

FIREFIGHTER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | WWW.FBU.ORG.UK | APRIL/MAY 2021

FIREFIGHTERS IN GOVERNMENT SIGHTS

PLANS WOULD
DISMANTLE SERVICE

SEE P10

SAVE LIVES WITH
OUR SURVEY

SEE P16

GRENELL: 'RECKLESS
DISREGARD FOR LIFE'

SEE P14

ENGLAND BRIGADES CUT
BY £140m SINCE 2016

SEE P6





MATT WRACK WE MUST BE READY TO FIGHT POLITICAL ATTACKS

GROUNDHOG DAY

In the last edition of *Firefighter* we discussed the report by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) on the response to the pandemic and how it was yet another political attack on our union.

Fast forward just two months and history is repeating itself. The inspectorate's annual *State of Fire* report again singles out the FBU and repeats worrying recommendations for government-imposed changes to our service, these include changing firefighters' terms and conditions, granting chief fire officers so-called "operational independence" (in reality independence from political accountability) and bringing in a pay review body.

And, just a day before the inspectorate released its report, home secretary Priti Patel confirmed to Parliament that legislation on these very changes to our service is imminent.

There is no doubt that the next few months will be decisive and we have to be ready to fight attacks on our terms and conditions and our profession.

GRENFELL INQUIRY

Module three of the Grenfell Tower Inquiry began on 30 March when the FBU delivered its opening statement.

Our submission focussed on the awful disrepair of the fire control switch on the lift and how very little had been done to ensure it was in working order.

On the night of the fire,



Cuts have consequences: firefighters attend a fatal fire in Surrey

and despite their best efforts, firefighters were unable to gain control of the lifts, impeding their attempts to rescue people.

Module two, which was completed the week before, proved to be a shocking indictment of corporate profiteering and deregulation. You can read more about this on pages 14 and 15.

CANCER REGISTRY

The response to the launch of the UK Cancer and Disease Registry has been remarkable, with 1,147 serving and retired firefighters registering online.

This should help researchers build a picture of the effect firefighting has on health.

The University of Central Lancashire (UCLan), which

oversees the registry, wants all firefighters, even those who have not received a diagnosis, to register.

The more responses, the easier the job will be for researchers to identify the level of risk firefighters face, making it easier to improve procedures and demand change.

The FBU and UCLan particularly want firefighters who attended the Grenfell Tower fire to register.

It's really easy to do, just check out our feature on pages 16 and 17 to find out more.

CUTS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

In March, our analysis showed that almost all fire and rescue services

in England had had their funding slashed since 2016, with some having their budgets from central government cut by more than 40%.

Sadly, just weeks later in Surrey we saw first-hand the disastrous consequences cuts can have at an incident where an individual died when it took the first engine 14 minutes to arrive.

The county has seen its central government funds cut by 34% since 2016, leading to the removal of engines and the closure of stations.

If we are going to build a service fit for the future, governments in all four parts of the UK need to understand that it cannot be done on the cheap.



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UNION LEARNING FUND

A big thank you to all providers of the Union Learning Fund and @FBULearn for the years of hard work – and to all the members, their friends and family who supported ULF and benefited from the courses. Abolition of this fund by the government is the sad loss of an excellent learning resource.

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NEWS

FATAL FIRE AFTER CUTS

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GRENFELL

FBU statement to Grenfell inquiry module 3 on fire safety

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The attacks on firefighters' terms and conditions come after successful industrial and legal action by the FBU to protect members' pensions and other conditions of service

GOVERNMENT PLANS WILL DISMANTLE THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE, WRACK WARNS

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Westminster government ramped up its plans to attack the fire and rescue service after Her Majesty's Inspectorate released a second report calling for sweeping changes to the service, including to firefighters' terms and conditions.

The annual *State of Fire and Rescue* report, published on 17 March by Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, reiterated calls for changes to the Grey Book, describing the document which details firefighters contracts of employment as being "too rigid".

The report also recommended that chief fire officers be granted so-called "operational independence" and breaking up the National Joint Council (NJC) where firefighters' pay is negotiated, to be replaced by a pay review body with no union representation.

In press interviews, report author Sir Thomas Winsor went as far as to hint that firefighters' right to strike could be removed by the government.

Just a day before the report's launch, home secretary Priti Patel confirmed

to MPs that legislation in Parliament is imminent and will be built on the inspectorate's report.

Separately, the government also confirmed it will consult on further subsuming fire and rescue services into the control of police and crime commissioners.

"Firefighters are clearly in the government's sights," said Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary. "We've known that plans were afoot to attack terms and conditions, the way pay is negotiated and how the very service operates. Now we know when it is going to happen, and we have to be ready."

The inspectorate's report, which follows one in January reviewing the pandemic response, claimed there are "too many barriers" to change in the fire and rescue service and pointed to a lack of "flexibility" in working practices, preventing chief fire officers from acting independently.

'ONE OF THE BIGGEST ATTACKS SEEN ON THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE'

Following on from the previous *State of Fire and Rescue* report, this year's makes recommendations including dismantling the NJC by June this year, just three months away.

Buried in the inspectorate proposals is a recommendation to review the roles of fire and rescue services and of firefighters.

The Home Office is expected to flesh out these plans in the forthcoming legislation.

Matt Wrack said the next few months will represent one of the biggest, co-ordinated attacks seen on the fire and rescue service and on the rights and conditions of FBU members

"The government wants to not only take away firefighters' seat at the table, but also tear up the Grey Book which, up to now, has been a vital safeguard against driving down terms and conditions and protecting the role of the firefighter.

"Doing all that, whilst giving chief fire officers complete freedom to do what they want is a recipe for disaster, and one which could effectively prove to be a dismantling of the fire and rescue service as we know it."

Government proposals on legislation are expected in the coming months.

BACK FIRE SERVICE, CANDIDATES URGED

SCOTTISH ELECTIONS

Firefighters are calling on candidates in May's parliamentary elections in Scotland to pledge support for an FBU plan to protect and invest in the fire service.

Its six points include maintaining national standards of fire cover, an agreed safe crewing model, reversing cuts to the number of firefighters, and funding retained firefighters in remote communities.

Candidates are also being asked to show they value firefighters by committing to pay parity for emergency fire control staff and a pay deal that addresses a decade of cuts to firefighters' wages, which are £4,000 lower in real-terms than in 2010.

The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS), has suffered significant cuts since it was established in 2013. Overall

funding for 2019/20 is 5% lower in real terms than in 2012/13.

Although the Scottish government's budget for 2021/22 has increased funding for SFRS by £9.9m in total, firefighters pointed out that long-term sustainable funding is needed to address the key points in the FBU manifesto.

Firefighters warned that the service needs proper investment to tackle an increasing number of hazards facing the public, including floods and wildfires.

Denise Christie, FBU Scotland regional secretary, said: "Firefighters have been on the frontline protecting communities during the coronavirus pandemic.

"The next Scottish government has a real opportunity to value those firefighters and the work they do by committing to a properly funded and well-resourced fire and rescue service."



MARK THOMAS

UNION BACK IN COURT OVER PENSIONS

PENSIONS

The FBU has begun High Court proceedings to force fire and rescue authorities to pay retired firefighters their full pensions.

In December 2018 the Court of Appeal ruled that firefighters are entitled to return to their previous pension schemes, after changes in 2015 saw individuals moved from their original 1992 pension schemes to worse ones.

This ruling should have seen authorities address the cases of those who have already retired – because of ill-health, for instance.

However, the authorities went to

an Employment Appeal Tribunal, in December 2020, arguing that they were not responsible for the age discrimination identified in the court case. In February, the tribunal ruled they must pay up.

After the authorities gave no indication that they would adhere to this ruling, the FBU, to set a legal precedent, began legal proceedings on behalf of three retired firefighters who have been left thousands of pounds worse off.

The union is demanding the employers ensure full compensation is paid, giving individuals what they would have received in their previous pension scheme.

SOUNDING OFF

Professor Anna A Stec appeals to every firefighter to complete a questionnaire that will save lives

EACH COMPLETED QUESTIONNAIRE WILL MAKE A HUGE DIFFERENCE

The creation of the UK Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry (FCDR), follows a report (bit.ly/FBU-toxic-exposure) in which more than 4% of serving UK firefighters who responded to a survey on fire contaminants had already been diagnosed with cancer.

The independent best-practice report was by the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan).

FCDR will quantify health risks that firefighters face. It will collect information on their work characteristics, exposure to fire effluents, lifestyle and health.

One of the main objectives of this database is to identify and keep track of all firefighters who have been diagnosed with diseases and cancers, as well as to identify any association between firefighters' work and exposure to fire carcinogens.

Every completed questionnaire makes a huge difference.

The completeness of the registry is most important when we are trying to understand things that only affect a small number of firefighters who respond to the registry. For example: rare cancers or exposure to specific fire carcinogens.

Every completed response also takes us closer to developing and offering preventative health screening, education and support that is designed specifically to protect firefighters' health.

To date, we have had 1,147 completed responses, including 668 from retired firefighters but we really need to hear from ALL firefighters, including those new to the career and those who have moved on.

Firefighters without a cancer diagnosis are just as critical as those who have received a diagnosis of cancer or any other disease. There is no minimum service time required to register in the FCDR.

We are incredibly proud of the work we at UCLan have done alongside the FBU, but now we need frontline firefighters to play their part and register – so that we can make firefighting safer.

■ Anna A Stec, MSc, PhD, CSci, CChem, FRSC, FiFireE, FHEA, is a professor in fire chemistry and toxicity at the University of Central Lancashire



ENGLISH SERVICES' FUNDS HAVE BEEN CUT BY £140m SINCE 2016

LOCAL GOVERNMENT SETTLEMENT

Fire services in England face another real-terms cut, FBU analysis of the 2021/22 local government finance settlement has revealed. Brigades will receive a cash terms increase of just 0.18% – equating to just £32,700 per brigade.

Funding for England's fire and rescue services has been cut by £139.7m since 2016/17, a reduction of 13.8%. Nearly all brigades have suffered cuts in the five years since the last local government settlement; 42 have lost at least £1m.

Some services, such as West Sussex

and Warwickshire, have seen their government funding cut by more than 40%, while some brigades have lost as much as £22m.

The chancellor failed to deliver urgent funding for England's cash-strapped fire services in his spring budget, despite warnings from firefighters that cuts will worsen their ability to respond to fire, floods and other emergencies.

Non-fire incidents attended by fire and rescue services in England, such as road traffic collisions, water rescues, evacuations and hazardous chemical incidents, have increased by 28% over the last five years.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "The past five years have seen more devastating cuts to fire and rescue services, just as brigades face an increased threat from major events like floods and wildfires.

"This settlement is another real-terms cut to brigades' funding and, after losing millions over the last few years, demonstrates the government's contempt for a vital service.

"Unless the fire and rescue service receives substantial and sustained funding, guaranteeing public safety will become increasingly a throw of the dice."

FIREFIGHTERS CALL ON COUNCIL TO REVERSE CUTS AFTER FATAL FIRE

SURREY

Following a fatal fire in March, Surrey firefighters have warned that more lives could be at risk if cuts to the service are not reversed.

In a letter to Cllr Tim Oliver, leader of Surrey County Council, firefighters said the tragedy in Banstead had been avoidable and criticised a "pattern of failings" in the service following cuts under a "Making Surrey Safer" plan.

They highlighted increased response times – it took the first fire engine 14 minutes to arrive at the fatal fire. This is four minutes slower than the service's county-wide target and six minutes slower than the response time Banstead ought to receive under the council's own equalities impact assessment.

Banstead fire station, which is four minutes away from the incident, was one of the stations closed at night under the plan.

An incident in Egham saw the first fire engine arrive



in 12 minutes. Egham, the closest station, was another closed at night under the plan.

Seven fire engines have been removed and three fire stations closed at night.

Joe Weir, South East FBU regional secretary, said: "The fatal fire at Banstead was a devastating incident. Every second counts in a fire, and the slow response times at this fire and other incidents seriously call into question

Surrey Fire and Rescue Service's ability to keep people safe.

"We warned time and time again that lives would be at risk if the cuts went ahead, but councillors and fire service managers chose to ignore firefighters' and residents' concerns.

"It's time they put public safety first and reverse the cuts to prevent another tragedy like this."

YOU CAN'T FIX ONE CUT BY MAKING MORE, WARNS FBU

WARWICKSHIRE

Warwickshire firefighters have voiced safety concerns over plans to remove a fire engine from Nuneaton fire station and move it to nearby Bedworth, where the service is struggling to maintain daytime cover.

A letter to CFO Kevin Amos warned the public in Nuneaton would be at risk and called on him to keep the fire engine at Nuneaton and reinstate full-time crews at Bedworth which was downgraded from full-time to on-call in 2011.

Firefighters said the plans had been announced in the media before they or the public had been consulted.

Neil Stuart, FBU Warwickshire brigade chair, said: "We warned a decade ago that cutting fire cover in Bedworth would pose problems in keeping residents safe.

"It's encouraging that the service has acknowledged this, but it can't be rectified at the expense of cutting fire cover in another area."



METROPOLITAN POLICE/GETTY

FBU HIGHLIGHTS SHOCKING DISREPAIR OF GRENFELL LIFT CONTROL SWITCH

Shocking disrepair of the Grenfell Tower lift fire control switch was a symptom of the neglect of the building and its residents, the FBU said in its opening statement to module 3 of the Grenfell inquiry.

On the evening of the fire, firefighters were unable to turn the lift fire control switch to force it to descend, and allow them to control it from ground level.

As a result, crews were prevented from using the lift as a valuable firefighting tool in the early moments of the tragedy.

This would have helped in reaching upper floors quickly with equipment and facilitated longer wears of breathing apparatus without the need to climb stairs.

Lift engineers for the tower had claimed in evidence that the lift was in working order before firefighters arrived.

However, an inspection after the tragedy found the mechanism to be jammed with debris with inspectors unable to turn it. Only after inspection in a workshop when the debris was

removed was the switch able to be manipulated into working order.

In the statement, delivered by Martin Seaward QC, the union urged the panel to reject the opinion of Roger Howkins, appointed by the inquiry as a lift expert, who had said that “with forceful manipulation with a fitting key the fire control switch would probably have worked”.

The FBU said the lifts were in poor condition generally and not working prior to the fire, as reflected in the many witness statements from residents of the tower.

The inquiry was urged to consider the effect refurbishment had on the state of the fire control switch, and to ask why, if it was being tested as claimed, were the

tests not documented over seven years?

The union also expressed its dismay over the standard of the fire risk management system in the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC) at the time of the fire.

In an expert report, Dr Barbara Lane criticised RBKC for its “woefully underfunded” fire safety risk management system, which the council had outsourced to the Kensington and Chelsea Tenant Management Organisation (KCTMO).

Despite having a portfolio of 9,746 properties, fire risk assessments (FRAs) borough-wide cost only £1,226 a month.

Dr Lane found the KCTMO to have failed in its “primary duty to monitor and review their fire risk assessment programme and assure themselves it was producing suitable and sufficient assessments of risk for their premises”.

Module 3 is investigating fire safety matters inside the tower, such as compliance with regulations, communication with residents and fire risk assessments.

DESPITE A PORTFOLIO OF 9,746 PROPERTIES, FIRE RISK ASSESSMENTS BOROUGH-WIDE COST JUST £1,226 A MONTH

REMEMBER THE DEAD – FIGHT FOR THE LIVING

International Workers' Memorial Day (IWMD) is a day of remembrance throughout the world for workers killed, disabled or injured by their work and takes place annually on 28 April.

It is an opportunity to highlight the preventable nature of most workplace incidents and ill health and to promote campaigns

and union organisation in the fight for improvements and workplace safety.

According to the International Labour Organization, more than 337m accidents happen on the job each year, resulting, together with occupational diseases, in more than 2.3m deaths annually.

IWMD commemorates those workers.

This IWMD will be an opportunity to remember the workers who have died because of Covid-19.

#IWMD2021

REMEMBER THE DEAD
– FIGHT FOR THE LIVING





FBU members on International Workers Memorial Day, in Albert Square, Manchester in 2018

BARBARA COOK/ALAMY



THEIR SIGHTS ARE TRAINED ON US

Ministers and the fire service inspector have fired the opening shots in a campaign to force firefighters into a new and subservient position in the service

The month of March saw the government intensify its attacks on firefighters and our union, with official confirmation of forthcoming legislation that could see wide-ranging changes hit the fire and rescue service and its employees.

The government did not make the announcements alone. Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services (HMICFRS) published a report that also called for the dismantling of the way pay is negotiated and for so-called "operational independence" for chief



fire officers.

One of the main targets for criticism in HMICFRS's annual report published in March 2021 is the Grey Book. This details the UK-wide terms and conditions of firefighters' jobs and is the basis of their contracts of employment.

It is negotiated by the National Joint Council (NJC), where the FBU meets fire and rescue service employers representing fire authorities and fire boards. The FBU's representation on the NJC give firefighters a say in what is included in the document.

Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire and Rescue

THE GREY BOOK DETAILS THE UK-WIDE TERMS AND CONDITIONS OF FIREFIGHTERS' JOBS

Services, has declared that the Grey Book is "too rigid" and a "barrier to change and improvement". He has called on government to review it.

WHAT IS IN THE GREY BOOK, AND WHY WE SHOULD DEFEND IT?

The Grey Book provides the basis of firefighters' contracts as employees of UK fire and rescue services. It provides national standards and helps to limit variations in firefighters' working conditions at a local level.

It covers hours of duty, shift systems and leave entitlement, helping firefighters

to maintain a work-life balance while ensuring 24/7 fire cover across the UK.

Duty systems must meet basic principles, including an average of 42 working hours per week for full-time firefighters, 24-hour periods per week off duty, and being family-friendly.

The FBU must be consulted on any changes to existing duty systems or proposals from fire service management. We know that duty systems are one area where some chief officers would like a free hand to impose changes.

Fire and rescue service employees' leave entitlement is clearly defined under the Grey Book, including the number of days paid annual leave and arrangements for public holidays.

Fire and rescue services are obliged to commit to family-friendly working practices and have in place policies to assist employees with children or other dependents. This includes employees' basic rights to maternity leave and statutory maternity pay, as well as paternity leave, adoption leave, time off for dependents, and the right for employees to request flexible working arrangements.

IMPOSING WORK OUTSIDE ROLEMAPS

For those covered by the Grey Book, work roles are clearly defined under agreements reached through the NJC, providing protection for what can and cannot be reasonably demanded by the employer.

Employees' duties and areas of competency – known as rolemaps – reflect fire and rescue services' responsibilities to respond to emergencies and improve community safety.

This provides essential protection for FBU members against change being imposed unilaterally by their employer.

Where employers wish to introduce new work outside of the rolemaps, they must put proposals to the FBU for consultation. This helps to prevent fire chiefs imposing new responsibilities on fire service employees without adequate resources, training and proper remuneration for increased workloads.

FIREFIGHTERS' HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELFARE

Fire service employees encounter a wide variety of hazards that need to be controlled through training and risk assessments.

The Grey Book sets out guidance on firefighters' health and safety at work for local fire services to follow, following the principle of maintaining a fit and healthy

workforce while providing an efficient and effective fire service.

This includes the provision of personal protective equipment (PPE) and necessary uniforms free of charge, and entitlements to sick leave and sick pay.

Employers are expected to look after their employees' welfare, providing advice and support on work-related issues such as stress, and supporting staff experiencing health problems with rehabilitation into the workplace.

DISCIPLINE AND GRIEVANCE

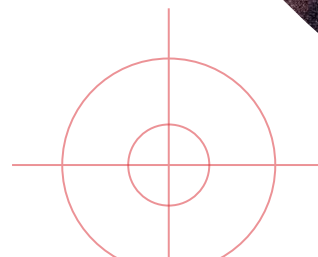
The Grey Book has clear grievance and disciplinary procedures for fire services to follow when issues between employees and employers arise.

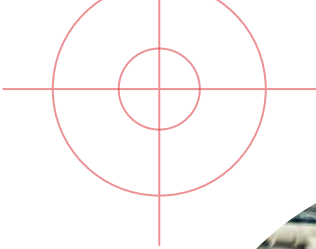
The protocol for the grievance procedure includes stages and timescales for resolving employees' complaints to ensure that their concerns are heard and not neglected by management.

The guidance for disciplinary procedures covers the scope for a disciplinary action, such as employees' conduct, attendance and job performance; the requirement to undertake an appropriate investigation; the stages of the procedure; the rights of the employee; and process for appealing decisions.

This is intended to prevent unjust dismissals or sanctions and ensure that firefighters' cases are treated fairly.

THE GUIDANCE
FOR DISCIPLINARY
PROCEDURES IS
TO ENSURE THAT
FIREFIGHTERS' CASES
ARE TREATED FAIRLY





RESOLVING DISPUTES

One of the initiatives of the NJC is the protocol for maintaining good industrial relations in the fire and rescue service. It sets out how fire and rescue service managers can work with trade union representatives for the benefit of employees and local communities.

It requires fire service managers to consult and negotiate with the FBU on issues which will impact the workforce, such as changes to working hours or duties. The Grey Book provides model consultation and negotiation procedures for fire services and trade union representatives at a local level, including appropriate timescales for reaching a resolution.

The mechanisms in place in the Grey Book help to prevent chief fire officers from freely changing and worsening firefighters' conditions.

When local fire services have attempted to impose non-NJC compliant duty systems, work outside the rolemap, or make changes to overtime working and other aspects of firefighters' terms and conditions, the FBU has been able to fight them off.

FIRE CHIEFS UNCHECKED

The HMICFRS proposals not only entail ripping up the Grey Book containing all of these protections, but also giving greater independence to fire chiefs, including over terms and conditions.

This is dangerous for our members and for the service. The voice of firefighters and control staff in their conditions and service would be weakened or erased.

Senior management would be able to dictate terms and conditions to workers without agreement or consent. We have seen various attempts to do this over the years, but FBU members have often been able to fight them off.

If these attacks were successful, it would be the beginning of a race to the bottom in firefighters' working conditions.

The FBU will not stand by and allow ministers to bulldoze firefighters' hard-fought for terms and conditions, nor our seat at the table.

Firefighters are ready to stand up, speak up and make our voice heard to protect our say in our service, for now and for the future.





A RECKLESS DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE AND SAFETY



The Grenfell inquiry has been hearing devastating evidence of how privatisation, deregulation and the placing of profit above human life played a central role in the disaster

Damning evidence at the Grenfell inquiry about companies responsible for cladding on the tower should be the “final nail in the coffin” for weak regulation and corporate profit seeking in the construction industry, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said.

The inquiry resumed by video links on 8 February after being halted by lockdown. Its Module 2 looked at the manufacture, testing and certification of products used in the refurbishment of Grenfell.

Arconic, a multinational, manufactured the ACM polyethylene (PE) cladding panels used. These were identified as the “primary cause” of fire spread up the building in the inquiry’s phase one report.

Three former senior Arconic employees refused to appear at the inquiry. Claude Wehrle, Gwenaelle Derrendinger and Peter Froehlich were “empty chaired”, with Richard Millet QC, counsel to the inquiry, presenting evidence in their absence.

A former colleague, Claude Schmidt, president of the French-arm of the company, agreed at the last minute to answer questions.

Schmidt accepted Arconic staff “misled” and “lied” to customers, hiding serious test failures.

He accepted that Arconic knew in March 2010 that architects, designers and construction professionals were being misled by claimed fire certification for the cassette variant of the panels. These are bent and hung in cassette form, which is more dangerous than the alternative “rivet” or bolted fixing.

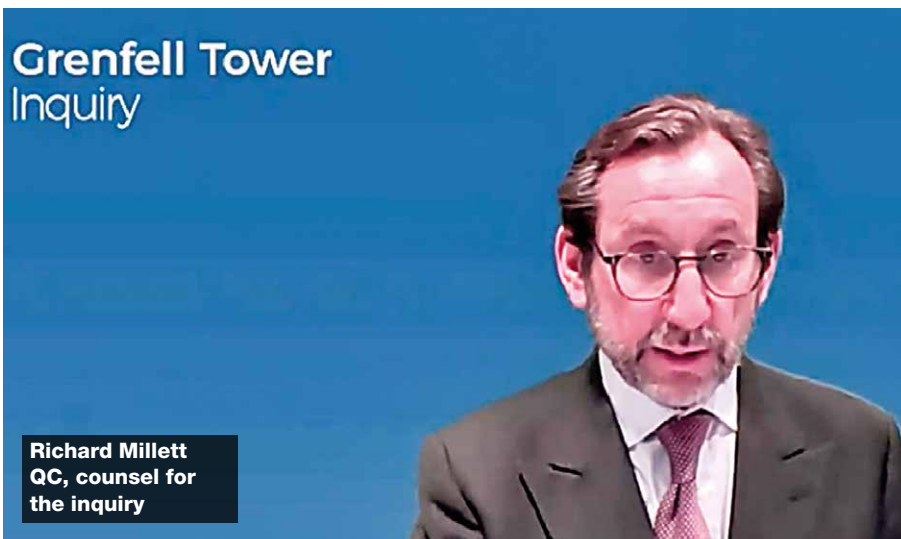
A presentation in September 2007 described the fuel power of a polyethylene core on a project of 5,000 square metres as being equivalent to a truck of 19,000 litres of oil. It raised the question of whose responsibility it would be if scores

**“THOSE LEADING THE
REFURBISHMENT HAD
‘LIMITLESS APPETITE FOR
INVESTIGATING COST
SAVINGS, BUT LITTLE ZEAL IN
RESPECT OF FIRE SAFETY”**

A GRENFELL SURVIVOR’S LAWYER



Magnesium oxide boards were installed on a fire test rig, enabling Celotex to pass the BS 8414 test



Richard Millett QC, counsel for the inquiry

of people died in a building clad in these materials. The presentation was reported to Arconic decision-makers, but the product continued to be sold.

The inquiry heard later how the use of this panel in other European markets had diminished over time due to changes in regulation relating to fire performance, but the UK remained a market because its regulations permitted its sale.

TESTING AND CERTIFICATION BODIES

The BRE (formerly the Building Research Establishment) carried out fire tests on Kingspan and Celotex products later used on Grenfell Tower.

Evidence from Phil Clark, a senior BRE technician, showed that, as a result of the 1999 privatisation of the organisation, testing the fire performance of external cladding became a source of revenue, leading to the body becoming closely linked to corporations, and a need to test for profit.

Clark admitted to a serious list of “omissions and missed instances” that allowed dangerous materials to receive a pass from the BRE.

During a 2014 large-scale test for Celotex RS5000 insulation boards, Clark failed to notice that fire-resisting boards had been added to the test rig. These were not declared in the subsequent report or sales literature for RS5000, allowing it to be considered “suitable for use” on high-rise buildings. RS5000 insulation is made up of polyisocyanurate (PIR), plastic foam that produces lethal gases when it burns, including hydrogen cyanide and carbon monoxide which cause rapid incapacitation when inhaled. It is understood that nearly all victims of the Grenfell fire died of smoke inhalation.

A FAILURE OF DUE DILIGENCE

The British Board of Agrément (BBA), the UK construction sector’s main certifying body, issued certificates for

Arconic’s Reynobond cladding panels and Kingspan’s insulation boards.

Evidence from BBA showed that staff did not have enough information from either Arconic or Kingspan to issue and re-issue safety certificates. Arconic had not supplied key information to the BBA about the testing and classifications of its panels, meaning that an earlier certificate that Arconic used to sell its product, was “materially wrong”.

From its own tests in 2005, 2011 and 2014, Arconic knew that its cladding panels would fail in a fire, but this was not revealed until after the Grenfell Tower fire – by a BBC journalist.

Chris Hunt, head of approvals at the BBA, issued a certificate for Kingspan’s K15 cladding board, but did not insist on seeing proof that the product had achieved a Class 0 fire rating (meaning that a product can adequately resist the spread of fire, permitting use in buildings over 18 metres high). He later admitted that this was a “basic failure of due diligence”.

KINGSPAN

The inquiry heard that, in the aftermath of the fire, Kingspan tried to undermine a proposed government ban on combustible materials on buildings over 18 metres high.

It sought to influence key

"IS THE REALITY THAT KINGSPAN WAS POTENTIALLY A SIGNIFICANT SOURCE OF REVENUE FOR THE BRE?"

RICHARD MILLETT QC

"YOUR APPROACH TO THIS ISSUE IS NOT ONLY DISHONEST BUT DISPLAYED A RECKLESS DISREGARD FOR HUMAN LIFE AND SAFETY"

RICHARD MILLETT QC, COUNSEL FOR THE INQUIRY, QUESTIONING ADRIAN PARGETER, KINGSPAN DIRECTOR OF TECHNICAL, MARKETING AND INTERNAL AFFAIRS

decision-makers, including MPs Michael Gove, Sajid Javid and Amber Rudd.

In January 2018, Kingspan representative Mark Harris was at a dinner at the House of Commons with MPs where they discussed Kingspan’s position that the combustibility of individual materials is irrelevant and that compliance should only be achieved through the very testing that the inquiry has shown to be deeply flawed.

PROFITEERING AND DEREGULATION

Arconic, Celotex and Kingspan were able to exploit a flawed and “supine” testing and certification regime to achieve a seal of approval for their lethal products.

Evidence from Module 2 of the inquiry shows how the safety of people in their homes has been sacrificed on the altar of deregulation, privatisation and corporate profit.

Module 3 of the inquiry, which began on 30 March, is looking at the tower’s internal fire safety measures, management of the building, compliance with regulations, fire risk assessments and complaints and communications with residents.

SIGN UP FOR THE UK FIREFIGHTERS CANCER AND DISEASE REGISTRY

We need to hear from **all firefighters** both serving and retired, from those who have never received a cancer or disease diagnosis, and from those who have had or currently have cancer or other serious or chronic illness

The aim of the UK Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry (FCDR) is to develop a better understanding of the increased occurrence of cancers and diseases among firefighters and to identify the association between a firefighter's occupation and exposure to fire effluents and residues.

Research study **objectives** are:

- **To identify** the association between firefighters' work characteristics and exposure to fire effluents
- **To identify** the frequency and severity of the most common diseases and cancers suffered by firefighters
- **Investigate** trends and variations of cancers and other diseases with specific work practices
- **To evaluate** the risk of cancer among firefighters when compared to the rest of the UK population
- **To offer** preventative health screening, education and support that is specifically designed to protect firefighters' health.

Why is it so important to join this registry?

More responses mean more data which makes this research more scientifically valid

**TO SIGN UP AND FOR MORE
INFORMATION GO TO:**

www.uclan.ac.uk/FCDR



**WHY
SIGN?**

**MORE RESPONSES
MEAN DATA HAS
MORE VALIDITY**





CALL OUT TO ALL LONDON FIREFIGHTERS

Following the Grenfell Tower fire, Dr Fiona Wilcox (HM Senior Coroner) has expressed concerns that, without an appropriate system of health screening, there is a risk that illness may arise unnoticed or occur later in firefighters, and thus reduce their life expectancy.

We need all **London firefighters**, particularly those who attended the **Grenfell Tower** fire, to be part of the UK Firefighters Cancer and Disease Registry.

The information collected will help us to evaluate firefighters' health and their exposure to fire toxins, to gain an understanding of the future possible health consequences, and finally to offer proper long-term health screening focussing on the fire toxins released during this fire.

IMAGE: EDDIE HOWLAND

Two annual TUC conferences, for women and black workers, went online this year – FBU participants report

WOMEN WORKERS

Holly Ferguson and **Clare Hudson** took part in this year's TUC women's conference and, on behalf of the FBU's national women's committee, submitted two motions both of which were passed: Covid-19: A Domestic Violence Crisis and Covid-19: Women workers must not pay for the crisis

More than half – 55% – of Britain's trade unionists are women, delegates to the first virtual Women's TUC annual conference heard in March.

The theme of this year's conference was Our Future, Our Fight. The format was different to other years because the conference was online. Morning debates were followed by panel discussions, workshops and fringe meetings throughout the day.

Delegates considered 46 regular and one emergency motion. Almost half of these were on the unequal impact of Covid-19 on women.

TUC general secretary Frances O'Grady kicked off proceedings with a speech that highlighted the structural inequalities exposed by the pandemic.

One shocking fact was that the 10 richest men in the world increased their wealth by half a trillion pounds during the crisis.

The conference coincided with the UK government's 2021 budget announcement and its submission to the NHS Pay Review Body recommending a measly 1% pay increase for health care staff.

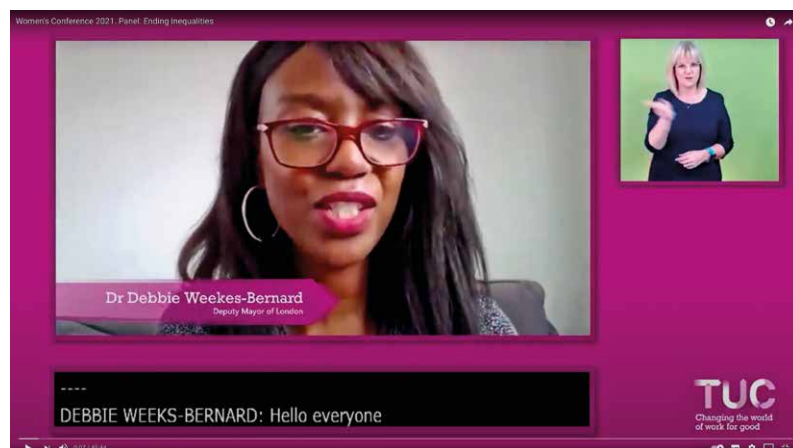
As TUC president Gail Cartmail pointed out, NHS staff are 70% female and, if the government embarks on another period of austerity, it looks like women will bear the brunt again.

The TUC will rightly be calling on the government to carry out equality impact assessments on its Covid-19 recovery plans.

The overwhelming positive from this year's conference was the news that more women are joining and becoming active in trade unions throughout the UK.

Not only are 55% of trade union members women, so are one third of all health and safety reps – a 5% increase in the past year, showing that the pandemic has galvanised women to take action.

Having more women at the heart of our movement is exactly what we will need for the battles ahead – after all this is "Our Future, Our Fight". Let's get to it.



The recording of a session from the TUC women's conference led by Dr Debbie Weekes-Bernard, deputy mayor of London for social integration, social mobility and community engagement, is available on YouTube: <https://youtu.be/czyNNMvGuFI>



The annual *Roots, Culture, Identity* art exhibition at the TUC Black Workers Conference marked its ninth anniversary with an online exhibition.

The exhibition is hosted by the TUC Race Relations Committee and is the concept of Zita Holbourne, artist, activist, poet, and curator of the exhibition. (Above: one of her works in the exhibition). She is a member of the TUC race relations committee and is joint chair of Artists Union England and the national vice president of PCS Union.

The exhibition was established in line with a recommendation of the TUC's Stephen Lawrence task group to showcase the talents of young black creatives, as Stephen had aspired to be an architect.

■ You can enjoy the exhibition at bit.ly/TUC-BW-art-21 until 30 June.

BLACK WORKERS

Three delegates from the FBU's black and ethnic minority members (BEMM) committee took part in this year's TUC black workers' conference – national chair **Tariq Khan**, national vice-chair **Karen Bell** and London regional chair **Amit Malde**

Key themes were organising and engaging with members, Covid and anti-racism, incorporating a large anti-racism rally for UN anti-racism day on 20 March.

An FBU motion on racism in the workplace was submitted and passed:

“Conference pledges to continue the fight against racism in every workplace and calls on affiliates to demand action at every level to achieve true equality for all black workers.

Conference believes that the rise in right wing populist politics is legitimising racism and that racists are feeling increasingly confident in deploying overt abuse or discrimination in the workplace.

Conference believes that this situation has been exacerbated by the impact of over a decade of austerity, resulting in cuts to equality departments and a very low level of recruitment in the public sector.

In the UK Fire and Rescue Service, the number of black staff remains disgracefully low, with a workforce that is 94.6% white. This has left black staff feeling isolated in the workplace with little hope of change due to lack of recruitment.

The combination of isolation in the workplace and the mainstreaming of racist attitudes is impacting negatively on the lives of black workers. Conference therefore pledges to use its collective efforts to support black workers and challenge racism wherever it is found.”

NEW EMPLOYMENT BILL HOW LEGISLATION COULD AFFECT FBU MEMBERS

Jo Seery of Thompsons Solicitors explains how a new Employment Bill, expected to be published later this year, could impact FBU members

The new Employment Bill, announced in the Queen's Speech shortly before the UK left the EU in January last year, is expected to be published later this year.

Whether it will safeguard workers' rights – one of the government's post-Brexit promises – will depend on how new laws are drafted.

The Bill is likely to cover issues including setting up a single body to enforce employment law for vulnerable workers; making flexible working the default position for all workers; the introduction of leave for unpaid carers; and redundancy protection for pregnant workers – all of which have become a priority for workers during the pandemic.

Main changes expected are:

A single labour market enforcement agency. This is a welcome move, provided it ensures a tougher approach to enforcement where there are clear failings by employers.

The right for all workers to request a more predictable and stable contract after 26 weeks' service. This falls short of a right to guaranteed hours for workers and fails to ban zero-hours working. There should also be a right to pay for work beyond contracted hours, minimum notice

periods for extra hours and compensation if an employer cancels an assignment without proper notice.

An extension of redundancy protection to limit pregnancy and maternity discrimination. Currently, a worker made redundant during maternity leave has the right to be offered alternative work when there is a suitable vacancy. In our view the protection should start when a worker informs their employer they are pregnant and continue for six months

after their return.

Leave for neonatal care to help support parents of premature or sick babies. This right would provide 12 weeks' paid leave for parents whose baby is born prematurely and spends time in a hospital neonatal unit.

A week's leave entitlement for unpaid carers. This will provide for five days leave, which in our view, should be paid if it is to be effective. While the proposals in the



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Employment Bill are welcome, it is noticeable that there is no mention of greater access for trade unions to workplaces.

Any employment legislation depends on effective enforcement. Trade unions are central to the enforcement of both individual and collective rights.

Covid-19 has presented workers and unions with a number of challenges when asserting collective employment rights.

For example, in one recent case, union members who were undertaking socially distanced picketing were moved on by the police and warned that if they returned, they would be issued with penalty notices for breaking lockdown rules.

The union, for which Thompsons acted, argued that the right to picket was a fundamental right protected by the Human Rights Act 1998.

Before the case came to court, the government backed down and confirmed that workers taking lawful industrial action have a right to picket at their workplace during the Covid-19 lockdown.

ACCESSING SUPPORT FROM THOMPSONS SOLICITORS

Thompsons Solicitors has been standing with unions and fighting for workers' rights for 100 years and has used its specialist expertise to protect the rights and interests of millions of union members across the UK since 1921.

Thompsons remains open throughout the pandemic, working from home and available to support FBU members in personal injury claims and (on referral from the union) employment matters.

For more information, visit Thompsons Solicitors' FBU hub.

FBU Energy Switch

LOWER YOUR ENERGY COSTS THROUGH COLLECTIVE SWITCHING

The FBU Energy Switch Spring scheme opened for registration on 30 March

The auction will be held on 18 May
Personal offers will go out from 31 May

The scheme will close on 29 June

For more information and to register go to: <https://bit.ly/3IY1R87>

Big Community
Switch



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shop.fbu.org.uk/collections/sportswear

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<https://www.firefighters100lottery.co.uk>



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CAT WITH LADDER SKILLS RESCUES ITSELF - WITH THE HELP OF FIREFIGHTERS

“The poor cat had apparently been up there more than 48 hours, but seemed fine when it came down – it just ran off without so much as a thank you ...”

STATION CAT PAY AND THE PANDEMIC

TAKE THE MONEY AND RUN ... BACK

Is it just your Cat, or are senior fire officers getting older, much older?

Your Cat has learnt that, despite taking voluntary retirement and receiving a lump sum payment from Mid and West Wales Fire and Rescue Service (MAWWFRS), CFO Chris Davies has been re-employed by MAWWFRS on a salary that is almost £20,000 higher than his former basic pay.

This is against government policy which says he should be re-employed for no longer than a one-year contract. Chris Davies has been re-employed in his new role for five years.

MAWWFR authority's policy on re-employment of retired firefighters following voluntary retirement states clearly: "an individual will be re-employed on the same level of basic pay pertaining to the role they hold on retirement".

Still, there's a pandemic on, who's going to notice?

RIGHTS AND WRONGS

The last year has been difficult for most, but one person has chosen to use it to further his agenda and yet again attack firefighters by saying that significant changes are needed in their fire and rescue services.

Sir Thomas Winsor, Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services, found there were too many "barriers" which were "impeding the



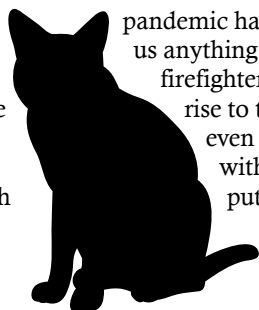
Sir Thomas Winsor at Downing Street

efficiency and effectiveness of services", and said changes in firefighters' terms and conditions are needed.

Your Cat presumes that Sir Tom wouldn't mind his own terms and conditions being torn up and slung into a kitty litter tray.

To add insult to injury, Sir Tom added: "If the pandemic has taught us anything, it's that there are too many barriers preventing firefighters from fully supporting their local communities when they need it most, which we know firefighters find frustrating."

No Sir Tom, if the pandemic has taught us anything it is that firefighters will always rise to the challenge even when faced with the barriers put in place by your bosses



Vesuvius
and Naples –
Vesuvius and
Worksop – see
Hot in Notts



FABIO DI NATALE/ALAMY | FHP

what Boris Johnson does at critical moments when he cannot be bothered to turn up?

The Prime Minister was not at the first five COBRA meetings as the first coronavirus cases arrived in Britain. And on the most significant day in British politics for a generation, Brexit Day, the *Guardian* reported our hero hid inside No 10.

All well and good, but your Cat thought Mr Johnson was paid to lead not hide ... remember the fridge.

We all know it is just a renewed attack on the FBU.

HOT IN NOTTS?

When your Cat read there were plans afoot to build a new fire station at Vesuvius, her mind erupted. How many volcano related puns could she think of?

As you all know any good pun has to *flow*, must provoke *laugh-va* and volcanos make good jokes because they are *hill areas*.

There would be no problem with insurance because if the volcano erupted then the station and its surroundings would be *covered*. If you dropped a portable pump on your foot you might *Krakatoa*.

With mirth of this *magma-tude* your Cat was punstoppable. Then she found out a little more.

Anyone thinking of applying for a transfer to the new fire station can unpack their flip-flops and sunscreen.

It turns out this Vesuvius is not on the Bay of Naples, rather a brownfield site in Nottinghamshire! Worksop, to be exact.

(the Tory government) for political gain.

If anyone knows how much volunteering Sir Tom has done to help his local community during the pandemic, your Cat would like to know. By the way, volunteering malicious and misleading opinions does not count.

REWRITING HISTORY

Your Cat owes her readers an apology. She has been reading the Torygraph! In her defence, it was in the cause of research. The paper has reported that firefighters' right to strike could be reviewed by parliament because of "1970s trade unionism".

So, this government has an issue with someone withdrawing their labour do they? But isn't this exactly

25-YEAR BADGES



Sean Gallanagh (l), green watch, Easterhouse, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Thomas Hanlon



Karen Read (r), fire control, Surrey, receives her 25-year badge from brigade chair Simon Harris



Andy Lowe (r), white watch, Calvert Lane, Humberside, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Lynden Young



Lee Wright (r), red watch, Weston-super-Mare, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Amanda Mills with colleagues looking on



Matt Wilkinson (l), white watch, Sutton, London, receives his 25-year badge from London South West area secretary Dave Young



John Lewis (l), red watch, New Inn, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from Dai Burton, with colleagues looking on



Jeremy Oliver (l), blue watch, Swansea Central, Mid and West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Steve Fuge, with watch members looking on



Mark Warrender (l), operational resource pool, and sports & social cycling section secretary, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Ryan Binks



Nick Bevitt (r), white watch, Calvert Lane, Humberside, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Lynden Young



Paul Yardly (r), Bridgend, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from Rob Bailey



Andy Abbis (r), Warwickshire, receives his 25-year badge from FBU organiser Adam Hemmings



Jason Williams (l), white watch, Swansea West, Mid and West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from Des Walker with watch members looking on



Mid and West Wales training department members (l-r), **Darren Powis**, **Arwel James**, **Rob Martin** and **Mark Grimshaw**, all receive their 25-year badges

40-YEAR BADGE



Colin Gilmore (r), Deal, Kent, receives his 40-year badge on his last shift from Kent East Group rep Jamie Dodd



Clive Matthews (r), Warwickshire, receives his 25-year badge from FBU official Adrian Young



John Griffiths (r), training centre, Dorset and Wiltshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Scott Blandford with new recruits looking on



Jon Curley (r), training centre, Dorset and Wiltshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Scott Blandford, with new recruits looking on



Ric Slatherton (r), red watch, Kirkdale, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from Mark Pimlett with colleagues (l-r) Paul Blanchard, Peter Ramejkis, Joel Condor and Alex Scott looking on



Ray Scaife (l), blue watch, Southport, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from Bob Tyrer with colleagues (l-r) Phil Jones, Rob Rimmer, Ian Jones, Duncan Barrow, Jess Makin and Lee Haigh looking on

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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