

FireFighter

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

July 2015

FBU CONFERENCE 2015

TAKING ON NEW CHALLENGES

See p10





Matt Wrack

New Westminster government will continue attacks

The outcome of the general election was a surprise to many. We now face a majority Conservative government and it is clear that it will move rapidly to implement its least popular policies. It will do this in the hope that some form of economic recovery will allow the Conservative Party to ease up as 2020 approaches, when it will then hope to sweeten the medicine with some form of tax cuts to win pre-election support.

The economy forms the background to much of the political debate in the UK.

The slow pace of recovery since 2007/8 is what provides the driving force for the cuts agenda. Austerity means

forcing down living standards through attacks on wages, benefits and pensions.

We expect more bad news from George Osborne's emergency budget which will fuel the attacks on our service. We also need to remember that attacks on our pay will continue and are inextricably linked to public spending cuts.

Osborne has been clear about the need to continue with pay restraint in the public sector (i.e. cuts in real wages and real living standards).

Attacks on our union rights

The Tory strategy to further attack unions is threefold, on voting thresholds, on additional requirements for so-called essential services (including fire and rescue)

and on union funds. It is no accident that our own union is targeted in these additional attacks. The Tories want to prevent workers from resisting the further onslaught against living standards or the destruction of jobs and public services.

The undemocratic nature of these attacks is highlighted very easily by applying the same rule on thresholds to parliamentary elections. Most politicians would not be in office if the general rules for thresholds were applied to their election.

Building a movement to resist

The Conservatives may have won a majority in the House of Commons but 63 per cent of voters did not vote for them.

Over the next five years there will be big struggles which develop opposition to their programme. Trade unions must play a leading role in building this broad based opposition.

The government will want to play divide and rule as it did under the coalition, but our challenge will aim to prevent them from picking us off one target at a time.

We need to think how we can build support in our communities for a broader challenge, which will provide us with the best mechanism to defend ourselves and the specific challenges we face as firefighters.

Our conference in Blackpool started the discussion on how we meet these challenges, including how we should



MARK THOMAS

I can assure all members that we will not rest in our campaign to challenge and expose the outrageous attacks on our pensions

proceed on pensions. It was clear from contributions made at conference that we need to think carefully about our next steps, but that does not mean we call a halt to campaigning.

We recently won a major legal case for retired members in relation to pension commutation after being told time and again by government ministers that we could not win. But we stuck with the case and we won.

I can assure all members that we will not rest in our campaign to challenge and expose the outrageous attacks on our pensions. We will not give up.

Fire and rescue – what role for the future?

For years politicians have justified cuts by pointing to

the downward trend in fire calls. This argument must be challenged.

Fires are not the only emergencies firefighters attend, and the work of our service is not exclusively emergency response. We need to keep making this case and building the evidence to challenge the cuts agenda.

The debate about the work our service might undertake in the future has been discussed at our conference over the past two years.

We are currently involved in detailed work with employers on these issues including difficult areas like emergency medical responses. We have always evolved and will continue to do so.

In the 1950s it was not the norm for firefighters to attend road traffic collisions or to carry out building inspections. Many of these new roles were called for and pioneered by the FBU. We will need similar thinking today. We have also challenged our employers about the need for proper training, equipment and standards, arguing that they should be making the case to central government for improved funding for the service.

These discussions are far from over, and there is a long way to go as debate about our role and our future continues. But discussion will only bear fruit if FBU members are fully involved. Please make sure you follow developments and contribute to mapping out a way forward for our profession.

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In action: Control staff and supporter at Essex FRS HQ in Rivenhall

Employers climb down over lockout plan as FBU members strike to save their service

Essex

Fire and rescue service employers were forced to climb down from their threat to stop Essex FBU members working for the whole weekend of 13–14 June despite their intention to strike for only one shift.

Firefighters and control staff were taking strike action against plans to cut at least 179 fire-fighting jobs – a quarter of all frontline staff in the county and the largest-ever single proposed cut to jobs in any one year across the UK.

Essex County Fire and Rescue Service (ECFRS) had threatened not to pay firefighters who turned up for work over the weekend outside the strike hours. FBU lawyers pointed out to them that non-payment was illegal, and the service withdrew the threat.

Alan Chinn-Shaw, secretary of the FBU in Essex, said: “We are glad that the fire and rescue service has, at last, seen sense on this issue.

“We were hoping that they will now see sense around the reason for the strike in the first place – the cuts and consequent threat to public safety.”

The approach taken by fire employers was criticised again when it was revealed they had

turned down an offer by the FBU in Essex to be recalled to duty if a major incident occurred.

Riccardo la Torre, chair of the FBU in Essex, said: “At all times our focus has been on the safety of the public. We are taking strike action precisely because fire chiefs want to cut 25% of frontline staff. This will have major implications for fire cover across the whole of Essex.”

It has also been revealed that the IT mobilising system that control staff use to send fire appliances to emergencies – which has been failing over a long period – is not expected to be back online until November at the earliest.

At the cost of hundreds of thousands of pounds, the Remsdaq 4i system was installed in January. It has failed multiple times requiring in staff to take down information using pen and paper before phoning fire stations on landlines to dispatch an appliance.

Essex control staff will have to use the old, out of date, mobilising system until further notice.

Jo Byrne, executive council member for FBU control staff, said: “It is essential that any equipment procured for the fire and rescue service is fit for purpose. Evidently, this mobilising system was not tested robustly before being put into operation.”



Southend



Waltham Abbey



Ongar



Canvey



Colchester

Industrial action must be supported: Dave Hopper (right) joins Matt Wrack on an FBU picketline

STEFANO CAGNONI/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK



Police bosses cannot run fire service – FBU

Service mergers

Plans by the government to bring fire and rescue services under the control of police and crime commissioners in England and Wales have been condemned by the FBU.

The Tory election manifesto committed the party to force firefighters to further collaborate with police forces, which could compromise the public's trust of firefighters within communities.

Mike Penning, minister of state for policing, has said that the benefits of increased collaboration are already being felt and is pushing for further integration.

But Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said there was simply no evidence of benefits. He added that police and crime commissioners, who were elected on a

turnout of only 15%, lacked the knowledge, expertise or democratic legitimacy to take on such a role.

"No matter what politicians say, mergers are driven by cuts and could have serious consequences for the ability of all emergency services to respond effectively," he said.

"The public want professionally trained firefighters when they call us. It is simply not true that police and crime commissioners have played any noticeable role in improving the fire and rescue service.

"They do not have a mandate to make such huge structural changes in the fire and rescue service."

The Home Office intends to present a draft bill on mergers to parliament by autumn.



TERRY WALTER/DEMOTIX/PA IMAGES

Mergers are driven by cuts: Police officers form a line at the front of a 2011 public sector workers' demonstration against cuts in Manchester where funding for Greater Manchester Police had been cut by £6.4m

FBU seeks to meet new fire minister

Government

A new Westminster fire minister with responsibility for the fire and rescue service was appointed in the post-election reshuffle.

Mark Francois succeeded Penny Mordaunt, who was moved to defence after less than a year in the post.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said he hoped that, with a new minister in place, a genuine and open dialogue could begin with the government over the future of the fire and rescue service and firefighter pensions.

"We were left at the end of the last parliament

with a confusing situation regarding firefighters who suffer a decline in fitness with the government saying one thing and employers saying something different. Firefighters are entitled to know the truth.

"The FBU looks forward to meeting the minister at the earliest opportunity."

SOUNDING OFF

Collective strength is our only answer

Dave Hopper, general secretary of the Durham Miners' Association, says workers taking industrial action must be supported

This year's Durham Miners' Gala, on Saturday 11 July, takes place at a vital time for British trade unions and the working class. We face a Tory government hell-bent on making cutbacks in social funding as they continue to make workers pay with austerity cuts.

The fightback will not be led by the Labour Party, but by the British trade union movement, which faces a daunting task in protecting its members' wages and conditions and, more critically, their jobs and safety. That is why I believe events like the Durham Miners' Gala, the last surviving gala and biggest trade union gathering in the country, are essential to galvanise and rally the working class for the struggles that lie ahead.

It is essential that no trade union or group of workers in struggle is left isolated as the miners were in 1984/85. The TUC must co-ordinate physical and financial support for any group of workers embarking on industrial action.

This Tory government was elected by only 25% of those eligible to vote and only 36% of those who actually did cast a vote.

Yet it wants to bring in legislation to introduce a threshold so that 50% of trade unionists must vote to legitimise any form of industrial action. This, in anyone's language, is a double standard.

Collective strength is our only answer. Our organisations were formed to support workers; although from today's biased media coverage you could be excused for thinking otherwise. This July in Durham the leaders of the movement will have their say as to what constitutes the way forward for working people. That is why this gala is so important.

The trade union and labour movement is at a crossroads and we must get it right, not only for our members but for our youth, the future. Support this year's gala.

Cuts fears as accounts reveal gap in funding

Scotland

A £43m funding gap has been found in the accounts of the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, provoking fears of further frontline firefighter job cuts.

Scotland's fire and rescue service was reorganised from eight brigades into one in 2012. The Scottish government said at the time that this would protect frontline services.

Chris McGlone, who was recently elected FBU executive council member for Scotland, said: "Protecting frontline firefighting services in Scotland was a key aim for the government in creating the single service.

"However, with 80% of the service budget spent on staffing, the reality of job losses and the potential for further cuts suggests that achieving this aim may be at risk."

In the first two years since the creation



Chris McGlone: frontline may be at risk

of the single service, Scotland has lost more than 400 frontline firefighters and emergency 999 control jobs.

Five control rooms are also due to close later this year which will compromise the resilience of the service.

IN BRIEF

Fire flaws in PFI hospital

Major flaws in fire-proofing materials have been found in the UK's first privately built hospital since the foundation of the NHS.

Opened in 2000, the Cumberland Infirmary in Carlisle was built under the Private Finance Initiative, costing £67m.

Graeme Higgins, secretary of the FBU in Cumbria, said: "It has to be asked why it has taken so long to identify the flaws in fire-proofing materials used in the hospital's construction. It could take up to 18 months to rectify these issues.

"In Carlisle alone we have two PFI-built fire stations. We would urge all stakeholders involved with PFI buildings to review the fire safety materials used in construction."

Commutation win

A successful legal challenge by the FBU has established that firefighters who retired between 1998 and 2006 should be compensated because they did not receive the lump sum in their pension that they were entitled too.

A test case involving a retired firefighter and FBU member found that the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) had failed to identify its responsibility to calculate appropriate commutation factors – the amount that needs to be given up in order to provide a lump sum – and that it should compensate the member for the loss of money and any tax liability.

Members who will be affected will be contacted shortly.

FBU domestic abuse policy

The FBU has published a domestic abuse policy document that will help officials negotiate a local policy to help victims and raise awareness within their fire and rescue service.

Samantha Rye, secretary of the FBU national women's committee (NWC), said: "The NWC wanted to develop this model policy document to assist officials to negotiate a local policy which will help improve the lives of members and raise awareness of issues associated with domestic abuse and sexual violence."

■ You can find the document at www.fbu.org.uk/?p=15280.



London firefighters training for vehicle rescue after a road traffic accident – fire and rescue service work is more diverse than ever

Fatality figures cannot justify job losses

London

Politicians have been warned against using fire death figures to justify further job cuts to the UK fire and rescue service.

London Fire Brigade has claimed that there has been a 50% fall in the number of fire deaths in the capital over a five-year period.

Matt Wrack, general secretary of the Fire Brigades Union, commented: "Any statistics showing a reduction in fire deaths are a result of the hard work, dedication and success of firefighters who provide a

life-saving service to the public.

"The point that is often missed in these debates is that a significant part of the work of firefighters is to reduce the number of fires.

"It would be irresponsible for politicians to use these figures to justify further cuts to the fire and rescue service, whose ability to undertake prevention and enforcement work has already been compromised.

"The work of the fire and rescue service is more diverse than ever, with firefighters undertaking more rescues at non-fire incidents than ever before."

NEWS FOCUS

New laws would take us back to 1927 when the Conservative Party launched an onslaught on union funding for the Labour Party



Armoured cars with machine guns at Hyde Park Corner in London during the general strike in May 1926

Tories take us back to the 1920s

Keith Ewing, professor of public law at King's College, London and president of the Institute of Employment Rights, says proposed government legislation on trade unions is an unjustified violation of the rights to freedom of expression and association and warns that there may be more on the way

The Queen's speech, summarising the government's planned legislation for the coming parliament, contained another wave of Tory attacks on trade unions, designed to weaken still further the industrial and political rights of working people.

On the industrial side, the most dangerous attack is in the proposed restrictions on the right to strike. New strike ballot rules would require a turnout of at least half of those eligible to vote. This means that any action would require the support of at least 25% of all those eligible to vote.

In addition, in the fire service, as well as in transport, education and health, the action will need the consent of at least 40% of those eligible to vote. The Tories try to justify this extra qualification by saying such areas of employment are essential emergency services.

Britain would not be alone in requiring minimum levels of participation to authorise industrial action.

But what is being proposed is at the high end of international practice and of questionable legality under International

Labour Organization (ILO) conventions by which the UK is bound. The ILO, founded in 1919, is now an agency of the United Nations.

These qualifications, combined with the government's refusal to reform rules that force unions to use postal voting and rule out online polls, may have the practical effect of banning industrial action altogether in the four so-called essential services concerned.

While international law permits industrial action to be banned in essential services, it requires independent and binding arbitration as a trade-off.

On the political side, union members would be required to "contract" in rather than "contract out" of the political levy

This is a partisan attack designed to weaken the Tories' opponents

that maintains their union's political fund. These funds enable unions to campaign for their members by activities like writing to MPs and lobbying party conferences without falling foul of 1992 legislation that deems such activity "political" and, without a political fund, unlawful.

This measure would come on top of the Lobbying Act that came into force in September last year and is better known as the "Gagging Act". The intention is to silence the principal opposition to the Tories.

The Gagging Act restricts the ability of unions to spend money supporting candidates favourable to working people at elections. The new Bill would restrict their ability to raise money for all political and electoral purposes.

The intention is to take us back to the situation in 1927 when, in the aftermath of the 1926 general strike, the Conservative Party launched an onslaught on trade union funding for the Labour Party.

A return to the "contracting in" regime for union political funds that was abolished in 1946 is, of course, wholly unjustified.

Union members must consent to their union's political objects every ten years; they are free to opt out of the majority decision if they do not like it; and they are free to leave the union if that is not enough.

The likely effect of the new laws will be to reduce the amount of money that unions can raise for political purposes.

The evidence of the 1920s and 1930s suggests that political fund income will fall by at least a third, though, for various reasons, I predict there will be an even greater decline today.

I predict also that there will be other nasty stuff on the political levy on the way, details of which are yet to be revealed.

In my view, the attack on our political freedoms in both the Gagging Act and the Trade Union Bill requires a legal response. This is a partisan attack designed to cumulatively weaken the Tories' opponents.

As such, the attack represents an unjustified violation of the rights to freedom of expression and association.

VIEW
FROM THE
AERIAL LADDER
PLATFORM



Think before you click ...

Extreme far right groups like Britain First and the English Defence League (EDL) have developed a formidable social media presence that is focused on fundraising to pay for their demonstrations and campaigns.

The EDL and Britain First are both fascist organisations whose main

activity is street demonstrations against Muslim communities to whip up tension and violence.

Their insidious social media pages will post an apparently innocuous patriotic image which people are urged to "like" and "share" with friends on social media like Facebook and Twitter.

An example of the sort of images they post is that of the late Bernard Jordan, the 89-year-old D-Day veteran who left his care home unannounced to attend the 70th anniversary commemorations of the Second World War Normandy landings in France, accompanied by the message: "How many thumbs up for



Bernard Jordan?" The image garnered over 23,000 likes.

The groups have also attempted to hijack the images of murdered soldier Lee Rigby as well as of actress Lynda Bellingham who died of cancer last October.

After liking or sharing these images

you will automatically see more of them, a quarter of which will be attempts to solicit donations.

Formed in 2011 by members of the British National Party, Britain First has more than 700,000 likes on Facebook which gives them the ability to contact over 20 million people in the

UK – a third of the country.

Russ King, secretary of the FBU in Tyne and Wear, spoke about this issue at FBU conference 2015.

He warned that users of social media have to be extra cautious about whose images they share as it is not always clear who is behind them.



FBU conference, held in Blackpool on 12–15 May in the aftermath of the general election, expressed determination to continue the union’s fight for justice and to take on the new challenges that we now face

‘WE ARE NOT AN ARM OF THE STATE’

Mark Rowe (Merseyside) moved an emergency motion condemning the use of firefighters to assist the eviction of anti-homelessness campaigners – the Love Activists – from the premises of an empty bank in Liverpool in May.

FBU reps visited the occupation before the eviction which saw 50 homeless people thrown out of the property.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, called the use of firefighters in this instance a disgrace and declared firefighters “won’t be used as an arm of the state”.

He said: “Firefighters provide a life-saving, humanitarian public service and should not be used to assist the evictions of anyone. Putting poor people out into the street is far from humanitarian.”

Last year 112,070 people declared themselves homeless in England – a 26% increase over four years.



‘PREPARE FOR ONSLAUGHT’

In his presidential address **Alan McLean** told conference of his shock at the general election result which saw the Tories confound expectations and polls to form a majority government.

The president warned conference that “we must be prepared for the onslaught” and be ready to fight back.

He urged the Labour Party to address why it lost so many supporters to smaller parties, with the likes of Ukip picking up nearly 4m votes.

FIGHT FOR PENSIONS JUSTICE CONTINUES

Congratulating members on the fantastic show of unity throughout the pensions campaign, conference committed the union to continue the dispute with a legal, political and industrial strategy.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, called the election result the biggest setback in the pensions battle. He called on members to keep the political pressure on their MPs and for the FBU to keep challenging the government over pensions at every point.

“We now have an imposed, unworkable scheme that we will pressure the government to improve. We will continue to fight for decent pensions for our members.”

Matt Wrack said a number of Tory MPs had given commitments to

FBU members locally over the “false guarantee” on firefighter fitness. He told conference the union would hold them to account.



RENEWGE

2015



DIRE WARNINGS OVER PRIVATISATION FROM SPAIN

Roberto Rivas, one of the Spanish firefighters who, in 2013, refused to evict an 86-year-old women from her house sparking the slogan “We rescue people, not banks”, said he was shocked and surprised but happy to be one of the guest speakers at FBU conference 2015.

Addressing delegates, he spoke about how the dangerous mix of austerity and privatisation in Spain had endangered firefighters and the public.

Privatised call centres there would only mobilise privatised fire services, ahead of publicly owned services, even when it would take them longer to get to the scene of an emergency. Those in trouble are then charged up to £1,000.

Trust with the public has been so compromised that many people no longer want to call firefighters if there is an emergency.

Roberto explained how austerity is causing more fires. “With an unemployment rate of 25 per cent, many Spanish people do not have enough money to light their homes, so are turning to naked flame candles instead,” he said.

BUMPER BATTLE AGAINST TORY UNION LAWS

TUC general secretary **Frances O’Grady** warned of a “bumper battle against anti-union laws” now that the Conservatives had won a majority government.

She said their plans would limit picketing and impose draconian strike ballot thresholds if they pass through Parliament.

O’Grady’s warning to the Tories was clear: “If you think we’re going to give up our right to strike without a fight then you’d better think again.”

Ian Lavery MP delivered a barnstorming speech to conference calling for delegates to take the fight to the new government.

“This isn’t a time to sit back and reflect. We’re trade unionists – we’re born into struggle. We dust ourselves down and continue to fight like never before.”



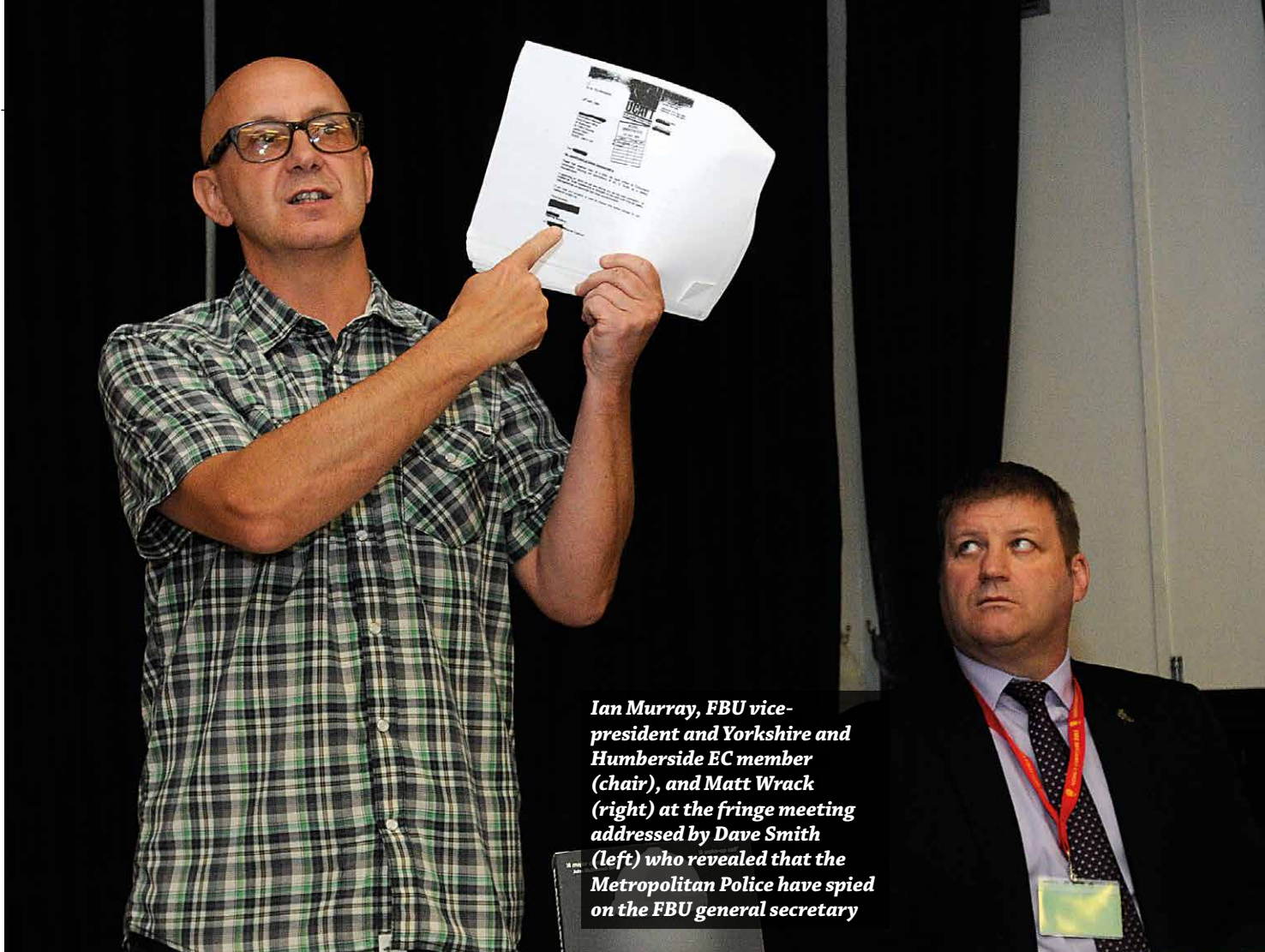
CREW REDUCTIONS BAD FOR ALL

Rich Williams (Staffordshire) told conference how austerity has led to severe crew reductions putting both firefighters and the public at risk with some fire and rescue services sending out as few as three firefighters on an engine.

Dave Burn (Cumbria) [below] said sending out small teams placed enormous pressure on those individuals while **Jenny Impey** (Kent) reported services had used aggressive tactics to push through reductions.



“If you think we’re going to give up our right to strike without a fight then you’d better think again”



Ian Murray, FBU vice-president and Yorkshire and Humberside EC member (chair), and Matt Wrack (right) at the fringe meeting addressed by Dave Smith (left) who revealed that the Metropolitan Police have spied on the FBU general secretary

FRINGE EVENTS

A fringe event heard from **Dave Smith** [above] who spoke about his efforts to expose the blacklisting of trade union activists in the construction industry.

The co-author of *Blacklisted: The Secret War between Big Business and Union Activists* also revealed how the FBU's general secretary had been spied on by the Metropolitan Police's special demonstration squad. Matt Wrack said he was "shocked but not surprised" about the revelations and confirmed he had requested a copy of his file from the police.

At a separate fringe event, **Brian**

Richardson, Unite Against Fascism assistant secretary, (right) paid tribute to former FBU president Mick Shaw for a lifetime of work fighting fascism and racism.



NO MORE PAGE 3, NO MORE SUN

Conference voted to condemn the continued use of glamour models on page 3 of the *Sun* newspaper as well as other dubious tabloid publications. **Alex Psaila** (South Wales) [below] said it was unacceptable to treat women in this way. **Matt Wrack**, FBU general secretary, called the newspaper racist, sexist and deeply reactionary, regardless of whether page 3 stays or goes.



'LEARN AND BURN' IS NOT ACCEPTABLE

Gordon Fielding (London) highlighted the alarming increase in burn injuries during fire behavioural training.

Conference agreed the adoption of the 'learn and burn' principle by many fire and rescue services throughout the UK was not acceptable.

In some brigades the number of burn injuries sustained in the training environment now exceeds those sustained in the operational environment.

The union will seek an urgent review of fire service guidance on fire behavioural training.

FBU general secretary spied on by the Metropolitan Police special demonstration squad



CONTROL ROOM SHORTAGES

Amelia Diallo (control, Lincolnshire) called the increasing rate at which control rooms are staffed at below safety-critical levels “unacceptable”.

A recent FBU control staff national committee survey had found that staff were understaffed, under-resourced, operating under increased pressure and not getting breaks. The knock-on effect could see the dispatch of firefighters to emergencies delayed.



NO SUPPORT FOR MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

Aggressive managers in the fire and rescue service are giving workers suffering from mental health problems “warnings about their sickness records and disciplinary sanctions” rather than the support they needed, conference heard.

Helen Tooley, (national women’s committee) said that staff who took time off due to mental illness “were looked on as weak and told to get on with it. Mental health should no longer be taboo. We need our employers to take it seriously”.

Micky Nicholas, secretary of the black and ethnic minority members committee, [below] advised conference that mental health issues disproportionately affect workers from ethnic minorities.

The union will produce a best practice guidance document to help local officials tackle mental health issues in the workplace.



CO-RESPONDING DISCUSSIONS TO CONTINUE

Conference voted to continue discussions over firefighters responding to medical incidents after hearing how it could be one of the biggest growth areas for the fire and rescue service in the next few years.

Conference heard from speakers who felt co-responding could help to keep fire stations open in the future, particularly those in rural areas.

The executive council will seek to address issues surrounding the policy, such as training, insurance, compensation and liability as well as the impact on other fire and rescue work.

CONFERENCE PHOTOGRAPHS:
STEFANO CAGNONI

AN APPEAL FOR NEPAL

FBU members from across the UK have been responding to the Nepal earthquake as part of the international search and rescue effort

Responding to the scale of April's devastating earthquake would be challenging for any country. For Nepal's firefighters, responding to fires and emergencies with inadequate personal protective equipment, obsolete vehicles and poor water supplies are challenges they have to face every day.

Since the earthquake hit, killing over 8,000 people, FBU members from across the UK have been in Nepal helping with rescue and reconstruction efforts.

Accompanied by four urban search and rescue trained fire dogs, Cheshire firefighter Steve Buckley helped with rescue efforts in the foothills near Kathmandu.

He has previously responded to

major incidents including the Indian earthquake in 2000 and the Japanese tsunami in 2011.

"I've been handling fire dogs for 11 years now and they are invaluable assets for search and rescue missions," says Steve. "You can cover so much more ground using dogs to search for survivors."

"The local hospital had been closed since the earthquake hit as a bell tower collapsed into it. After we secured the tower it was gratifying to see the hospital's lights come back on and wards open again."

"In the 12 days I spent there I saw over 70 international rescue workers coming together to help the people of Nepal. As the country's own fire and rescue service is underdeveloped it was great that we could play a part to help them recover."

Nepal was the second international incident Cheshire fire and rescue service responded to after last year's major flooding in north east Bosnia.

Lifeline

John Turner, also of Cheshire fire and rescue, says the international response was a lifeline to the Nepalese people. "We were travelling to villages where, six to seven days after the earthquake, people had not seen anyone. We were the first people they saw."

"Ninety five per cent of the buildings had been destroyed. Those still standing were uninhabitable. Locals were either living under plastic sheets or in cattle sheds with animals."



John Monaghan with donated Aquaboxes, Kathmandu, March 2015



Daz Tennant of the Cheshire search and rescue team making an improvised splint for a child with a broken arm



Firefighter wearing donated PPE, Kathmandu, 2012

As well as the support they have given since the earthquake, FBU members have a long connection with Nepal.

Since 2010 Devon and Somerset firefighter John Monaghan has co-ordinated a number of donations of firefighting vehicles and protective personal equipment to firefighters in Nepal.

Firefighters in flip-flops

He recalls seeing firefighters in Kathmandu responding to emergencies wearing t-shirts and flip flops.

"The firefighters were sharing a handful of threadbare tunics and tin hats. One of them had a bandaged foot. I asked what had happened and was told a nail had gone through his flip flop, wounded his foot which had since got infected."

Returning to Devon, John requested a halt to the disposal of ex-service PPE to landfill sites so it could, instead, be donated to Nepalese firefighters. Eighty sets of PPE were sent out to New Road Fire Station in Kathmandu in 2010.

Since then, several visits have been arranged to provide training on donated vehicles and equipment.

Basic firefighting and rescue training courses were also run for firefighters from across Nepal in 2012 and 2013 following a request for support from the United Nations Development Programme.

Funds have also been raised to help an orphanage install a well pump, solar panels, clothing, bedding, educational support and operations for orphaned children.

Steve Buckley of the Cheshire search and rescue team with Bryn the dog



HOW YOU CAN HELP

Please consider making a donation to the Disasters Emergency Committee Nepal Earthquake Appeal fund via its website www.dec.org.uk.

FBU members will be raising money at this year's Glastonbury festival, as part of the trade union affiliated Leftfield area, for firefighter colleagues and disaster relief projects in Nepal.

If you would like to support this vital work please check out the Fire Aid website www.fire-aid.org or contact John Monaghan directly: jmonaghan@dsfire.gov.uk



*Fighting for a safer capital:
London 21 June 2014
People's Assembly March
against Austerity*

10 YEARS AFTER THE 7/7 LONDON BOMBS

8,000 JOB LOSSES

Despite a mounting threat of terror attacks, the fire and rescue service has significantly fewer staff and resources than it did on the day the bombers struck



CAMERON MATTHEWS

London Fire Brigade was criticised for the closure of Manchester Square fire station just weeks before the bombings. The closure moved significant numbers of personnel and equipment out to the suburbs. Had the station been open, it would have been one of the best placed to respond.

Paul Embery, secretary of the FBU in London, says corporate managers have still not learnt the lessons of 7/7.

"Only last year two fire rescue units were removed as part of the ongoing cuts. These units would have played a huge role in any rescue efforts deriving from a terrorist attack. These are the mistakes of the past being played out in the present," he said.

Although London is a big target, the threat of terror attacks is UK-wide. Belfast, Manchester, Glasgow and Exeter have all been targets for actual or planned attacks in the past 10 years.

Control

Job loss figures in 999 emergency control are even more stark, with an overall cut of nearly 18% over 10 years.

A recent survey by the FBU's control staff national committee found that control rooms were understaffed, workers under-resourced and under increased pressure.

Jo Byrne, executive council member for control staff, said the situation is untenable. "Control rooms are now being regularly staffed at under safety-critical levels, meaning workers are pressured to work extra hours and are expected to do more with less."

The union warned in its *Sounding the Alarm* report that the next five years will determine

how resilient the fire and rescue service will be for decades to come.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "To lose this many firefighters is irresponsible and reckless."

"The simple truth is that we cannot be as prepared as we should be for major incidents when firefighter numbers have been cut so savagely."

"It makes no sense to cut firefighters in the centre of major cities that are big terror targets. Emergency response times are up, the number of firefighters able to respond is down – this is no way to be prepared."

"As George Osborne continues cutting public services we are going to have to fight job cuts harder than ever. We need to engage the public, pressure politicians and fight back."



Tube train blown up in the London bombings near Aldgate station

JEFF MOORE/ALLACTIONDIGITAL.COM/PA PHOTOS

Ten years ago the FBU said one of the most obvious lessons from the 7/7 London bombings was that cutting the number of firefighters would do nothing to protect the public in an emergency. Now new figures show that there have been massive firefighter job cuts across the board.

The London terror attack targeted three Tube trains and a bus, killing 52 people and injuring more than 700 others. In the aftermath of the bombings, the FBU backed calls for more resources, personnel, equipment and training, making the case that, on the day of the bombings, the fire and rescue service was badly overstretched.

But a decade later, and five years into an austerity programme, new figures reveal a massive cut in firefighter numbers, raising serious questions

over how the UK fire and rescue service can respond to major, labour-intensive incidents when it has far fewer personnel and reduced resources.

Firefighter magazine can reveal that, in the past 10 years, the UK has lost more than 8,000 fire and rescue service jobs – equivalent to almost one in seven posts. The overall headcount of the service has dropped from 59,000 to 51,000, which includes the loss of 6,400 wholetime firefighters' jobs, 1,400 retained firefighters and 345 control staff.

In the last 12 months alone 1,843 firefighter posts were lost, making it the worst year for job losses on record.

London, a decade after the bombings, is down more than 800 firefighters. This is on top of the 10 fire stations closed in January 2014 by mayor Boris Johnson.

ATAXIA

A little known condition that affects 10,000

We receive no government funding so the money raised by people like FBU member Martin Barker goes a long way

Ataxia affects more than 10,000 people in the UK. Jonathan Evans, from the neurological charity Ataxia UK, describes the debilitating condition and what is being done to help – and how an FBU member is fundraising to help

Some people inherit ataxia, an umbrella term given to a group of neurological conditions that can affect balance, co-ordination and speech, through genes that have come from one or both parents.

Others develop ataxia due, for example, to vitamin deficiencies or degeneration of the balance centre in the brain.

Or it can be a result of damage to the brain from a stroke, tumour, viral infection or head injury. In many people, discovering the cause of ataxia is complicated and involves a number of tests and scans. Sometimes it is not possible to find the cause of ataxia, of which there are over 70 different types.

People often first notice a problem when they realise they have been falling over more than usual, struggling to walk in a straight line or have become more clumsy.

As the condition progresses, walking may become difficult or even impossible, so sufferers may need to use a wheelchair. Ataxia can affect anyone, at any

age depending on the cause. The severity of the symptoms varies largely.

The condition affects around 10,000 people in the UK. But only one in ten of the population has heard of it. Ataxia UK works as a charity on behalf of people who are affected.

FBU member

We receive no government funding so the money raised by people like FBU member Martin Barker goes a long way. Martin, along with his family, will be taking part in a tandem skydive to raise funds for us in August.

These funds enable us to exist as a charity. In our small team we have a research department that works directly

People often first notice a problem when they realise they have been falling over more than usual, struggling to walk in a straight line or have become more clumsy

with scientists and other research departments to apply for and secure grants for other researchers to conduct further work into better understanding the condition.

Our vision is a world free of ataxia. So a big part of the funds raised goes directly to promoting research with the

aim of finding treatments and a cure by 2020. Ataxia UK also operates a helpline, providing support and guidance to thousands of callers each year.

We have a network of local branches and support groups across the UK that offer mutual support and guidance to people with ataxia in their local community.

Provision of healthcare for people with ataxia has improved significantly over the past half century, but there is still a great deal of work to be done.

2015 marks our fiftieth year as a charity and we are hosting a series of regional conferences, marketing activities and fundraising events.

Awareness day

One such event is our London City Bridges Challenge: a six-mile guided walk across London's bridges on Sunday 20 September, which ties in to International Ataxia Awareness Day.

Such crucial fundraising allows us to create and promote campaigns that enable us to really get the word out there and get people engaging with ataxia.

■ You can donate to Martin Barker's skydive at: virginmoneygiving.com/team/barkerchallenge2015.

■ Find out more information on Ataxia at www.ataxia.org.uk.

■ If you are planning a fundraiser, looking to raise awareness or simply would like to know more about ataxia you can get in touch at office@ataxia.org.uk.



The Ataxia UK team

Legal Beagle

Special leave when you have an emergency

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

Q A member whose partner has life-threatening cancer needs time off work to look after her and their young family. The member has been told he has to use up his annual leave allocation first before being granted any "special leave". Is this correct? What are his rights?

A The member is not legally required to use up all his annual leave before being able to take emergency leave.

It is the right of all employees to take emergency unpaid leave to deal with an urgent situation involving a dependent. There is not a specific limit on how much time you can take time off. However, it must be a "reasonable and necessary" amount of time otherwise your employer may be able to refuse the emergency leave. Your employer should not refuse emergency leave based on the disruption and inconvenience caused to its business. So, if possible, try to agree the leave with the employer first. Members should also check with their employer if they have any policy on paid leave in emergencies.

If one of the member's children is younger than five, he can exercise the right to take up to four weeks' unpaid parental leave a year (up to a maximum of 18 weeks over five years).

Q How is this leave taken?

A In the case of emergency unpaid leave, there is no specific requirement for when a

member must notify his employer that they will be taking the leave. However, the employee must inform his employer as soon as possible of the reason for the absence and how long it is expected to last.

In the case of parental leave, the employee must give at least 21 days' notice of the dates on which the leave is to begin and end.

Flexible working

Every employee now has the right to request flexible working after 26 weeks of employment.

This may be an arrangement that would allow your member to help his partner through her illness while continuing to work.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

A written request should be made to the employer, stating the date of the request and whether any previous application has been made and, if so, when it was made. Employees can only make one request in any 12-month period. It is worth an employee delivering a strong and persuasive case because employers do not have to agree to a flexible work request.

An employee's request and any associated appeal must be considered and decided upon within three months of the request, so a record should be kept of when it was submitted.

It is important to be aware that, if a flexible working request is granted, it will mean a permanent change to the

employee's hours of work.

There is no obligation on an employer to change the working hours back to the original pattern if the need for flexible working ends.

Q How can an employer be persuaded to help?

A I would strongly recommend that a member in this situation contacts the FBU for support.

Any worker who needs to take time off to look after family members should check their employer's handbook or intranet to ensure that they are aware of any relevant policies. In this member's case the employer has referred to the availability of "special leave", so the member should prioritise finding out whether this refers to a formal policy.

If the employer does not help the member to manage the situation, there will be an increased risk of the member being absent from work due to illness or stress-related conditions. In these circumstances, the employer would incur increased costs of managing that sickness absence and, perhaps, even training a replacement employee in the future, that might far outweigh the cost of being flexible now.

■ Answers by Joel Smith from Thompsons Solicitors.

As a union member, you can obtain 30 minutes' free confidential telephone advice on any non-work-related legal matter, including on criminal law, consumer law, property and land law, wills and trusts, nuisance and trespass and a host of other legal issues. Please contact FBU Legal Services on 0808 100 6061 or, in Scotland, 0800 089 1331 for more information.

A 1,200-mile pedal via the Alps – but the honeymoon comes first

Three Barnsley firefighters are planning a massive charity bike ride

“From Budapest to Barnsley – 11 countries in 11 days”. It sounds like the pitch for an edgy road movie.

In fact, it's part of the nifty slogan five firefighters from blue watch in Barnsley have come up with to publicise the marathon cycle ride they are planning for September – to raise at least £11,000 for two local charities.

Canny readers will spot there's a bit of a theme going on here – 11 countries, 11 days, 11 grand. It is all helping to establish the “brand”, spread the word and get people talking to raise as much cash as possible for Barnsley Hospice and Leeds-based charity Candlelighters, which supports children with cancer and their families.

The blue watch team have set up a Facebook page and a Twitter account, and there are plans for a website. From Budapest to Barnsley could well be going viral before the marathon ride begins.

“We thought it had a bit of a twang to it,” says crew manager Darren Middleton, one of three team members who will be clocking up 1,200 miles on their bikes – including a three-day stretch through rugged Alpine terrain.

Colleagues David Camp and Ryan Frost will also be cycling – with Andrew Braddock and Phil Powell, who retired recently,



giving crucial back up in a people carrier South Yorkshire's fire and rescue service has offered to lend the team.

Now Darren and his colleagues are on the look out for sponsors or donations to pay for fuel and accommodation.

A crowd of 250 heard local Indie rock band Here's Jonny play at a fundraising event at Gawber Social Club near Barnsley fire station in May.

The team has also been fundraising at supermarket tills in Asda and Morrison's in Barnsley. The firefighters pack bags for customers, and set up a stall explaining just why they plan to cycle through Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland and back to Barnsley once off the ferry at Hull.

“It's gone down very well – people were chucking in 50ps and even £20 notes,” says Darren. A couple more days packing at the checkout are planned for late summer at both supermarkets.

The team has approached the giant Meadowhall shopping complex outside Sheffield in the hope of raising yet more cash. “We'd like to set up a couple of static cycles,” says Darren.

But gearing up for a major charity fundraiser needs more than a canny marketing strategy. As firefighters, the cycling team are, of course, already pretty fit. Ryan is a keep-fit enthusiast and former footballer Dave cycles as a hobby. After intensive questioning, Darren lets slip that he won a silver medal in the World Duathlon Championship in Ottawa a couple of years back.

110 miles a day

But, with around 110 miles a day to cover, a rigorous training schedule is already under way. “We are covering about 60 or 70 miles a day at the moment when we are not on shift. But we won't be able to have a full run through 11 days back to back until its the real thing,” says Darren.

A lot of ground was covered in a recent holiday in Scotland, when the three took to the roads around Loch Lomond. “We did 80 miles a day four days running,” says Darren. It is, he says, “very hilly” up there.

There are personal reasons why Darren is extremely keen to raise funds for local charities helping people face cancer. The death of his friend Tina Element, mother of three children, from cancer at just 31, two years ago was the initial spur for raising funds.

“Tina spent the last few months of her life in Barnsley Hospice and received very good care. Her husband is one of my best friends. I intended to do the ride with him at first. But he's got a



Rigorous training is already under way – the three are currently covering 60 or 70 miles a day when not on shift



The team has been fundraising at supermarkets – packing bags for customers and explaining why they plan to cycle through Hungary, Croatia, Slovenia, Italy, Austria, Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland and back to Barnsley once off the ferry at Hull



'It's very hilly up there': The three firefighters did 80 miles a day four days running during a training holiday

lot on working and looking after the children. We spoke about it at work and it just evolved. A lot of people have lost someone to cancer and the hospice does a marvellous job caring for people."

There are limits

In the run-up to September 15 – when the 11-day marathon cycle begins – the team will be twin-tracking preparations – fundraising and getting fit for the big event.

When the *Firefighter* asks why the team picked September, Darren reveals why there's no way he can start pedalling across Europe until early autumn. He's getting married in July and his fiancée Kirsten, a primary school teacher has, like all the team's partners, been "very supportive". But there are limits.

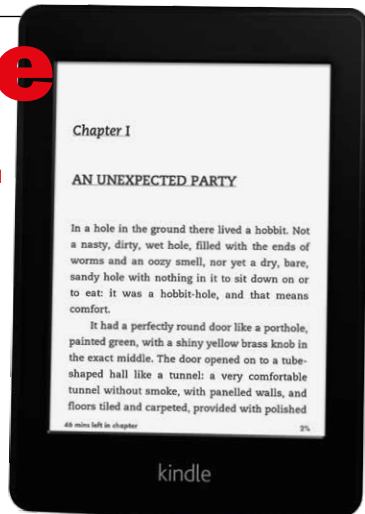
"To be honest, I was under strict orders that it had to be after the wedding because of the amount of stuff we have to do before and we had to get the honeymoon in first". Quite so.

- **EMAIL:** eleven-in-eleven@hotmail.com
- **TWITTER:** [@11in11cycle](https://twitter.com/11in11cycle)
- **FACEBOOK:** http://bit.ly/11-in-11_facebook
- **DONATE:** <http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/team/11in11cycle>



The team photo: (l to r) Ryan Frost, Darren Middleton and David Camp with support team (back row) Andrew Braddock and Phil Powell

Prize quiz



Win a Kindle Paperwhite

HOW TO ENTER

To win a new Kindle Paperwhite please send your answers by 31 July on a postcard to: Prize Competition (July 2015), 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 Which US president signed the Civil Rights Act in July 1964?

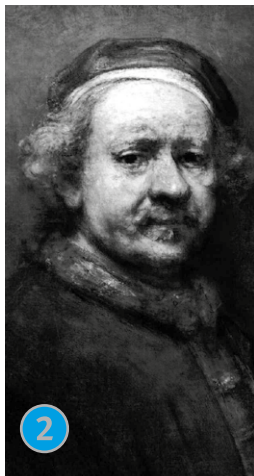
- A – Dwight Eisenhower
B – Lyndon B Johnson
C – John F Kennedy
D – Richard Nixon



PA PHOTOS

2 July 1606 was the birth year of which famous Dutch artist?

- A – Vincent van Gogh
B – Hieronymus Bosch
C – Piet Mondrian
D – Rembrandt



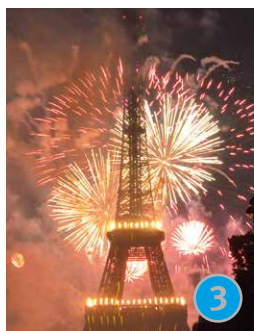
PA PHOTOS

4 The Spanish Armada was defeated by England in July of which year?

- A – 1588
B – 1688
C – 1585
D – 1898

5 The first successful cloning of what mammal was achieved in July 1996?

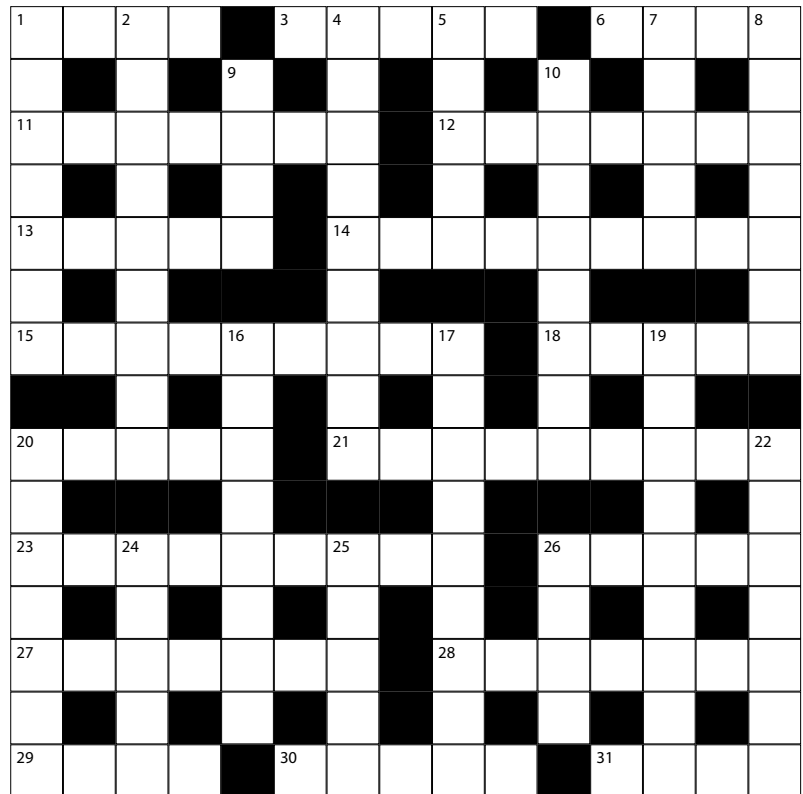
- A – A cow
B – A sheep
C – A whale
D – A dog



PA PHOTOS

3 14 July is celebrated in which European country as its national day?

- A – France
B – Germany
C – Holland
D – Spain



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1, 12** You, or this magazine (11)
3 Previous to, in an archaic way (5)
6 One of Trumpton's twin 4, 1 across 12s (4)
11 Annual publication of predictions (7)
12 See 1 across
13 4, 1 across 12: 6's colleague (5)
14 Stick one's oar in (9)
15 Keep calm – Corporal Jones's catchphrase (4,5)
18 Rowing squad (5)
20 Freight on ship or aeroplane (5)
21 Of an album, not permanently bound (5-4)
23 Hollyoaks' 4, 1 across, 12 (3,6)
26 Tom – Eastenders' 4, 1 across, 12 (5)
27 Rotate (7)
28 Ugly building, say (7)
29 Body powder, in short (4)
30 Sudden (military) attack – with food mixer? (5)
31 Jealous feeling towards another (4)

DOWN

- 1** Drooped, waved or marked (7)
2 Dealer in contraband spirits (3-6)
4 Not factual (9)
5 Overhaul of ship (5)
7 Let loose from bonds (5)
8 Reap what was sown (7)
9 One who looks down his/her nose (4)
10 Do wrong to; afflict with pain or resentment (8)
16 Likely (8)
17 Look-out point on ship (5-4)
19 Rookie; youngster (9)
20 Entertainment form – Minnelli film (7)
22 Farm for food with fins (7)
24 Belly-button (5)
25 Best imaginable (5)
26 Bovine meat (4)

Last issue's answers and winners



Crossword solution May/June

May/June quiz answers

- 1** – D Pinocchio
2 – C Cruella de Vil
3 – A Richard III
4 – B Clement Attlee
5 – D Manchester United

Winner of April quiz

Clare Hudson, Nottinghamshire

Station Cat

Johnson pulls rank on city's fire authority

Mayor Johnson's hands-off approach

Who would you think knows more about fire-fighting – the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority or Boris Johnson? Given that Boris knows sod all, the Cat would think the LFEPA is probably the correct answer. Boris wouldn't agree.

It emerged recently that "Two Jobs" Johnson has issued no fewer than nine "directions" to the authority over the last few years.

The most significant was when he imposed a "realignment" of the service contrary to LFEPA advice. "Realignment" in this case meant cutting £29m a year off the budget. That is some interference, even by the mayor's standards!

And when the now cash-strapped authority tried to raise revenue by flogging off the former fire station site in Southwark to a developer, the hand of Boris struck again. He vetoed that plan, presumably on the basis that LFEPA would only waste the millions of pounds raised by spending it on improving fire services.

Boris also likes to ensure that he has the right type of manager. The sort of chap who would appeal to Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson. That is why he "directed" that he be involved

in appointing the London fire commissioner. Left to the authority, the lord knows what type of riff-raff they might have appointed.

Boris doesn't care much for the LFEPA. He says it is "highly dysfunctional". When he eventually pops off to become MP for Uxbridge and South Ruislip full time, no doubt the authority will organise some sort of "do" – to which Boris won't have the Cat's chance of an invite ...

Credit to the Yorkshire spenders

What is plastic, oblong, thin and entitles the bearer to spend money like an octopus at a Las Vegas gaming joint? Why it's a fire service credit card!

There has been a regular exodus of Yorkshire fire service bosses to Kuwait recently. Yes, that's Kuwait in the Gulf, not the name of a small Dales village. It is difficult to say exactly what these managers have been doing there, as they appear not to know themselves.

The service originally told the *Yorkshire Post* it was engaged in a profit-making training contract in Kuwait but later said it wasn't interested in making a profit. But while it may not be

anxious to make money, it is certainly keen on spending the stuff. The Yorkshire fire service corporate credit cards have been taking a real pasting.

Corporate cards were introduced as a convenient way of buying "low value goods and services".

Low value like the £45,902.46 that went onto the service's credit card at Kuwait City's plush Marina Hotel ("a prestigious, multi-facility, five-star complex offering luxurious and functional amenities") during three visits spread over seven weeks. With spending like that, it's lucky they went for the non-profit option.

South Yorkshire's corporate cards almost melted with

their activity during last year's strikes. They were used to purchase £4,900 worth of food for "temporary staff". It is a mystery why these people couldn't buy their own

grub, but managers slapped their meal bills onto the cards with gusto at curry houses, McDonalds, pizza places and pubs.

Saved kitten could be sign of future

Naturally, the Cat takes a great interest in kitten stories and would privately like us to be renamed the Cat

Could it be? Yes, it is: Boris Johnson in fire kit. Are two jobs not enough for him?

STEFAN ROUSSEAU/
PA PHOTOS



Rescue and Fire Dousing Service.

Imagine her delight to discover that the Lancaster Township Fire Department of Pennsylvania had played a part in rescuing a feline friend from a storm drain.

And they did it in a very interesting way.

Our US firefighting chums pronounced it too small to attempt entry so they enticed a small child, in this case six-year-old Janeysha Cruz, to crawl down the gap on a rescue mission.

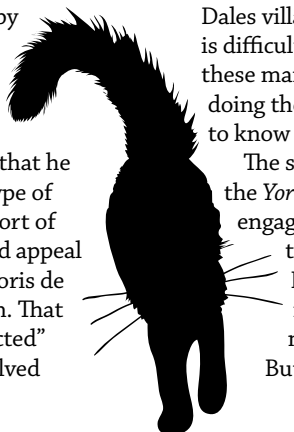
It is to be hoped that the attention of the UK government is not drawn to this tale. It would only give them ideas.

You can see work and pensions minister Iain Duncan Smith thinking: "Well, if children can go down holes, they can surely scramble up chimneys ..."

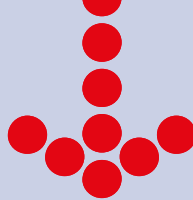
A sucker for the job

Firefighters have enough problems getting to an emergency – but a crew in Luton in April faced an unexpected obstacle in the shape of a school lollipop man who continued to herd children over the road outside William Austin school despite the approach of a fire engine on call.

A witness said several firefighters left the vehicle to "escort him off the road". More crackers than lollipops, the Cat would think ...



25-year badges



John Davies (r), green watch, Neath, Mid & West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from brigade vice-chair Lawrence Larmond



Stewart Brown (l), Wimbledon, London, former LGBT EC member, receives his 25-year badge from national officer John McGhee



Paul Jones (r), green watch, Neath, Mid & West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from brigade vice-chair Lawrence Larmond



Tony Howells (c,r), Pembroke Dock, Mid and West Wales, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Graeme Callan with colleagues and Tony's son Gareth (who had just joined the service) looking on



Dave Cappaert (l), green watch, Homerton, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Karl Haider



Pete Cogley (r), Lancashire officers' branch, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Harman



Colin Golden (r), blue watch, Eccleston, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Jason Hannah



Chris Martin (r), blue watch, Eccleston, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Jason Hannah



Ian Simms (r), blue watch and branch chair, Eccleston, St Helens, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Jason Hannah



Frank Davidson (l), Cumbria, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dave Burn



Paul Bray (l), Devon and Somerset HQ, receives his 25-year badge from brigade vice-chair Scott Mitchell

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



Andy Bradley (2nd r), red watch, Odsal, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from Bradford division secretary Dave Gillian with colleagues (l-r) Craig McCulloch, David Hebblewhite and Spencer Priestley



David Elliott (c, r), blue watch, Carlisle, Cumbria, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Steve Ratcliffe with blue watch Carlisle East and West colleagues

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Change of address or next of kin

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

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0808 100 6061

(England, Wales and N Ireland),

0800 089 1331

(Scotland),

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues.

For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.