but not all of this action, as the Welsh government consulted on its own proposals to soften the reductions to pensions for firefighters who retired at 55.

The longest of the strikes lasted four days, from 31 October to 4 November 2014. But many of the stoppages happened in short bursts of two hours. This was to maximise impact on fire

We hired specialist pensions analysts to challenge the government's assumptions about the cost of our pensions



employers, who had to pay for agency strikebreakers to provide cover, while minimising the impact on strikers' pay. We also organised a demonstration in London on 16 October 2013. Firefighters travelled to lobby MPs at Westminster repeatedly.

Industrial and political pressure delivered results. On 15 December 2014, the Labour Party pushed for a vote on firefighters' pensions, with shadow minister Hilary Benn taking apart the government's case. The vote was lost, but the then fire minister Penny Mordaunt promised parliament that firefighters unable to maintain operational fitness over the age of 55 would either be redeployed or offered an unreduced pension.

FIREFIGHTERS FURIOUS

Firefighters were furious at being ignored and belittled by Tory ministers, and rightly so. On 25 February 2015, during a 24-hour strike, thousands of firefighters picketed parliament itself. Some wore Penny Mordaunt masks with a Pinocchio nose.

The new scheme was imposed by

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Firefighters at a demonstration about pension cuts in 2015





Striking firefighters
on a London picket line
in October 2013

>> Westminster on 1 April 2015. As a result of our action, we achieved a major improvement in the actuarial reduction suffered by firefighters if they retire at 55: from 47.1% to 21.8% in England and 9% in Wales and Scotland. We also made progress for firefighters incapable of working beyond 55. In Northern Ireland, firefighters still retire at 55.

Current firefighters pension scheme 2025 active early retirement factors are 20% at age 55, 16.6% at 56, 12.9% at 57, 8.9% at 58 and 4.6% at 59.

The FBU continues to make the case that a retirement age of 60 is not fit for purpose and that it potentially discriminates against women. This an ongoing fight for the union which is continually raised with the appropriate bodies.

RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS

Retained firefighters are some of the biggest beneficiaries of our campaigning on pensions.

As a result of pressure from the FBU, the Westminster government accepted that retained firefighters should have access to a workplace pension in 2006.

At the same time, an FBU legal challenge was successful in using the Part Time Workers Regulations (an EU directive) to argue that they should have full access to fire service pension schemes. This was a huge victory for retained firefighters and had implications for part time workers across the economy.

The FBU fight for retained firefighters' pensions continues with the second options exercise and the retained pension aggregation fight.

Control staff have always been in the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) which is less generous. The FBU rejected changes to the LGPS in 2012, but other unions (which have more of a

By standing together, striking together, and using the courts, we have preserved a lot and made some important advances

say in local government schemes) voted to accept them. The FBU has always argued for control staff to be included in fire service pension schemes. It is wrong that control staff are separated from their station-based colleagues, and it makes little sense for a workforce to have their pay and pensions split over different systems of negotiation. The FBU continues to fight for the right of control members to be included in a fire service pension scheme.

The FBU has used every tool at its disposal to fight for firefighters' pensions. Every year, we take hundreds of individual cases through the internal dispute resolution process, to the Pensions Ombudsman and through individual and collective legal challenges.

LEGAL ACTION

Legal action has won retained firefighters access to pensions and has given firefighters with permanent disabilities who retired through ill-health protection from having their ill-health pensions removed. We have used the courts to insist that additional allowances and day crewing payments are pensionable.

In 2018, the FBU challenged the

way the government had implemented the 2015 pension scheme changes.

Because of pressure from the FBU and our allies, ministers decided to taper the introduction of the scheme over seven years in a way that amounted to discrimination based on age. We took them to court arguing this and after long legal battles, we won, meaning that firefighters got a full seven years back in the old scheme. This was a win not just for our own members, but for workers across the public sector. It is estimated that the total cost of our success is £19 billion. Millions of workers have benefited from this.

HIGH COURT

Outrageously, the government responded by making pension scheme members in the 2015 scheme foot the bill for this win. We have challenged this and expect a decision from the High Court in the coming weeks.

FBU members should rightly be proud of our achievements in defending pensions in the fire and rescue service.

The past two decades have seen attack after attack on workers and their pay and conditions. Our pensions have not been immune. But by standing together, striking together, and using the courts, we have preserved a lot and made some important advances.

Our battle on pensions is unfinished business: the fight continues.



North East firefighters
at a pensions rally
in July 2014

Mr Lewis
Why have you ignored the
Evidence of your own report?
60 is too old for operational
Firefighters, **FACT!**

The
estimated total benefit
so far to members of the FBU,
and to members of other public
sector trade unions, of the
union's success in fighting
for pensions justice is
£19 BILLION

Fire Fighters
to the **RESCUE**
But please be patient,
I'm **59** you know!

Firefighters at a
London rally
in October 2013

MARK THOMAS

FIGHTING FOR YOUR VOICE IN POLITICS

National officer **Riccardo La Torre** sets out what the FBU is doing to fight for firefighters via its Labour link

The FBU is affiliated to the Labour Party in England and Wales. As an affiliate, we have an opportunity to argue and campaign for policies within the democratic channels of the party. When a policy is passed at our conference or executive council, we fight to make it the policy of the next government.

Like the 11 affiliated trade unions, the FBU uses the structures of the Trade Union Liaison Organisation (TULO) to do this. Matt Wrack, our general secretary, sits on a contact group with 10 other trade union leaders and can advise and criticise Keir Starmer and the rest of the Labour leadership directly.

The FBU has a longstanding tradition of critically engaging in Labour. We forcefully make the case for resources for the fire and rescue service and public services, for firefighter pay, for green investment funds, and on other issues such as an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and the right to strike.

ANTI-UNION LAWS

The minimum service levels legislation for the fire and rescue service will severely affect the ability of firefighters in England to take effective, lawful strike action, even after a majority vote for it.

The FBU has opposed these pernicious laws from the very start. We were key to ensuring that the TUC adopted a strategy which included non-compliance with the new laws, and we helped to ensure that the whole trade union movement would refuse to tell their members to cross picket lines.

Ultimately, we need these laws to be scrapped and, thanks to the work of the FBU and other Labour-affiliated unions, this should now happen. Party leader Keir Starmer has pledged that Labour will repeal both the 2023 Minimum Service Levels Act and the 2016 Trade Union Act within 100 days of taking office.

But, as we have seen before under Keir Starmer's leadership, a pledge is not a victory. We will not rest until these laws are scrapped, and we will use our role as an affiliated union to hold Labour's feet to the fire on this commitment.

FIREFIGHTERS' MANIFESTO

The FBU launched the Firefighters' Manifesto in November last year at our national rally at Westminster. Since then, members across the UK have engaged in campaigning and lobbying activity to support the manifesto.



We are using the manifesto to shape our lobbying of Labour ahead of the next election, including:

- Fighting for central government funding to deliver jobs, fair pay and decent pensions for firefighters, control staff and other fire service employees
- Ending fragmentation through a new statutory advisory body to develop and advise on all areas of fire and fire safety policy
- Rebuilding resilience, including the unique role the fire and rescue service can play in tackling extreme weather events
- The case for improved workers' rights and the repeal of anti-union laws through the New Deal for Working People

NEW DEAL FOR WORKING PEOPLE

Trade unions including the FBU have been pivotal in getting Labour to adopt the New Deal for Working People. This is a series of measures that will improve the lot of workers in the UK. Among other things, it includes:

- Repealing anti-union legislation, including the Trade Union Act 2016 and Minimum Service Levels Act 2023, and introducing electronic balloting
- Defending and expanding collective bargaining
- Sick pay, parental leave and protection from unfair dismissal from day one
- Banning zero hour contracts, and ensuring workers get reasonable notice of any change in shifts or working time
- Better statutory parental leave, bereavement leave, and protections for pregnant women
- Establishing and properly funding a single enforcement body to enforce workers' rights
- Closing gender, ethnicity and disability pay gaps.

These proposals are a direct result of unions, including the FBU, fighting for them inside Labour. FBU general secretary Matt Wrack sat on the taskforce that established the original proposals.

At Labour's national policy forum (NPF) in July 2023, our delegates argued against backsliding on these proposals. Our resolution at Labour Party conference on the New Deal passed unanimously in 2023.

The FBU does not think these pledges go far enough, but we recognise that they are an important start in unshackling the unions and shifting the balance of power at work towards workers.

In the coming months, the FBU will



FBU members at a national rally in London last November to launch The Firefighters' Manifesto which sets out a vision for a modern, resilient, joined-up service with the resources it needs and a seat at the table for firefighters

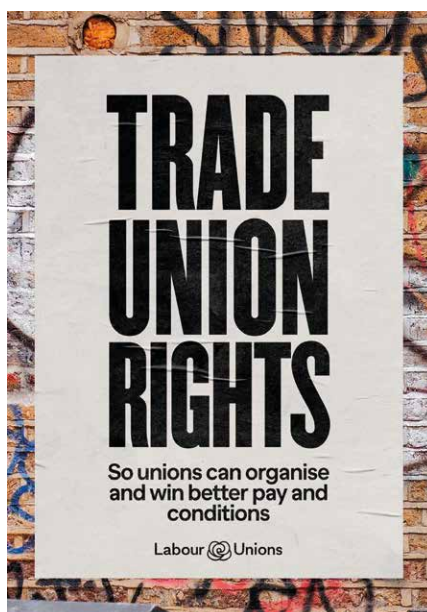


Illustration from Labour's New Deal for Working People

work to ensure that members are kept up to date, and we will be fighting hard for the priorities of firefighters to be included in the Labour Party's general election manifesto.

In a few months, we will have the opportunity to kick the Tories out of power after 14 years of cuts and attacks. If that happens, the FBU will be at the forefront of fighting for Labour to deliver for firefighters.

Workers cannot rely solely on politicians to ride in and save us from attacks on our pay, conditions and rights. We have to organise ourselves in our workplace to truly harness our collective strength.

But firefighters cannot ignore the undeniable influence government has on every aspect of our working lives.

It is a discussion we must be part of, even if sometimes it means forcing our way in.

Pressing need for regulation

At even very low levels, chemicals of the PFAS group pose a serious threat that the UK government is slow to react to.

Professor Andrew Watterson, public health researcher, University of Stirling, sets out the issues

Firefighters have become increasingly familiar with and in contact with PFAS. Poly and perfluoroalkyl (including PFOS/PFOA) substances all fall under the PFAS umbrella term. They are a large group of at least 9,000 synthetic chemicals first identified in the 1930s and are present in our water, air, fish, soil, household materials and in our blood!

They can be inhaled, ingested or absorbed through the skin and will accumulate in the human body over time.

They have been widely used in foams, fridges, electrical and semiconductor manufacture, cleaning agents, petrochemicals, polymers, carpets, textiles, furniture, even crumb rubber. The 1960s saw PFAS firefighting foams developed. As “old” PFAS are phased out or banned, new ones have been introduced. Legacy PFAS will remain in our environment for a very long time.

LIVER DAMAGE

PFAS can affect cholesterol levels and may increase risks of higher blood pressure, pre-eclampsia in pregnant women, kidney cancer, testicular and breast cancer, male fertility problems, liver damage and interfere with children’s antibodies.

US research in 2020 linked PFAS to four of the top eight cancers found more commonly in firefighters including testicular cancer, non-Hodgkin’s lymphoma and prostate cancer.

There appears to be no safe level of exposure for PFAS and a few parts per

trillion may have adverse effects.

Dupont contaminated a US town decades ago with unregulated PFAS chemicals to make Teflon, then suppressed early PFAS health study findings. The company profited at the cost of the lives and health of their employees and local community.

Effective UK regulation and removal, if possible, of these chemicals is therefore vital but remains problematic, but US agencies have done more.

VICIOUS CIRCLE

PFAS manufacture and use provides a classic example firstly of industry hazard data suppression and secondly the still dominant “vicious circle” risk approach of regulators and governments who “don’t look, don’t find” and then tell workers and consumers there is no problem.

Upstream action is still relatively limited in preventing large groups of chemicals entering work and wider environments.

Governments have been very slow to remove such hazardous substances, calling for endless studies, filling of all data gaps and factoring in socio-economic requirements. That is why we only have so-called “acceptable” standards that satisfy governments and industry on carcinogens and not ‘safe standards’ that best protect workers and the public.

Addressing the hazards of chemical groups to trigger regulation rather than the risks is needed, not limping along trying to control the risks for each individual chemical. If chemicals are approved, we then need to set tough exposure





Firefighters face quadruple PFAS exposure risks – firefighting foam, in fires, fire sites and fire stations and both in and on their PPE

standards, properly monitored with effective enforcement.

Firefighters know all about health and safety regulatory failures and face additional PFAS problems due to those failures.

The UK registration, evaluation, authorisation and restriction of chemicals (REACH) programme has still not addressed the threats PFAS continue to pose, despite the chemicals being on the UK Government REACH list for 2021 and recognised as substances of very high concern.

In 2024, finally, the first priority listed by the UK Government for 2022-24 UK REACH programme was PFAS in firefighting foams along with an assessment of PFAS known likely releases from consumer articles. The problem, however, is that the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) which has the lead role on UK REACH and the Environment Agency are both underfunded, understaffed and increasingly ineffective.

QUADRUPLE JEOPARDY

Double, treble and quadruple jeopardy may occur for some people when assessing chemical risks and finding the best means to reduce cumulative exposures. Workplace, home, environmental, food and water exposures all need to be assessed because PFAS exist in almost all these settings.

Using the “exposome” (total external environmental exposures, associated biologic responses and internal processes) is therefore important.

Even though PFAS levels may be very low, they could still be harmful. This is why the approach to monitoring firefighter exposures and health already advocated by the FBU is so important. We should also be asking questions about past regulatory failures to adequately assess firefighting foam hazards over six decades of use.

Firefighters have quadruple PFAS exposures with firefighting foam, in fires, fire sites and fire stations and PFAS both in and on their own PPE.

Downstream additional controls therefore have to be applied to reduce exposures with the best systems of work available, training, information, and the provision of ample, suitable and well tested PPE and work clothing properly stored, washed, cleaned and replaced. The FBU is already addressing these matters itself to protect members because rightly it does not assume governments or employers can be relied upon to do so based on their past records.

■ Shortly before we went to press, the French National Assembly passed a law strengthening regulations on PFAS. The UK remains a long way behind.



The FBU launched its first national disability and neurodiversity forum at the Leeds Marriott hotel on 20 March

Neurodiverse members are organising

Employers have a duty to ensure that workplaces are accessible to all, says FBU assistant general secretary Ben Selby

People with minds and bodies of all kinds and functions work in fire stations and control rooms. The fire and rescue service is neurodiverse, as is our union.

But employers are failing to consider this diversity, creating significant barriers at work. This has to change.

DISABILITY AND NEURODIVERSITY

Neurodiversity is an umbrella term referring to the many ways that people think and experience the world. It includes a range of neurological conditions, such as autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), dyslexia, and Tourette's syndrome. Approximately one in seven people in the UK are in some way neurodivergent.

People who identify as disabled may have visual, auditory, physical or psychiatric impairments. Not all disabilities are visible to others: it is estimated that 70-80% of disabilities are invisible.

It is a myth that only one type of person can work in the fire and rescue service. Hundreds, possibly thousands, of FBU members are in some way



PICTURES: LUCY RAY

neurodivergent or disabled.

Having a diverse workforce means that people bring different skills and experiences to their roles. Employers have a duty to ensure that workplaces are accessible, so that everyone can work safely and without undue stress or risk.

A firefighter with dyslexia may excel at navigating buildings due to their spatial awareness, while they may find it stressful to read small print. A person with autism may be highly skilled at absorbing details during fire control calls, while they might be hypersensitive to bright lights in the control room.

UNDERSTANDING DISABILITY

There are two main ways of viewing disability: the medical and the social model.

The medical model demands that employees “fit in or get out”. Impairments are seen as problems that must be fixed or treated to overcome difficulties. All the emphasis is on the worker, who is forced to attempt to change or to hide any struggle.

The social model says that people with impairments are not inherently disabled but are instead made disabled by barriers that commonly exist in



Above: FBU AGS Ben Selby with trade union activist and tutor Janine Booth
Above right: Charlie Batchelor, FBU education officer, with attendees at the event



society. The difficulties people may face at work are created by the failure of their employers to create accessible and inclusive workplaces.

Shifting to the social model enables workers to organise collectively. For the examples given earlier, legible, larger fonts should be used, and unnecessarily bright lights should be dimmed. Instead of individual workers being told that something is “wrong” with them, we can come together to demand that the conditions of work change.

WINNING FOR MEMBERS

Delegates at last year's FBU conference spoke passionately about the need for support for neurodivergent and disabled firefighters. The FBU has promoted dyslexia awareness in the fire and rescue service for many years. But awareness alone is not enough, and now members are getting organised to take action more broadly.

The union is embarking on a process of learning which started this year with the publication of the FBU's new *Neurodiversity in the Workplace* guidance. Written in collaboration with neurodivergent members and officials, this document aims to equip members, reps and officials with the skills and knowledge to fight for inclusive workplaces.

HISTORIC EVENT

This March, members from across the union came together in Leeds for the FBU's first disabled and neurodivergent forum. More than 30 FBU members attended from across the UK, to share experiences and begin UK-wide organising.

As with any trade union organising, we started by identifying the key issues in the workplace. Recurring themes

A firefighter with dyslexia may excel at navigating buildings due to their spatial awareness, while they may find it stressful to read small print

emerged from discussions: discrimination and harassment; a lack of training and education on neurodivergence and disability; obstructive bureaucracy; and inadequate support. These challenges have been created by policies and practices that have been designed without the input of disabled and neurodivergent workers.

But members have started to build grass root networks locally, connecting firefighters and control staff facing these barriers at work. These groups are growing in regions from North Wales to London, providing support and starting to make progress.

Connections are also being made with the wider trade union movement. A panel of trade union representatives fed in about how disabled and neurodivergent members are organising for change in the RMT, NUJ, Unite, TUC and other unions.

THE FIGHT AHEAD

Equality is a core trade union principle, and we have much to learn from the workers fighting for accessible workplaces across sectors and industries.

This forum marked the beginning of disabled and neurodivergent FBU members formulating collective demands and organising to win improvements across the UK.

No-one should have to struggle alone. United, we can tear down barriers and create an equal and inclusive fire and rescue service.



At this year's FBU women's school at Wortley Hall

25 years of the national women's committee

Katie Holloway, chair of the FBU national women's committee, looks back at a quarter of a century of work for women and forward to the future

The National Women's Committee (NWC) was inaugurated in 1999, at a one-off special meeting at Wortley Hall near Sheffield.

The meeting gathered women activists from all over the country to progress issues for women and ensure proper FBU representation of all women members.

25 years on, it seemed only right to celebrate the anniversary at our annual national women's school at Wortley Hall.

The weekend in March consisted of guest speakers including Laura Bates (Author of *Fix the system, not the women*), Nikki Pound (TUC Policy officer) and Denise Christie (Former NWC secretary

and EC member).

The theme was "enough is enough" and covered workshops on sexual harassment, challenging behaviours, the history of the NWC and much more.

Women gathered from all over the country to celebrate the successes of the NWC and discuss improvements that can be made in future.

The past 12 months has seen the launch of our Fight for 52 campaign, asking for 12 months' full-pay maternity leave in the fire and rescue service.

We discussed the next stages of our campaigns and explained how members can help be a part of them.

The feedback from the weekend has been extremely positive with women wanting to become more involved in the union movement.

Comments included: "It has been really empowering and thought-provoking" and "I now have the tools to challenge some of the behaviours that have no place in our profession".

The NWC would like to thank FBU members and officials for their support of the committee over the past 25 years, which has allowed us to continue improving the rights of women in the service. We look forward planning our 2025 women's school.



Meet the rep

Karen Bell

Black and ethnic minority members section national chair

1. What made you want to become a rep?

Having had no interest in the trade union movement, on joining the fire service I quickly recognised the importance of a union to ensure democratic process, giving a voice to those marginalised and unfairly treated in the workplace and providing general workplace support.

2. What is your proudest achievement as a rep?

It's been a steep learning curve and a bitter/sweet experience. The role comes with many challenges. Resilience, reminding myself daily as to why I took up the position and the ability to welcome even the smallest of 'wins' have been really important for me. I'm always proud when I see members who I have represented during difficult times now flourishing.

3. Who is your ultimate hero?

I will have to say my mum.

4. Describe yourself in three words

Resilient, hardworking, caring.

5. What was the last conversation you had that made you think differently about something?

A simple conversation with my daughter in which she reminded me that she was doing her best. I'm

always humbled and grounded by my daughter and her ability to say something profound that makes me think differently.

6. Which TV show could you not live without – and – What's your favourite band/musician?

I can live without all TV. However, a mindless soap allows for escapism, so please allow me one of the well-known ones ... I don't have a favourite band/musician. I have eclectic taste and simply enjoy songs with good meaningful lyrics and a good beat.

7. If you weren't a firefighter, what would you be?

I'm not quite sure. I've had many jobs but, by far, a firefighter and being a ski rep are my most favourite – both of which are jobs that were not planned. They are simply jobs that I did because I was told I couldn't. So, I'll simply rely upon destiny to guide me.

8. If you could travel back or forward in time, where and when would you travel to and why?

Spring forward in time to a happy retirement spending time with my family and dearest friends, with the ability to still live comfortably and with good health. If I had to go back, it would be to just one more day with my dad and my maternal gran.



What's New? Wildfire simulator

Lancashire Fire and Rescue Service (LFRS) has recently implemented a wildfire simulator created by firefighter and FBU member Luke Butterworth. The simulator is an advance in training techniques for wildfires and other results of climate change.

The simulator works by creating a 3D topographical map of a moorland area, then projecting the map onto a sandpit, to create a scale model of the hills, valleys and map features out of the sand.

A satellite image of the area is then projected onto the sand and animations such as fire spread, smoke and wind can be added to produce an accurate scale model of a wildfire incident.

The practical and interactive training has seen huge improvements in the way theory and classroom-based wildfire sessions are presented, allowing learners to see practical examples of how factors in the wildfire prediction system (wind, slope, aspect) affect fire spread and behaviour.

LFRS has used the wildfire simulator to assist with introducing recruits to wildfires as well as specialised burns training delivered to Greater Manchester Fire and Rescue Service.



FBU PHOTO COMPETITION 2024

Photo competition 2024

We are looking, once again, for well composed images that show one or more aspects of a firefighter's working life whether striking, dramatic, creative, personal or humorous, with an emphasis, where appropriate, of firefighters in the correct PPE.

With kind sponsorship from College Hill printers, there will be one first prize of £500 and two runners up prizes of £100.

This year's contest closes on 26 July 2024. By submitting an entry, each entrant agrees to the official rules. Follow the link below or scan the code to see the rules and how to enter. The competition is only open to current FBU members.

- Email your entries to firefighter@fbu.org.uk.
- bit.ly/FBU-photocomp-2024



Last year's winning entry by Jazz Hayer: Lonely Walk. Tyre recycling fire. Longest lasting fire in Notts FRS history took 34 days to extinguish.

A FIRST



All female crew at Rhyl fire station, North Wales – a first

STAND UP TO RACISM



Executive council member for Wales Cerith Griffiths speaks at a Stand Up To Racism event in Cardiff on 17 March

FBU SHOP

FIGHT FOR 52: SUPPORT THE FBU CAMPAIGN FOR FAIR MATERNITY PAY

£14.99 inc p&p

As part of the FBU's campaign for 52 weeks' full maternity pay leave for women in the fire and rescue service, these 100% cotton t-shirts have been made with **FIGHT FOR 52** and the FBU logo printed on the front, **FIGHTING FOR FAIR MATERNITY PAY** on the back, and the Equality Matters logo on the sleeve. Available in navy in a range of sizes.

shop.fbu.org.uk



PICTURES: JESS HUBB



Wrack on the Road



■ 6 March – TUC women's conference at Congress House



■ 7 March – Morning Star public meeting on minimum service levels law at Mander Hall in London

■ 2 April – Cross Questions on LBC answering questions on water privatisation, Gaza and the general election

■ 8/9 April – FBU members meeting in Belfast

■ 16-18 April – FBU national school at the Old Ship Hotel, Brighton

COMING UP:

■ 27 April – TUC black workers conference at Congress House

■ 1 May – London May Day march and rally

■ 4 May – Leeds May Day event

■ 22-24 May – FBU annual conference, Blackpool

Too many chiefs?

Station Cat discovers chaos and confusion

Here's an odd thing. Northamptonshire Fire and Rescue Service's website says that Mr Simon Tuhill is chief fire officer. But in the news section of the same website, Mr Tuhill is only the acting CFO.

Here's something even odder. The website's lead news story has this acting CFO tearing into his boss, the police and crime commissioner. The commissioner's "misogynistic remarks" he says, "fell short of the standards we expect from ourselves" and it's now "impossible for him to legitimately hold me and this service to account."

It's dynamite. It's like the Westminster government's cabinet secretary announcing on the Downing Street website that the prime minister can't do his job. It's too chaotic to be true – except that Northamptonshire's police and crime commissioner is one Stephen Mold. And Mr Mold has a PhD in creating chaos.

Since July last year, he has chosen two new CFOs, neither of whom had any experience at all of firefighting. They made up for this by being personal friends of Mr Mold.

The first resigned after 10 days. The second, a former police chief (Conservatives like Mr Mold like appointing police officers to run the fire service), was under investigation by the Independent Office for Police Conduct, and Mr Mold apparently remarked

that if she was not cleared, "I'll dump the bitch."

This seems to have been the last straw for Mr Tuhill. The acting CFO, with 25 years' experience of firefighting, rejected for the top job in favour of people with no experience at all, has used the FRS's own website to disown his boss, as brutally as possible.

Given all this mayhem, it seems a small matter that the FRS website does not know whether Mr Tuhill is CFO or only acting CFO. Either way, now

Mr Tuhill has said publicly that Mr Mold can't do the job, it's hardly surprising that Mr Mold had announced he will not seek re-election in May. The only question is whether he can hold on that long.

Spare a thought for the folk Mr Mold promoted. The two women he tried to make into CFOs have had their reputations unfairly trashed. And Mr Mold has just appointed the Home Office's top fire strategist, Jonny Bugg, as chief executive in his office.

"I am looking forward to the opportunity to work with Stephen Mold and his leadership team" said Mr Bugg when they gave him the job. Not for long, Jonny.

■ Stop press. A Northamptonshire FRS press officer has confirmed to Station Cat that Mr Tuhill is only *acting* CFO. He did not explain why the website calls him the CFO.



25-year badges



Darren Marshall (l), fire safety, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from HQ rep Tom Marchant



Tony Garforth (r), green watch, Bootle and Netherton, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Adam Casey



Dexter Marshall (r), blue watch, Whitehill, Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Matt Fryer



Wayne Van Hecke (l), protection, FSHQ, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge at Eccles fire station from officers' branch secretary Chris Evans with colleagues (l-r), Adam Freeland, Mike Wilcox, Rodney Bowker, Mark Pendlebury, Dave Minto, Emma Davies and John Duffin



Andy Macaulay (c), white watch, Lewisham, London, receives his 25 year badge from Lewisham branch secretary Toby Walsh (l) and London regional secretary Jon Lambe



Justin Randtoul (r), Richmond, London, receives his 25-year badge from SW London area secretary Dave Young



Andrew Dunham (l), white watch, Rochdale, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary James Cheverton, with colleagues looking on



James Young (r), white watch, Cambridge, receives his 25-year badge from Richie Powell with colleagues looking on



Andy Crowther (centre), Killingbeck Green, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Tom Else



Susanna Clarke (r), technical rescue unit, white watch, Bickenhill, West Midlands, receives her 25-year badge from TRU FBU rep James Silver with unit colleagues



Jim Hutchen (r), Winchester, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Stu Eade



Mark Cope (r), red watch, Highgate, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from brigade committee member Adam Joyce, with members of Highgate red and green watches



Simon House (l), green watch, Redbridge Hill, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Jamie Kelly, with (l-r) Rob Blackman, Stu Young, Sam Poulter and Keith Holland



Chris Frost (r), red watch, Soho, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Shawn Howlett with colleagues looking on



Steve Mawdsley (l), green watch, Wigan, Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary and brigade vice chair Kieran Roberts, with Paul Gibbons, Liam Towers, Jonny Houghton, Shaun Kavannagh, Martin Pike and Nigel Brown



Simon Fairbrother (r), Richmond, receives his 25-year badge from SW London area secretary Dave Young



James Weston (l), white watch, Agecroft, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Lee McNab



Neil Burge (r), RDS Frome, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Dave Lock with colleagues looking on



Gary Keary (c), Former Greater Manchester brigade secretary and regional chair, green watch, Sale, receives his 25-year badge from national officer Mark Rowe and EC member Les Skarratts



Rob Crook (r), Winchester, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Stu Eade



Steven Haste, health and safety rep, Newton le Willows, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Stephen McCann (r) and branch rep James Seddon (l)



James Allen (l), white watch, Bromley, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Scott Pinkney with colleagues looking on



Maxwell Dixon (l), green watch, Bromley, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Scott Pinkney with colleagues looking on



Steve Marchant (l), blue watch, Parkway, South Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Alex Wilson with colleagues looking on



Pete Griffiths (r), red watch, Heywood, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Mike Taylor, alongside colleagues John Ogden, Dave Harrison and Lyndon Twigg



Adam Clarke (l), red watch, Wimbledon, London, receives his 25-year badge from SW London area secretary Dave Young



Paul Tomlin (r), blue watch, Barnstaple, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from South West regional chair Scott Young with colleagues looking on



Andrew Lamb (l), Mossley, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Ruth Arden, alongside (l-r) colleagues Adrian Patrick, Mark Smith, Paul Holloway and Chris Jewitt



Neil Henderson (l), red watch, Lowestoft, Suffolk, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Phil Johnston, with (l-r) Gareth Hadridge and Chris Randall

40-year badge



Iain Barbour (l), Cupar, Scotland, receives his 40-year badge from branch chair Gordon Nimmo, with colleagues looking on



Kim Knight (r), red watch, Lowedges, South Yorkshire, receives her 25-year badge from divisional rep Steve McGovern with members from red and white watch looking on



Lee Richardson (centre right), officers' section, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from Manchester and North West officer rep Chris Evans, alongside colleagues (l-r) Mark Palin, Ken Booth, Steve Jordan, Martin Foran and Kevin France

Please send high resolution digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk
or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE

For your image to look its best, we need the original, full-resolution image. One lifted from a website may not do justice to a unique occasion. We do our best with images that are low resolution, taken directly into a bright light or suffer from camera-shake, or have other problems, but cannot perform miracles. Please include details for each image – 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/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

England, Wales and N Ireland

0800 100 6061

Scotland 0800 089 1331

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.



THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS

10 REASONS WHY FIREFIGHTERS NEED THE FBU'S POLITICAL FUND



1

LOBBIES OF POLITICIANS

Rallies at Westminster for pay, and regular lobbying of politicians for our demands

2

PAY AND PENSIONS

Without the FBU's campaigns, firefighters' conditions would be far worse

3

CUTS AND PRIVATISATION

Protests, letters and other initiatives to fight job cuts and privatisation

4

CAMPAIGNING WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

To oppose all anti-union laws and defend collective bargaining

5

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Making the case on DECON, breathing apparatus, mental health and more



POLITICAL FUND
BALLOT 2024
VOTE YES

6

INTERNATIONAL SOLIDARITY

Learning from international firefighter unions and showing solidarity across the globe

8

TRADE SECTIONS

Campaigning for the rights of officers, retained and control members

7

EQUALITY MATTERS

Fighting discrimination and harassment, and winning 52 weeks' paid maternity leave

9

COMMUNICATIONS

Reports, submissions, briefings, social media and more to get our message across

10

GENERAL ELECTION

An organised political voice to fight for the NHS, welfare state and the fire service

**MAKE SURE YOUR
BALLOT IS IN THE POST
TO ARRIVE BY 29 APRIL**