

Firefighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union

**ANGER OVER 2%
PAY INSULT**
See p4

**PROFITS, NOT PAY,
CAUSING INFLATION**
See p12

**DECON CAMPAIGN
ONE YEAR ON**
See p14

**ARE YOUR
MEMBERSHIP
CONTACT DETAILS
UP TO DATE?**

Contact your brigade organiser
[fbu.org.uk/
regions-nations](http://fbu.org.uk/regions-nations)

PART OF THE TEAM

SOLIDARITY WITH AND FROM CONTROL See p10

August/September 2022



www.fbu.org.uk

HEATWAVE

July saw the hottest temperature ever recorded in the UK and, as a result, a huge strain on all members who worked tirelessly dealing with major incidents across much of the country.

The FBU has warned for years that the impact of climate change is and will be acutely felt by the fire and rescue service. These warnings have fallen on deaf ears.

This is despite the fact that the risks arising from heatwaves (and drought) have been on the government's National Risk Register since 2008 and the risk and impact of wildfires was added as a "newly assessed risk" in 2013. Even so, we should not be too hard on the government. It has only had nine years to resource fire and rescue services properly to deal with the risk!

RESOURCES

Instead of putting in place measures to improve public safety, reduce environmental damage and protect businesses and homes, the government has had more pressing matters to pursue in that time: immoral and unsuccessful legal fights to defend discriminatory attacks on firefighters' pensions, extending the responsibilities of the slash-and-burn chief inspector of police services (now thankfully retired), to cover the fire and rescue services in England, and an inspection and reporting regime created to match his outlook and objectives are some examples.

This summer we have seen fire and rescue services where the heatwave hit hardest go into meltdown (sorry!) with desperate calls for firefighters



to report for additional shifts – the result of the cuts in thousands of jobs over past decades – 11,500 since 2010 alone. It time to stop the cuts and then rebuild the size of the sector.

WHITE PAPER

As reported in this issue of *Firefighter*, the FBU has submitted its response to the Westminster government's fire service White Paper. The union will be campaigning relentlessly against this foolhardy and ill-conceived policy adventure. I urge members to actively engage with that campaigning.

TORY PARTY LEADERSHIP

Still, what feels like the trend of "another year, another fire minister at Westminster" has continued with the resignation of Lord Greenhalgh and the appointment of Sarah Dines to that office. One upside of the gangster turf-war, aka Tory party leadership battle, has been the well-publicised U-turn on the flagged regional public

sector pay issue. The furore that followed brought into focus the economic benefits of national sector-based pay bargaining.

HMICFRS

FBU national officials recently met with Andy Cooke, the newly-appointed HM Chief Inspector of Constabulary and Fire and Rescue Services, and the lead HM Inspector for Fire and Rescue Services, Roy Wilsher. In what was without doubt a pleasant meeting it is fair to say that we came away with a raised level of optimism. The proof of the pudding, as with all things, is in the eating.

PAY

June and July saw extensive consultation with branches across the UK on the derisory 2% pay proposal from the employers. Reflecting the outcome of that consultation, the executive council met and voted to reject the 'offer'. This has been conveyed to the national employers.

While we await their

response, the union is taking the necessary steps to prepare for strike action should it be required. Members can assist this work by ensuring that the details we hold for you on our membership database are up to date. We use this information to ballot members. It's a small, quick step.

If you haven't done so yet, please speak to your local representatives if you don't know how to update the details: fbu.org.uk/regions-nations

PICKET LINES

Over the summer, as at the ports affected by the P&O sacking-by-video message in March, FBU officials and some members have been joining RMT picket lines across the UK. Those strikes, now supplemented by strikes by members of other unions in the transport sector will be continuing, we expect, for some while.

Members are asked to drop in to picket lines in their area to meet the strikers and offer solidarity. A half-hour on the picket line by FBU members will go a long way to boost the morale of our brothers and sisters as they fight to maintain their jobs and standard of living.

CUBA

As this issue of *Firefighter* was going to press, members will have heard the devastating news that one firefighter is dead and 16 are missing as a result of firefighting operations at the oil tanker depot in Matanzas, Cuba.

I have written to Ulises Guilarte de Nacimiento, General Secretary of the Central de Trabajadores de Cuba (CTC) union on behalf of FBU members and officials to offer our support and solidarity.



Merseyside branch members at a meeting that discussed pay



PETER ARKEL/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



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August/September 2022

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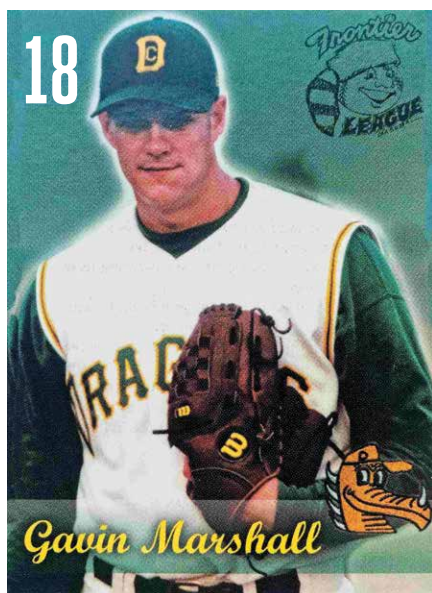
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MARK THOMAS

Firefighter

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NEWS

FBU AT MINERS' GALA

Union members and banners were back at the Durham miners' annual celebration **P6**



IN THE FIRING LINE

White Paper is a coordinated attack on pay and conditions **P7**



PAY OFFER

ANGRY RESPONSE AS UNION REJECTS 2% PAY 'INSULT'

Firefighters across all workplaces, duty systems, ranks and roles have responded angrily to a 2% pay offer from fire and rescue employers.

Following an extensive membership consultation and reflecting the outcomes, the union's executive council unanimously rejected the offer and has agreed to develop a campaign for decent pay, including the need to prepare for strike action.

The 2% pay offer came at a time when inflation had reached 9.1%, and follows huge cuts to firefighters' real world pay over many years. Between 2009 and 2021, firefighters' real terms pay has been cut by 12%, or nearly £4,000.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said that the offer was "utterly inadequate and would deliver a further cut in real wages to firefighters in all roles in the midst of the cost of living crisis".

Wrack added: "This latest insulting proposal follows 12 years of government-imposed reductions in real wages.

"This proposal will anger firefighters across all workplaces, duty systems and ranks/roles.

"It is galling to be insulted in this way, especially after our contribution to public safety during the pandemic."

Since the pay offer was announced members across the country have been meeting to discuss the matter.

The reports from local meetings in this article are a sample of what was basically a universal response at all the meetings held.



Matt Wrack speaking to West Midlands members at a packed branch meeting on the pay offer

East Midlands regional secretary Adam Taylor attended a branch meeting in Corby, Northamptonshire, and tweeted that: "Firefighters know their worth. Last night it was no different. Unanimous rejection of the insulting offer".

Nearby Derbyshire brigade organiser Dan Carter reported that members at Swadlincote unanimously rejected the pay offer and stated that "members are disappointed that the government isn't recognising their value".

Elsewhere, FBU Durham reported that the Spennymoor branch had "great

engagement from members" and that there was "another unanimous rejection of the 2% pay offer".

FBU Manchester said that there was "great" attendance at a Broughton branch meeting and that there was "lots of discussion around the derisory pay offer".

The union has written to the national fire employers to inform them of the anger and frustration their proposal has created and sought confirmation that they have written to and met with the Westminster fire minister to request additional funding in order to make a realistic offer.

It has made the same point to the National Fire Chiefs Council.

Finally, the FBU has written to government ministers and departments, including those in devolved authorities, to seek urgent additional funding to enable fire and rescue employers to make a reasonable offer.

A number of chief fire officers have written to their staff saying they want to pay more. Why then did most of them only budget for a 2% pay rise?

FBU launches BA policy awareness campaign

The FBU has reported two fire and rescue services to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), and identified several others, in relation to bringing in policy which would see firefighters sent into fires without donning their breathing apparatus facemask.

The FBU wrote to the HSE urging it to “investigate our complaint and use its statutory powers to bring an end” to the policy.

The union has also launched a public campaign raising awareness of the dangers of this change to policy and encouraging firefighters and the public to sign a petition opposing these measures.



The policy change would make it possible to instruct firefighters to go beyond the point of safe air with their breathing apparatus turned off in high-rise building fires – a move the union says breaks health and safety law. Hampshire & Isle of Wight and Dorset & Wiltshire fire and rescue services have both introduced the change.

FBU national officer Riccardo la Torre said: “Fire bosses would do well to remember that the safety procedures they are ripping up exist for a reason – they were born from the death and injury of firefighters”.

■ Sign the petition at bit.ly/FBU-BA-petition or scan the code.



FBU members at this year's event commemorating the Tolpuddle Martyrs who were transported from Dorset to Australia in 1834 for forming a union

PENSIONS

Pensions: government in court again

The FBU has won permission for a judicial review of the government's approach to the 2015 public sector pension scheme debacle, in which it is attempting to force firefighters to pay for its mistakes.

In 2019, following legal action by the FBU and judges, courts ruled that the way in which new public sector pension schemes had been introduced in 2015 was discriminatory on age grounds and told the government to reverse the changes for 2015 to 2022. The government says the cost of this would be £17bn. Its reaction has been to

try to shift the cost to younger members of the new, post-2015, public sector pension schemes.

This plan is being challenged on the grounds that it breaches commitments made in legislation and to unions in 2015, that it contravenes the purpose of the cost control mechanism, and that it discriminates against younger scheme members.

Mark Rowe, FBU national officer, said: “Firefighters and other public sector workers shouldn't be forced to pay for discrimination against their own workforces.”



Sounding off

Rail strikes

Mick Lynch, general secretary of the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) explains why transport workers are striking

RMT has been winning pay deals with some employers when they are not controlled by the dead hand of the Department of Transport and when free collective bargaining can take place.

However, due to this government's intransigence, our union has been forced to take further strike action in the national rail dispute.

Make no mistake, this government wants to close ticket offices across the country, attack the safety-critical role of the guard and further diminish catering grades.

It wants to introduce seven-day working as mandatory in all train operators and impose new grading structures, salaries and roles on new entrants to the railway who will be working for less money and with no realistic prospect of pensionable retirement. Lower pay, longer hours contracts.

In other words, work longer and harder for less money.

On Network Rail, the government wants a complete restructure of the maintenance function with fundamental changes to working practices, rostering, competency, organisation and other measures as well as productivity and technology measures for signallers.

Meanwhile, passengers are spending up to five times as much of their salary on season tickets than their continental counterparts, while the train operators' profits go to seven groups owned by foreign state rail companies, meaning they will subsidise transport systems in France, the Netherlands, Germany, Italy and China.

The other 50 per cent of train operator profits will go to Go-Ahead and FirstGroup's investors, mainly a group of 13 major asset management funds, some of which have holdings in both companies. Just last year, train companies paid out £800m to shareholders.

Transport services whether bus, rail or ferries, should not be cash cows for private investment funds, but public services democratically run in the interests of the taxpaying, travelling public.

FBU RETURNS TO DURHAM MINERS' GALA

Firefighters returned to Durham this year to join thousands of other workers and trade unionists at the annual miners' gala.

The weekend began with a three-day FBU national officer school, which had been postponed from 2020.

Attendees heard from speakers including Bakers, Food and Allied Workers Union joint general secretary Sarah Woolley and National Education Union president Daniel Kebede.

This year's gala paid



MARK PINCHER

tribute to key workers and their role in keeping the country going through the pandemic.

People lining the streets applauded firefighters marching behind the FBU

banner. Firefighters spoke to members of the public about the Westminster government's White Paper attack on pay and conditions, winning their commitment to back the FBU in its fight.

INSPECTION REPORTS

FBU warns on chief officer powers

Recent reports on official inspections of brigades in England raise serious questions about government plans to boost the powers of chief fire officers, the FBU has warned.

Reports on 15 brigades by Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary and Fire & Rescue Services (HMICFRS) were released in July.

Problems around values and culture in many services were reported.

The inspections also found that some services are not sufficiently prioritising fire prevention activity.

National officer

Tam McFarlane said:

"Firefighters will all tell you the same thing: cuts to resources mean that fire and rescue performance is declining rapidly.

"Firefighters and control staff do the best job they can do each and every day, but with 11,500 less firefighters

compared to 2010, it is becoming increasingly difficult to maintain public safety.

"These reports make it clear that there are serious issues when it comes to management culture. Given chief fire officers are ultimately responsible for this mess, serious questions should be asked about the White Paper plans to boost their powers. Culture starts at the top."

In brief

FBU continues to oppose takeover

The FBU's North West region has expressed continuing opposition to the transfer of governance of the Cumbria fire and rescue service to police and crime commissioner (PCC) Peter McCall. The move was rejected in a public consultation. The union fears it could lead to three station closures, with the loss of 18 jobs. Executive council member for the North West, Les Skarratts said: "Even at this late stage we would ask him to reconsider, we will obviously engage and talk with him to attempt to progress the transfer without further detriment to our members or the public."

Local FBU warns over anti-union approach

Buckinghamshire FBU has criticised the decision to hire its former chief fire officer Mark Jones in the same role in Northamptonshire. It cited anti-union action, presiding over cuts, and creating a "damaging and divisive culture". Northamptonshire and East Midlands region FBU officials will, as always, approach discussions with any chief professionally and hope that a leopard can change its spots.

FIREFIGHTERS AND CANCER

Irrefutable evidence of the cancer hazard posed by firefighting

The International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a World Health Organisation body, has declared that occupational exposure as a firefighter has been classified as carcinogenic – meaning that it has the potential to cause cancer.

National health agencies can use this ruling as scientific support for their actions to prevent cancer amongst firefighters.

The decision comes against a background of research from around the world proving that there are links between firefighting and cancer, and

investigating the role fire contaminants play in causing cancer.

In the UK, the FBU's DECON campaign has led the way. The DECON project has commissioned independent research, which includes a firefighters cancer and disease registry (FCDR) to monitor health, and used that research to produce best practice training for firefighters.

FBU national officer Riccardo la Torre said: "This classification should be a huge wake-up call for both the government and fire and rescue services,"

and called for the FBU's DECON work to be used to increase protection.

The research by the University of Central Lancashire has found that surveyed firefighters were four times more likely to have been diagnosed with cancer than the general population.

■ Details of the IARC declaration at bit.ly/Lancet-IARC-firefighting

■ Do the DECON training at

fbu.org.uk/decon

■ Fill in the registry at

bit.ly/UK-FCDR

■ DECON one year on – P14

The Westminster government's fire and rescue White Paper is a coordinated attack on pay and conditions, the FBU has charged.

In its formal submission, the union criticises the White Paper's proposals as an attack on firefighters' right to have a say on their pay and conditions, including those relating to safety.

The White Paper proposes a review of pay structures which is likely to consider replacing collective bargaining with a pay review body, which would enable ministers to unilaterally decide pay rates.

Other proposals could result in industrial action being weakened or undermined.

More broadly, the White Paper lacks proposals to improve the service.

It also suggests that the powers of chief fire officers should be increased. This could impact areas that have a direct effect on the service the public receives, including reducing firefighter numbers, response time targets, cutting night cover and new shift systems.

The White Paper further proposes transferring governance of the fire and rescue service to a single individual. This could see police and crime commissioners, or a mayor or single councillor, taking over fire and rescue services.

The union warns that proposal reduces democratic oversight.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said it was "absolutely scandalous that the government has launched this coordinated attack on the pay and conditions of hard-working firefighters, and on the fire and rescue service.

"When it comes to the fire and rescue service itself, we are clear.

"Chief fire officers cannot be trusted to get it right on their own. More power for them over matters like



PA IMAGES / ALAMY



News Focus

Fire and rescue workers in the firing line

the number of firefighters, attendance times or night cover will make the public's fire and rescue service worse – the evidence on that is absolutely clear."

The FBU submission says the White Paper is "remarkably thin on substance" and "lacking real ambition".

Instead, it seeks to reduce firefighters to "shut up and do as you are told" status.

The FBU said it would engage with ministers and employers over detailed proposals, but the primary message to ministers was "stop and think again: this is not the way to improve our service and profession".

The union lists other flaws in the White Paper:

- No provisions to improve the service
- No new investment

- Right of firefighters to collectively bargain with employers over pay, conditions, safety and other vital matters threatened
- Firefighters' pay cut, and increased hours and intensity of work

The union says the rationale for the White Paper is based on "false claims, half-truths and mistakes". These include:

- Claims about the Covid-19 response, which are "simply untrue"
- Claims about the Grenfell Tower fire which ignore the public inquiry and frontline firefighters.

"Contemptible" myths and lies about firefighters and the FBU during the pandemic.

The White Paper contains gimmicks, which would contribute nothing to the service, the union says. These

include an oath, "committing firefighters to do as they are told, while losing the right to be heard".

The union points out that oaths have not prevented MPs from being guilty of "widespread law-breaking, corrupt decision making, crimes and other breaches of the rules".

The FBU says the White Paper contains some proposals it would be happy to discuss, subject to ministers providing more detail.

These include:

- A College of Fire and Rescue
- Professional standards for entry and officers
- Research and data.

The union's submission refutes claims of "slow progress" in negotiations on broadening the role of firefighters because of current negotiating arrangements, pointing out government failure to fund change is the true cause.

The union advances its own plans for the service, including

- Westminster-funded investment in the fire and rescue service across the UK
- Immediate recruitment of 5,000 new firefighters
- UK-wide service delivery standards
- A statutory advisory body for the UK, including the FBU
- A publicly owned and funded fire service college and fire research body
- Returning the Building Research Establishment to public ownership
- Restoring all building control functions to local authority building control
- An adequately resourced and high quality fire safety inspection regime conducted by trained fire and rescue service specialist fire safety inspectors.

■ FBU submission on the White Paper: bit.ly/3vMyg7V

■ Government's *Reforming our Fire and Rescue Service* White Paper: bit.ly/3Qtlgec



THE BIG PICTURE

HEATWAVE

FBU members were stretched to the limit by wildfires in July. Wildfires broke out across the UK as the country experienced record temperatures. There were a number of injuries to FBU members. This included hospitalisations. Cuts stretched the fire service's ability to respond. Firefighters were left working in extreme heat and conditions for excessive periods, and employers had to ask people to give up leave. Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "Firefighters are at the forefront of the climate emergency ... The brutal truth is that government ministers and chief fire officers have ignored the warning signs which have been obvious for all to see. They are guilty of criminal complacency."

Wildfires in farm fields
near Ongar in Essex

AIR VIDEO UK/ALAMY





PART OF THE TEAM

"Fire Service, where's the emergency?" ... and, with that, fire control are in attendance. We will remain there until the last crew leaves the scene. From now on, everything we say, hear and do will have an impact on how the incident unfolds. We're not physically there, but our presence will be felt. This is why we earned our title "firefighter control".

And yet, we haven't always felt like we're "part of the team". At FBU annual conference, Bedfordshire representatives called for a review of control pay.

Some members may not understand our role and why it's needed, so here's a taster of what we do.

DYNAMIC MOBILISING SYSTEM

We use a cloud-based, dynamic mobilising system which shows accurate caller location information and has What3Words integrated gazetteer.

We use GoodSam software to use the camera on a caller's smartphone to visually assess, make decisions on mobilising, or to forward footage to firefighters' phones to give a heads-up of what they're going to.

Our system suggests who to send but

We must rebuild links and strengthen solidarity inside the FBU, says **Rebecca Lewington** acting regional chair for Eastern region





PHOTOS: STEFANO CAGNONI

Bedfordshire Fire Control members (l-r) Vanessa Bierton, Vicky Doherty, Nerys Church, Rebecca Lewington, Ann Stevens, Rachael Clements and Wendy Randall

we have full autonomy to change that based on local knowledge or factors that no automated system can calculate.

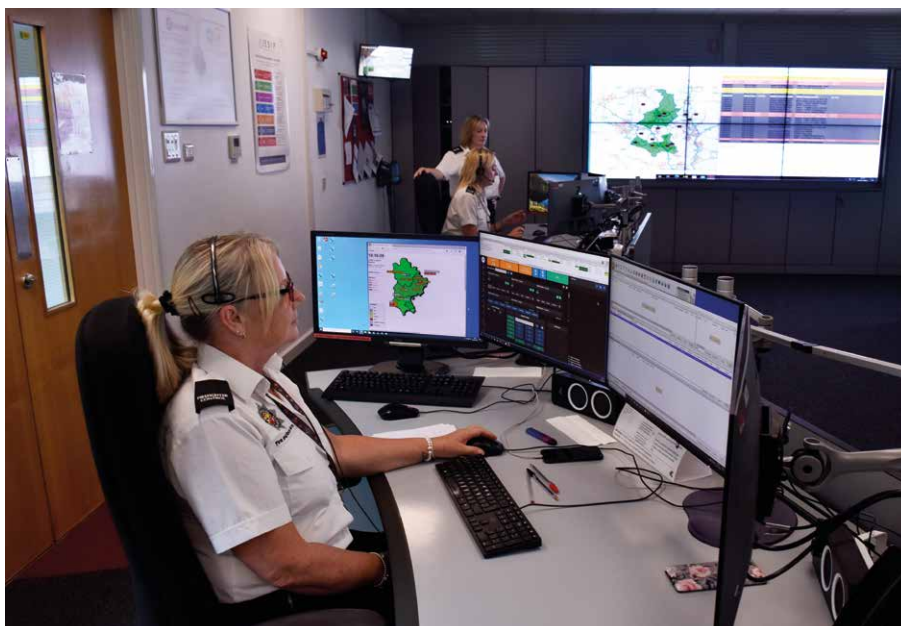
We give life-saving advice to callers in danger and keep them talking until firefighters arrive. We have applied Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Programme (JESIP) principles for a long time and many control staff are Airwave network tactical advisers.

We monitor channels for marauding terrorist attack (MTA) or fire survival guidance (FSG) emergency information and liaison with the national intelligence assurance team (NRAT) and national resilience fire control (NRFC) during large-scale incidents.

We take calls for other brigades during spate conditions and we have even been known to get hold of a Sea King helicopter for a complex rescue. Whatever firefighters need at the scene, we will get it to them.

When I started, we had a great working relationship with our stations. We'd spend days on stations and they would visit us and see how it all works. This created camaraderie and trust in each other.

When the pay campaign ended in 2003, "modernisation" changed this. We were not allowed to have visits on



stations – "where does that fit into your role map?" – and stations were too busy with increased work to visit us; even to bring new recruits in.

We still have a great working relationship with our crews, but they don't know us as they did before.

Modernisation also led to the regional FiReControl project. Our regional control centre was built at Waterbeach, Cambridgeshire. Not too difficult to travel to for my control; life-changing for others in the region.

Some moved home to be closer. We were told we would have to apply for our jobs and not everyone would be accommodated.

The doomed project was scrapped in 2010, after costing more than £460m.

But the cost to control members was more than financial. We had gone from being a strong, organised and energised FBU branch to having the wind taken from our sails.

When FiReControl was cancelled, there was relief followed by uncertainty. Unlike other brigades, we have maintained our control room but at times we have been told our jobs need to be justified – imagine living with that for

more than 10 years.

The disconnect with stations has, I believe, sadly altered solidarity for us within the FBU.

At conference, those sitting near me witnessed my frustration that the speeches made from the rostrum omitted control members when appealing for improved conditions.

But this isn't about blame; this is about reconnecting the membership. In fact, control members received great support at conference and all related resolutions were carried unanimously.

The efforts made by the FBU campaigning for us to be eligible for the Jubilee Medal were appreciated; the results varied from control to control but the message was loud and clear: control are part of the team.

SURPRISED BY THE WORK WE DO

We have had some crews visit us again now that Covid restrictions are easing and they have been surprised by the extent of the work we do. We must use this opportunity to rebuild those links and strengthen solidarity within the FBU.

Control staff, get involved in *your* union. Attend the training courses, go to committee meetings. At the very least, make contact with other control members and our control staff national committee (CSNC), who work tirelessly to move our agenda within the union. We are not, and never have been, voiceless.

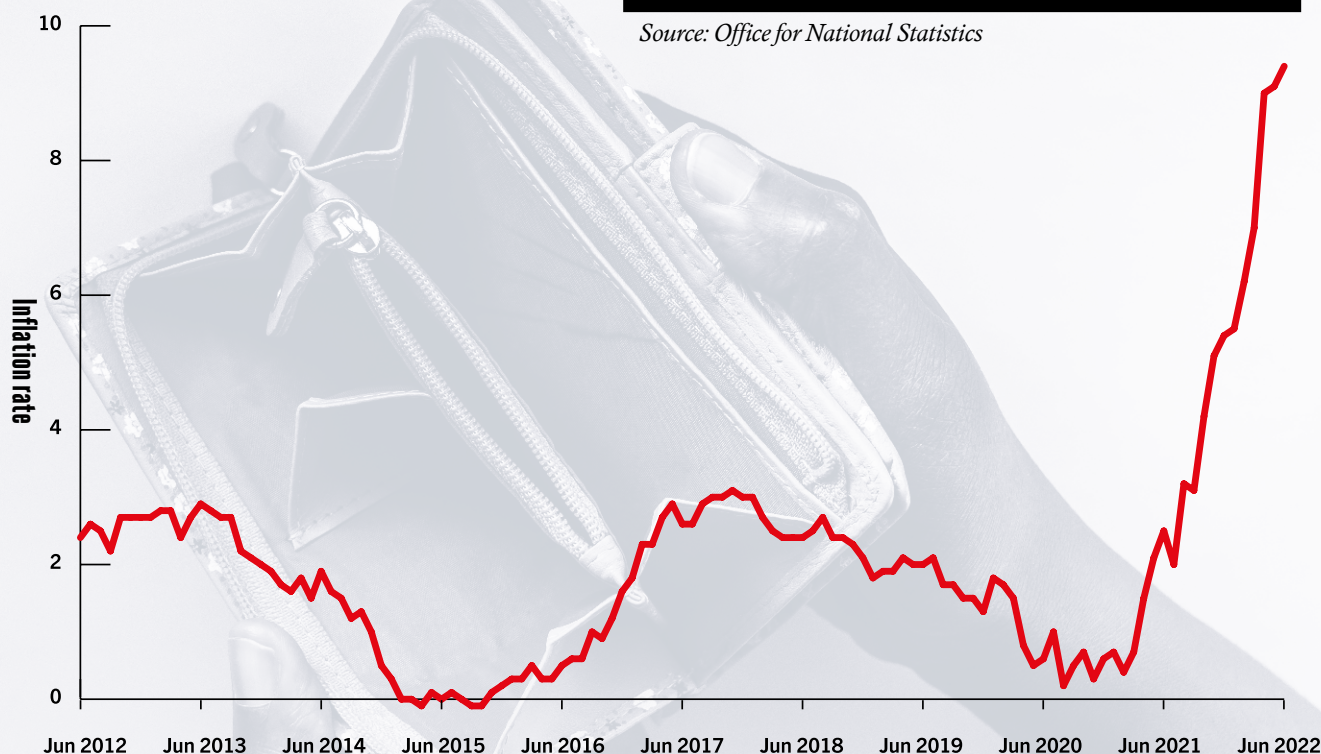
Firefighters, visit your control rooms; see what we do and how you can support us. There are many challenges ahead for the FBU, for all sections, and we must organise and be ready to fight for all members.

We're one union and we must give solidarity without question.

There are many challenges ahead for the FBU, for all sections, and we must organise and be ready to fight for all members

Annual UK Consumer Prices Index (CPI) inflation June 2012 to June 2022

Source: Office for National Statistics



Profits, not pay, are the cause of inflation

Far from causing inflation, wages make up a declining proportion of the cost of the products we buy, explains economist **Michael Roberts**

UK inflation hit a 40-year high in June, reaching 9.4% compared to a year earlier.

The rate is expected to reach double digits later this summer. If you include mortgage costs, the retail price index is already up 13.7%.

Inflation – the change in the prices of goods and services – is driven by accelerating food and energy prices. Road fuel prices are up 33%, the largest ever one-year jump.

The so-called “energy price cap” which supposedly fixes a limit on home gas and electricity prices, increased by 12% in October 2021 and by 54%

in April 2022. The April increase is equivalent to £700 for “typical” levels of dual fuel consumption paid by direct debit. There is every possibility that this cap will be raised by another 30 to 50% in October. At the same time, world food prices are at an all-time high.

Why is this happening when, for years, inflation rose by no more than 3 to 4% a year?

COSTS, WAGES AND PROFITS

Three parts make up the price of any good or service.

One: the cost of raw materials or components in, say, a car or a packet of

tea bags, or the price of electricity or oil, plus depreciation – a machine’s life may be 10 years so you need to calculate the annual cost for replacing it.

Two: the wages paid to people making tea bags or delivering fuel etc.

Three: profits – the mark-ups on costs made by companies.

In the past two years there has been a very sharp rise in the cost of raw materials and components due to Covid – lockdowns leading to supply bottlenecks and to workers lost through either being sacked or moving on – compounded by the war in Ukraine which has led to the loss of food exports

from both Russia and Ukraine and sanctions on Russia leading to rocketing energy prices.

Behind these immediate causes is a longer-lasting reason for rising inflation – the slowing and very low rate of growth in labour productivity. If the value created by workers is not growing enough, then any demands by companies to keep profits rising, or by workers to increase wages, will tend to cause a rise in prices as demand outstrips supply.

This particularly applies to Britain, where productivity growth is one of the lowest of the top economies.

Some economists tell us rising wages cause inflation.

This is nonsense. Prices have been rising sharply with little or no rise in wages. Over the long term, wages as a share of what makes up the price of a product have been falling.

What is missing from the claim that wages are driving up prices is what is happening to profits.

A report by the trade union Unite found that company profits were responsible for 60% of the rise in prices over the past two years, with raw

Company profits jumped 11.7% in the six months to March. In the same period, labour income rose only 2.6%; and fell by 0.8% after accounting for inflation

material costs taking up most of the rest. Labour costs took up only 8%.

Profit margins for the UK's biggest listed companies were 73% higher than pre-pandemic levels. UK-wide company profits jumped 11.7% in the six months to March 2022. In the same period, labour income rose only 2.6%; and fell by 0.8% after accounting for inflation.

It is the big corporations that have continued to raise their prices to increase their profits at the expense of wages.

Far from a wage-price spiral, we have a profit-price spiral.

This has led to average wages in the UK falling at their fastest rate for more than two decades. Annual growth in regular pay fell by 4.5% in April after adjusting for inflation – the biggest fall since comparable records began in 2001.

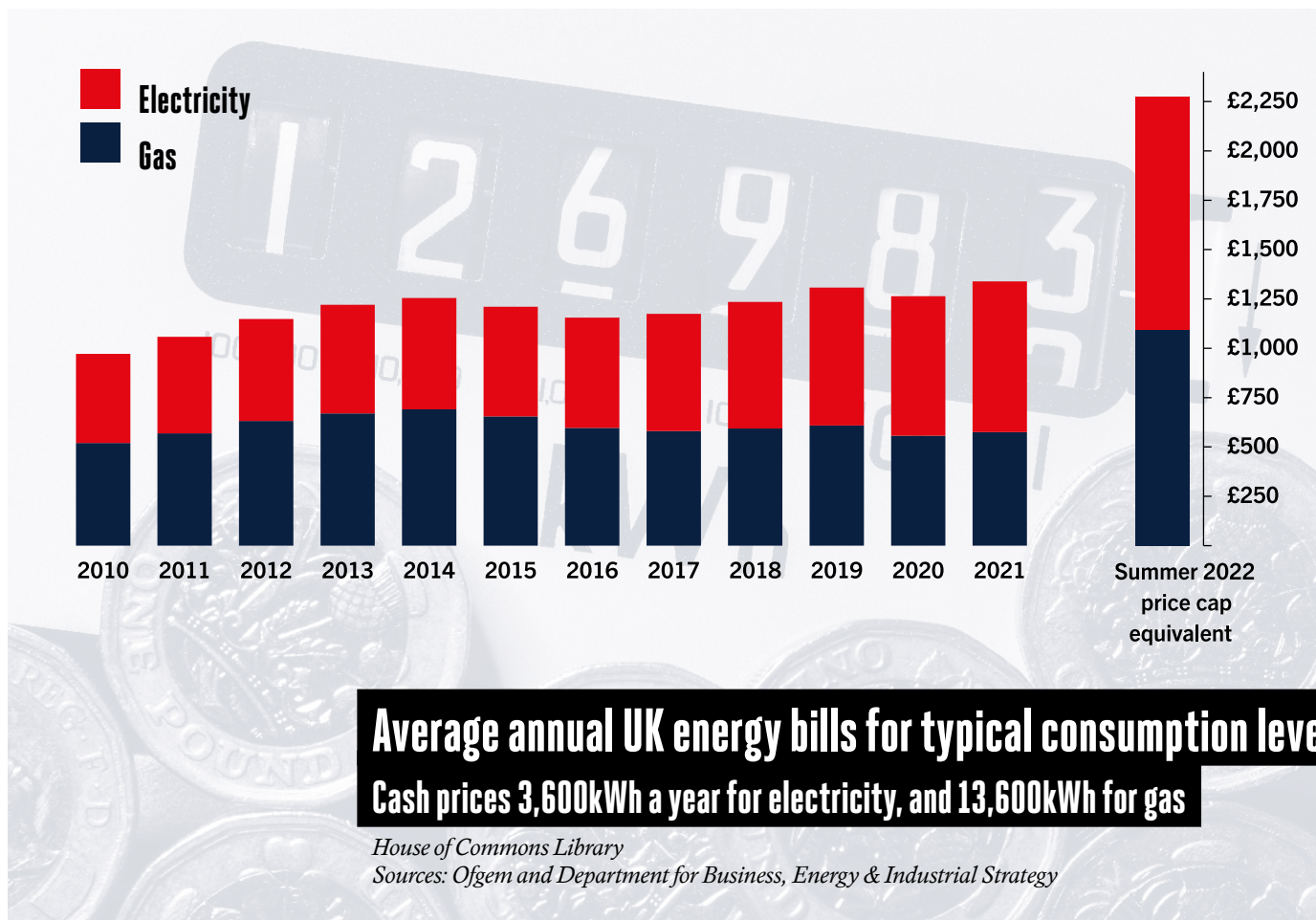
If this continues, it will leave the average worker almost £13,000 a year worse off by the middle of the 2020s. By 2026, average household earnings would be £30,800, compared with £43,700 if wages had risen at the same pace as in the two decades before the banking crisis, according to the Institute for Fiscal Studies.

No wonder workers are trying to recoup their loss of income from profit-driven inflation.

But that will not be enough to avoid future crises, because energy and utility companies continue to be run for profit, not as a public service. The public should own these monopolies so that prices can be controlled; and investments made to improve services, not to go into huge dividends for shareholders.

Above all, public investment is badly needed to boost productivity growth so that average incomes can rise without price inflation devaluing the “pound in our pockets”.

Michael Roberts is an economist who blogs on economic issues at thenextrecession.wordpress.com. He provides regular analysis on his Facebook site: facebook.com/100064268366203



FIREFIGHTERS AND CANCER

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

PREVENT THE RISK AFTER THE FIRE

Any fire can release toxic contaminants that spread in the air and on skin, kit and surfaces. By taking steps to prevent this risk every day, you can help to prevent cancer and other diseases.

DECON to protect yourself, your co-workers and your family.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

STOP THE RISK FROM SPREADING

Any fire can release contaminants that spread on skin, kit and surfaces. These toxins can increase the risk of cancer – but you can take simple actions to protect yourself, your co-workers and your family. Just remember to DECON.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

CLEAN KIT REGULARLY

Dirty kit exposes you to dangerous contaminants. After responding to a fire, make sure your kit is cleaned safely and thoroughly to help prevent cancer and protect the people around you.

Learn daily habits that can save lives after the fire is out.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

SHOWER WITHIN AN HOUR

Always shower within an hour of returning to station after attending any fire. This helps you to get rid of dangerous contaminants.

SOAP AND SCRUB YOUR SKIN. WASH AND DRY YOUR HAIR.

Learn daily habits that can save lives after the fire is out.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

SCRUB BEFORE GRUB

After any fire, DECON before you eat, drink, or go into the kitchen or mess. Wash and change your clothes to help prevent cancer and protect your co-workers.

Learn daily habits that can save lives after the fire is out.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

WATCH OUT FOR WEAR AND TEAR

Damaged kit doesn't keep fire contaminants out. Check your kit for wear and tear every shift, and make sure your brigade gets it officially checked at least every three months.

Learn daily habits that can save lives after the fire is out.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON posters and stickers have sprung up across fire stations, covering almost every surface with reminders of important behaviours

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

DECON BEFORE YOU DRIVE

Make sure dangerous fire contaminants don't build up in your vehicle. Clean the inside of your car regularly and DECON before you drive. If you are carrying clothes that have been exposed to fire in your car, make sure they are sealed in an airtight bag or box.

Learn daily habits that can save lives after the fire is out.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

CLEAN WHAT YOU CARRY

Your belongings can pick up fire contaminants that don't break down. Wipe your phone, wallet and other items clean with one wipe each.

Learn daily habits that can save lives after the fire is out.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON
TO PREVENT & PROTECT

DON'T TAKE THE DANGER WITH YOU

Any fire can release toxic contaminants that spread on skin, kit and surfaces. To protect yourself, your co-workers and your household from cancer and other diseases, make sure you're taking the right steps to prevent this daily risk.

Scan for training:

or visit: fsu.org.uk/decon

FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

DECON

ONE YEAR ON

DECON is
here to stay



The FBU's vital DECON campaign to better protect firefighters against toxic contaminants and prevent cancer has brought a wave of change across the fire and rescue service. FBU national officer **Riccardo la Torre** looks at what has been achieved one year on from its launch

Before the Fire Brigades Union started exploring the links between firefighting, contaminants and cancer, there was very little work being done across the UK fire and rescue service on how to prevent firefighters from developing cancer and other diseases because of their work.

Since we launched DECON in September 2021, we have seen a culture change across the UK fire and rescue service as firefighters embrace DECON behaviours.

Fire and rescue services are adopting new and more innovative ways to better protect their employees' health.

This is the beginning of the DECON generation.

INGRAINING DECON IN THE UK FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

We launched the DECON training because we want every firefighter to understand the risk to their health even after the fire is out.

Thousands of firefighters have watched the training videos and are equipped with the knowledge on the different steps to follow to protect themselves, their co-workers and their families.

When the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) first carried out its research into the links between cancer and firefighting, it found that 75% of fire and rescue services displayed no information about contaminants. Now,

posters warning of the dangers and reminding firefighters about the DECON behaviours to follow are on nearly every fire station across the UK.

While many firefighters have taken the training on their own initiative, it is hugely important that fire and rescue services take DECON seriously and make every effort to ensure that their employees know what to do and can take the steps to minimise their exposure to toxic fire effluents.



Thanks to the tireless work and dedication of our health and safety reps, several fire and rescue services have formally supported DECON, taking on board the recommendations and building the training into their training programme.

In services like Shropshire Fire and Rescue Service, the training is being provided for all new recruits as part of their initial training and will be repeated for all their employees every two years. A DECON working group has been set up to introduce the key elements of DECON such as "shower within the hour", helping to secure towels and decontaminating shower gel in every washroom across stations.

REVOLUTIONISING DECONTAMINATION PRACTICES

Some fire services are going above and beyond to decrease firefighters' exposure to toxic contaminants and prevent

cross-contamination on stations.

In Tyne and Wear, FBU officials have been working with the fire service on a new "clean-cab" policy and ground-breaking plans to build a fire station around the principles of DECON.

The "clean-cab" policy has seen the service invest in lockers for fire engines to dispose of contaminated kit and smoke curtains to help prevent crews inhaling toxins, while the new fire station is designed for firefighters to move through the DECON steps without spreading contaminants throughout the building.

These new policies will massively help to prevent firefighters carrying toxic fire effluents around their workplace and back to their home. We are calling on other managers to take note and look at how they can apply these principles in their services.

INTERNATIONAL RECOGNITION

DECON is having an impact not just in the UK, but also internationally.

On 1 July, the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), a World Health Organisation body, classified firefighters' occupational exposure to toxic contaminants as carcinogenic.

The lead researcher on the DECON project, Professor Anna Stec, is a member of IARC and we can be proud that our research helped to influence the decision.

This is a huge step in the right direction. We have consistently warned the National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC), fire service employers, and government ministers that toxic contaminants are a life-threatening occupational hazard for firefighters.

It is a wake-up call that they must push ahead with urgent improvements to protect firefighters.

We can also be proud that our firefighter brothers and sisters

across Europe are benefitting from DECON. I was proud to give a presentation on our research at a meeting of the European Public Service Union (EPSU) Firefighters' Network at European Parliament

in Brussels in June, while our interim best practice report with UCLan has now been translated into eight European languages.

We have more work to do to save firefighters from early, needless deaths, but everything we have achieved over the last year shows that DECON is here to stay.



Arise Ye Workers

The release from prison 50 years ago of five trade unionists jailed for defending jobs is a key moment in UK history with lessons for today, writes **Will Stone**

Fifty years ago, five London dockers who had been imprisoned after ignoring a court injunction to stop picketing as part of a campaign to save their jobs, walked free from Pentonville prison.

A massive upswell of solidarity from across the labour movement and beyond had forced the hand of the Conservative government of the time.

On Friday 21 July 1972, the dockers, who came to be known as the Pentonville Five: Vic Turner, Tony Merrick, Bernie Steer, Conny Clancy and Derek Watkins, had been arrested after ignoring an injunction issued by the National Industrial Relations Court to stop picketing the Midland Cold Storage Company in Hackney, East London.

Six days later, with a TUC-backed general strike looming, the five were released.

The shop stewards were fighting for jobs and against attempts by bosses to use the introduction of shipping containers to rationalise and deskill their industry – part of an age-old fight against new technology being used to undercut workers' job security, pay and conditions, that is being seen today in many workplaces with increasing automation, digitalisation and artificial intelligence.

ATTACK ON EVERY WORKER

Speaking on the picketline at the time, Vic Turner said: "This attack is on every industrial worker in the country, whether he's organised or unorganised. People outside the trade union movement better get the message, because it's going to come home to them, very, very shortly."

The Pentonville case came at a time of increasing strike action against attacks by the Tory government of the time, with

Union members from all over the country joined a 24-hour a day demonstration outside Pentonville prison, including miners from South Wales and teachers from East London, who were greeted by dockers as they arrived



Vic Turner (front) and Bernie Steer are carried on the shoulders of supporters after being released

1972 seeing the highest number of strikes since Britain's only general strike in 1926.

The then prime minister, Edward Heath, was determined to get the upper hand over increasing trade union militancy, introducing anti-trade union laws. The Industrial Relations Act the previous year established the National Industrial Relations Court.

But government attempts to make an example of the five backfired after tens of thousands of dockers walked out on strike the day they were imprisoned.

The national shop stewards committee had passed a resolution saying that if any worker in the country was touched as a result of the Industrial Relations Act they would take action.

The mass walkout of dockers was soon followed by solidarity strikes by Fleet Street print workers, seeing national newspapers shut down, as well as from miners and workers in construction, transport, at factories, post offices and other public and private sectors.

Workers then picketed Pentonville prison en masse. Maurie Day, a close associate of Vic Turner, described the atmosphere as "electrifying", with people coming from all walks of life to support the pickets and hand out refreshments including tea, beer and soup.

Squatters occupying a nearby building invited striking workers and their supporters over for refreshments and a kip.

One supporter, Ian Olley, said: "The majority of people who did go to Pentonville and on marches had actually stopped work, and so the employers were really getting one up where they didn't like it. It really was a time where you really thought something was going to

'No-one is going to take any workers on when that class is absolutely united and backed up by other people'

A huge march of union members and supporters followed the London docks shop stewards committee banner with its slogan Arise Ye Workers from Tower Hill to Pentonville prison where the Pentonville Five were freed

happen. I think that's one of the reasons why they did let them out eventually, because I think the whole situation was getting a bit too f***ing dangerous for them."

His hunch was probably right, No sooner had the TUC called for a one-day general strike on Monday 31 July unless the five were freed, than the government's Official Solicitor stepped in and secured their release. By this time more than 250,000 workers had taken unofficial strike action.

The Pentonville Five were carried from the prison on the shoulders of supporters under the banner "Arise Ye Workers".

Tony Merrick remembered hearing the news first from warders and prisoners that they were getting out. He said: "Before I knew it we were at the gates, on the shoulders and away."

Each of the five gave speeches outside, thanking workers and supporters. Bernie Steer told the crowd: "The five of us were put in by a political court, and it was the trade union movement that got us out.

"We're so overwhelmed with the support we've got from you, because without you we'd have rotted in there and make no mistake about it."

ANTI-UNION LAWS

Unfortunately, anti-trade union laws are very much alive and kicking under today's Tory government. Just this month, Conservative MPs backed legislation allowing agency workers to break strikes.

The move came amid a "summer of discontent" with the first national strike action on British railways for a generation, as well as separate strikes at Royal Mail, courts, universities and colleges.

Other workers have also threatened strike action over insulting pay offers as inflation soars, including firefighters, civil servants, teachers and NHS staff.

Bernie Steer, the last surviving member of the Pentonville Five who died this July, speaking after being released, summed up what the historic events of 50 years ago mean for today's struggles.

He said: "The only lessons perhaps we can draw are the lessons that no-one, certainly not the establishment, is going to take any workers on when that class is absolutely united and backed up by other people."



PETER ARKELL/REPORTAGE PHOTOGRAPHY

Winning the game of life

Gavin Marshall always had two dreams: “To play professional baseball, and be a firefighter.” By the age of 27, Gavin had realised both – and turned from trail blazer to blaze preventer.

At 45, he is better known these days – in FBU circles, at least – as Yorkshire & Humberside brigade secretary and regional treasurer.

But in 2001 he made baseball history as the first European to play professionally in the US. He spent two seasons as a pitcher for Indiana-based Dubois County Dragons, sending the ball down at speeds in excess of 90mph.

You may have seen Gavin’s picturesque old league stadium home – it featured in the 1992 box-office hit *A League of Their Own*, starring Tom Hanks and Madonna.

Now 18 years into his fire service career, that baseball flame still burns brightly. Gavin is a third generation Marshall to both represent and coach Great Britain – following in the footsteps of grandfather Ron and dad Brian.

Now he has passed the torch to sons Zebb and Cole (12 and 11). In July, he oversaw the GB U12s’ visit to Austria, where a clean sweep of four games ensured qualification for next summer’s European Championships.

It’s a wonderfully outrageous, unlikely tale of a supremely driven lad from Hull, and it’s one Gavin felt compelled to share after reading other people’s good news stories in *Firefighter*.

‘TELL YOUR STORY’

“My dad passed away a couple of years ago,” Gavin explains. “And he always said: ‘you really need to tell your story.’”

“I still have my own little baseball card which I’ve occasionally shown if I’ve been on a course, but it’s not something I’d really been comfortable with.”

That admission is a neat fit with the popular public perception of firefighters as the everyday superhero – the character who gets on quietly with the job.

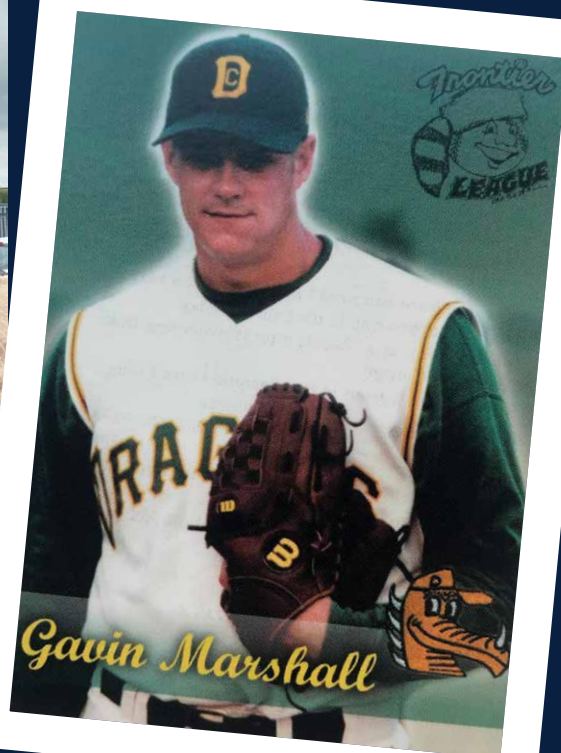
For Gavin, the similarities between his distinct working worlds are obvious. Whether tackling

Firefighter Gavin Marshall, brigade secretary for Humberside and regional treasurer, was the first European to play professional baseball in the USA. He spoke to **Steve Morgan**



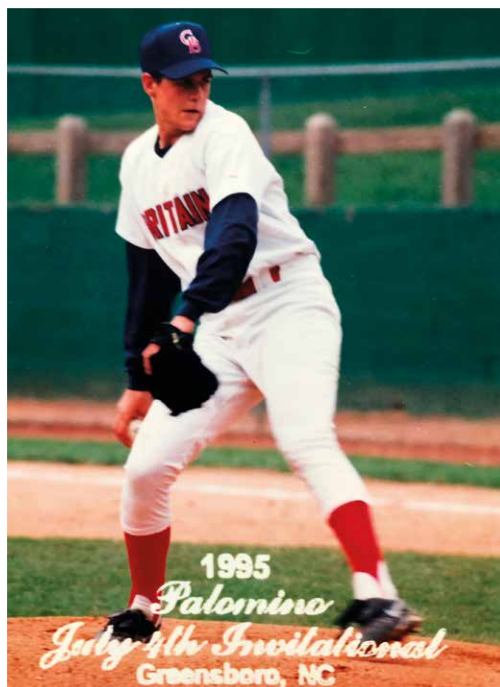
Gavin at work today

Gavin still has the baseball card he featured on as a pitcher for Dubois County Dragons





Gavin's grandad, dad and uncle in Italy, 1981



Gavin pitching for Great Britain in 1995

Gavin's son Cole fielding



Gavin watches as his son Zebb takes on a pitcher

a blaze, standing in front of a batter determined to smash the ball out of the park, or now as a pitching coach for Great Britain – swift and clear decision-making processes are critical.

"They call baseball the game of life – it throws so many challenges at you," he says. "You probably experience failure more than you do success – and that gets you in a really good position for life, in my eyes.

"You've got nothing other than the facts in front of you. If you make a decision at a job and it's wrong, an incident can get out of control. Similarly from a coaching point of view, if you don't make the right selections, before you know it, you could be losing 8-0. It's all about setting the tone."

FAMILY HISTORY

The tone was clearly set a long time ago, courtesy of Gavin's can-do nature and appreciation of family lineage. He talks with fondness about the family history in the sport; grandad Ron's playing days in a strong club set-up boasting 80 teams in the Hull area alone.

Baseball may be a marginal sport on these shores these days, but Gavin remains as in love with it as ever.

He is justifiably proud of his legacy – not just for his boys, but for those others

who were moved by his efforts. British baseball's website pages are awash with testimonies to this inspirational pioneer. "There are hundreds of Europeans at US universities and colleges these days," Gavin adds. "Quite a few British guys are out there looking to go one step further than me – I'd love to shake their hands."

Respect for the past is key to the future. Before our chat finishes, Gavin – also a keen rugby player – mentions a funeral he is attending the following day. It's of 1980s Hull Kingston Rovers stalwart Asuquo 'Zook' Ema. Ema became a firefighter after his retirement, like a few of his former colleagues.

"It sounds crazy," Gavin laughs. "But I would drive past the fire station, trying to look in and see him.

"I wanted to be a firefighter and play sport, just like Zook. I remember thinking: 'I wonder if I could do that.'"

'You probably experience failure more than you do success – and that gets you in a really good position for life, in my eyes'



London Pride 2022

MARK THOMAS

Pride's 50th anniversary

Pat Carberry, FBU LGBT+ national secretary, reviews the changes and challenges of half a century of protest against the perception that homosexuality is something to be ashamed of, and the reality of the situation today

1 July 2022 saw the 50th anniversary of the first ever Pride march in the United Kingdom.

When the event first took place, the people participating could be counted in the hundreds. Now London Pride attracts an attendance of over a million.

The origins of the event's title "Pride" stem from what those original protesters aimed to achieve, to remove the social perception that homosexuality was something to be ashamed of.

London Pride was, and for many remains a protest, although it has been hijacked by corporations which use it as a tool to promote and sell their products under the guise that it is a big party.

The trade union movement has played a significant role in supporting Pride throughout the decades. At one point, the TUC was the largest contributor to support the event happening.

As a consequence of corporate sponsorship, the trade union movement has been pushed further to the back of the parade and this has resulted in a total withdrawal by the TUC of funding for London Pride in favour of giving donations to smaller regional Pride

events to support them.

The FBU has led the way in fire service participation in London Pride. Over a quarter of a century ago it was our members who first decided to march in uniform identifying them as part of the fire service. The fire service employers were not so keen and some instructed our members not to wear uniform stating: "it's not something the service wants to be associated with".

Our members defied the ban and marched loud and proud to be members of the service and LGBT+.

Services quickly realised they were missing a trick as Pride was a rare opportunity to access the needs of the LGBT+ community and now we work together to make the event inclusive for all.

As a result of the bravery of those who first took to the streets of London,

There remain many challenges for our community and rights that have been hard fought for are constantly under attack

the Pride movement has grown throughout our nation with many smaller regional events being part of the regular annual calendar.

Pride is not just an event for LGBT+ people to attend and participate in; it is open for everyone who supports, accepts and respects those who identify as LGBT+.

Some may feel that we no longer need to celebrate Pride but, unfortunately, the need is as much alive as it was 50 years ago. In 2015 the United Kingdom was ranked the highest in Europe to being LGBT+ progressive, but by last year had fallen to 14th place.

There remain many challenges for our community and rights that have been hard fought for are constantly under attack.

For me, as a gay man, Pride remains an important event. It is one of the few days of the year I can walk down a street holding the hand and sharing a kiss with my partner of 20 years without fear of verbal or physical assault.

That remains the reality for so many of our community, the simple everyday things others take for granted can still come at considerable risk for us.

MARK THOMAS



Meet the rep

Gus Sproul, (acting) regional chair, Scotland

What made you want to become a rep?

I never really wanted to be a rep, but I've got a lot of pals in the trade union movement who had been at me for a long time. The watches I'd worked were always saying I should do it: usual reasons – argumentative, shouty, opinionated etc. I was too busy, but eventually I was sat at a branch meeting and the silence was too painful when nobody else would step up, so I said I'd do it. And look what happened ...

What is your proudest moment as a rep?

Scottish pay campaign, late 2019. The Scottish Fire and Rescue Service had set up "engagement sessions" to deliver their pitch. One, at East HQ, saw them set out 100 chairs in a room for us. Watching HUNDREDS of angry members pour in and fill that room, and the next, and the corridor, responding to our ask, was a really proud moment.

Who is your ultimate hero?

The late Andrew Weatherall [a musician, DJ, songwriter, producer and remixer who began as an acid house DJ] a true musical pioneer, who never sold out and never compromised, and an absolute gentleman.

Describe yourself in three words

To quote my teachers ... Could. Do. Better.

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

Brendan Woodhouse's speech at FBU conference had a huge impact on me on the issue of refugees ... probably the first time I'd really had the human stories hit me like that. And my son's recent bid for a VR headset, a compelling argument about embracing technology, limitless possibilities, and the benefits of doing huge graffiti pieces without it costing loads for paint or getting arrested.

Which TV show could you not live without, and what's your favourite band or musician?

Ozark (gutted). Talking Heads / LCD Soundsystem / Andrew Weatherall

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

Still trying to work out what I want to be when I grow up.

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

The future, when Tressell's [author of the great working class novel *The Ragged-Trousered Philanthropists*] vision of the Golden Light is diffused throughout all the happy world from the rays of the risen sun of Socialism! Or Berlin 1938, just to know how it felt. But more honestly, Ibiza, 1988.



Legal Beagle

Neil Todd of Thompsons Solicitors outlines the legal steps demanded of unions ahead of strike action

We are seeing an increase in industrial action across the country and, in every instance, unions and their members will have gone through legally required steps to take strike action.

A union must serve a "notice of ballot" on an employer before any ballot opens and then a "notice of action" when it is ready to call industrial action. The notice of ballot must contain **either**:

a list of the categories of employee to be balloted with the numbers in each category; also a list of their workplaces with the number in each; and then the total figure of all those concerned and an explanation of how the figures were arrived at; **OR** where some, or all, of the employees concerned are employees from whose wages the employer makes deductions representing payments to the union (i.e. check-off), either the lists and figures (with the explanation) above, or such information as will enable the employer readily to deduce that information.

Fail to follow these requirements and the ballot can be challenged.

The union endeavours to ensure that its membership database is accurate but depends on members for information, so firefighters should make sure the information it holds is up to date through their brigade reps: fbu.org.uk/regions-nations

Contact

FBU Freephone legal advice:
0800 100 6061

In Scotland: 0800 089 1331

[thompsonstradeunion.law/
trade-unions/fbu](http://thompsonstradeunion.law/trade-unions/fbu)

FBU PHOTO COMPETITION 2022

YOUNG AND OLD, LARGE AND SMALL

Subjects of the winning images in this year's FBU photo competition range across young and old, large and small. First spot goes to *Dalton Mill Fire, March 2022* by Chris Wilson of West Yorkshire, Judges were impressed by its clarity and composition.

One of two runners-up, *If You Can See It, You Can Be It*, by Luke Prest, of Derbyshire has



Runner-up: *If You Can See It You Can Be It* by Luke Prest, featuring his RDS colleague Kara Askwith, at Dronfield station

similar photographic attributes, but showed a different side of life and work in the fire and rescue service.

The other runner-up, *One Last Run*, is a portrait of former Grays, Essex, firefighter and out of trade member Roger Pickett, by his firefighter son Leigh. Judges praised its combination of outstanding technical quality and perfect observation to create an image that is both powerful and moving. Roger is the founder of the Essex Fire Museum and was awarded a British Empire Medal in the 2022 jubilee birthday honours list.



Winner: *West Yorkshire FRS at Dalton Mill fire, March 2022* by Chris Wilson



Runner-up: *One Last Run* by Leigh Pickett. Roger Pickett is driving a 1952 Merryweather turntable ladder carrying the funeral casket of a former firefighter. It was the 44th time that Roger had carried out this duty for a deceased former firefighter.

'Boring little man' who delivered a revolution

Firefighter contributor Francis Beckett's acclaimed play about the founding of the welfare state, *Clement Attlee*, comes to Liverpool's Epstein Theatre while the Labour party conference is in the city, on 26 and 27 September. Attlee's 1945-51 government founded the National Health Service, created the welfare state, brought in free education for all, and nationalised key industries like railways. Francis Beckett, a former president of the National Union of Journalists, said: "People asked me how I could write a comedy about this boring little man. But he was a fascinating man, and a prime minister of rare skill and determination."

■ Tickets at £19 are available from bit.ly/Attlee-Epstein

Notice to all FBU members – if your contact details have changed – address, email and/or phone number – please let your brigade official know. Brigade contact details can be found at fbu.org.uk/ regions-nations

LETTER

An insult to firefighters

It's an outrage. When I retired in 2012 the previous four years was austerity – with a 0% rise. We finally got 1% and I believe [London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority chair] Brian Coleman did not hand it over to the rank and file, keeping it for the authority coffers. Surely we're all entitled to it.

This time 2% is something out of a comedy routine, a farce. Barristers want 25%, rail crews already offered 7%, I think in Merseyside.

What are the firefighters to ask for? Double figures has got to be the starting negotiation.

I would like to believe that the current government will do the right thing and recognise hard working firefighters for their efforts – particularly during the Covid crisis. Good luck comrades.

**MP
ROOT member and former LFB (31 years),
FBU member 41 years**



Wrack on the Road



■ Matt gives a talk to new branch reps at their introductory course in the East Midlands, with regional secretary Adam Taylor chairing.



■ Standing in solidarity on the RMT picket line at Stratford Market depot, East London.



■ Meeting three new West Midlands women's committee reps on their introductory branch reps course.

■ Brilliant turnout of FBU members at a branch meeting in the West Midlands on 5 July, where there was real anger on the derisory 2% pay offer and a huge appetite to take this fight head on (see P4).

COMING UP:

■ Pay campaign branch meetings across the UK

With friends like these ...

Station Cat on firefighters, fitness and fibs

The most stunning by-product of the fall of Boris Johnson is the discovery that top Conservatives love firefighters. Or at least, find it convenient to say so.

Johnson himself declared his love at what turned out to be his very last prime minister's questions on 6 July. Bedford's Labour MP Mohammed Yasin reminded him of "the dangerous work undertaken by the fire service." So would the PM "reconsider his 2% pay offer when firefighters have endured a 12% real-terms pay cut over the last decade?"

Johnson assured Yasin that he shared his "support for the firefighters of our country" who "do an incredible job." It is, he said, "a testament to their work that deaths from fire over a long period have, on average, been decreasing, thanks to the work that they put in."

But no, the country could not afford to pay them enough to keep up with inflation, added the PM, who is paid £164,080 plus free use of elegant homes in Westminster and the Buckinghamshire countryside and as much private jet travel as he wants.

The next day, Johnson announced

his resignation, and the race was on for his job.

So it came to pass that, 10 days after Johnson's tribute to firefighters, the trade minister, Penny Mordaunt, who hoped to succeed him, was telling the *Daily Telegraph*: "The first job that I had in government, I managed to bring the firefighters dispute, pensions dispute and strikes to an end."

Now, far from ending the firefighters' dispute, she caused it. Back in December 2014, Mordaunt, then fire

minister, told the House of Commons: "If someone

fails a fitness test through no fault of their own and they do not qualify for ill health retirement, they will get a redeployed role or an unreduced pension."

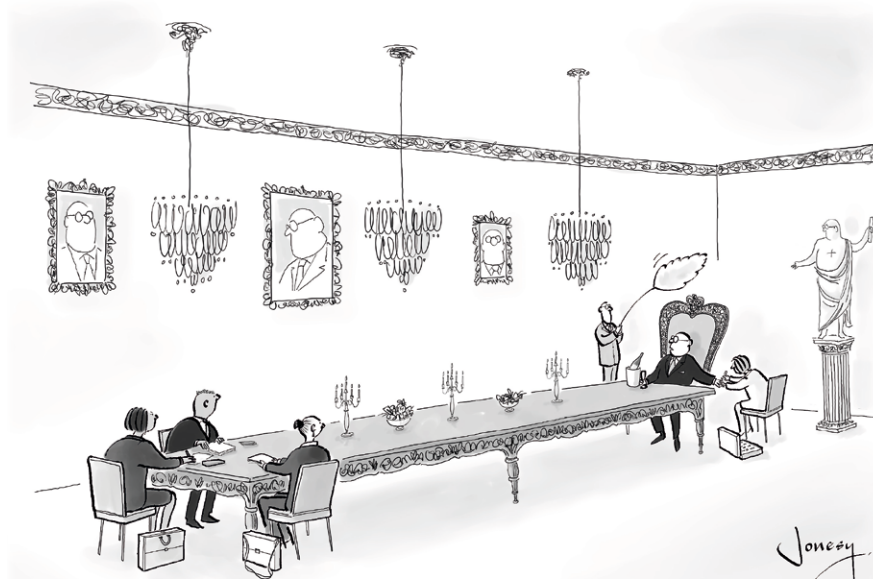
But the government didn't deliver this. They almost certainly never intended to.

Ms Mordaunt's hopes of succeeding Johnson were snuffed out soon afterwards. Was that because the Tories decided they could not possibly have someone who told lies as the Prime Minister?

Apparently not.



PA IMAGES



... and what makes you think the company can afford to meet your excessive demands?

25-year badges



Danny Head (r), white watch, Rayleigh, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Matt Edwards



Dave Hogan (r), green watch, Grays, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Matt Edwards with his watch looking on



Simon McNally (l), training, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Matt Edwards



Helen Astridge (l), white watch, control, receives her 25-year badge from Hertfordshire brigade secretary Daren Scotchford



Ian Read (r), Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Chris Craddock



Emma McEvoy (r), Maesteg, South Wales, receives her 25-year badge from branch secretary Ciaran Gibbons, with white watch looking on



Robert Newman (l), green watch, Clacton, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Stuart Abbs with colleagues looking on



Alex Cox (l), green watch, Clacton, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Stuart Abbs



Brian Flanchard (l), red watch, Kirkdale, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Lee Hunter



Alistair Keith (r), fire safety, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from East Scotland organiser Davey Strachan



Suzanne Tassiker-Dowson (l), white watch, Marionville, Scotland, receives her 25-year badge from East Scotland organiser Davey Strachan



Lee, the son of **Simon Potter**, receives his father's 25-year badge from London Borough rep Tony Jackson, after Simon sadly passed away



Lee Woods (l), blue watch, Addington, London, receives his 25-year badge from SE organiser Martin Thompson



Stephen Gregory (r), branch rep, Aston, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Philippa Smith with colleagues (l-r) Rebecca Allsopp, Stephen McCormack, Cara Lansley and Liam Harris



Graeme Sinclair (r), amber watch, Marionville, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from East Scotland organiser Davey Strachan



Matty Howard (l), white watch, Stratford, London, receives his 25-year badge from borough official Simon Kenton



Lee Down (l), Forest Hill, London, receives his 25-year badge from borough rep James Gouldsworthy



Mark Higgins (r), white watch, Middlesbrough, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe with station comrades looking on



Anthony Weeks (l), blue watch, Addington, London, receives his 25-year badge from SE London organiser Martin Thompson



Richard Beardmore (r), blue watch, Parkway, South Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Alex Wilson



Stewart Dewar (l), operational logistics, Hereford and Worcester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Andrew Faizey



Gary Philp (r), amber watch, Dunfermline, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from Fife lead rep Chris Murphy



Carl Fenton (l), red watch, Crowborough, East Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Paul McIlvenny



Davie McNeely (r), white watch, Dunfermline, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from East Scotland vice chair Chris Murphy



Robert Michinson (r), amber watch, Dunfermline, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from East Scotland vice chair Chris Murphy



Sandy Garvie (r), protection and prevention, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from East Scotland vice chair Chris Murphy



David Kay (r), amber watch, Dunfermline, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from East Scotland vice chair Chris Murphy



Rachael Broom (r), Royston, Hertfordshire, receives her 25-year badge from brigade organiser Rob Fortune with watch colleagues looking on



Luke Gibbs (r), white watch, Hendon, London, receives his 25-year badge from NW London area organiser Brian Flanagan with colleagues looking on



Matt Sephton (r), red watch, West Hampstead, London, receives his 25-year badge from NW London area organiser Brian Flanagan with colleagues looking on



Steve Ryan (r), blue watch, Croydon, receives his 25-year badge from SE London area organiser **Martin Thompson**



Dave Whitley (r), FSE, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary **Kev Wilkie** with Skelmersdale colleagues (l-r) **Barry Foster**, **Paul Webb**, **Tom Christopher** and **Phil Turner**



Andy Markham (r), red watch, Kingsway, Derbyshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair **Tony Dempsey**



Chris Higgins (centre), blue watch, Hornsey, and NW London area H&S rep, receives his 25-year badge from EC member **Dave Shek** (r), and regional organiser **Gareth Cook**



Paul Dean (l), Carlisle East, Cumbria, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser **Ben Jones** and the brigade committee



Matt Goad (r), blue watch, Hendon, London, receives his 25-year badge from NW area organiser **Brian Flanagan** with colleagues looking on

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co/Region 13 office

REGION 13 Avon, Cornwall, Devon & Somerset, Dorset & Wiltshire, Gloucestershire

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Bristol, BS7 9RE
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

England, Wales and N Ireland

0800 100 6061

Scotland 0800 089 1331

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



THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS

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.

DEFEND FIREFIGHTERS' BREATHING APPARATUS SAFETY PROCEDURES

Firefighters' breathing apparatus (BA) is crucial for tackling fires safely, providing them with protection from death, injury and disease when working in oxygen-deficient, toxic and hazardous atmospheres.

The National Fire Chiefs Council's (NFCC) attempts to remove BA safety in high rise building fires and deploy firefighters without safe air is unsafe, unlawful and unprofessional.

This policy risks firefighters' lives and puts public safety at risk.

Dead and injured firefighters can't rescue anybody.

"Procedures were introduced years ago to keep firefighters as safe as possible. To disregard those procedures is to put the public and firefighters at risk. Harrow Court [a fire in which three people, two of them firefighters, died] lives with me still, 17 years on"

James D
22-07-2022

"This would be a step backwards and the thought of any firefighter risking more than they already do to save lives is unthinkable."

Julie F
14-07-2022

"Fire chiefs, ask yourself: would you have been happy with this step backwards in firefighter safety when you were an operational crew member?"

Mark L
14-07-2022

**Please
sign the
petition**

