

FireFighter

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

June 2009



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END THE POSTCODE LOTTERY

Union moves to end fire service planning chaos

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Pay tops agenda as Union builds campaign on operational standards

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Enhanced education officers' role will boost members' skills

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MONEY TO BURN
Nearly £40m of taxpayers' money is going up in smoke

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Defend control jobs



The key debate at our annual conference this May was around the attack on emergency fire controls in England. As we have made clear time and again, the regionalisation project is an expensive and unnecessary waste of resources. The truth is that it is not wanted within the fire and rescue service. Effectively, Government is forcing this on the service. Regrettably, others who could have done more to resist have failed to do so. Chief fire officers and local politicians could have ensured that the project was scrapped long ago.

They have failed to do so. It has been left to the FBU time and time again to point out the dangers of the proposals and the ever-increasing costs.

The regionalisation plan is proceeding and currently that means that our employers in England intend to transfer emergency fire control staff to new employment – under the regional local authority controlled company (LACC) which is intended to run eight of the nine regional controls (there will not be an LACC in London).

The clear intention then is that large numbers of control members would be

made redundant. Those who remain employed would face an uncertain future as we are currently unaware of the terms and conditions under which they would be expected to work.

PART OF THE TEAM

This whole sorry saga is a disgrace and we do not intend to accept it. The fire service prides itself on teamwork. None of us can perform within the service without the rest of the team – and our emergency fire controls are an essential part of the team.

So the message from our conference was that we intend to do everything in our

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Secretary John Drake:
'It's my job to make sure
every member is properly
served by the Union'



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Reports from the FBU's annual
conference in Scarborough

power to defend our control members.

Over the coming months the Union will be visiting every fire and rescue service in the UK to explain what we are fighting for and to ask for your support. The Union will be asking every branch to ensure they are represented at local meetings.

There is still a huge amount which can be done to fight this attack. We will be asking members to engage in a new stage of lobbying of local fire service politicians as well as MPs. Our demands are straightforward. If the regionalisation

plans go ahead we want our members to be employed on the same terms and conditions as they are now – recognition of our Union and agreement that there will be no compulsory redundancies. These demands are very modest – and achievable.

Our message to the politicians is that they need to deliver to this group of staff because the rest of us will not stand by and allow their jobs and conditions to be devastated.

Ultimately that may mean industrial

action. That is not something we want and it is something which can be avoided. But the responsibility lies with our employers. They cannot wash their hands of the issue. They have a very clear responsibility to their current staff and we will be insisting that they meet that responsibility.

Our conference was unanimous on this matter and the Union will ensure over the coming months that every member is fully aware of all the issues involved so that if a call for industrial action comes it will receive a huge echo. The government and employers need to understand that this campaign is only just beginning its most serious stage.

To borrow a phrase from John Paul Jones, the founder of the American navy – ***We have not yet begun to fight.***

Politicians need to deliver to this group of staff because the rest of us will not stand by and allow their jobs and conditions to be devastated



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

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Everything you need to know about integrated risk management planning

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June 2009

→ Latest news

→ Sounding off

HSE notices have national implications, says FBU

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Health and Safety Executive has served two improvement notices on Hertfordshire FRS following the deaths of two firefighters at Harrow Court, Stevenage in February 2005.

Jeff Wornham and Michael Miller died trying to save Nathalie Close in a fire. Another member of the public was rescued and many others evacuated.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "Although these improvement notices are served on Hertfordshire they have national implications. Other fire brigades across the UK should be making sure they can satisfy the expectations of the Health and Safety Executive."

There will be no prosecution over the deaths, but following an inspection in March 2009 the HSE has issued improvement notices instructing Hertfordshire to design a breathing apparatus refresher training programme and to review boat operator training.

The HSE stated that "the current standards of BA refresher training are not sufficient to cover all aspects"

'Other brigades across the UK should be making sure they can satisfy the expectations of the HSE'

and that there was only one training instructor at Hatfield where the rescue boat is based.

It has raised concerns about the size of drysuits – large and extra large only – provided to firefighters for use with the water rescue boat, and has asked for more information about availability of up-to-date operational intelligence packs for high rise residential buildings.

The HSE also highlighted that because of the time taken to clean fire kit, firefighters were washing their own kit which "can have an impact on the protective properties".

FBU Hertfordshire Brigade Secretary Tony Smith said: "There are critical health and safety issues for firefighters which need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Two fellow firefighters died at Harrow Court, Stevenage, and it is critical that the lessons learned from that tragedy are fully addressed."



A Hertfordshire firefighter walks with flowers to be placed near Harrow Court

JOHN STILLWELL/PA PHOTOS

Four are arrested over fatal warehouse fire

WARWICKSHIRE

Four former warehouse workers were arrested last month in connection with a fire that killed four Warwickshire firefighters in 2007. The three men and one woman, all from Poland, were arrested on suspicion of arson with intent to endanger life.

The fire started on November 2 2007 in a vegetable packing warehouse in Atherstone on Stour, near Stratford-upon-Avon. The FBU described it as the “worst night for the fire service in decades”.

Ashley Stephens, 20, John Averis, 27, and Darren Yates-Badley, 24, were found dead in the remains of the building. Their colleague Ian Reid, 44, died in hospital.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: “If that terrible fire was started deliberately then the whole community and firefighters everywhere will want to see those responsible punished. We welcome any progress the police are making, but strongly caution against prejudging any of those arrested.”



JUSTIN TALLIS / REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Fire investigation officers began their investigation as soon as the blaze was out

Everyone has the right to a fair trial.

“The Health and Safety Executive is conducting a joint investigation with the police. Firefighters must have safe systems of work in place no matter what caused the fire and we await the result of that investigation.”

City cuts services despite fatality rate

MANCHESTER

Greater Manchester FBU has warned that plans for more cuts to local fire services from July will mean even longer delays for fire engines and a shortage of specialist vehicles to cover major incidents.

Since 2002 one in four frontline firefighters, over 400 posts, have been axed. Dedicated crews have been taken off special appliances while a large number of higher reach vehicles have been completely removed from service.

Greater Manchester fire service is one of only five in England not keeping pace with reductions in fire deaths. Its average fatality rate per 100,000 of population was 0.74 against the England average of 0.49 in the four years to 2006-7, according to CLG.

Green light for action ballot over 44 posts

ESSEX

THE FBU has given the go ahead to Essex members to ballot for industrial action over the fire authority's programme of cuts in frontline staff and provision to respond to 999 calls.

A first round of cuts includes axing one in ten frontline wholetime firefighter posts. The 44 posts will be lost by changing how specialist vehicles are crewed, leaving only enough firefighters on duty to crew one of two specialist fire engines at a time.

Grays firefighter and Essex FBU Acting Brigade Secretary Paul Adams said: “It's a recipe for disaster. Cuts compromise the safety of firefighters and public alike. The fire authority needs to realise there is strong and growing opposition to the cuts.”

BA control officer moved to community safety

NORTH YORKS

North Yorkshire fire crews have condemned plans to cut the number of firefighters on fire engines, including removing the breathing apparatus entry control officer to work on a

community fire safety van which will go to 999 incidents separately.

Ian Watkins, North Yorkshire FBU Brigade Secretary, said: “The role was introduced after firefighters were killed. It cannot simply be removed without us having serious concerns.”

Sounding off!

DAVE CHAPPELL

Devon and Somerset

Meet the family – in Cuba

While on holiday in Cuba this May fellow FBU member Simon Green and I visited Havana's central fire station – Comando 1, named “Camilo Cienfuegos” after the charismatic Cuban revolutionary. This is one of Havana's 23 stations which cover a population of 2 million.

We came with greetings on the 50th anniversary of Cuba's revolution and to see how things are for Cuban firefighters. On arrival we saw two brand new appliances parked outside, part of a large batch from China, and were impressed by other equipment, including BA and PPE.

The Cuban fire service is a mix of professional firefighters and military conscripts. Cubans can work as firefighters for their two years' military service, while crew, watch and station managers are professionals. They work shifts of 24 hours on and 48 hours off and retire after 25 years.

What Cuba lacks in material wealth it makes up for in organisation and ingenuity. For example, Cuban firefighters run regular



TUC general secretary Brendan Barber spoke at a rally in the Cuban capital Havana last month to mark the 70th anniversary of the Cuban trade union confederation CTC and the 50th anniversary of the Cuban revolution

fire and accident prevention campaigns while specialist officers undertake inspections.

Firefighters play a central role protecting homes and people from the threat of hurricanes by storing personal belongings, securing houses, and transporting people away from danger.

Fatalities from fires and hurricanes in Cuba are, un-coincidentally, very low by comparison with other Caribbean countries.

Firefighters of the world are all family, said Fabian Rodríguez Molina, the station commander. Before leaving we asked to make a donation towards a Cuban firefighters' welfare fund or for the station children's party, but the offer was politely declined with a dignity and independence that characterises Cuban people's strength of mind.

The firefighters we met welcomed us visiting them. With little sign that the USA is about to end its 50-year economic blockade of the island, the best way we can support Cubans in their struggle for economic and political independence is to visit Cuba ourselves.

Lifelong learning: a wider role for regions

**TREVOR SHANAHAN,
NATIONAL ULF CO-ORDINATOR**

“ This year’s FBU annual conference took an important decision to widen the role of regional education officers to include lifelong learning. This position becomes ‘regional education and learning organiser’ (RELO).

People will be appointed to these posts by regional committees as soon as possible and will shadow regional Union Learning Fund (ULF) co-ordinators.

The Executive Council, which brought the proposal to Conference, will bring rule changes to fully embed this position in the Union’s structure to annual conference 2010.

During the transition period, ULF project staff will continue to advise the Union on lifelong learning matters linked to workforce development under the appropriate national officer.

Conference also agreed that the Union should further explore continued funding from central government and/or fire and rescue services (FRSs), since ULF funding by government is due to end next year.

These developments, which will ensure a robust future for the Fire Brigades Union, are the culmination of a process which began when, following annual conference 2007, the Executive Council set up the Embedding Lifelong Learning Group (ELLG) group to consider the issue and bring forward proposals.

The ELLG has sought information from a number of sources, including other trade



unions, while ELLG members have spoken with officials at all levels of the FBU and have taken on board a wide range of views. The Executive Council considered the work of the ELLG in February 2009 and agreed to put a statement to the FBU's annual conference.

The conference decision strengthens the Union's organisation of education and learning. The RELO will have responsibility on behalf of the regional committee to organise learning and FBU education within region.

This will help to ensure that union learning reps (ULRs), who may be new officials, are encouraged to take up a more active role within the Union. The position of the branch and brigade ULRs will be considered further prior to annual conference 2010.

The Executive Council is working to secure the future of FBU learning centre staff, who are employed through the FRS they work in. The ULF manager is now employed on a fixed term contract which ensures that he is answerable to the general secretary and EC. Four regional co-ordinators are employed as consultants with the others seconded from their own FRS.

Financial costs to the Union of embedding learning in its structure are negligible. ULRs work within their branch, apart from the costs of training and attending events, and the RELO position is not an additional official. The extended remit may mean the post holder has to travel more and attend additional meetings, so there may be a small increase in travel and subsistence expenditure within the regions.

The Executive Council believes it is important to ensure that embedding lifelong learning enhances the delivery of trade union education and helps increase the skills base of officials. These changes will enhance the role and status of education officers and will deliver a quality education and learning package to officials and FBU members.

FBU members at a Union
Learning Fund course

PAUL BOX/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

FBU ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009

Union is negotiating to maintain living standards

FIRE SERVICE PAY 2009

Conference sent a clear message to the employers that the FBU would oppose:

- any attempt to link detrimental changes to conditions of service to pay; and
- any attempt to threaten FBU members by offering a time-limited offer such as was recently made to workers in other areas of local government.

Delegates agreed that discussions with the employers should continue in an attempt to obtain a pay offer which maintains living standards and attempts to make up any ground lost as a result of previous below inflation rises.

"These views and concerns have been clearly reported to our employers and we await a response," said FBU General

Secretary Matt Wrack.

Conference also agreed that the Executive Council, while continuing negotiations, should prepare for a trade dispute and ballot if the employers failed to make an acceptable pay offer and that brigade committees should prepare members for a campaign leading to possible strike action.

Conference agreed that any offer on pay should be subject to consultation with members through the Union's normal structures.

"The debate on the vital issue of pay took place in the midst of the worst financial and economic crisis in living memory," said Matt. "That has had an inevitable impact on our talks with employers who have so far failed to resolve this issue for 2009."

He reminded members that the 2003 agreement had produced a formula based on the movement of pay of associate professional and technical (APT) employees within the Office for National Statistics annual pay survey.

This APT formula was to operate until 2006. Subsequently the Union achieved pay rises in line with the APT formula for 2007 and 2008, he said.

"Concerned at the level of these rises, Conference instructed us to investigate the performance of the APT formula," Matt continued. He told delegates that research was carried out by the Labour Research Department and a report was presented to the Executive Council and reported to regional, sectional and brigade committees.

The general secretary also reported that the National Joint Council agreed to establish a joint working party which began to meet in the autumn of 2008 to discuss pay for 2009 and 2010, but there has been no agreement yet on the issue.



Matt Wrack: We await a response from employers

A shorter week – that's family friendly

WORKING HOURS

Conference instructed the Executive Council to explore options for achieving reduced working hours. An EC subcommittee should be established and a report with any recommendations circulated to brigade/sectional committees before annual conference 2010.

There was concern about widespread

attempts by local employers to bring in new shift patterns which disadvantaged members. Employers sought to justify such changes under the guise of being "family friendly", but a true family friendly change would be a reduction in basic hours.

Conference said that the Executive Council should consider the need to support members campaigning to defend the current shift duty system.

PICTURES: TONY BARTHOLEMW



Delegates urge public alliance to defend service

A SERVICE FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

Delegates set out their vision for “a service fit for the challenges of the 21st century” with better professional standards and preparation and public support for an improved fire service.

Conference agreed an Executive Council statement which noted that in the last five years rushed changes had adversely affected the service: “While Government calls for greater resilience, the systems which developed this in the past have been abolished and not replaced.”

The FBU had highlighted the policy development vacuum with reports on attacks on firefighters, FRS response to floods, and firefighter fatalities.

Conference welcomed developments on operational guidance and operational training research as a result of campaigning by the Union, but warned they were not sufficient to resolve firefighters’ concerns.

It called for improved, objective professional standards to apply to key areas of work, including training, equipment, operational procedures and standards of emergency response, appointments and promotions and local, regional and national planning.

There should be no postcode lottery of levels of service. “The public has a right to know that firefighters attending an emergency

incident have received training to the highest possible standards and that this does not vary according to locality. Firefighters have the right to know that they have the best possible equipment, training and procedures.”

The FBU must play a central role in developing structures to address these issues if they were to have credibility.

There should be improved preparation, including local risk assessment and response planning, training and communication within the service. “All too often IRMPs are about cost-cutting rather than risk management.”

Conference pledged to engage with tenants, community groups and local businesses and trade unions to build an alliance to defend the service. When issues were properly explained the public would understand the need to improve their service “rather than see it cut back further and further”.



League tables ‘will slash standards’

AUDIT COMMISSION

Conference called on the Executive Council to campaign against the use of reports such as the Audit Commission’s *Rising to the Challenge* of December 2008, as a basis for standards of fire cover.

Conference noted with concern that brigades praised by this report had achieved “modernisation” by making savings by changing shift duty systems, depleting frontline fire cover, cutting establishment figures, and other draconian measures.

As with other public service industries, league tables produced as a measure of performance only led to employers competing to slash standards to the detriment of the public and employees alike.

Conference reiterated the need for a risk

based, properly resourced fire service.

Delegates also expressed alarm at the cost cutting measure within the Audit Commission report of replacing conventional pumps with target response vehicles (TRVs).

Smaller crewing levels and the limitation of equipment of TRVs, designed to deal with small known fires, meant they were not capable of replacing pumps without seriously increasing risks to firefighters, members of the public and property.

The vehicles had not been adequately evaluated and the efficiency savings had been exaggerated.

The Union should continue to highlight safety concerns about TRVs and should produce its own report to challenge the credibility of the Audit Commission’s cost-cutting claims.



FBU ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2009

Hatred danger warning

THE BNP AND RACISM

Delegates called on the fire service to state that members of right wing extremist organisations are not welcome and demanded the right to bar members of the British National Party from Union membership.

Conference warned of the danger of the BNP gaining seats in the European elections and underlined the importance of a high turnout. It called for support for the Hope Not Hate campaign and Unite against Fascism.

Conference applauded fire authorities such as Avon who had stated that racists were not welcome and demanded that the FRS should have the same right as the police and prison service to dismiss right wing extremists.

General Secretary Matt Wrack asked: "How can anyone serve a multiethnic diverse community if they believe that sections of that community shouldn't be here?"

"The right to organise in a trade union also means the right to decide who is not welcome in our trade union. That right needs to be built into legislation."

However, the Union did not want to end up paying some fascist compensation and would take legal advice before proposing any rule changes.

"Fascists coming in our Union would be effectively a fifth column within our ranks," he declared. "We'll fight for the right to bring in those rule changes."

■ Delegates called on the Union to instruct members not to make home safety visits in residences where members had been racially abused. At present it is not an offence to

verbally abuse anyone in your own home. Conference called for this law to be changed.

■ Hundreds of delegates wearing Hope Not Hate t-shirts (above) delivered anti-BNP leaflets to homes throughout Scarborough ahead of the European elections. Paul Meszaros of Yorkshire Hope Not Hate campaign said: "It's absolutely fantastic what the FBU is doing here today. The whole place is going to get covered in a couple of hours." For further info and a video of the leafletting visit: www.hopenothate.org.uk/

GUEST SPEAKERS

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber was among the guest speakers at Conference. Visit FBUTUBE to see the video.



FBUTUBE
www.youtube.com/fbutube

For more on the conference

Fires and floods – issues at heart of the service

CLIMATE CHANGE

Conference called for a "just transition" to a low-carbon economy where working people have control over changes to jobs.

Moving an Executive Council policy statement, General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "Climate change is not a trendy issue for tree huggers, it's an issue which is at the heart of the fire and rescue service. It's about safety and resources."

During the 2007 floods firefighters with inadequate personal protective equipment had to stay away from home for days on end, while in 2006 there was a high number of grassland and heathland fires.

"Climate change experts agree that we can expect increased periods of drought and increased extreme storms," he said. "This policy statement makes the case for investment in our service. It is about protecting our members' jobs for the future."

The statement opposed government's use of market mechanisms to prevent further climate change. "Price increases and regressive taxes are about working people paying the price for climate change," he told delegates.

"In the light of the present economic crisis, why would anyone dream of letting the bankers deal with climate change?"

The statement called for trade union environmental reps to have legal rights

like safety reps, public ownership of major energy sectors, low-cost public transport and increased cycling facilities.

It opposed expanding Heathrow and Stansted and building new nuclear power stations, and called for coal fired power stations with carbon capture and storage.

There should be an assessment of climate change as it affects the UK fire service, and a FRS adaptation strategy with guarantees on staffing, IRMPs, training, equipment and health and safety. Fire and rescue authorities should be funded and have a statutory duty to deal with flood rescue.

The FBU is to appoint a climate change policy officer, train union reps and elect brigade and regional environmental reps.

Wanted: a legislative stick (just a little one)

EQUALITY REPS

“Equality should be the beating heart of the Union,” said Alli Burrows moving a successful motion calling for statutory rights for equality reps.

“Progress has been made on a number of equality issues by the Government,” she told delegates. “Credit where credit is due, and we acknowledge improved maternity provision, civil partnerships, increased protection on grounds of age, religion and belief, and sexual orientation.

“But there remains more to do.”

The amalgamation of much of this legislation into the Single Equality Bill was a missed opportunity, since the Bill failed to provide equality reps with time off to conduct their duties.

Equality reps were making real differences to people’s working lives but this was still a work in progress.

“In order for equality reps to be fully effective we want them to follow in the footsteps of our safety and learning reps and receive statutory rights. We need to keep up pressure on Government to include provision for equality reps to get paid facilities time, as in the present economic climate employers are unlikely to agree to paid time off.

“We need a legislative stick even if it’s only a little one.”

Conference called on the Executive Council to work with the TUC and affiliates to campaign for the Government to change the legislation to facilitate paid time off for equality reps to carry out their duties.

ON THE FRINGE

Outside the debating chamber there was plenty of activity on the conference fringe and at the stalls of a range of organisations.

General Secretary Matt Wrack hosted a well attended meeting on the People’s Charter. The charter, launched at Westminster earlier this year, includes calls for banks and insurance companies to be brought into public ownership, investment to protect and create jobs, and giving local government the power and money to build new homes to end the housing crisis.

The Palestine Solidarity Campaign, the Cuba Solidarity Campaign, the Venezuela Information Centre and the Campaign Against Climate Change also held successful events.

Delegates were able to talk to representatives of organisations such as Unite Against Fascism, Love Music Hate Racism, CND, War On Want and the Union Learning Fund.

Where union work means fear for your life

INTERNATIONAL

“In Colombia trade union work means that we live daily with the fear of death,” Carmen Mayusa, a leader of the Colombian health workers trade union ANTHOC, told Conference.

“Over 10,000 trade unionists have been killed. Since January 1 we have proof of the murder of 17 trade unionists,” she said. “Those not murdered are imprisoned and accused of terrible crimes.

“I was imprisoned for 25 months and 17 days with some of my family – my sister and her 18-month-old son who had to serve the sentence with us. We got out of prison but to our immense pain we have been given no employment opportunities.

“In Colombia our families are made to pay for our trade union activities. Three of my brothers were murdered. The last of them was killed on August 8 2008 one month after I was freed from prison. He was a leader of the Colombian TUC.

“But we do have hope and you are that hope. I myself was released because of a Justice for Colombia campaign just like my comrade Martin Sandoval [a leading Colombian human rights campaigner] who was released from prison yesterday.”

FBU president Mick Shaw said: “I visited



Mick Shaw: visited Colombia

Colombia two months ago as part of a Justice for Colombia delegation, some of whom visited Martin Sandoval in prison. His release shows the results that can be achieved by campaigning on behalf of workers in other countries.”

End the blockade, Mr President

Noting that President Barack Obama has approved changes to allow Cubans in the US to travel more freely and send money to relatives, Conference called on the UK and devolved governments to demand the US ends the illegal blockade of Cuba. “The US Government must recognise that Cuba has the right to exist as an independent nation,” the successful motion stated.

■ **Support early day motion 1171.** A parliamentary early day motion calling for a fresh approach in UK-Cuba relations and a ministerial visit to Cuba has gained the

support of 140 MPs. Your help is needed to push it above 200 signatures to make an impact with the UK Government. Visit <http://tinyurl.com/o8cme4>

‘Boycott Israeli goods’

Conference called for immediate recognition of the Palestinian state based on the 1967 border with Israel and urged the Executive Council to condemn the continued occupation of Palestine by Israel and to support a boycott of Israeli goods and services, sanctions and disinvestment.

The “ongoing occupation, annexation and ethnic cleansing of Palestine by Israel” was in breach of international law and continued in spite of condemnations in many UN resolutions, by the International Court of Justice and by human rights organisations in Israel and internationally.

Conference declared its support for the statement, made in December 2008 by Luisa Morgantini, Vice President of the European Parliament: “It’s time for the Israeli Government to stop considering itself above the law and start respecting it, beginning by freezing all settlement-building activities and ending its siege on the Gaza strip.”

Conference called on the Executive Council to seek support within the trade union movement.

Everything you wanted to know about constructing an IRMP

In a bid to fight back against cuts and the postcode lottery of fire service provision, the Union has launched a new guide for FRS managers and elected members on how to properly draw up an IRMP. Assistant General Secretary Andy Dark explains

❖ The theory

Integrated Risk Management Planning (IRMP) was introduced into UK fire and rescue services (FRS) to coincide with the removal of national minimum standards of fire cover. The theory was that the national standards were based on property risk, while emergency cover should actually be based on life risk. The reality is that outside the City of London, there isn't really that much difference between the two. Despite this, since FRSs knew their areas better than anyone else, it was decided that in future they should determine their own standards of cover (based on life risk) at a local level, rather than have new

national standards forced upon them.

But IRMP (or IRRP as it was called in Wales – Reduction Plans rather than Management Plans) was intended to be about much more than minimum standards of emergency cover. The English, Welsh and Scottish governments all produced guidance documents to explain what IRMP was all about, and how an IRMP should be developed. Typical of these guidance documents is the Scottish version which says:

The IRM development process should comprise the following four stages:

- *Identify existing and potential risks to the community within the fire authority area*
- *Evaluate the effectiveness of current*

preventative and response arrangements

- *Determine policies and standards for preventative and response arrangements and identify opportunities for improvement*
- *Determine resource requirements to meet these policies and standards.*

The point being that the entire purpose of an FRS is to deal with “existing and potential risks to the community” – everything from firefighting, fire safety enforcement and call handling, to the more obscure activities that some FRSs are instructing their staff to undertake in the name of “community fire safety” and “partnership working”. All of these are activities that deal with “existing and potential risks to the community”, so all



JOHN HARRIS/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

also have dozens of other plans to manage the risk in the community; attending fires, delivering home fire safety, enforcing the Fire Safety Order, road traffic collision (RTC) reduction campaigns, New Dimension and so on. All of these make competing demands on resources, all of these will have different effects – some critical, some not so – some of them are demanded by the community, some are required by legislation regardless of the desires of the community.

But with only limited resources, not all of these plans to manage the risk in the community can be implemented at the same time – some cannot be implemented at all. Some are ongoing (like attending fires), others come and go (like RTC reduction campaigns). To make sure that they are actually implemented – and in such a way that they might work without conflicting with one another for resources – they have to be integrated.

It makes sense that this process should be called integrated risk management planning.

❖ The practice

The question is, if IRMP is such a sensible process, and if government guidance documents describe it in a series of logical steps, why does it cause so many problems?

- Why has it not made any measurable impact on fire deaths?
- Why has it not made any measurable impact on the frequency of fire?
- Why have firefighter injuries and fatalities been increasing since its introduction?
- Why are the insurers telling us that financial fire losses are rocketing upwards?

The cynical answer to these questions is that governments never really had any intention of seeing IRMP work properly. It was made to look attractive, but the real intention of introducing it was to make cuts to the service.

The more generous answer is that those who developed the concept of IRMP genuinely intended it to work, but it was introduced in a hurry, and without adequate information or instruction about its use. Few civil servants have read the scant government guidance on the subject, and most elected members of fire authorities and fire boards (who are the final arbiters of the suitability of IRMPs) have no real idea what an IRMP is supposed to contain. Senior managers of FRSs therefore don't get criticised for producing IRMPs that don't even

of these activities are supposed to go through the IRMP process.

That is, rather than simply decide to send staff out on skateboards into the local community to look for abandoned cars because someone thinks it is a “good idea”, the FRS should first identify and assess the risk posed by abandoned cars. If they think that sending people out on skateboards is a safe and effective policy to reduce the risk, they need to set performance standards so that in the future, they will be able to measure the success (or otherwise) of the policy. Finally, they have to calculate the resources that will be required to implement the policy. IRMP guidance documents also say that all of the

above must be based on evidence, and must go out for consultation with the public and other interested parties.

By going through this process, the FRS might develop a plan to manage the risk in its community by sending staff out on skateboards to look for abandoned cars. But they

Few civil servants have read the scant government guidance on IRMPs, and most elected members of fire authorities and fire boards (who are the final arbiters of the suitability of IRMPs) have no real idea what an IRMP is supposed to contain

examples to illustrate the process. The framework does not claim to describe what should be contained in an IRMP, it just describes how to write one.

The second part of the document is (or at least will be) a series of supplements that describe the detailed issues that should be contained in an IRMP. Already in progress are supplements that address:

- The “balance” between prevention and intervention
- Equality and diversity
- Taking account of National Framework documents
- Gathering and using operational risk information

Other supplements will be produced to address other issues as time allows. The important thing is that as situations change, the supplements can easily be changed and amended, whereas the framework remains constant.

In England, Communities and Local Government (CLG) has actually produced “IRMP Chapters” that are supposed to have the same function as these supplements, but all of these chapters were written by different contractors, and none of them had a unifying framework on which to base their ideas. As a result, they are hardly used because they lack any common thread. Each one requires

If IRMP is so sensible why have firefighter fatalities been increasing since its introduction?

come close to integrating plans to manage the risk in the community. In England for example, the only thing that senior managers know is that they get a pat on the back from the Audit Commission every time they save some money – regardless of the effect they have on community or firefighter safety.

It is worth noting that the English Audit Commission certainly doesn't know what an IRMP is supposed to do. In its recent report *Rising to the Challenge*, it says that “three fire services we visited were involved in over 200 partnership initiatives... but none had systematically identified the costs and benefits of their involvement to determine when resources should be prioritised”. Quite clearly the problem here is that these three fire services were not following the process of IRMP, but the Audit Commission does not mention IRMP as being part of the solution. In fact, IRMP is only mentioned in two paragraphs of the Audit Commission's entire report.

❖ A solution

It is also true to say that so far, since the introduction of IRMP, the FBU has been so tied up with fighting off cuts, reductions in standards and attacks on conditions of service, that we haven't had time to look closely at what IRMP should be delivering. We know exactly what we don't think should be in an IRMP, and we have battled against

Since the introduction of IRMP, the FBU has been so tied up with fighting off cuts, reductions in standards and attacks of conditions of service, that we haven't had time to look closely at what IRMP should be delivering

those things. But other than standards of fire cover that deliver firefighter safety, we haven't really thought strategically about what should be in an IRMP.

All FRSS have produced their own plans, taking their services off in different directions depending on the particular whims of their senior managers. FBU officials have contained some of the excesses of these managers, but FRSS are still drifting apart into a postcode lottery of service provision.

To address both of these issues we have recently produced and launched a new document, *Integrated Risk Management Planning*, the Framework Document on how to construct an IRMP/IRRP.

The document is divided into two parts. The main body of the document uses the national guidance documents as a basis for an explanation of what an IRMP is supposed to be (and equally importantly, what an IRMP is NOT supposed to be), followed by a detailed description of the IRMP process. This main body is the “framework” of the title. It does mention some “plans to manage the risk in the community”, but these are only by way of

a completely separate approach to its application through IRMP.

The FBU's supplements will be different because each one will follow the same common framework. Whoever actually writes a supplement, they will know the process into which it must fit.

❖ Presentation

The document is deliberately written in the language of “modern management” with the intention that it will be used directly by FRS managers who prepare IRMPs, and for elected members who approve them. A much briefer explanatory note will also be written for elected members who are often too busy to launch into a detailed document and need to be engaged first with a short summary.

Even if you take the cynical view of the reason why IRMP isn't working properly, at least the IRMP Framework Document will give the FBU a common focus for the direction of IRMP, even if governments are happy to continue to see standards falling in the name of so called “efficiency savings”.

Money to burn?

Unopened regional control centres cost taxpayer £40m

Nearly £40 million of taxpayers' money is going up in smoke because of years of delays before nine regional fire control centres become operational, the FBU can reveal.

The first centres will have cost over two years in rent and other charges before brigades move in in July 2010.

The nine regional centres are meant to replace the 46 existing emergency control rooms the Government wants to close under its FireControl project. But the controversial scheme remains in turmoil and beset by spiralling costs, technical problems and delays.

"The project is years behind schedule with project costs rocketing above £1.4 billion," said FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack. "It should be scrapped before another penny is wasted."

A six-month rent holiday was set aside to cover the period between the buildings being completed, a fit-out programme and the first fire brigades moving in.

None of the new buildings will become operational until late 2010 after further delays were announced in late 2008 – which was itself a delay from the original timescale of 2007.

The total rental costs between the buildings being completed until the first fire service moves in are £39,953,430, the Union has established from answers to Parliamentary Questions.

Matt Wrack added: "This is a scandalous waste of public money when fire brigades are looking at major cuts because of a

lack of cash. What was meant to be a money saving project has turned into a financial disaster and diverted funds away from frontline services.

"Despite a few meetings for window dressing, these are largely unused buildings which will not be operational for years.

"The buildings were completed on time and the Government delayed the start of rental payments to give them time to fit out the interiors. But a host of other delays have put the project years behind schedule.

"The fault lies at the door of Government. No local fire authority is responsible in any way for anything which

Regional control centres: the cost

South West £4,544,395. Due to become operational July 2010.

East Midlands £4,819,688. Due to become operational July 2010.

North East £4,460,836. Due to become operational July 2010.

West Midlands £4,418,312. Due to become operational October 2010.

South East £4,949,292. Due to become operational February 2011.

North West £4,240,999. Due to become operational February 2011.

Yorkshire and Humberside £4,849,422. Due to become operational February 2011.

East of England £5,295,606. Due to become operational October 2011.

London £2,374,880. Due to become operational February 2011.

This is a grand total of £39,953,430 in rents for buildings which will not be operational until late 2010 at the very earliest. Even when the first brigade moves in, the buildings will still be under-utilised.

These figures are the totals of rent and other costs from completing the buildings until February 2009, plus the government's estimate of ongoing monthly costs until brigades move in. For full details, including the original Parliamentary Answers, go to: www.fbu.org.uk/newspress/pressrelease/2009/05_06.php

has happened up to now.

"Taxpayers are propping up another failing IT project because the Government is too embarrassed to admit how bad things have become. If they want to save money they should shut this project down before it gets worse."





WHAT'S MY ROLE?

John Drake
Regional Secretary
FBU South West Region



Like all regional secretaries in the Union, I am first and foremost accountable to the regional committee. In

the South West this is made up of elected representatives from all six brigades in the region, along with representatives from the women's and black and ethnic minority sections of the Union.

The South West region is vast and varied – stretching from Cornwall to Gloucestershire. The northernmost tip of Gloucestershire is actually nearer to Scotland than to Cornwall – which helps explain why I seem to spend a great deal of time on the road.

As soon as I joined the fire service, I knew I wanted to play an active part in the

'It's really important that any member who wants to can stand for office in the Union and that every position from branch rep to regional secretary is elected not appointed. It makes us all accountable to the membership. You've got to deliver if you want to stand again'

Union. I served as a branch rep, brigade chair, brigade secretary and regional official before being elected to this job. It's really important that any member who wants to can stand for office in the Union and that every position from branch rep to regional secretary is elected not appointed. It makes



PAUL BOX/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

Communication Workers Union campaign to stop Post Office privatisation – going out and supporting their rallies and demonstrations.

We have also recently campaigned against the BNP in the South West – a vote for the far right is against everything the FBU holds dear, no matter how that party tries to present itself as acceptable. In the run-up to the European election, BNP candidates made it clear they hoped to attract voters disillusioned with mainstream parties in the wake of the scandal over MPs' expenses. It was important we spoke out.

As a region, we have led the way in campaigning against regional control centres – the South West was picked as the first in line for just one control centre to deal with all emergency calls in the region. We've been fighting it for the past five years.

It was uncharted territory, but I think we've won the argument with the chief fire officers, our own members, the public and local politicians. No-one down here wants it. But there is a handful of civil servants intent on driving through the project regardless.

The fight is far from over. We've been very vocal down here for all the right reasons, and other regions are picking up on the work we've done on the ground.

There have been campaign successes. In Cornwall, for instance, the Union fought successfully against plans to close down the only two 24-hour stations in the county, which would have left Cornwall with no guaranteed night-time cover. We lobbied county councillors and campaigned hard to raise public awareness. The proposal was scrapped early last year. It's important to celebrate victories.

The South West is a strong region with many committed officials who make things happen. Avon, for instance, has led the way in campaigning for better facilities at the fireground. A dignity vehicle is now in use and other fire and rescue services are interested in following suit. Making dignity for all at the fireground a priority was another instance of the women's committee

us all accountable to the membership. You've got to deliver if you want to stand again.

Being regional secretary involves co-ordinating various national, regional and local campaigns and assisting branch and brigade reps.

This can involve dealing with individual grievances or disciplinary issues, where there's often a lot of case work. I act as liaison between brigade officials and lawyers in these cases. I also work with other regional officials to make sure members' issues get dealt with effectively.

The day job has to be the primary focus. But being an FBU regional secretary means you've also got a responsibility to the wider trade union and labour movement. The world doesn't end at the fire station door.

We are very involved with the South West regional TUC, campaigning with other unions. At the moment we are backing the



The South West is a big region with big issues – from cuts in Cornwall (above) to the first regional control centre near Bristol (below)



PAUL BOX/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

doing things for the wider Union, not just for women members.

Last year, campaigning led by FBU women saw off unisex facilities at the new Severn Park training centre. Women in the Union continue to punch above their weight. It's a bonus for the region, keen to progress equality, that the National Women's Committee office is based at our headquarters in Bristol.

One of the downsides of this job is that I don't spend as much time on fire stations as I'd like. But I do get a strong sense that attitudes to equality in the service have changed a great deal for the better in recent years.

The Union has a duty to represent all its members. It's my job as regional secretary to make sure every member, wholtime or retained, based in city centre Bristol or rural Cornwall, man or women, is properly served by the Union.

As regional secretary in the South West I am proud to support projects helping colleagues thousands of miles away provide a better service, by helping them train up as trainers. So now firefighters from Palestine and Colombia – and the people they serve – are benefiting from the Union's internationalism.



KEY RESPONSIBILITIES

- ◆ to ensure the policies of the FBU are applied in the South West region
- ◆ to ensure there is effective negotiating machinery in each of the six areas in the region
- ◆ to support and assist brigade officials in carrying out their roles
- ◆ to attend brigade committees, assisting negotiations when necessary
- ◆ to ensure that all members' issues are dealt with effectively

Two wheels good

Get pedalling – get fit. That’s the message from numerous medical studies

CYCLING

Bike Week (June 13-21) is the UK’s biggest mass participation cycling event with activities throughout the country, ranging from cycle training for novices to group rides around local cycling routes.

It’s a good opportunity to get some fresh air and do your health a (pedal) power of good. The theme of this year’s event is: “Get more out of life. Live local. Go cycling.”

Medical evidence suggests that if you cycle, not only will you get more enjoyment out of life, you’ll get more of it to enjoy: cyclists typically have a level of fitness equivalent to being ten years younger, according to a British Journal of Industrial Medicine study.

Regular exercise, such as cycling, halves the chances of suffering from heart disease, the single largest cause of death in Britain, and provides protection from strokes, diabetes and certain types of cancer, according to a 2001 Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology report.

After just a few weeks of regular cycling, regardless of age or gender, the cyclist will be fitter and enjoy a greater sense of wellbeing. This applies even to people like firefighters who are already fit.

Here are some of the health benefits.

◆ Immune system

Moderate activity such as cycling strengthens the immune system and can increase activity against tumour cells.

◆ **Muscles** Cycling activates most of the body’s muscles. The leg muscles are responsible for the pedalling movement, the abdomen and back muscles stabilise the body and the shoulder-arm muscular system supports the body at the handlebars.

◆ Skeletal system

Exercise and the accompanying strain on the skeletal system strengthens, increases mobility and

KEY POINTS:

- ◆ Cyclists are as fit as most people ten years younger than them
- ◆ Cycling halves the chances of heart disease
- ◆ The best way to improve your health is to cycle to work
- ◆ You can buy tax-free bikes for work under the Government’s Green Transport Plan

has a positive effect on bone density and strength.

◆ **Spinal diseases and back pains** The cyclic movement of the legs stimulates muscles in the lower back, where slipped discs are most likely to occur. Cycling can stimulate the small muscles of the vertebrae.

◆ **Joint protection** Cycling is especially good at protecting and feeding cartilages as the support given by the bicycle means that the forces that act as a result of body weight are reduced.

◆ **Mental stress** Cycling has a relaxing effect due to its uniform, cyclic movement which stabilises the physical and emotional functions of the body.

But what about the risks? One of the reasons people give for not cycling is the fear of being knocked off by a car or lorry, but Department for Transport figures show that a cycling death in Britain occurs less than once every 18 million cycling miles. A serious injury occurs less than once every 900,000 cycling miles.

The British Medical Association has concluded that the benefits of cycling outweigh the risk of injury. In fact cycling becomes safer the more people do it – for a doubling in cycle use, risk decreases by a third.

Cycling regularly to work (and, by extension, to school and on other regular journeys) has been shown to be the most effective thing an individual can do to improve health and increase longevity.

And now you can get tax-free bikes for work under the Government’s Green Transport Plan through schemes negotiated with employers.

Companies such as Cyclescheme will get you the bike you want from your local dealer. You pay back a loan on the bike, accessories and safety equipment through a “salary sacrifice” scheme from gross rather than net pay for the hire period (usually 12 months), allowing

you to benefit from income tax and NI relief.

You can use the bike however you like, but a bike purchased under Cyclescheme should be used for work journeys at least 50 per cent of the time. However, you don’t have to cycle to work for a specified number of days throughout the year and you don’t have to record your trips or mileage.



→ To find out more:

Bike Week

www.bikeweek.org.uk
Enter your postcode to find an event near you

Cycling and health

www.cyclehelmets.org/1015.html

www.lcc.org.uk/index.asp?PageID=229

Tax free bikes

www.cyclescheme.co.uk/employee_faqs.htm

School appeal

Q My child has been refused a place at our local school. Do I have any legal right to challenge this?

A If a child is refused a state school place the parents have a legal right of appeal and must apply to their local authority's admissions authority.

In England, there is a School Admission Appeals Code of Practice. You can download it from the Department for Children, Schools and Families website at www.dcsf.gov.uk/sacode.

A parents' guide to primary and secondary schools admissions and appeals is available at: <http://tinyurl.com/pzcr5d>

The appeal panel can only consider whether the law and the admission policy of the school were correctly applied. If the panel rejects the appeal, parents may be able to take further action.

They could complain to the local government ombudsman in England, who could recommend a fresh appeal if maladministration of the appeal process leading to injustice is found.

An appeal panel's decision can be overturned by the courts if the parents apply successfully for judicial review asking the High Court to review the decision.

Judicial review must usually be applied for within three months of the decision. A parent must have gone through all other complaint or appeal procedures before applying for judicial review

The procedure can be used where:

- the LEA acted unreasonably
- the LEA exceeded its powers
- the LEA failed to perform a mandatory public duty
- the LEA misunderstood or misinterpreted the law or its own legal powers (error of law)
- a decision was taken without the client having the opportunity to present her/his case (breach of natural justice)
- the decision was biased



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Legal Beagle

Answers to some frequently asked legal questions that members put to the FBU

(breach of natural justice)

- an official or body has exercised their discretion improperly, or a decision was taken without supporting evidence
- an official or body did not make a decision when it should have done so
- there are human rights issues.

Gone bust

Q I am a retained firefighter and I have been made redundant from my job outside the fire service but my employer has gone into administration. How will I get my redundancy pay?

A It is one of the greatest injustices that workers laid off by firms that go bust have to join the usually long queue of creditors. Once the administrators have done their work, there may be nothing left to pay former employees.

The government's Insolvency Service will usually pay out

in such circumstances. But statutory redundancy pay is capped (currently at £330 a week to a maximum of 30 days' pay) and limited to employees with two or more years' service. The Insolvency Service can also pay towards other money owed, such as holiday pay and unpaid wages.

The TUC has called for statutory redundancy pay to be increased and for the newly unemployed to be allowed to keep more of it by raising the limit above which it is taxed.

Claims to the Insolvency Service must be submitted within six months of the redundancy. For more information go to: www.insolvency.gov.uk

Behind the veil

Q But can't I recover the money from my former employer's parent company, which is still trading?

A One measure that would greatly assist unions in recovering money for members

directly from the company in administration would be to allow for what is called "the corporate veil" to be lifted to remove immunity from prosecution that parent companies often enjoy.

Where incorporation of a company creates a separate legal liability in a new company, making it distinct from its parent company's shareholders and directors, the corporate veil gives the parent multinational organisation cover to prevent creditors recovering debts from those shareholders and directors.

It can only be lifted when there is an accusation of fraud or wrongful trading.

If the government were to amend the Companies Act to end the protection afforded directors from being held personally liable in respect of company obligations, then recovering money for workers from insolvent firms would be much easier.

Unfair criteria

Q Are employers allowed to set selection criteria for redundancy?

A Selection criteria are often raised as part of the consultation period that employers are required to undertake with their workforce and, if there are more than 20 employees, its representatives when redundancies are being made.

If you or your trade union consider the selection criteria to be unfair then the employer should be told. The aim, as part of the consultation, should be to reach agreement on what the selection criteria should be.

If an employer imposes its original criteria and you and your trade union consider it to be unfair, the you may be able to pursue an employment tribunal claim for unfair dismissal on the basis that you were unfairly selected for redundancy.

→ The advice published here is not intended as legal advice on individual cases. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

‘Watching that last arrow hit the centre was a good way to finish’

Ian Finlay loves archery because it is a skilled sport not a heritage whimsy. It demands focus, concentration and accuracy.

It took Deeside firefighter Ian Finlay until his mid thirties to find his perfect sport. But within months of finishing an archery course for beginners five years ago, he was named Cheshire county novice of the year. His choice was well on target.

Since boyhood Ian had always quite fancied the idea of archery, and on the look out for a new sport since he'd packed in playing "Saturday morning rugby with a hangover". A family holiday with his wife and two sons at a green theme park in Caernarfon proved a turning point. "They'd got longbow archery and I seemed to be quite good at it," said Ian. "It spurred me on to find a club to join when I got back home."

He enrolled with Chester-based Cheshire Country Bowmen and progressed swiftly.

"I really took to it and started teaching beginners at the club the following year – the course that really got me started," said Ian, a Green Watch crew member at Deeside station, North Wales. In February, he added Cheshire indoor champion to his novice win.

Ian prefers shooting arrows inside – which he says marks him out from the vast majority of archers. "It's really intense and there are such small margins of error. I just like the pressure that goes with that," he explains. Ian can often be found practising at home, honing his skills by shooting up to 200 arrows towards his garage.

He enjoys "blind shooting," which is less scary than it sounds. "You draw up, looking

at the target and just at the last minute close your eyes so you can feel what your bow's doing. It's very short range and you actually learn by having your eyes closed."

Archers in doublet and hose can be seen at Heritage Britain events – and mention of the sport can conjure images of Robin Hood and his merry men. Ian has got used to fire station colleagues referring to "my green tights and my codpiece" – but says they are generally quite supportive amid the gentle ribbing.

Archery is indeed steeped in history, which has spawned a wealth of stories. Ian recounts how the "V" sign can be traced back to the Battle of Agincourt. The French had taunted they would cut off the two fingers needed to shoot an arrow from every English longbowman once victorious. But the English won – and their taunting riposte to the French was a two-fingered salute.

Border skirmishes

Ian is an Englishman working just over the border in Wales, whose club is based in a town steeped in history and border skirmishes. It is, he says, allegedly still legal to shoot a Welshman found inside Chester city walls after 11 o'clock at night with a bow and arrow. Though it's not, of course, something he'd try or encourage – and local police and magistrates could have a different view.

But Ian loves his bow and arrows because it is a skilled sport not a heritage whimsy. It demands focus, concentration and accuracy.

IAN FINLAY

Ian Finlay, a Green Watch crew member at Deeside station, North Wales, has been fascinated by archery since boyhood. Although he only took up the sport five years ago, Ian won a bronze medal at the World Firefighter Games in Bootle last year.





He has set his sights on targets and titles beyond the county, though he didn't have to travel far to pick up a bronze medal against stiff international competition.

Liverpool was picked as the European City of Culture for 2008, attracting a host of events to the region, including the World Firefighter Games. It was held at Blundell Sands near Bootle, and Ian went along to practise in the run up to the games.

Very blustery

It was outdoor shooting over 70 metres, and conditions over the two day event were quite windy. "It's a totally open field right next to the sea and can get very blustery," said Ian who won the bronze, beating a more experienced French contender on the last arrow. "I knew it had to be a nine on the gold. Watching that last arrow hit the centre was a good way to finish. There was just one point in it".

The equipment needed for archery doesn't come cheap and you can't just pop down to the local sports shop to get kitted up – Ian travels to a trusted archery supplier's shop in Mansfield. It's all customised to fit body shape and personal preference, he explains.

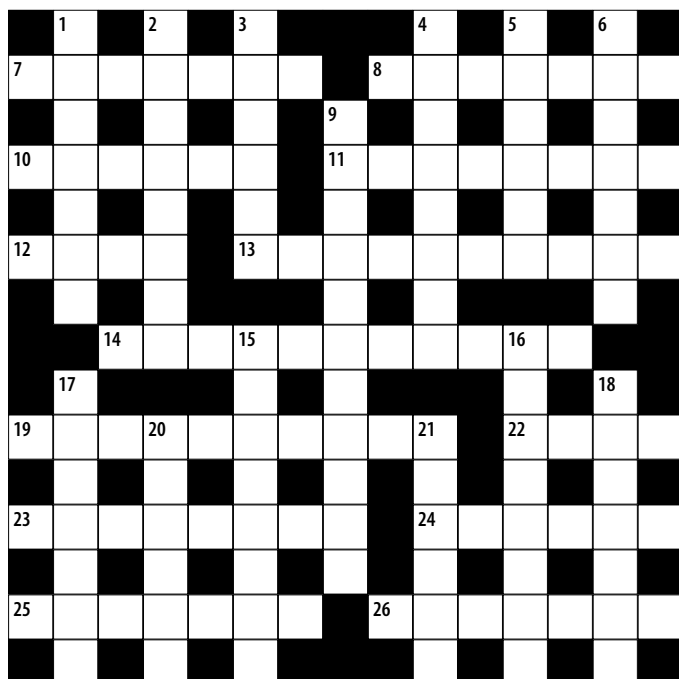
"The 'riser' is the handle bit in the middle, then you've got the 'limbs' top and bottom – the bendy bits of the bow – and the 'string' which is pulled taught. These are the basics before you add on all the stabilization, sights and weights. It should be fitted properly to match your body. Maintenance is intensive, and you've got to keep on top of your equipment and trust the person who sets it up for you."

Ian has still got the riser he started out with, but got two new "limbs" in the run up to the World Firefighter Games bankrolled by a sponsorship deal with a firm in Mold. The next World Firefighter Games are in Korea, where archery is the national sport, rather than Bootle half an hour's drive from home. As Agincourt proved, English bowmen are up for a challenge. And he can always try sponsorship again...



Within a year of taking up archery Ian was teaching beginners at Cheshire County Bowmen

Quick Crossword

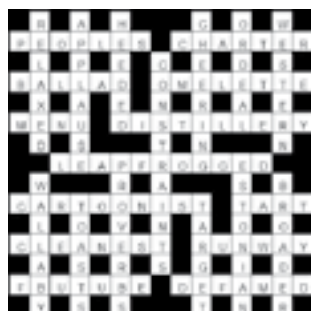


ACROSS

- 7** (Monumental) figure with square base and four triangular sides (7)
8 Cold-blooded, scaly animal (7)
10 Members or priests of ancient Celtic religious order (6)
11 German or Austrian wine, or its grape (8)
12 Small, two-winged biting fly (4)
13 Such countries have nowhere to park their ships (10)
14, 24 9 of all conflagrations – September 2-6, 1666! (5,4,2,6)
19 Re-states (10)
22 Source of heat or power (4)
23 Dependable (8)
24 See 14 (6)
25 Gets off bus, train etc (7)
26 Young hare (7)

DOWN

- 1** Stand-pipe – seriously lacking during 14, 24! (7)
2 Device for cooling engine or heating room (8)
3 Type of 22 (6)
4 One who works in precious metals and stones (8)
5 Sloping type, often used for emphasis (6)
6 Bed-cover from pre-duvet days (and not the best fire escape!) (7)
9 Parent's male parent (11)
15 Tumblers – but not for drinks! (8)
16 Law-breaker (8)
17 Breakfast crops? (7)
18 Reduced in rank (7)
20 Items – ain't what they used to be! (6)
21 Precious metal, second prize (6)



Solution to May 2009 crossword

Winner of the April Firefighter 2009 quiz
 Racheal Sargeant of Middlesex

Answers to May 2009 Firefighter quiz

- The Wind in the Willows
- Spring
- Alfred Lord Tennyson
- Arkansas
- Warren Beatty



WIN!
 camping
 equipment

Prize Quiz

Win a self-inflating bed and easy to put-up tent
 The theme this month is history



- 3**
- What do Galahad, Perceval, Tristan and Mordred have in common?
 a. They were all horses taking part in last year's Cheltenham Gold Cup
 b. They were all Knights of the Round Table
 c. They are all names of mountains in Wales
 d. They are all names of English beers

- When did Hawaii officially become part of the USA?
 a. 1950
 b. 1925
 c. 1959
 d. 1969

- Which wife outlived Henry VIII?
 a. Anne Boleyn
 b. Catherine Howard
 c. Catherine Parr
 d. Jane Seymour

- Who was the only ever British Prime Minister to be assassinated?
 a. Robert Walpole
 b. Spencer Perceval
 c. Sir Robert Peel
 d. William Pitt
- In what street did the Great Fire of London begin?
 a. Baker Street
 b. Pudding Lane
 c. Brick Street
 d. Oxford Street



2

HOW TO ENTER

To win a self inflating bed and easy to put-up tent please send your answers to the Prize Quiz by 30 June 2009 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (June 2009), FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 7AE. Include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.

StationCat

... brings you the news they don't want you to hear

Coleman's cabs ...



Station Cat reports with regret that the ludicrous Conservative London assembly member Brian Coleman has still not been fired as chair of the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority.

We reported in February that he had attacked Liberal Democrat MP Lynne Featherstone for calling out the fire service, although the firefighters who attended the incident said she was right to do so.

Coleman said self-righteously: "It costs £250 per hour for a call out." Well, it's come to the Cat's attention that it costs £8,000 a year to have Mr Coleman regularly ferried about the capital in taxis.

In December, he ran up a £412.50 fare on a round trip from his home in Barnet, north London, to a nearby London Jewish Forum meeting where the driver kept the meter running before taking him to City Hall.

The Cat thinks Ms Featherstone's £250 was money well spent, at least by comparison with the wretched Coleman.

... and his Travelcard...

Did we mention that while we are paying £8,000 a year for Brian Coleman's taxis, we are also shelling out £1,700 a year for his (presumably unused) Travelcard?

... and more?

In fact, the Cat is getting increasingly interested in Mr Coleman. Stories about his arrogance and extravagance should be sent in a plain brown e-mail to stationcat@fbu.org.uk

Call this responsible?



Anyone who has tried to get a public sector pay rise out of ministers has heard the solemn speech about how we have to be responsible with public money. The row over MPs' expenses has afforded us a glimpse of just how responsible firefighters' ultimate boss, CLG secretary Hazel Blears, is with public money.

She claimed for three different properties in a single year, spending almost £5,000 of taxpayers' money on furniture in three months. In March 2004, she declared her property in her Salford constituency was her



Coleman: £8,000 a year on cabs

second home and spent £850 on a television and video and £651 on a mattress.

In April, she switched her second home to a flat in south London, claiming £850 a month for the mortgage. In August, she sold the flat, making a £45,000 profit, and stayed in hotels. In December, she bought another London flat for £300,000.

During the next four months, Ms Blears spent £4,874 on furniture, £899 on a new bed and £913 on a new TV — the second funded by the taxpayer in less than a year. All this of course is on top of her salary, which was £144,520 from April 1 2009.

Being solemn and responsible about holding down the pay of a fully trained firefighter, which is £27,851, looks pretty shabby in the light of those figures.

So why no sprinklers?



How do we come to have a national fire service training college without sprinklers, where a recent fire caused an estimated £1.3 million of damage to 11 fire appliances? Maybe it's got something to do with the "vision" ministers had for the college.

It was explained to Parliament back in 2004 by Phil Hope MP, then John Prescott's gopher.

He said: "The college is working to develop other markets both in the UK fire industry and with overseas fire and rescue services. It is developing an enhanced training portfolio, with increased emphasis on outreach training, and distance and e-learning capabilities. Options for involving private sector partners in aspects of the college's trading are being actively explored."

So ministers had told the college to give priority to canvassing for new business. And that, no doubt, is what it did. Sprinklers might have been a better investment for the future.

No-Hoper



Mr Hope, now Minister of State for Care Services, worked under John Prescott for years, so he, too, played a key part in government efforts to keep firefighters' pay down. And he too has a starring role in the row over MPs' expenses.

He will be writing a cheque to the taxpayer for £41,709 to cover the cost of the furniture and fittings he claimed for a small two-bedroom flat in south London. It's the largest amount an MP has pledged to refund since the expenses scandal broke. Mr Hope's ministerial salary is £105,412.

Down the drain



Just in time for the Cat's award for the silliest and most complacent defence of FireControl of the month, which again goes to fire minister Sadiq Khan. He told the Fire Conference in May that it was going to be "challenging and complex." So it has been "rescheduled" — which means it's been put back, yet again.

That, he says, was a "tough call." It wasn't, of course. He didn't have a choice, because the original schedule wasn't going to be met. And a horrific amount of money goes down the drain every time he takes the "tough call" to "reschedule" the plan.

Nearly £40 million will be spent on nine regional fire control centre buildings before they even become operational.

✂ if you have any snippets you think Station Cat should get his sharp claws into email: stationcat@fbu.org.uk

25-year badges



Rick Williams (l) receives his 25-year badge from South Command rep Dave Taylor, both Green Watch Chichester, West Sussex



Stuart Fish (l), Lincoln South White Watch, receives his 25-year badge from Garry Speed, Fairness and Equality rep Lincolnshire



Simon Jenkins, Treasurer, Welsh Region (l) receives his 25-year badge from General Secretary Matt Wrack



Dietmar Gabler (r), Green Watch, Newbury, receives his 25-year badge from Berkshire Brigade Chair Maurice Whyte



Mick Gay (r), Kent FRS, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretay John Hogben



Russ Condon, Red Watch, Hindley (l) receives his 25-year badge from GMC divisional secretary John Roberts



Roger Bidgood, White Watch, Caerphilly (front left) receives his 25-year badge from Branch Secretary Stuart Townsend. Back row (l-r) Chris Ferris, Gareth Morgan, Gareth Vaughan



Nigel Reynolds (l) receives his 25-year badge from Oxfordshire Brigade Secretary Alan Sillman



Steve Morley, Branch Rep, Blue Watch W55 Hindley (l) receives his 25-year badge from John Roberts Div Sec GMC



From left: Trefor Jones, Mark O'Nions, Mick Spillane and Phil Donovan receive their 25-year badges from West Midlands Brigade Vice Chair Roger Moore (second from right)

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Change of address or next of kin

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

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

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

T THOMPSONS SOLICITORS