

FireFighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union www.fbu.org.uk

April 2014

**THE
COST OF
INADEQUATE
SPRINKLER
REGULATIONS**

See p14

United against cuts

**Firefighters and
local communities
stand up for safety**

See p10





Matt Wrack

We say some farewells ... and the fight goes on

In the last edition of *Firefighter*, we reported a particularly sad month, with four of our number dying across the UK in just a few weeks. In January's edition, we covered the death of Nelson Mandela and the loss felt internationally. This month, the tragic news has continued, with the British trade union movement losing two of its most vibrant and talented champions.

Tony Benn and Bob Crow, both longstanding friends of the FBU, died within the same week. Tony Benn was 88 and Bob Crow was only 52. In different ways they represented much of what the labour movement is about.

Bob's life's work demonstrated that it is possible for workers to organise, fight back — and win. For that he was hated by bosses and reviled by the right-wing media. As we all

know well, in the face of such attacks, Bob stood up for himself just as he did for RMT members.

Tony Benn, born into the political establishment, became one of Britain's best known politicians. Defying the normal direction of travel for politicians he became more radical rather than less as he got older.

Both Bob and Tony had attended and spoken at many events for, or alongside, the FBU. They have both addressed the union's national school in recent years and were always popular speakers with firefighters at marches and rallies.

It has been interesting



to see how the media has tried to sanctify and sanitise both, paying respect to their commitment despite political disagreements.

People who are attacked, pilloried and persecuted while alive are suddenly acknowledged as people of committed views and principle. At the same time the radical causes they argued for and the case they made are quietly written out of history.

I am sure both Bob Crow and Tony Benn would be laughing at some of the people who have come out to praise them after their deaths.

Both would certainly argue that we need to carry on campaigning and fighting. The attacks we face, within the fire and rescue service and more widely, have not stopped or slowed down at all.

As I write this, a new report from the Institute of Fiscal Studies highlights the squeeze on real wages and living standards since 2010. Increasing costs of food, energy, childcare, transport and other essentials have hit people, meaning that real wages have fallen for



the majority.

This is also likely to be the case in 2015, meaning that we will experience the first parliament since records began in the 1870s where average workers are worse off at the end of a parliament compared to the beginning.

The impact of austerity

Continued austerity and continued cuts mean the onslaught we face is not easing up at all. Regrettably, it is all too often the case that we are the only organisation that speaks up for the fire service.

Chief officers, who should know better, regularly repeat the mantra that the cuts are here, just get on with them.

Why does the FBU keep complaining? Well, we make no apologies for campaigning and fighting to try to defend our service, our living standards and our pensions.

In reality, we live in a wealthy society which can afford all of these things but, as Tony Benn would have pointed out, real power is in the wrong hands.

The cuts have become so serious that even the Local

Government Association (LGA), which represents employers in England and Wales, recently warned that cuts are going to have an adverse impact on emergency response times and the ability of the service to deal with major national emergencies such as the recent floods.

We have been making this case for a considerable time so it is welcome that the LGA has finally acknowledged a number of our key arguments.

We need to continue to lobby firmly, consistently and relentlessly, and to push the issue of fire and rescue up the political agenda.

In that regard, the union's executive council is currently preparing research and reports on the state of our service and its future role. This is being done in preparation for the general election in 2015 so that we can engage with — and challenge — politicians over the coming year.

It is a job everyone can help with. The fight goes on.



Follow the general secretary on Twitter: @MattWrack

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Victory over retained pensions but overall dispute continues

Pensions

The Fire Brigades Union has heralded victory in the fight for access to fairer pensions for retained firefighters in England — but warned the campaign against government attacks continues.

Retained duty firefighters who worked between 1 July 2000 to 5 April 2006 will, from 1 April, be able retrospectively to access a similar pension to whole-time colleagues.

In 2008 the courts ruled that retained firefighters had been discriminated against under regulations relating to the less favourable treatment of part-time workers after a lengthy court battle conducted by the FBU.

Since then negotiations have taken place solely between the FBU and DCLG to enable RDS firefighters to get what they are entitled to.

As part of these negotiations the FBU

has also achieved a method of repayment that should make it easier for those who wish to join.

But because the Department for Communities and Local Government dragged its feet in implementing the decision, the issue became one of eight points in the FBU's long-running dispute over pensions.

After six years of campaigning by the FBU, the government has now relented and made moves to enact the ruling.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "This is a victory for firefighters and the FBU particularly. We campaigned alone for fair pensions for retained members.

"Our union is the expert voice on firefighter pensions and our members will now be able to access professional advice on the details of the scheme and the advantages of joining.

"But the campaign to defend the pensions of retained and whole-time

firefighters continues. Firefighters across the UK are united in our determination to ensure a workable, fair and affordable scheme for everyone."

Fire and rescue authorities now have until 1 April 2015 to identify eligible individuals and explain how they can join the scheme. The full consultation response from government, which details specifics of the scheme, can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/p9l45og>.

The FBU said that, although the change applies to England specifically, it expected the same process to be followed by devolved governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Contribution increase

Despite progress on retained pensions, there was a serious setback in March when the government said that it will raise the amount firefighters in England must pay towards their pensions from 1 April 2014 despite concerns raised by the FBU.

The increases will apply to members of both the 1992 and 2006 firefighters' pension schemes.

The same increases have also been announced in Scotland, and similar announcements from Wales and Northern Ireland appear imminent.

Matt Wrack said the government's attacks on pensions and the fire and rescue service as a whole had been relentless. "Yet again they have refused to listen to the concerns of firefighters.

"Firefighters are proud to work tirelessly for their communities, but the government's response is to make their pensions unaffordable and jeopardise their retirement.

"Surely now it's time to draw a line in the sand and say: 'No more attacks on our pensions and no more cuts to our service'."

Campaign update

The FBU Executive Council met on 27 February and 25 March and reported to a meeting of local officials on 27 March. The details will be reported back through circulars and through local branches.

PAUL SARRPO



Retained duty system firefighters at Halifax, West Yorkshire, fire station

Mark Lever: Autism touches the lives of over two million people in the UK every day

www.fbu.org.uk



Brigade tried to mislead public on danger of fire

London

London Fire Brigade managers tried to mislead the public over the seriousness of a fire in Dagenham during industrial action over pensions in November last year, the FBU in London has charged.

Firefighters were criticised by local fire chiefs and government ministers when they questioned whether the fire in a scrap metal yard was a major incident.

FBU London regional secretary Paul Embery said London Fire Brigade (LFB) tried to hoodwink their own firefighters and the public over a run-of-the-mill scrap yard fire "because they doubted the ability of their strikebreakers to cope".

He said it was an underhand attempt to trick London firefighters into leaving picket lines during a period of lawful FBU

strike action.

The police commander's log for the incident, obtained under the Freedom of Information Act, reveals:

- The police commander received a direct request from the LFB for the incident to be declared "major".

- A senior brigade officer admitted to the police that the incident was not a major one in terms of firefighting.

- That senior officer then suggested that a major incident should still be declared because of "everything on the periphery".

- These representations helped to "galvanise" the police commander into declaring a major incident.

The major incident declaration was rescinded shortly after the strike ended.

More information on the London FBU's website, visit <http://tinyurl.com/qa7qvwo>

Johnson accused as cuts claim first life

London

Firefighters have accused the London mayor Boris Johnson of having "blood on his hands" after a Woolwich pensioner died following a fire in his home after his nearest fire station had been closed.

Maurice Cunliffe, 83, died in the early hours of 27 February, four days after being pulled semi-conscious from a fire in his flat at Riverview Heights on Eglinton Hill.

FBU London regional secretary Paul Embery said

Johnson's closure of ten fire stations had claimed a first victim. Woolwich fire station was closed along with nine others in January.

Mr Cunliffe was forced to wait while crews from Eltham, Plumstead and East Greenwich fire stations battled to reach him.

Historical data shows that firefighters from Woolwich would have taken around six minutes to arrive at the scene, but on this occasion the first fire engine arrived eight minutes after mobilisation

– more than ten minutes after the brigade received the first call to the incident.

When firefighters found Mr Cunliffe he was suffering from smoke inhalation but was alive and semi-conscious, meaning his chances of being saved would have increased had he been pulled from the fire two or three minutes earlier.

In 1998, cuts supported by the London's current fire commissioner closed Shooters Hill fire station, less than 100 yards from Mr Cunliffe's front door.

SOUNDING OFF

Autism awareness

2 April is World Autism Awareness Day. Mark Lever, chief executive of the National Autistic Society, explains what is at stake

Autism is much more common than most people think with around 700,000 people in the UK living with the disability – that's more than one in 100. If you include their families, autism touches the lives of over two million people in the UK every day. And it doesn't discriminate – it affects people no matter what their social background or gender.

Yet, despite all the lives that autism touches in every corner of the country, myths about what it is and how it affects people still abound. Every day, my organisation hears from people with autism and their families of the misconceptions that they face and the struggles that result.

We've come a long way since the days when people with autism were labelled as "psychotic" but it's clear that there is still work to be done in challenging autism stereotypes and raising awareness of what people with autism can achieve and what they are capable of.

One myth that still persists is that autism only affects children. It is, in fact, a lifelong disability and the National Autistic Society is campaigning to end the wait for the thousands of adults with autism across the country who are not receiving the support they desperately need.

On 2 April, to coincide with World Autism Awareness Day, the government is launching a refreshed strategy to improve the services available to adults with the condition. This strategy flows from the Autism Act, the first disability-specific legislation in England, which the NAS and our supporters campaigned long and hard for.

But policy, practice and awareness still need to be improved to ensure that people affected by autism can live the life they choose.



Please support us to raise awareness and campaign for change. Follow us on twitter

@autism or visit www.autism.org.uk

No sprinklers in station that was destroyed by fire

Norfolk

A fire station that burnt down in Norfolk had no sprinkler system, the brigade's deputy chief fire officer Roy Harold has said. Eight fire engines from across Norfolk and Cambridgeshire attended the fire at Downham Market station and nearby houses were evacuated briefly.

"I think there is a fire safety message there for us," said Harold. "This building's relatively new, but it wasn't sprinklered. If it had been fitted with sprinklers the fire would have been put out very quickly automatically. We now ask all new building developments to consider sprinklers very strongly."

No-one was inside the station, which is crewed by retained firefighters, when the fire broke out and nobody was



hurt in the blaze.

FBU Norfolk secretary Jamie Wyatt said: "This is an opportunity for NFRS to learn from this incident and immediately review its fire risk assessment of its stations, in particular those which are unmanned in the evening and weekends. No one is immune to the risk of fire or its effects when it occurs.

"While sprinklers do not stop fires occurring they are effective in suppressing fire until the fire service can arrive and extinguish the fire, reducing the damage, cost and limiting disruption."

An investigation has been launched. A new station for Downham Market could cost about £1.5m.

Scotland debate is ignoring cuts and austerity, FBU warns

Scotland

The debate around Scottish independence is largely ignoring crucial issues facing workers, especially around cuts, austerity and social justice, the Fire Brigades Union has said.

At the union's last conference, a motion proposed by Scottish delegates declaring the organisation neutral on the issue was passed without anyone speaking against it.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack recently confirmed that union officials would not indicate support for a Yes or No vote in an official capacity.

However, Wrack also said that the independence debate was failing to address crucial issues affecting workers, such as cuts, austerity and falling living standards.

"What firefighters and other workers need is a real alternative to austerity, but on both sides of the referendum debate most politicians aren't even asking the right questions, never mind providing any answers," Wrack said.

"We need policies that stop the cuts, create jobs and provide security and a future for all. We want the longstanding concerns of the trade union movement and working people to be heard in this debate.

"There are strong views on both sides of the Scottish independence debate, but neither camp has provided any serious alternatives to the policies of cuts and austerity that are devastating our public services, cutting living standards and prolonging economic stagnation."

Scotland FBU welcomes Palestinians

Palestine

The Fire Brigades Union recently welcomed colleagues from Palestine who were in Scotland to receive specialist training in water rescue.

The course is being facilitated by the FBU



Palestinian firefighters on the course

in partnership with the Scottish Government, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and the Palestinian Authority.

It builds on links developed over the past few years between the FBU and members of the Palestinian fire service.

Every year in the occupied territories civilians die and businesses are damaged by flash floods. The skills developed and subsequently delivered by the Palestinian Authority Civil Defence (PACD) will assist in reducing death and destruction.

The Palestinian Authority minister of the interior, Dr Said Abu Ali, said: "The Scottish fire and rescue service has developed a course suitable to meet the urgent needs of the PACD and to deliver skills vital for the humanitarian requirements of the Palestinian people."

Firefighters in 25-day hunger strike

Georgia

Firefighters in the Caucasian republic of Georgia recently took part in a 25-day hunger strike to protest against their conditions. Members of the Tbilisi Firefighter-Rescuers Trade Union called for the dismissal of the director of

the country's emergency and urgent services agency, Temur Giorgadze, whom they label a "corrupt criminal".

Firefighters are banned from striking under Georgian law and there is no mediation or mandatory arbitration.

Public Services International and the European Federation

of Public Service Unions — to which the FBU is affiliated — said they fully supported the protest action. Although Georgia's firefighters were willing to risk their lives, they were not provided with adequate equipment and faced daily abuse by their employer, the organisations said.

Local government admits fire authorities at crisis point

FBU challenges all in fire service to stand together to demand adequate funding

Government funding

Fire authorities are reaching crisis point because government funding cuts could hit their ability to respond to future national emergencies.

That was the message of a report from the Local Government Association launched on the eve of its annual fire conference and exhibition, which took place in Cardiff on the 11 and 12 March, and where a large FBU contingent was present to represent the union and firefighters as a whole.

The LGA's report, *AnyFire: The future funding outlook for fire and rescue authorities*, shows that fire and rescue authorities in England and Wales are starting the new financial year with a third less money from central government than four years ago. A further 10% cut is expected for 2015/16.

Although the LGA, which represents 46 fire and rescue services in England and three in Wales, was right to point out the dangers of the funding gap of a typical authority increasing by £3m a year (and being set to reach £17.5m by 2020), the FBU was critical of some of the report's conclusions.

The LGA report maintains that, although services are approaching a critical level, "fire and rescue authorities accept that this is part of the deficit reduction programme and all public services must play their part in this".

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "The LGA is right to say that fire and rescue services must be given the funding to play a key, continued role in national resilience.

"But it's clear that across the country cuts are already slowing emergency response times, impacting on critical services and endangering lives.

"All of us working in fire and rescue and local government must stand together to save fire and rescue services and convince central government to provide adequate

funding for brigades.

"Merely creating a greater burden on local people by increasing council tax, reducing effectiveness by cutting cover at night or reducing firefighter salaries will not work – particularly after three long years of attacks on pensions."

On the opening day of the conference, Wrack took part in a panel discussion "The case for change" in the fire and rescue service, alongside Paul Fuller, president of the Chief Fire Officers Association, and Peter Holland, the Westminster government's chief fire and rescue adviser.

"The FBU has pioneered innovation, but any changes, such as greater collaboration with other emergency services, must put safety first, and discussions must include the expert view of firefighters themselves"

Wrack said: "Firefighters want to provide a world-class fire and rescue service to the communities we serve, but the case for change turns on improving the quality of our service and elevating the role of firefighters themselves.

"What is currently happening is that fire stations are closing and fire engines being axed as firefighter jobs are slashed. That is simply worsening the service for our communities and already means people waiting longer for a fire engine when they dial 999.

"The FBU has pioneered change in the fire and rescue service since the Second World War but we will not countenance slashing our service and dressing it up as an improvement, nor embrace so-called innovation if it really means a worse

service or worse conditions.

"Firefighters want a service that can respond rapidly to a wide range of emergencies and has consistent, universal and professional standards at its core, but this is reliant on sustained investment, not even more cuts."

Other areas of discussion during the conference included blue light integration, the role of retained firefighters, privatisation, mutuals and contracting out and flooding.

Westminster fire minister Brandon Lewis also addressed the conference. Firefighters had hoped that he would use the opportunity to respond to the Ken Knight review of the fire and rescue service, *Facing the future: findings from the review of efficiencies and operations in fire and rescue authorities in England*, but the minister did not explicitly address the report.

Instead he discussed more collaboration between emergency services, more extensive use of retained firefighters and the decreasing number of fire incidents.

In response, Wrack said: "Ten months on from the Ken Knight review, we are still waiting for the government's response, but the minister's comments today suggest it is too much for firefighters to hope that they have put his dangerous agenda to rest.

"The declining incidence of fires is reliant on the resources given to the fire and rescue service, and cutting budgets and firefighter jobs will mean less fire safety work and a reduced capacity to respond quickly and effectively.

"Retained firefighters do a magnificent job, but we can't simply replace whole-time staff without affecting the safety of our communities.

"The FBU has pioneered innovation throughout the history of the fire and rescue service, but any changes, such as greater collaboration with other emergency services, must put safety first, and discussions must include the expert view of firefighters themselves."



Matt Wrack addresses the conference

**NEWS
FOCUS**

Whole service must stand together against cuts, Wrack tells conference

VIEW
FROM THE
AERIAL LADDER
PLATFORM



A photograph of a woman in a white jacket with 'FIGHTER' written on the back, working at a sewing machine in a garment factory. The background shows other workers and sewing machines in a dimly lit industrial setting.

Workers' Memorial Day

In our picture a woman wears a jacket identifying her as a fire safety steward as she works at the Goldtex garment factory in Savar, Bangladesh.

The collapse of the Rana Plaza building in the Bangladesh capital of Dhaka two years ago killed more than 1,100 people.

In November 2012, 112 workers died in a fire at the Tazreen Fashions factory in Dhaka.

These disasters highlighted the appalling working conditions in the country's textile industry which employs nearly half of the country's workers, much of whose production is exported to the west.

Every 15 seconds, somewhere in the world a worker dies as a result of a work-related accident or illness. This means more people die while at work than fighting in wars.

On 28 April every year trade unions around the world mark Workers' Memorial Day as an international event to remember workers killed in incidents at work or by diseases caused by work. At the same time it is an opportunity to campaign to ensure that such tragedies are not repeated: to "remember the dead and fight for the living".

All over the world the day sees active campaigning, workplace awareness events, public events, speeches, multi-faith religious services, wreath laying, tree planting, the unveiling of monuments, balloon releases, and events where organisers lay out empty shoes to symbolise those who have died at work.

The event is recognised by the International Labour Organization and the International Trade Union Confederation.

In 1999 it was adopted by the TUC which believes that the campaign is best approached by "building trade union organisation and campaigning for stricter enforcement with higher penalties for breaches of health and safety laws".

The TUC coordinates activities across the country. You can find a list of events taking place at <http://bit.ly/FBUmemorialday>.

For resources on Workers Memorial day including ribbons and car stickers please contact the Greater Manchester Hazards centre at: mail@gmhazards.org.uk.

PICTURE: ANDREW BIRAJ/REUTERS

Fire and rescue services across the country are suffering deep cuts. But firefighters and local communities are uniting to stand up for public and firefighter safety and their opposition is causing local politicians to think twice. *Firefighter* looks at the latest developments in campaigns across the UK.

Firefighters and communities unite against cuts

Firefighters in **Wales** have expressed their “deep concern” over proposals to merge the control room for Mid and West Wales with South Wales and relocate it to the headquarters of South Wales police in Bridgend.

The FBU believes that the fire authorities of South Wales and Mid and West Wales passed the merger following a feasibility study at the end of last year.

Grant Mayos, FBU executive council member for Wales, said: “Our highly skilled control room members have proven time and time again that local knowledge saves precious time in responding to incidents.

“We are therefore deeply concerned about how the loss of a dedicated fire control room in Mid and West Wales will affect the service provided to local communities – and the future of our members.

“The FBU in Wales has opposed this move from the outset and we have informed management of our serious concerns.”

However, there is good news from **Bedfordshire**, where the fire authority rejected proposals from the fire service to downgrade Kempston fire station.

Firefighters argued that the change would have resulted in a significant increase in slower responses to 999

emergencies and greater risk for local communities. Bedfordshire FBU secretary Jamie Newell said firefighters from across the county would like to thank the public and local councillors for their support. “We’re proud to continue to support you through the work we do.

“This united campaign from firefighters, members of the community and their local councillors shows the significance and importance of standing together. But the fight continues, and we must build more ties within the community to stop other cuts, particularly in Luton and Bedford.”

No Plan B

East Sussex firefighters have complained that their chief fire officer “wants the public to do his job for him” after he admitted he has no “Plan B” for his scheme to cut firefighter jobs and fire engines.

The fire authority is asking the public for its suggestions through an online questionnaire which says there is “an over-provision of emergency resources”; that large cuts have to be made; and that the “status quo is not an option”.

Des Prichard – who earns more than £150,000 a year – has proposed cuts that could lead to the loss of 80 firefighter jobs, as well as fire engines in Brighton, Hove and Hastings.



FBU members and members of the public marched from the Cromwell Road fire station to Grimsby Town Hall on 15 March.

Because of £8m cuts by Humberside fire and rescue service, Cromwell Road is due to merge with Peaks Lane station with the loss of one fire engine.

Both Cleethorpes and Waltham fire stations will lose their fire engines and get 4x4 vehicles.





RICK EVANS/GRIMSBY SCOUTHOPE MEDIA GROUP

Gavin Marshall, FBU rep at Cromwell Road, said his members felt the plans would increase response times and put people's lives at risk.

"Yes, fire calls are decreasing," he told the Grimsby Telegraph, "but you cannot just base it on stats.

"Just before Christmas we had a spate of flat fires where single mothers had been burning paper to keep warm."



Simon Herbert, Fire Brigades Union chair for East Sussex, said: "I'm amazed that Mr Prichard has been unable to offer any alternatives to cutting appliances and firefighter numbers and is now asking the public to do his job for him.

"I would expect a reduction in the number of fire engines or station downgrades or closures to be the last place he would look to make savings."

In **Warwickshire**, firefighters reacted with anger to news that their deputy chief fire officer Gary Phillips would return to the job a month after retiring. Marcus Giles, FBU secretary for Warwickshire, said: "This is just a question of jobs for the boys and is a particular insult at a time when the service is being cut to shreds by central government."

Warwickshire is currently making £2.39m in cuts which will lead to the loss of 40 whole-time and 36 retained firefighter positions over four years.

Lives at risk

In **Cleveland**, the fire authority is pressing ahead with plans to close Marine fire station and cut 114 full-time firefighter jobs, despite over 95% of respondents to the Fire Brigade Union's survey saying that they felt lives would be put at risk if the cuts were implemented.

FBU secretary Davy Howe said: "We will leave no stone unturned in our ongoing fight against these cuts."

More than 8,000 people signed the FBU's petition against the proposals.

Grimsby firefighters and their supporters marched against cuts to local fire services. Humberside fire authority recently announced that Cromwell Road station in Grimsby will effectively close, with one of its fire engines moved to Peaks Lane station and the other being lost permanently.

FBU secretary Richard Walker said: "It's important that firefighters and the people of Grimsby stand together to prevent these reckless changes going ahead."

Tory councillor is suspended after backing Labour party amendment to put off cuts

Jobs for the boys: deputy chief back in job a month after retiring

Tyne and Wear firefighters have expressed their "devastation" about the decision to close three stations.

A vote at a meeting of the fire authority on 17 February means that Sunderland Central, Gosforth and Wallsend fire stations could still close within the next three years.

FBU secretary Dave Turner said: "This is a very sad day for firefighters and the community who were united in the campaign to keep the stations open.

"The FBU has spent a great deal of time consulting with local politicians and it is clear that most do not support any station closures.

"So why did they vote for a plan that neither they nor the public nor firefighters agree with?"

Plans for redundancies and £3.7m cuts to **Hereford and Worcester** fire service are dangerous and wrong, local firefighters have said.

FBU representatives were informed of possible compulsory redundancies at a meeting with senior managers.

In an indication of how campaigns against fire service cuts can affect the views of politicians, the *Malvern Gazette* reported that Conservative councillor Phil Grove had been suspended by his party after breaking ranks with the Tory group on the fire authority at a meeting in February.

He had backed Labour plans to inject an extra £500,000 into the service. His decision led to a crucial amendment being passed by 11 votes to 10. It delayed a decision to make £4m of cuts until June using the cash from a budget surplus.

Earlier, FBU secretary Steve Gould said: "These cuts could mean that the firefighters who have been working so hard to combat recent floods could be made redundant within six months.

"How would our communities cope with future floods with even less rescue cover?"

"Firefighters take great pride in serving our local community, and now we need every resident in Hereford and Worcester to tell their politicians: No more cuts to local fire services."

Firefighters once again responded magnificently to the major flooding of the past winter. England and Wales endured the wettest winter since records began. About 6,500 properties were flooded.

Peter Holland, chief fire and rescue adviser in England, said that 70% of England's fire and rescue services were involved in the relief effort and that more than 1,000 people had been rescued. Over 100 specialist flood rescue teams were available during these floods, though not all were deployed.

Some 20 brigades assisted in Devon and Somerset and a further 16 crews helped in Berkshire in February. As well as rescuing people, firefighters defended critical national and local infrastructure – such as the Kenley water treatment works in Croydon, south London.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack visited some of the flood-hit areas in the south-west and north-west of England in February.

"Firefighters did a fantastic job in the floods, saving lives and reducing damage

done to homes and businesses," he said. "They are always proud to serve their communities during difficult times."

There are no definitive figures as yet on the number of people firefighters assisted during these floods. The FBU is seeking to find out but, so far, it seems that fire and rescue services themselves have no clear idea.

200 assisted

During the tidal surge and flooding on 5 December 2013, Cleveland FBU officials reported that firefighters assisted more than 200 people, including leading 100 coach passengers and 80 others to safety at industrial sites.

Yet the fire and rescue service says that only two people were rescued in floods during that month. This is particularly galling as Cleveland firefighters are facing cuts to the service, including at stations that responded to flooding.

Politicians do not even know how much activity to tackle floods has been going on and still seem determined to slash the service.

Lynne Owens, the chief constable of Surrey, told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme that in the 24 hours 10-11 February, firefighters rescued 150 people from floods. Yet firefighters in Surrey have complained that money is being wasted on private contractors while the fire and rescue service is being cut.

FBU officials have reported significant problems in crucial areas of flood response during the recent events.

Wrack said: "A very troubling picture is emerging of understaffed operations, badly equipped firefighters and inadequate training severely hampering their work and creating greater risk for firefighters and the public."

Examples reported by firefighters so far include:

- Problems with providing relief crews, with firefighters working 12 hours or more without a break
- Wet-weather kit used by one shift and then passed to the next shift – still wet
- Concerns about training of some boat crews
- Kit given to the army instead of being

Firefighters rise to the challenge of floods ...

... but questions
over resources
and statutory duty
remain unanswered



used by firefighters

- Carbon monoxide exposure for the public and firefighters
- Control rooms inundated with calls
- Different rates of pay for overtime and stand-down time
- The use of private contractors to do flood work
- Concern about whether the full cost of response will be reimbursed
- How damaged or used kit will be replaced.

Wrack said: "Although there has been improvement in equipment after firefighters raised concerns during the 2007 floods, it seems our calls for better preparation and support have not yet been adequately addressed, with unprecedented cuts severely jeopardising our ability to cope with the floods effectively.

"After such a magnificent response by firefighters to flooding, it was surprising to hear ministers still denying the need for a legal duty on the fire and rescue service to respond to flooding."

Communities and local government secretary Eric Pickles told the House

"Unprecedented cuts severely jeopardise our ability to cope with the floods"

of Commons on 10 February that local resilience forums were "working well" and that "making this a statutory duty would not help anything and would not make a single community safer".

5,000 fewer firefighters

There are 5,000 fewer firefighters today than at the time of the 2007 floods. Although floods are top of the national risk register, local IRMPs often fail to mention floods and local resilience forums do not adequately quantify the risks.

The lesson of the recent flooding is that the government must provide serious resources to ensure that firefighters can intervene throughout, from flood defence work to evacuation, rescue

and pumping out.

Asked about a statutory duty on 3 March, fire minister Brandon Lewis said: "My discussions with fire chiefs have revealed that that is what they are happy with; they like the current situation."

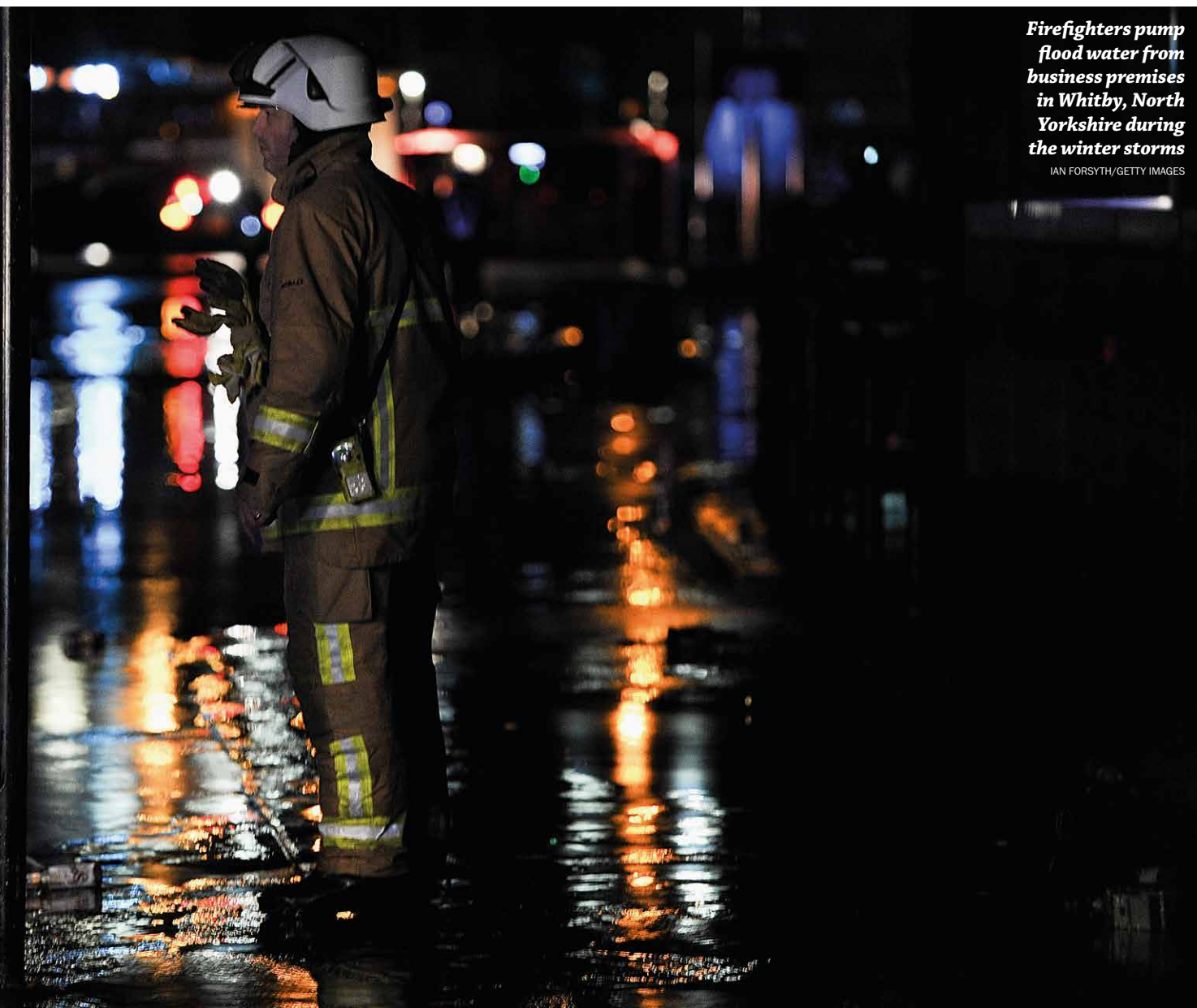
The need for a statutory duty was proposed by the FBU after the 2007 floods. It was accepted by the Pitt review of those floods, but not implemented in England and Wales. Scotland already had it – Northern Ireland introduced it in 2012 after FBU campaigning. Even the Chief Fire Officers Association wants clarification of responsibilities for flood management.

No doubt some senior figures in the fire and rescue service will be telling ministers that they coped well enough and no change in the law is necessary.

But these floods prove a statutory duty is vital. The fire and rescue service needs the funding, the resources, the equipment and, crucially, the highly trained professional firefighters so that the service is ready for the next deluge.

Firefighters pump flood water from business premises in Whitby, North Yorkshire during the winter storms

IAN FORSYTH/GETTY IMAGES





£1 billion and 5,000 jobs – the cost of warehouse fires

Report counts the cost of inadequate sprinkler regulations

The economy has lost £1 bn in production and 5,000 full-time jobs through preventable fires in commercial warehouses in England and Wales over the last five years.

That is the conclusion of research commissioned by the Business Sprinkler Alliance and independently conducted by the Centre for Economics and Business Research into the financial and economic impact of blazes in warehouses without sprinkler systems.

Between 2009 and 2012 there was an annual average of 588 fires in commercial warehouses that did not

have automatic fire sprinkler systems installed as a preventative measure.

Their report found that, as a result, each year an average of £230m was directly lost by businesses and £190m was lost in productivity and through the impact on the supply chain. In addition, the government lost £160m in tax receipts over five years and £11m was spent on carbon dioxide emissions and water used in fighting fires.

On top of this, approximately 1,000 direct and indirect jobs were lost annually through disruption and business failure; an average of 21 local businesses were affected by road closures and air and water contamination; and

135,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide were released into the atmosphere annually – the equivalent of the carbon dioxide produced by generating the annual electricity consumption of Portsmouth.

The report argues that fire safety laws focus on preventing deaths and the spread of a fire to other premises, but neglect the protection of the premises themselves or their contents such as machinery or equipment.

Benefits

As well as recommending that the government should increase awareness of the benefits of installing automatic fire sensing and suppression systems



LEWIS WHYLD/PA IMAGES

(AFSSs) in the warehouse industry, the report also suggested a review of building regulations, particularly whether it is right that only newly built warehouses that exceed 20,000 square metres are obliged to install AFSSs.

FBU assistant general secretary Andy Dark said: "There's no doubt that AFSSs have an important role to play in reducing the effect of fires. As this report demonstrates, the failure to ensure more extensive installation of

sprinklers has led to massive economic damage – as well as increasing the risk of death and injury to firefighters and the general public.

"But even if sprinklers were installed everywhere, it would not negate the need for a fully funded, professional fire and rescue service. In addition, we need to make sure firefighters have the time and resources to dedicate to fire safety work, whether through public information or the inspection of buildings."

The FBU has long advocated the case for AFSSs and welcomed the report. But, as the union told the government in its report *Facing Reality — the need for a fully funded fire and rescue service*, published in June last year, sprinklers (and smoke alarms) do not rescue people, they do not extinguish fires completely and they do not stop fire spreading to surrounding properties.

Firefighting crucial

For these irreplaceable tasks, firefighters are necessary.

It is clear that further research is needed on the economic case for maintaining and improving operational intervention at fires when they do occur, whether the fire spread has been suppressed by sprinklers and other active fire protection measures or not.

Further research is needed on the economic case for maintaining and improving operational intervention



Training to help you help your fellow members

Update your knowledge and develop your skills with the FBU

The FBU values the contribution of every member and official and is proud of its tradition of broader trade union education. The union is committed to offering opportunities to help all members develop new skills and gain the confidence to take an active role in the workplace and our organisation.

Branch officials, health and safety reps and union learning reps (including part-time and retained members) all have the right to paid time off for training for their role. Our courses are also designed to accommodate other members. Training and learning materials are provided by the union nationally and are free for FBU members.

The FBU's national education programme is made up of a range of courses designed to help branch, brigade, section and regional officials as well as active members with their development.

Within the programme, we have developed "pathways" that group component courses for different types of official and member to help them develop the right mixture of skills and knowledge.

All the pathways start with core introductory courses. After these, participants can choose from optional courses in their own pathway or from another and access courses from the TUC, depending on their needs.

Branch and section officials, brigade education officers and regional education and learning organisers are available to help members plan their development and will be able to provide a named contact to help members get started.

Sectional schools and courses

As well as education for members as a whole, most FBU sections — women, black and ethnic minority members, LGBT, control staff and officers — also organise seminars and schools. You can find out more about these events from the sectional secretaries.

Interested in training?

If you are interested in taking part in FBU training, talk to your local officials. National officials let regional officials know about forthcoming events. The regional officials then identify and nominate candidates.

National school

This year's FBU national school takes place on 10–14 November at Wortley Hall near Sheffield.

The national school is the main education event in the union's calendar.

It will cover industrial issues as well as wider political, economic and social affairs. It takes place over five working days, Monday to Friday.

Participants will have the chance to update their knowledge, develop their skills and confidence to engage in debates covering current fire service employment issues; what is happening at the National Joint Council; and matters with a wider social and political relevance.

Attendees will be given a pre-course assignment to help them prepare and will work with others attending on relevant project reports, bringing together coursework and guided learning on external educational visits that will be incorporated into the week's learning activities.

The introductory course Engaging with Politics is linked to the Developing Campaigning and Organising Skills course within the brigade and regional official's follow-on pathway. Attendees will have had to attend at least one of these courses before attending the National School.

Participants will update knowledge, skills and confidence to engage in debates covering employment issues

Subjects included in training

The education programme aims to help members and officials:

- Improve their performance within the workplace and the union
- Gain opportunities to achieve a greater understanding of trade union policies and priorities
- Develop an understanding of the wider political context within which they work
- Improve study skills and personal confidence while participating in educational activities
- Have their learning achievements recognised through accreditation

Examples of training

- Handling members' problems
- Fairness at work
- Tackling bullying and harassment
- Discipline casework and representation at hearings
- Internal investigations
- Bargaining skills
- Engaging with politics
- Developing campaign skills
- Building union membership
- Promoting and developing union learning
- Pensions appeals
- Fire and rescue service funding and financial information
- Integrated risk management planning and challenging within the process



PICTURES: MARTIN JENKINSON

BA GUIDANCE

The need is as pressing as ever

The FBU has advised members to continue to use the existing BA procedures

Breathing apparatus

In January the government published a document, *Operational guidance: breathing apparatus*, that applies to England and was designed to replace BA procedures laid out in a technical bulletin that was issued by the Home Office 17 years ago (number 1/1997). Separate arrangements are in place for guidance in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Although the FBU has long been the foremost advocate of the need for central guidance, we also believe that any such guidance must be robust and safe.

Within the new guidance, the union identified some key, risk-critical issues, including a failure to incorporate the lessons from investigations into serious accidents.

As a result, the FBU wrote to all relevant ministers across the UK to draw attention to our concerns. The union

will soon meet Peter Holland, the chief fire and rescue adviser at the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), to discuss them. The FBU has also

been given the opportunity to raise these issues with the governments in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

The need for safe and effective BA guidance is as pressing as ever. Firefighter fatalities at incidents are becoming an almost annual event. Perhaps most worrying of all, East Sussex Fire and Rescue Authority is pursuing a legal

defence that fire authorities have no responsibility to protect the safety of firefighters at an incident. The union believes that this mindset – combined with weak BA guidance – is a recipe for disaster.

Examples of the FBU's concerns

- Recognition of the congruity of fire service role and incident ground role
- More comprehensive guidance on training and the use of BA equipment by those who are not yet fully competent
- Clearer guidance on the centrality of communication
- A greater emphasis on the need to learn lessons from the tragic events that have taken place since the last guidance was issued
- Ensuring the document mirrors the DCLG's Fire and Rescue Authorities health, safety and welfare framework for the operational environment issued in June 2013 which has HSE approval
- An improved definition of the triggers for reviewing the guidance, for example, the lessons arising from an investigation or on the advice of the chief fire and rescue adviser.

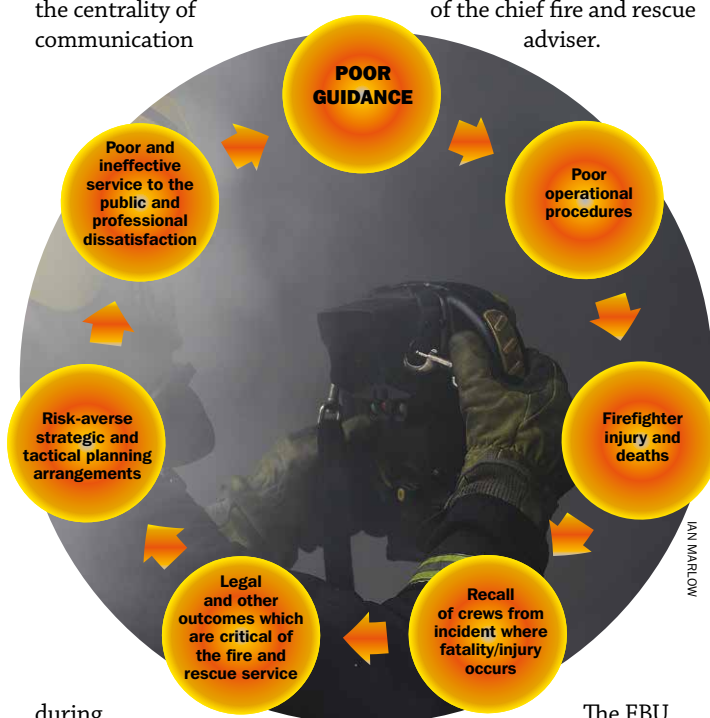
The union wants to make sure that the fire and rescue service maintains its function to extinguish fire, and operates with correct and safe fire-fighting procedures that ensure there is no contradiction between active intervention and firefighter safety. To achieve this, guidance – including for breathing apparatus – must be suitably robust.

Without this, we risk establishing a cycle of poor guidance, poor operational procedures, avoidable firefighter deaths and injury, legal challenge (through compensation, coroner's decision or Health and Safety Executive action), a tendency toward risk-averse strategic planning and an ineffective fire and rescue service which reduces professionalism and provides a less effective fire and rescue service for the public.

As a result, the FBU has advised members to continue to use existing BA procedures. Local officials and health and safety representatives have been advised on what constitutes safe BA procedures, although local representatives can discuss any proposed changes with local management.

FBU assistant general secretary Andy Dark said: "There is no immediate need for alarm. Although the guidance has been published, existing BA procedures remain in place and we have the mechanisms through which our concerns with the central guidance can be addressed.

"We'll keep members informed of developments through the usual channels."



during incidents

- Clearer guidance on the restricted conditions in which emergency deployment of BA could take place and the use of the term "emergency deployment" rather than "rapid deployment"

The FBU is committed to ensuring that the problems and issues that directly or indirectly contributed to the death of and serious injury to firefighters in the years since the last guidance was issued are addressed.

Legal Beagle

When it's time to blow the whistle

FBU
FREEPHONE
LEGAL ADVICE
0808 100 6061
IN SCOTLAND
0800 089 1331

Q I have seen something at work that I know contravenes health and safety legislation. I want to tell someone about it but am I protected at all?

The Public Interest Disclosure Act (PIDA) 1998 protects disclosures, but only if they involve a criminal offence, failure to comply with legal obligations, a miscarriage of justice, health and safety or the environment.

The Enterprise and Regulatory Reform Act (ERRA) came into force in June 2013. It further restricts protected disclosures to those "made in the public interest" and which are "reasonable in the circumstances". The irony is that, while the law was supposed to encourage individuals who have witnessed wrongdoing to make disclosures, even if a disclosure is made in the public interest it is currently not "protected" unless it meets these criteria.

In short, there is a real lack of clarity around what constitutes a "protected" disclosure.

This presents whistleblowers with a legal minefield which, if not navigated correctly, could ruin their career.

The government is still considering its response to a consultation on whistleblowing that analysed whether there are aspects of the law which were deterring whistleblowers from coming forward. But if this government's record on employment rights is anything to go by, we should not expect much to change.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Q Who should I make a disclosure to?

A There are different conditions to be met for a whistleblower to be protected, depending on to whom the disclosure is made.

The law encourages internal disclosure by protecting any qualifying disclosure made internally to an employer or other reasonable person. However, when a disclosure is made externally, there are additional criteria to be satisfied in order to ensure protection.

The whistleblower must reasonably believe that the disclosure is substantially

true and of a serious nature - not made for personal gain - and must believe that it is reasonable to make the disclosure.

Moreover, if the disclosure is made to a regulator, the worker must believe that the disclosure comes under the remit of the particular regulator.

The difficulty with this is that while, in some cases, it will be obvious which regulator to approach, there are many other instances where this might be less clear and a whistleblower could inadvertently make an unprotected disclosure, even when this is made in good faith.

Q Could my career be put at risk by making a disclosure?

A A firefighter who wishes to make a disclosure may understandably have concerns over a potential backlash from their employers or colleagues and may fear for their future career prospects.

As in most occupations, firefighters who have taken on their employer and raised a concern could be treated cautiously by new employers and are therefore inherently disadvantaged.

A firefighter who is a member of a trade union may find themselves in a much stronger position should they wish to make a disclosure.

In addition to vital legal support, another of the many advantages of union membership is that unions can offer a whistleblower the option to raise concerns anonymously through a third party, removing the risk to their careers entirely.

For example, Thompsons recently advised an employee of a university who wished to expose wrongdoing by a senior member of staff in their department. The concern was that the university - or the colleague and their circle of influence - would close ranks and sacrifice the career of the whistleblower to avoid a scandal.

Through making their disclosure through a third party, the employee was removed from these risks.

'It's about boosting confidence and team building'

Sarah Gartland was inspired by a session at an FBU school to make her own contribution to helping victims of sexual abuse get back on track



Volunteering

When Grangetown, Cleveland, firefighter Sarah Gartland went to the FBU women's school at Wortley Hall near Sheffield two years ago, a presentation from a group of women had a huge impact.

A team from Sheffield Rape and Sexual Abuse Counselling Service spelled out the lasting effect violation can have on women's lives. Some had never spoken of their traumatic abuse to anyone before contacting SRASACS. Other rape crisis centres across the UK could tell the same story.

The service provides a free helpline and free counselling at a secret location in the city. Even if many years have lapsed, counselling can help restore a sense of self-worth corroded by the trauma of assault. It has helped many "victims" redefine themselves as survivors. Lives have been set back on course.

Inspired by the Sheffield women, Sarah, who worked in youth development before joining the fire service a decade ago, was determined to get involved with local support groups when she got back home.

Build confidence

Shifts and family commitments ruled out training as a counsellor. But Sarah's previous career had equipped her with the skills to run workshops designed to boost self-esteem and build confidence. Now she uses those skills to empower both women and men coming to terms with sexual abuse in her locality.

"When people go to a rape crisis centre they need to talk about what's happened to them," says Sarah. "My session is completely different. It's about boosting confidence and team-building. Completely different to confidential counselling – but complementary."

Sarah's workshops have helped to restore self-esteem when the sense of self has been violated and compromised by abuse. "No matter how many qualifications someone has, a sexual attack can have devastating consequences and make people feel worthless." Not everyone, but too many needlessly blighted lives.

The workshops Sarah runs aim to empower – but they can also be fun, as women attending FBU women's school last year can attest.

After formal sessions had finished, they had the chance to take part in a workshop Sarah has devised for vulnerable groups. It was an exhilarating evening – the workshop won glowing reviews on women's school feedback forms. Of course, "You had to be there" to experience how effortlessly the session brought out the need to cooperate to achieve common goals and the sense of team bonding and empowerment successful completion of joint tasks brings.

But here is a flavour. In one task, each woman had a letter stuck to one hand. When Sarah called out a word, they had to line up to get the spelling right. Some were long, some were short – there was a lot of moving around, interaction, negotiation, shared sense of purpose. The final phrase was "Women's School".



SARAH GARTLAND

Cleveland firefighter Sarah Gartland was inspired by a session at an FBU women's school to run her own workshops to boost the self-esteem of victims of sexual abuse



Bonding and empowerment through teamwork at Wortley Hall

In another, giant and tiny card packs had to be sorted into suits, each group deciding how best to get the job done fast – delegating, allocating suits, cooperating. There was even a relay race using Jenga building blocks. Without cooperation and teamwork these tasks risked descending into chaos.

But teamwork won through. This is hardly surprising as teamwork is part of the firefighter job spec. But the methods Sarah uses in her workshops work well with vulnerable people who may be battling chronic loss of self-esteem and have certainly never been out on a shout. "It's not about the task, it's about the process around the task," Sarah explains. "People get absorbed in tasks, cooperating and working alongside each other in an atmosphere of mutual trust."

A lot more fun

And it seems a lot more effective – and certainly a lot more fun – than exploring the concept of teamwork on a whiteboard.

Official statistics are startling. The latest government-endorsed figures estimate there are 69,000 female and 9,000 male rape victims each year. Most never make it to court. Just 1,070 people a year, on average, are convicted of rape.

The need for services such as those offered by SRASACS is acute, as councils slash funding and grants dry up. The "Jimmy Savile effect" is prompting women who have lived with the aftermath of assault for years to seek help for the first time.

At last year's FBU conference, Helen Harrison from the FBU national women's committee organised a bucket collection for SRASACS. It raised £700, which was partly used to build new stairs at the centre, opening up more much-needed counselling space.

Vote of thanks

At the Women's TUC this year, Sarah Gartland moved the vote of thanks – after delegates had backed motions calling for more support for victims of domestic violence, to step up the campaign against female genital mutilation and to highlight the impact bedroom tax is having on vulnerable women who need a place of safety in their own home.

Sarah was due to run another workshop at this year's women's school – and will continue to offer her pro bono workshops to groups supporting men and women who are suffering the aftermath of sexual assault.

She is also exploring working with women whose confidence has been sapped after suffering domestic violence, helping them write CVs and get back on track.

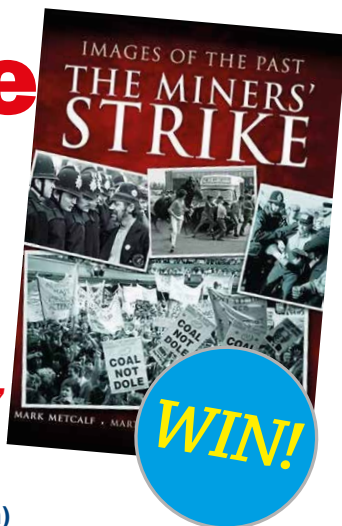
Sarah is now a huge enthusiast for volunteering – and thinks many firefighters who are not yet volunteering have skills they could share outside work.

"I'm really glad I got involved as a volunteer – it feels good to give something back." It must be good to know you are helping to make a difference to people whose lives have been traumatised.

Prize quiz

Win one of six copies of *Images of the past: The Miners' Strike*

(Images by Martin Jenkinson)



HOW TO ENTER

To win a copy of *Images of the Past* please send your answers by 30 April 2014 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (April 2014), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.



1 2014 is the 25th anniversary of the fall of which wall?

- A - Hadrian's wall
- B - The Great Wall of China
- C - The Berlin Wall
- D - The Western Wall

2 The invention by Sir Tim Berners-Lee of the world wide web celebrates which anniversary this year?

- A - 25th
- B - 30th
- C - 50th
- D - 10th

3 Which American animated sitcom aired its first episode in December 1989?

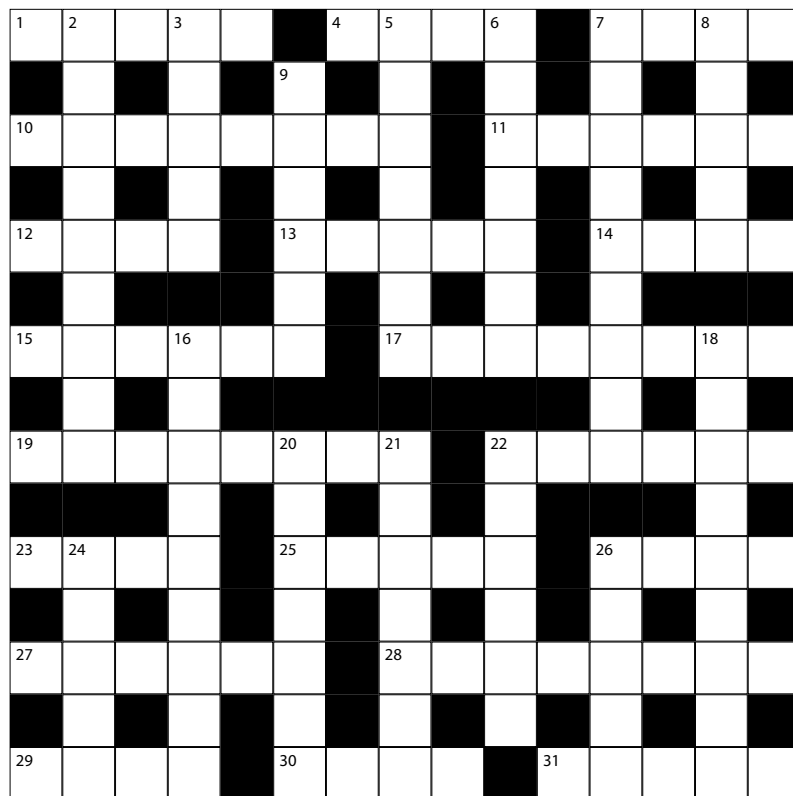
- A - The Simpsons
- B - Family Man
- C - Sponge Bob
- D - Beavis and Butt-head

4 February 1989 marked the launch of which 24-hour news television channel?

- A - BBC 24
- B - Sky TV
- C - Channel 4
- D - Channel 5

5 Translated from Chinese, the "June Fourth incident" or "89 democracy movement" refers to what event?

- A - The Tiananmen Square massacre
- B - The beginning of the 'New Democratic Revolution' in 1919
- C - Chinese dissident Liu Xiaobo awarded Nobel Peace Prize
- D - The end of the Great Qing dynasty in 1912



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1 Type of dry-cured ham, and where it's from (5)
- 4 One who considers him or herself superior - like Hyacinth 11 (4)
- 7 The R in 6's union (4)
- 10 Socialist politician, died in March (4,4)
- 11 Rudimentary bit of kit! (or sitcom 4) (6)
- 12 Male pig (4)
- 13 Thespian (5)
- 14 Dislike intensely (4)
- 15 You should have one on each foot (3,3)
- 17 With strength, energy and influence (8)
- 19 Britain's most popular perennial (8)
- 22 Such workers are often employed on zero hours contracts (6)
- 23 Fish - with a deep voice? (4)
- 25 Trousers, across the pond (5)
- 26 Watery obstacle around building (4)
- 27 Japanese dressing-gown (6)
- 28 The M in 6's union (8)
- 29 Defeat (the flames?) (4)
- 30 Jane Austen novel (4)
- 31 Peter Pan's pal (5)

DOWN

- 2 Express sorrow (9)
- 3 London's one likes closing fire stations (5)
- 5 Without pause (3-4)
- 6 Union leader, died in March (3,4)
- 7 Sporting equine (9)
- 8 Chemically inactive - like argon (5)
- 9 One of ten in a century (6)
- 16 The T in 6's union (9)
- 18 Such luggage is left on the carousel (9)
- 20 Become better (7)
- 21 Least (7)
- 22 Soak up (6)
- 24 Similar (to) (5)
- 26 1,000mm (5)

Last issue's answers and winners



Crossword solution March

March quiz answers

- 1 - C Canada
- 2 - C Lox
- 3 - A The Hole In The Wall Gang
- 4 - A Oil on the track
- 5 - D Slaughterhouse-Five

Winner of January/February quiz

Joe Jackson, London



Station Cat

Food, floods and a fire authority fix

Forbidden fruit ...

 If you visit the Merseyside fire and rescue service human resources department, don't eat a banana. Bananas have joined a growing list of forbidden things after a young woman who works there was told off for eating one at her desk.

Apparently she was disobeying an instruction in a new list of "Don'ts" which says: "Avoid eating at desks, especially hot food that can produce a strong smell that may affect your colleagues or food which requires a knife and fork to eat."

She must have thought that bananas, normally eaten cold and without the aid of knife and fork, were relatively safe.

What you may or may not eat at your desk is just one of the great issues that the most important people in Merseyside FRS have been wrestling with.

A pay and pensions manager got a dressing down for discussing funeral and widow's pension issues for a dead colleague in the office. The conversation should have taken place in a glass box, apparently.

They've built these little glass boxes, you see, where you go if you need to speak to anyone. You can talk for up to half an hour. Then the lights and air conditioning are turned off. If you need a bit more time, you go outside and wait a few minutes, then go

in again.

The memorandum setting out the means of achieving this silent, antiseptic, human-free space is dated November last year and is headed "Summary of Office Behaviour Principles". It goes on:

"Teams are asked to look at the principles collectively and discuss the implications for their own areas." It adds. "The Office Refurbishment Forum Working Group will review the principles and their impact in 6 months' time." The ORFWG, no less. We can't wait for its pronouncement.

Instructions include: "Refrain from placing anything on low level storage units"; "Refrain from placing posters and other things on walls or upon the desk dividers"; and "Clear desks at the end of the day."

Apparently the top brass in Merseyside FRS has the time both to write this rubbish and then wander around policing it.

Johnson's job creation scheme

 Who says that nice mayor Boris Johnson just wants to cut the number of people in the fire service? Your cat has found he actually wants to increase

Democracy at work – mayor Boris Johnson is hoping to avoid more troublesome opposition to his plans by reducing the number of elected members of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority and increasing the number of his own appointees

PICTURE STEFANO CAGNONI



numbers, in one area anyway. OK, so that one area is mayoral appointments to the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA). There are only two at the moment, and he wants six of them.

Unfortunately, it looks as though this may just make it easier for him to get rid of firefighters. The LFEPA has in the past tried to block Mayor Johnson's cuts. And he doesn't want that sort of trouble again.

So he wants to reduce the number of assembly members on the board from eight to six, and the number of councillors from seven to five. So increasing the number of mayoral appointees from two to six takes on a rather different aspect.

A silver lining for this crowd

 We're all in this together, number 1,197. Join your cat in celebrating the sustained good fortune of Paul Hancock, chief fire officer in Cheshire, his deputy, the appropriately named Mark Cashin, and assistant CFO Richard Ost.

In 2011, Messrs Hancock and Cashin got "recognition awards" of £3,000 each for their "excellent performance" and their "additional regional and national roles." Mr Ost was fast-tracked up the scale.

In 2012 the £3,000 was incorporated into their basic salaries, making it a permanent pay rise.

In 2013 they bunged Mr Hancock another £3,500 and Mr Cashin another £2,000.

Mr Ost's expected pay rise was brought forward six months.

This year 2014 Mr Hancock is getting another £4,800, Mr Cashin another £5,380, and Mr Ost another £3,100. And on top of that, all three of them get a pay rise of 1 per cent.

Sadly they have not been able to ensure that Cheshire firefighters share in their good fortune. The value of firefighters' pay has declined in each of those four years, and in Cheshire 162 jobs are to go, and there are to be cuts of £8m.

But you can't please everyone, can you?

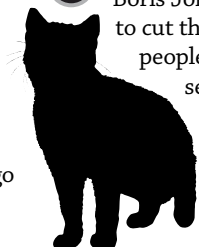
Stepping up with a plate

 If you thought that no one else lent a hand when the floods came, you should know that corporate Britain stood ready to do its bit.

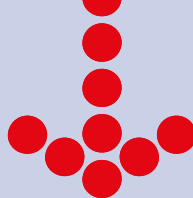
"Marks and Spencer have contacted London Fire Brigade," wrote commissioner Ron Dobson. "They have set aside resources to support our FRS responders around the country with emergency food for communities, volunteers and services and where necessary, clothing and bedding. M&S are supporting on a case by case basis to ensure their limited resources are directed to where they are needed most."

Get in touch, he said, "if you believe your FRS responders and community volunteers are in need of emergency food packages".

All isn't lost, there's a plate of M&S sandwiches on the way. Heart-warming, really.



25-year badges



Ian Hodgson (r), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from Marine branch secretary Buck Rodgers



John Collingwood (r), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from Marine branch secretary Buck Rodgers



Mark Clynch (l), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from Marine branch secretary Buck Rodgers



Michael Simpson (l), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from Marine branch secretary Buck Rodgers



Paul Henderson (l), Cleveland, receives his 25-year badge from Marine branch secretary Buck Rodgers



Andrew Allison (l), officers' branch, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Dane Rollo



Dave Yews (l), officers' branch, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Dane Rollo



Martin Willey (r), white watch, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Johnny Treadlightly



Pete McDermott (l), officers' branch, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Dane Rollo



Andy Maloney (r), Gerrards Cross, Buckinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade health and safety rep Jason Naylor



Steve Cummings (l), officers' branch, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Dane Rollo



Nigel Randall (c), blue watch, Weymouth, Dorset, receives his 25-year badge with members of blue and white watch looking on



Ian Mclean (r), officers' branch, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Dane Rollo



Anth Collins (l), red watch, Newton Aycliffe, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Dave Welsh

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

FBU regional offices

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REGION 13 Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, Avon, Gloucs, Wilts, Dorset

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0117 935 5132, 13rs@fbu.org.uk

Change of address or next of kin

Advise your Brigade Organiser of any change of address and Head Office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0808 100 6061

(England, Wales and N. Ireland),

0800 089 1331

(Scotland),

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

T THOMPSONS SOLICITORS