

FireFighter

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

November/December 2008

RESCUES
See page 16 for
detailed coverage
of new figures on
FRS rescues

'INADEQUATE TRAINING IS COMPROMISING OUR SAFETY'

Poll reveals firefighters' concerns as FBU heads to parliament on November 12 to lobby over safety See page 12

INVEST IN SAFETY



**SAFER
FIREFIGHTERS
SAFER
COMMUNITIES**

Future of our service



On 12 November firefighters from across the UK will gather in Westminster.

We are meeting to raise our concerns about the

number of firefighter fatalities in recent years and to point to some of the possible reasons behind this alarming trend.

Over the past six weeks I have travelled to most parts of the UK and spoken to members about this campaign.

What has become clear from these visits is that this issue touches on a wider ranging debate about the whole future of the fire

and rescue service.

To put it briefly – and bluntly – the Service has taken its eye off the ball in recent years. Under political pressure to meet government targets, the basics are being neglected.

Alongside this we have faced an endless round of financially driven changes and cutbacks. These have also had the effect of undermining the professionalism within our Service. These concerns are also confirmed in the recent survey of FBU members. In responding to this survey members have expressed their concerns at the level of training currently in place.

You can read some of the findings of this survey on page 12.

We have produced a report on firefighter fatalities which also highlights many of these concerns. Over the next few months we will ensure that these issues are raised throughout the Service.

Those in positions of authority need to remember that firefighters are the professionals who deliver this service. It is firefighters who have the professional and technical knowledge and skills to take the Service forward. The challenge to fire service politicians is whether they are ready to listen.

Contents

Features

12 FIREFIGHTERS' SAFETY

Deeply worrying findings of FBU survey

16 RESCUES

Fire crews save over 300 people a week

20 PALESTINE

Firefighters are struggling to do their jobs in extreme danger, three FBU officials find

22 CUBAN REVOLUTION

50 years and still going strong, finds an FBU study tour

Regulars

4 NEWS

FBU criticises Eurotunnel over fire; Essex crews demands chiefs come clean; more delays on FireControl

10 AERIAL LADDER PLATFORM

It's getting harder to find key facts and figures on the Service, says Sheila Pantry

24 WHAT DOES ...

A firefighter (control) instructor do?

26 YOUR HEALTH

Don't overdo it this Christmas

27 LEGAL BEAGLE

Home repossession

28 DAY OFF

Me and my football team

30 PUZZLE PAGE

Your chance to win Cuban teeshirts

31 STATION CAT

The news they don't want you to hear

32 25-YEAR BADGES

Win
a Christmas
hamper
see p30



28

Finlay MacKay
is a match-day
announcer



22

FBU goes to Cuba

Financial crisis – why should we pay the price?

The news in recent weeks has been full of concern about financial and economic matters. The UK economy has officially gone into recession. This is likely to continue into 2009 and possibly beyond. The economic situation is likely to bring hardship to millions through job losses, house repossessions and wage rises below inflation. In some recent cases workers have even been asked to take

cuts in their take home pay. In the fire and rescue service this situation is likely to lead to further difficulties. Under the current three year spending plans of the Government we are already seeing cutbacks in many services. This may now become even more difficult. This raises the question of why we face these difficulties. For three decades we have been told by Government that the market is the answer to all economic problems. We have seen deregulation of

financial markets and the privatisation of public services. Suddenly in the face of the biggest financial crisis in decades the tax payer is asked to provide the funds for a bail out. One central question will be “who is going to pay the price for all this?” Will we allow ordinary working people see their taxes rise, jobs cut, wages squeezed and homes repossessed in order to provide billions of pounds to bail out the banking system.

A debate is taking place in the labour movement as well as in the media about these issues. The starting point for me is that working people did not create this crisis and therefore should not have to pay the price.

Matt Wrack

General Secretary

Those in positions of authority need to remember that firefighters are the professionals who deliver this service



12

Lack of training is compromising safety

LETTERS

Government took pension rights

Reading your column of ‘Sounding Off’ by Arthur Lockyear on Remembrance Sunday (*Firefighter*, Oct 2008, p5), I wonder if you and others are aware of the thousands of ex firefighters who served in the armed forces, and after joined the civil forces (fire, ambulance and police) doing long service for them, but not getting the full pension because of service in the armed forces.

This is because these years do not count towards our pensions.

I served in the fire service for 23 years, retiring in 2001 at the age of 55.

At that time I received half pension because the government took away my right to my 12 years armed service time, to add on to my 23 years fire service.

I have joined a group called the Armed Forces Pension Group to highlight and hopefully one day reverse this injustice to ex service people.

More information: www.afpg.info

Bob Whistler
Hants

Published by the Fire Brigades Union, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames KT2 7AE. www.fbu.org.uk

Design by Edition Periodicals, 241–251 Ferndale Road, London SW9 8BJ. www.editionperiodicals.co.uk

Printed by Southernprint Ltd, 17–21 Factory Road, Upton Industrial Estate, Poole, Dorset BH16 5SN





SUZANNE PLUNKETT/REUTERS



It is possibly only a matter of time before an FBU member is injured or killed while trying to fight a channel tunnel fire that could easily be avoided

FBU: Eurotunnel is failing to learn lessons of earlier blazes

CHANNEL TUNNEL FIRE

The FBU has criticised the Channel Tunnel operator Eurotunnel for failing to replace open-sided lattice framed lorry carriers with enclosed rolling stock.

The tunnel operator was also condemned for failing to install fire suppression systems in the lorry wagons and for failing to provide adequate protection to the tunnel's concrete lining.

A fire broke out September 11 on a shuttle train in the north tunnel, 11 kilometres from the French entrance. The source of the blaze, which burned for 16 hours, was a lorry reportedly carrying chemicals. The fire spread to other trucks destroying six carriages and one locomotive. No-one was killed but 700

metres of the tunnel was damaged.

The FBU said recommendations it made 12 years ago following the November 1996 channel tunnel fire were ignored.

Jim Parrott, Executive Council member for FBU South East, said: "Our main concern was open-sided wagons. We wanted closed trucks that would contain any fire. Considering there are 40,000 vehicle fires per year in the UK, it is remarkable there have not been more fires in the channel tunnel."

John McGhee, FBU National Officer responsible for Health, Safety and Welfare, said: "Eurotunnel have continued to say that they believe that this is an acceptable and safe way to transport goods through the tunnel. We're very concerned for our members who

have been forced into a situation to evacuate the public and staff from these trains because Euro Tunnel refuses to make changes that would prevent these fires.

"It's possibly only a matter of time before either a member of the public or one of our members will be either seriously injured or killed whilst trying to fight a fire in a tunnel which could easily be avoided."

As part of the FBU investigation into the September 11 fire, John McGhee is holding meetings with the channel tunnel Anglo-French intergovernmental commission. This has asked the Channel Tunnel Safety Authority to conduct a review of the extent to which the fire has modified the original risk-assessment assumptions for the tunnel and to make recommendations.

New guidance issued



ILL-HEALTH PENSIONS

New guidance on ill-health pensions, replacing the offending 2006 guidance, has been issued by Communities and Local Government. The new guidance says the onus is on a fire and rescue authority to "make every effort, through reasonable adjustments, including reasonable re-designing of jobs within an authority – to enable and encourage firefighters to stay in work within the role if they can, rather than be retired early."

In the case of retained duty system firefighters, "any redesign and readjustment should be consistent with the duty system".

The new guidance states that should it not be possible for firefighters to stay in work in considering the case for ill-health retirement, a FRS "will need to consider the application of the criteria in the regulations in the light of the

facts and circumstances of individual cases." These facts and circumstances include the "realistic prospect of suitable employment".

Before reaching a final determination as to the absence of any suitable employment within the role, FRAs "must consider whether they can create a suitable post through adjusting posts within their structure, rather than simply look at matching the employee to existing opportunities.

"The absence of a realistic prospect of suitable employment within the role at the end of this process is material to the decision

on whether the criteria apply, and whether an award is made."

Meanwhile, the FBU nationally is making final preparations for an appeal against the Judicial Review decision on ill-health pensions. The appeal will take place on 13–14 January 2009 at the High Court in London.



General Secretary Matt Wrack with three London members who saw their pensions removed under the 2006 guidance

More info:
www.fbu.org.uk

Thousands submit grievances

FAIRER COMMUTATION CAMPAIGN

Thousands of FBU members have submitted grievances as part of the Union's Fairer Commutation campaign. In May 2008 key technical changes known as "commutation factors" were applied to the 1992 Firefighters' Pension Scheme (FPS). The department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) backdated the application of these changes to 1st October 2007.

The Union believes these "commutation factors" should have been reviewed in 2001. That they were not means that these changes could have significantly reduced the overall value of the pension of those who took retirement before 1 October 2007. Many FBU members who retired after 2001 and before 1 October 2007 are justifiably angry about this.

Some 3,300 individual grievance letters

have been downloaded from the FBU website and over 2,000 hard copies received at the FBU National Office in Kingston. Responses received so far from CLG say that the matter is being considered.

Questions have been raised and answered in parliament and a letter the Union requested from the Government Actuary's Department shows that the CLG was aware of the new actuarial figures in August 2006, yet, the Union believes, it chose to ignore them to the detriment of FBU members.

The Union's Executive Council has decided to support a challenge to the 1 October 2007 implementation date via the Pension Ombudsman.

The Union has assured members that the issue is being dealt with and that it will be progressed if CLG has not addressed the issue within a reasonable time for dealing with grievances.

Sounding off!

JOHN GILLIVER

Brigade Chair South Yorkshire

Anger over shift changes

Aggressive managers at South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue Authority are hell-bent on confrontation over plans for shift changes and among FBU members there is growing anger over threats to impose them.

We want to know why there has been no negotiation with the FBU before the fire authority councillors received the proposals for consideration. The Union has still not been officially given details of the plans although full press packs have been sent to the media.

These plans came out of the blue despite national agreements about having 'no surprises'. FBU members across the county are furious at these threats to impose contractual changes without any negotiation.

During last year's floods councillors and managers were applauding our commitment and praising our work. It is a disgrace that managers are now rewarding us by kicking us in the teeth.

Managers are going out of their way to seek confrontation and not negotiation.



Firefighters laying hoses in an attempt to drain water from behind the Ulley Dam near Rotherham, South Yorkshire, June 2007. Councillors and managers applauded our commitment and praised our work then. Now they kick us in the teeth

They are behaving like dictators rather than professional public sector managers.

The public will be disgusted at the way their firefighters are being treated. We are not looking for a fight, but we're not going to run away from one either. A round of branch meetings in our brigade has confirmed this view.

South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue is proposing that from early 2009, arrangements change from a nine-hour day shift and 15-hour night shift to 12-hour shifts for both days and nights.

Essex crews demand that fire chiefs 'come clean'

CUTS FIGHTBACK

Fire crews are urging Essex fire chiefs to come clean to the public and local politicians about their cost-cutting plans and the impact they will have on frontline services. The FBU is concerned that the public and their local councillors are being asked to sign a blank cheque for cuts.

Uncertainty and suspicion is growing as it seems senior managers are giving different briefings to line managers, fire crews and to the local politicians about what the draft Essex plans actually mean. And it seems that some controversial changes are being pursued without them even being mentioned in the public consultation document.

For example, one apparent plan omitted from the integrated risk management plan (IRMP) is to replace some full-size, fully-crewed and properly equipped fire engines with smaller, under-equipped vehicles carrying insufficient firefighters on board to safely tackle the kinds of rescues and emergencies their communities will call them to. And senior managers have confirmed they have already been



Plans include replacing fully-crewed and properly equipped fire engines with smaller, under-equipped and under-crewed vehicles

looking at various vans with a view to buy.

Keith Flynn, Essex FBU vice-chair, said: "What chance do the general public or local councillors have to decide what they think when they're not given the full picture in the first place?"

"Even the professionals are now getting worried because the consultation document fails to spell out exactly how many firefighters are planned to serve at each community fire station across the county or what type and size of fire engine they will be expected to crew."

More celebs pledge support

WINDSOR FIRE STATION

With a Judicial Review brought by the Windsor and Maidenhead Council against the brigade's 'public consultation' on plans to axe night-time cover at Windsor fire station imminent, more celebs have pledged support for the Union's campaign. Anna Friel (below), Piers Morgan and Alan Sugar have added their names to a list that already includes Cliff Richard, Rolf Harris, Michael Parkinson, and Russ Abbott.

Firefighters in Windsor and across Berkshire oppose the cuts and fear they are a precursor to outright closure of the station.

Michael Rowley, Windsor branch rep said: "On our doorstep is a Royal Palace that attracts 7m visitors

a year. Windsor fire station also plays a key role in the protection provided to the public across East Berkshire." The two-pump, four-watch station plays an important role in backing up other stations.



JEN LOWERY/REX FEATURES



Gill Pier on Westray – FBU numbers in the Orkneys are growing

Highland & Islands growth

BUILDING THE UNION

Recruitment to the FBU in the Highlands & Islands continues apace with 30 firefighters and two stations in the Orkney Isles signed up with further gains expected. Retained firefighters from 10 of the 14 stations in the Orkney archipelago attended a meeting on 13 September called by the FBU. Scottish and national officials provided briefings on a range of issues from pensions, workforce development, lifelong learning and local and regional developments.

Membership packs were distributed and feedback from the meeting indicated many more firefighters would soon be joining the FBU. Papa Westray and Flotta stations are now 100% FBU. FBU Highlands & Islands officials Fraser Parr and Bill Sanderson were following up this meeting as *Firefighter* went to press.



◆ Derbyshire firefighters concerned about planned changes to their shifts that would extend the working day by two hours staged a protest in September as the fire authority met at area headquarters. Under the change – which managers are set to impose in January – 11-hour days will replace the traditional nine-hour shifts and the nightshift will be cut from 15 to 13 hours. Says Helen Tooley, crew manager and women's rep for FBU East Midlands (Region 6): "The shift changes they are after would make it nigh on impossible for anyone with family responsibilities to join the fire service, and many will leave." (see also page 5 on shifts).



◆ Britain's pensioner and trade union movements joined together on October 22 for the first time to call for a higher basic state pension for the over 60s of today and tomorrow. Thousands of protestors of all ages lobbied Parliament, as part of a campaign organised by the National Pensioners Convention (NPC) and over 15 trade unions to mark the centenary of the state pension. For the first time in 100 years, working age and retired people lobbied their MPs together to stress that a decent state pension is an issue not just for today's pensioners, but for future generations as well.



Adviser and client at a job interview at a Job Centre Plus in London

'Government must act on recession'

TUC

The TUC has called on the Government to "give the same commitment to fighting recession as they have done to saving the banking system".

TUC General Secretary Brendan Barber said: "Their response should have three aims. They should make the recession as short and shallow as possible; make sure that those who did least to cause the downturn do not suffer the worst consequences; and ensure we emerge from it with a fairer, more balanced and sustainable economy. They must not simply recreate the conditions that helped bring about the economic crisis."

The TUC called for a sharp reduction in interest rates and said the newly

unemployed should be given more help by reversing cuts in Job Centre Plus staff, increasing statutory redundancy pay and lifting the amount of redundancy pay that can be taken tax free. Recent action to

'The Government must not be timid.

Past crises of this magnitude or worse, such as the great depression and the economic aftermath of war, have needed radical new policies'

help homeowners facing repossession is welcome, but more will need to be done.

Brendan Barber added: "The Government should plan for a green industrial revolution to make the UK the most

advanced and vibrant low carbon economy in the world. This would create jobs and help rebalance the economy away from its over-emphasis on financial services. It should involve new spending, not just bringing forward planned expenditure.

"Above all, the Government must not be timid. Past crises of this magnitude or worse, such as the great depression and the economic aftermath of war, have needed radical new policies and a rejection of old orthodoxies."

→ The response to the recession was to be high on the agenda of a Labour Representation Committee Conference on Saturday 15 November from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm, at the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1.

'Most successful' G&L school ever

EDUCATION

Over 40 FBU members came together with other lesbian, gay, bisexual and trans colleagues to celebrate the tenth FBU LGBT School at Wortley Hall, Sheffield on 17–20 October.

Speakers ranged from Jona Ollson, an openly gay chief fire officer from New Mexico USA, who looked at personal

issues, including internalised homophobia, racism and sexism, to the originator of the FBU G&L section, Terry Richardson, now retired and a Justice of the Peace and Ben Summerskill chief executive of the gay rights campaign organisation Stonewall.

Said Stewart Brown, executive council member G&L: "A decade ago the first school was attended

by 12 people seeking to convince the Union and Fire Service that no one was paying any attention to their needs. This tenth anniversary school was the most successful, emotive and powerful educational weekend the G&L section has ever organised."

Full reports of this and the B&EMM school (below) will be in Flagship and Advisor magazines

MARTIN JENKINSON



Workshop at the B&EMM school

B&EMM school highlights the role of Union's black women members

EDUCATION

'Women in colour' was the theme of the FBU Black and Ethnic Minority Members School 2008 held 10–12 October at Wortley Hall. All the speakers were women – apart from the FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack – and included Donna Fraser, Olympian and Commonwealth medal winner, Phyll Opoku-Gyimah from the Public and Commercial Workers Union and a founder

member of UK Black Pride, Jona Olsson, fire chief from USA and political activist.

'Edu-tainment' in the evenings was Black History Studies on the immigration of a Caribbean woman from Jamaica to the UK in the 1950s and the Banner Theatre with its play 'They get mobile phones don't they?' Both helped students separate the facts on asylum and immigration from the myths pedalled by the mass media.

The school was oversubscribed once again. Seventy students attended, 22 were first-timers.

SIMON GREEN



FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack with the legendary DJ Don Letts at a Black History month event organised by the Union in London in October. The focus on the night, organised by the FBU's B&EMM section with the multi-media event management skills of former Hampshire firefighter Simon Green, was a screening of the At The River I Stand, a gripping documentary on the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King and the relationship with the labour movement. Matt Wrack spoke and Don Letts capped it off with some classic sounds.

◆ An Early Day Motion has been tabled in the House of Commons calling for the Government to "reconsider the distribution of funding to fire and rescue services in 2009-10 and 2010-11 and to reinstate the 2007-08 funding floor of 2.7 per cent so that resources for frontline fire services are kept at a level which is safe for the public and firefighters." Members and officials are urged to write to their MPs to ask them to sign EDM 2309, Fire and Rescue Service Funding.

ALAN WYLLIE



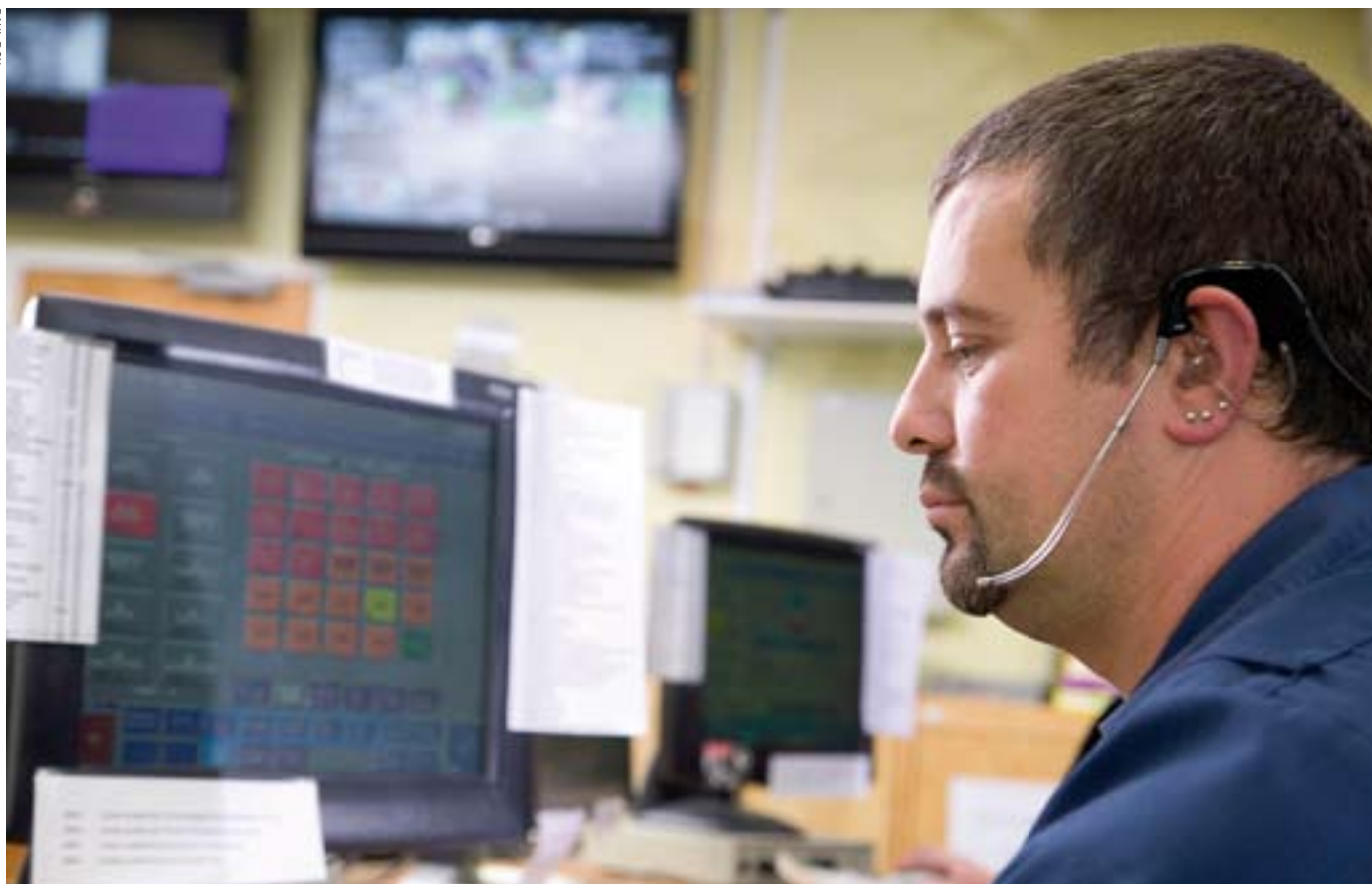
Gary Murphy, FBU H&S rep with the new H&S pack

◆ Recent government statistics found that safety reps prevent between 8,000 and 13,000 workplace accidents and between 3,000 and 8,000 work-related illnesses each year in the UK. If you have an interest in the area and you would like to get more involved, why not become an FBU safety rep? You won't be left to cope alone. The Union provides the help, training and resources – including a new easy to use health and safety pack. Contact your brigade official today. More info: <http://www.fbu.org.uk/workplace/healthsafety/>

◆ Hundreds of anti-fascists campaigners were expected to protest outside the British National Party (BNP) national conference on 14–16 November in Blackpool. Said United Against Fascism: "In the run up to the European elections the BNP will try to spread its message of hatred and division. We must unite to stop them. We must show our opposition to the fascist BNP and it's politics of race hate and division. We must show that there is united opposition to the BNP and ensure that Blackpool is a fascist-free zone."

More info: www.uaf.org.uk or 020 7833 4916





More delays to FireControl project after Government admits major technical problems

REGIONAL CONTROLS

The Union has called for a complete review and overhaul of the FireControl project after the Government was forced to admit it has hit major technical problems. It will mean further costs and delays for regional controls, which the Government said would use “tried and tested” technology, make massive savings and would be fully operational by November 2007.

That date was put back, and this latest admission comes only months before emergency control staff were to start moving to new control rooms next June to start operating in October 2009. FireControl was originally estimated to cost £100 million when it was first proposed but the full projects costs are now over £1.5 billion with more to come.

This includes £278 million pounds earmarked for an army of consultants, directors, PR staff, “change co-ordinators”, “project assurance” staff and agency staff.

The project is based on closing all 46 emergency fire control rooms in England and moving to only nine regional centres. Similar plans were rejected in Scotland and Wales.

The union has repeatedly accused the Government of diverting massive amounts of public money away from frontline fire services where it is desperately needed. The FBU says Firecontrol, is unnecessary, over budget and years late.

The news came as a YouGov poll commissioned by the FBU found that just 3% of firefighters thought moving to

‘There needs to be a public review of this entire project. A public service which provides a rapid response to save lives cannot be dealt with in this way’

regional control centres was where money should be spent in order to improve the fire and rescue service.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: “This project has lost all credibility within the fire service. Everyone else knows this project is already a disaster but the Government wants to plough on regardless.

“Project turmoil has led to highly skilled staff leaving and serious damage to morale. The project is highly divisive in a fire service which has built its very high public reputation on strong team working.

“Vast amounts of public money are being wasted on a project which is unnecessary, already three years late, massively over budget and with no guarantee it will work as claimed. The Government’s track record on major IT-led projects is truly appalling and this is underlined by what is happening in the fire service.

“Money is being thrown away on management consultants, regional project directors, change co-ordinators, project assurance directors, PR and human resource directors. No one ever dialled 999 and asked for any of those.

“We’re short of firefighters in many brigades and in desperate need of more safety critical equipment and training at a time when firefighter deaths are at a 30-year high. Even a fraction of the money being wasted would make an enormous difference in every fire brigade.

“There needs to be a thorough public review of this entire project. A public service which provides a rapid response to save lives cannot be dealt with in this way.”

➔ More info on Government plans to close all 46 emergency fire control rooms in England and replace them with just eight regional centres: www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/outofcontrol/

Where is all the fire information?

SHEILA PANTRY, OBE BA FCLIP, SHEILA PANTRY ASSOCIATES LTD.

“ Access to free information on fire, occupational safety and health is being curtailed, making it ever more time consuming and costly to get hold of critical facts and figures about the UK fire and rescue service. This includes key providers such as the Fire Service College (FSC), traditionally the most importance source of intelligence on the service.

The college has been conducting a review of its administrative and corporate service functions in a drive to ensure it is best placed to deliver quality training at the best value for money. Part of the review has inevitably focused on the College Library and Information Resource Centre (LIRC), and the role it plays in delivering a service to the college and subscribers. The introduction of the integrated personal development system has also changed considerably the demands fire and rescue services place on the library.

Because of its traditional role as a sort of centre of excellence, individuals and organisations have, over the years, donated information for safekeeping. But since April 2008, only students on a FSC course have been allowed access to the FSC/LIRC.

This situation continues whilst the review takes place, leading to a much-reduced service. The FSC says that the review should result in a library service that delivers what the majority of fire and rescue services and other subscribers want in a much more effective way, at a sustainable subscription rate.

Unfortunately this has meant that the LIRC database that was available on the FSC web site is no longer available. Anyone involved in collating and analyzing information knows that once subscriptions and database updating are cut, there is little hope of any “catch-up”. And that is a major problem, not just for now but the future.

Anyone seeking alternative sources will be disappointed. Major national institutions such as the British Library have always regarded specialised centres of information such as the FSC/LIRC as back-up for their own service. As a consequence they do not collect fire information in any depth.

The Communities and Local Government web site www.communities.gov.uk/fire/, contains some information produced in recent years, such as Fire Service Circulars, but it is not too helpful if you need information prior to 2002. Furthermore, you'll struggle to find any technical or operational guidance on it, including fire and rescue manuals (available hard copy only through the TSO bookshop www.tsoshop.co.uk).

Organisations such as the Fire Protection Association have a range of publications, including the newly launched *Fire Risk Management Journal* (formerly *Fire Prevention and Fire Engineers Journal*)



available via its website. But, as with many similar organisations, you need to be a member to be able to see the full text of guidance, advice and (some) journals and newsletters.

Those seeking fire and health and safety legislation documents can get hold of them free of charge from the government's Office of Public Sector Information (OPSI) website www.opsi.gov.uk, where you can search for acts and statutory instruments (SI).

But it is best if you know the title or SI number and year, otherwise the process can be quite frustrating and time consuming as you wade through the retrieved list of documents. Also any legislation prior to 1987 is not electronically held, but is provided under one of the subscription services.

As for the Health and Safety Executive website, www.hse.gov.uk, it has drastically reduced all OSH information services in recent years, including the content of their

database HSELINE. The HSE is one of many database producers that are now not able to afford subscriptions to journals and staff that undertake the indexing. Thus they are unable to keep their database coverage as complete as they used to do. The HSE used to add about 12,000 items per year – now it is more like 1,600 items.

Nor does HSE keep all their most useful and essential publications on their web site because they cannot afford to lose revenue from their publishing arm. So if you are seeking Approved Codes of Practice or legislation guidance, you are directed to HSE Books to purchase paper copies.

You can obtain electronic versions by subscribing to services offered by Barbour, Croners, IHS/OHSIS, OSH UPDATE and FIREINF. But many of these services do not index references in journals, magazines, newsletters or conference proceedings with the exception of FIREINF and OSH UPDATE.

Fortunately, the Health and Safety

Laboratory web site www.hsl.gov.uk remains a good source of research reports on fire and explosions. There is a link from www.hse.gov.uk/research/hsl/fire.htm

A word of advice – there are a great many fire, health and safety organisations' websites, but you need to watch out for the authoritative and validated websites; www.oshworld.com brings hundreds of websites together under both country and subject links and they are selected for their quality. This saves much time googling for quality data.

Sadly, despite great advances in database, information and communications technologies, today too much time and therefore money in staff time can be lost searching for quality information on the fire service!



→ Sheila Pantry Associates Ltd provides health, safety, environment and fire electronic services and products. www.sheilapantry.com



Firefighters tackle a fire on board the Viking Vulcan at Leith Docks in Edinburgh earlier this year

DAVID CHESKIN/PA PHOTOS

'Inadequate training is compromising our safety'

INVEST IN SAFETY



SAFER
FIREFIGHTERS
SAFER
COMMUNITIES

The majority of UK firefighters say current operational training is less than adequate, with 80 per cent saying this is compromising their safety, according to a new poll commissioned by the FBU. More than three-quarters of UK firefighters say the fire and rescue service must stop cutting frontline personnel.

As the Union takes its campaign for Government action to address the deeply worrying recent rise in firefighter fatalities to parliament on November 12, a new poll commissioned by the FBU shows that the majority (53%) of firefighters affirm that operational training received in the past 12 months was less than adequate.

The YouGov poll found that more wholetime firefighters (59%) believed their training was inadequate, though the majority of retained firefighters (51%) were also unhappy with it.

Fire crews were asked whether the quantity and quality of operational training had improved over the previous 12 months. Almost three in five (59%) did not believe that it had and over a quarter (27%) said it had not improved at all. The figure was significantly higher for wholetime firefighters, with 71% disagreeing with the view that improvements had taken place, compared with 55% of retained firefighters.

Asked whether inadequate or insufficient in-operational training was compromising the safety of firefighters, some four-fifths (80%) believed that it had been compromised to some degree, while over a third (37%) believed very strongly that firefighter safety had been compromised by inadequate or insufficient training.

Some 44% of wholetime firefighters agreed very strongly that inadequate or insufficient training was compromising their safety.

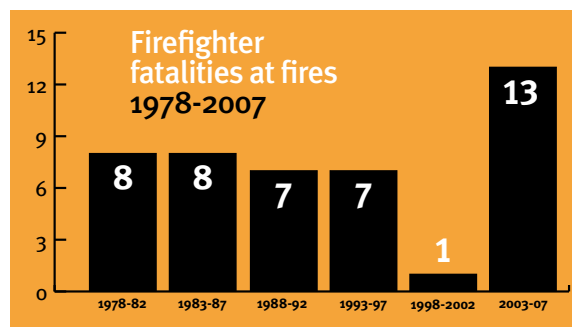
FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "These results

show the grave concerns fire crews have over training and their worries about the impact this is having on their safety. That is reason enough for the government and fire chiefs to take note and listen."

The results come as new research carried out by the Labour Research Department on behalf of the FBU show a sharp rise in firefighter fatalities in recent years. In the five years since 2003 at least 22 firefighters have died while on duty, significantly more than in the previous five years.

The research report finds that many of these deaths were caused by inadequate training, inadequate crewing levels and weaknesses in integrated risk management planning.

Added Matt Wrack: "I knew firefighter deaths were increasing, but I am horrified at the rate by which they are increasing. Government can do something about this. I am asking ministers and MPs to act on this report urgently."



Source: LRD
Research for the FBU,
November 2008





BA training

SEAN VATCHER/FIREPIX

BREATHING APPARATUS (BA) TRAINING

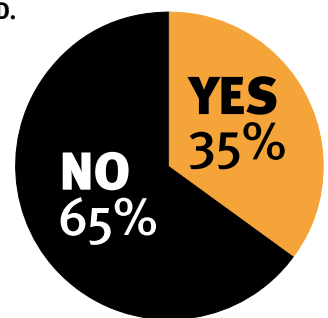
Firefighters were asked whether they had received specialist breathing apparatus (BA) training. Overall, just over a third (35%) said they had. Some 13% said they had not received any BA training in the previous 12 months, though some of those were officers.

Over a third (36%) said their BA training had been for a day or less, whilst less than 40% had had BA training lasting for more than two days.

BA refresher training was also a cause for concern. Almost a quarter (24%) said they had not received any BA refresher training in the previous 12 months.

Some 14% of those who done refresher training for BA had only watched a DVD.

Received breathing apparatus training in the last 12 months?



HOT FIRE/ FIRE BEHAVIOUR TRAINING

Over a third (36%) said they had not received any fire hot fire/behaviour training in the previous 12 months, with almost two in five (39%) of wholtime firefighters citing this as a concern.

There were also concerns about the duration of this training. More than a third (36%) spent less than four hours doing hot fire/behaviour training, with the majority doing a day or less. Less than 10% did three or more days hot fire/behaviour training.



Hot fire training

DID YOU KNOW?

- UK deaths on duty of firefighters for the five years 2003-2007 have risen by 62% compared with the previous five years (1998-2002).
- Eight firefighters died on duty in 2007 – the worst year for firefighter deaths since 1985.
- The trend in deaths of firefighters at fires declined through the 1970s, 80s and 90s. But it has risen sharply since 2003.
- Thirteen firefighters were killed at fires between 2003 and 2007.
- For almost seven years between March 1996 and September 2002 there were no firefighter deaths at fires.

Source: LRD research for the FBU, November 2008

DYNAMIC RISK ASSESSMENT TRAINING

Over a third (34%) of fire service personnel polled said they had not received dynamic risk assessment training in the past 12 months. A higher proportion of wholetime firefighters (38%) than retained (30%) said they had not had the training.

Some 14% said they had received specialist dynamic risk assessment training, though nearly one in five (18%) said they had only been trained using a DVD.

The majority of firefighters (52%) had received half a day or less of dynamic risk assessment training and only a quarter (24%) had received more than a day of dynamic risk assessment training.



18%
trained
using DVD
only

RESOURCES

Fire crews were asked about cuts in frontline personnel. More than three-quarters (76%) agreed very strongly that the fire and rescue service must stop cutting frontline personnel if it is to provide a coherent, effective and safe response to the incidents it was expected to attend, and 95% opposed cuts in frontline personnel.

Instead fire crews believe that the £1.5 billion being wasted on regional controls could be better spent on operational training (89%), more frontline equipment (75%), more frontline personnel (74%) and modern communications equipment for every firefighter (59%) – all measures that would significantly enhance safety in the light of recent and previous fatalities.

95% of firefighters
oppose cuts
to frontline
personnel.

**CUTS
COST
LIVES**



BUILDING CONSTRUCTION TRAINING

Almost half (48%) of those polled said they had not received any building construction training in the last 12 months. Only 5% said they had received specialist building construction training and 15% said their training had consisted of a DVD or similar method.

The quality and duration of training were also of concern. Nearly two-thirds (65%) had received half a day or less of building construction training, while less than 10% had had more than two days.

Source: In August 2008 the FBU asked the YouGov research organisation to poll members about safety and other concerns. Just under 2,000 fire service personnel were polled and the results confirm the serious issues raised by the OASD reports and in fatality investigation reports.

Firefighters carry chemical protection suits during an exercise simulating a chemical agent terrorist attack on Bank Underground station in London

Taken part in large scale training exercises in last 12 months?

NO
73%

YES
27%

LARGE SCALE TRAINING EXERCISES

Only just over a quarter (27%) of fire service personnel said they had taken part in a large-scale training exercise in the previous 12 months. Firefighters in Scotland (11%), the South West (18%) and London (19%) were worst off in terms of large scale exercises.

FBU RALLY AND LOBBY JOIN IN

INVEST IN SAFETY



As *Firefighter* was going to press the Union was gearing up for a mass rally and lobby of the

Westminster parliament on firefighter safety on Wednesday November 12, amid an alarming rise in firefighter deaths in recent years.

More investment by fire and rescue services in training will be a key issue to be raised with MPs.

The Union will be also asking for better record-keeping of firefighter deaths and injuries

at a national level by a new FRS body that will ensure the lessons of fatal and other serious incidents are learned and implemented by every fire service, including in their integrated risk management planning.

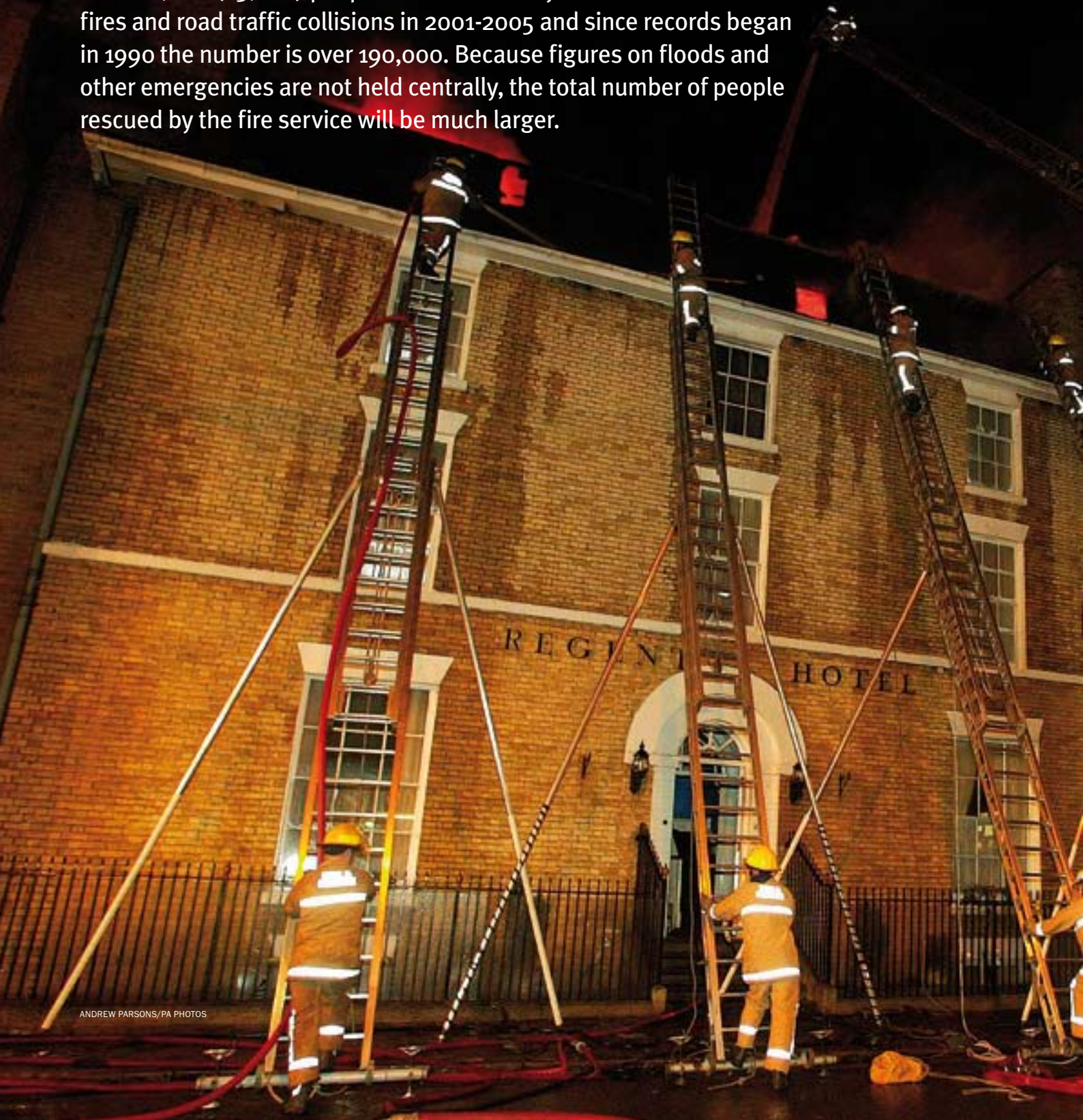
This body would also take charge of developing and agreeing safety critical operational guidance based on the lessons learned.

Details of arrangements and the issues we are asking you to raise with MPs are on the FBU website at www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/fatalities/

FIRE SERVICE RESCUES

OVER 300 PEOPLE RESCUED PER

Over 80,000 (83,668) people were rescued by UK fire crews from fires and road traffic collisions in 2001-2005 and since records began in 1990 the number is over 190,000. Because figures on floods and other emergencies are not held centrally, the total number of people rescued by the fire service will be much larger.



ANDREW PARSONS/PA PHOTOS

PLE WEEK



Last month *Firefighter* reported new figures published for the first time by the Union that show the central role of FRS rescues in protecting communities. Here we publish the detail.

The figures showed that more than 300 (322) people a week are being rescued from fires and road vehicle crashes by the fire service across the UK.

Over 80,000 (83,668) people were rescued from fires and road traffic collisions (RTCs) in 2001-2005, the most recent five years for which data is available. Since records began in 1990 the number is over 190,000. The total number of people rescued by the fire service will be much larger.

The number of rescues from RTCs is based on a highly conservative estimate, while data in a number of years in

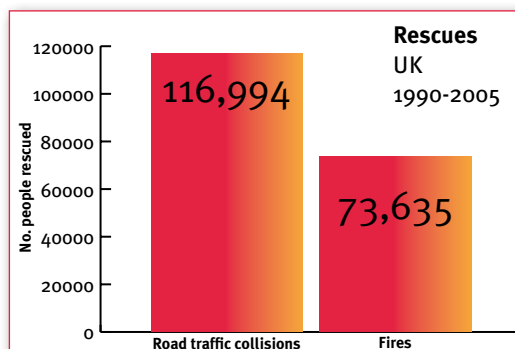
In England, in the ten years to 2005 just under 130,000 (128,547) people were rescued. In 2005 alone, over 13,000 (13,596) people were rescued

the 1990s is patchy. Some figures, such as those rescued from flooding, water or the London terrorist attacks, are excluded.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: "The fire service today is an all-round emergency response and rescue service. The figures illustrate why the public has such high confidence in the fire service.

"They also underscore the importance of the frontline rescue capability in saving lives."

Rescues



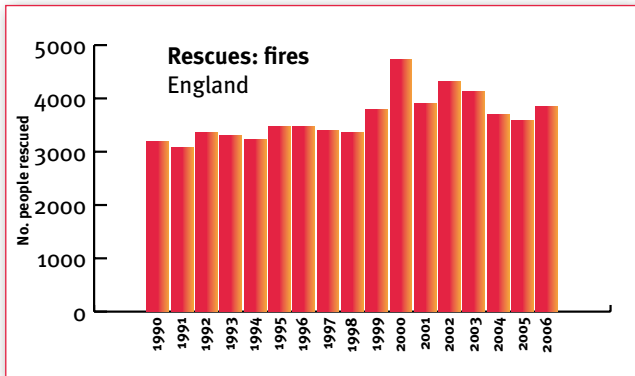
Source: CLG; Scottish Executive; Welsh Assembly Government; Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service; answers to written parliamentary questions

In England, over 68,000 people (68,619) were rescued from fires and RTCs in the five most recent years for which data is available. In the ten years to 2005 just under 130,000 (128,547) people were rescued. These figures are absolute minimums as the number of rescues from RTCs is based on the assumption of just one person rescued per road traffic incident involving persons rescued. In 2005 alone, over 13,000 (13,596) people were rescued.

CLG says it does not collect figures for those rescued in England from water incidents not involving fires, which the FBU estimated at 3,500 in the summer floods of 2007 alone.

PA PHOTOS

Fires

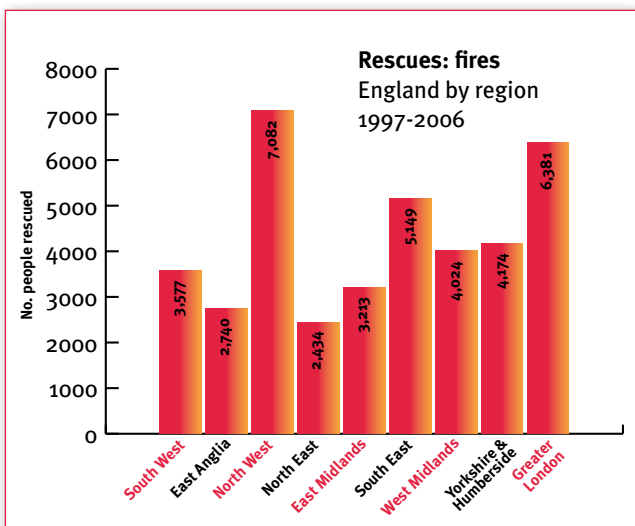


Source: Annual Fire Statistics (1990-1999); answers to parliamentary questions 14 June 2005, 27 November 2006, 21 April 2008.

Over 25,000 (25,551) people were rescued from fires by fire and rescue services across the UK in the five most recent years for which data is available. More than 4,600 (4,605) people were rescued from fires in 2005 alone. The total has risen to over 73,000 (73,635) since 1990.

In England, rescues from fires are running at record or near-record levels, with the total at over 60,000 (61,883) people since 1990. More than 38,000 (38,777) people were rescued from fires in England by the fire and rescue services in the most recent ten years for which data is available. More than 3,800 (3,845) were rescued in 2006 alone.

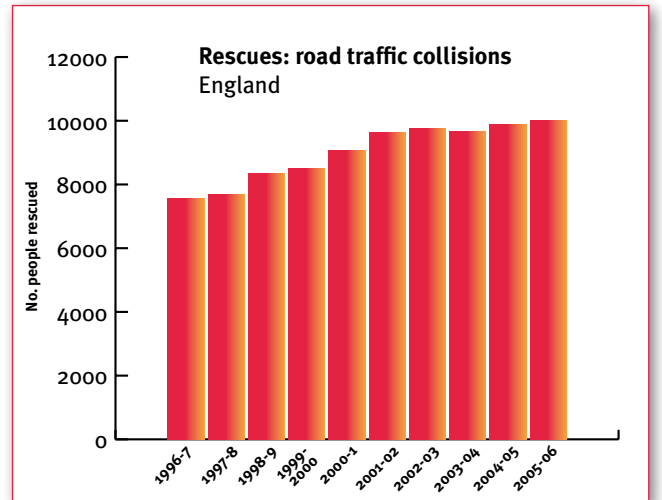
Driving these increases are rescues from dwelling fires which are running at record levels. Dwelling fire rescues have remained at more than four-fifths of total rescues from fires since records began 27 years ago, comparing the two most recent five-year periods. Just under 34,000 (33,981) were rescued from dwellings in England in 1997-2006 and just under 3,400 (3,394) in 2006 alone.



Source: answer to parliamentary question 21 April 2008.

Over 7,000 (7,082) people were rescued from fires in the North West during the period 1997-2006, the ten most recent years for which data is available. More than 5,000 (5,149) were rescued in the South East and over 6,300 (6,381) in London. Fire crews rescued more than 4,000 in the West Midlands region (4,024) and Yorkshire and Humberside (4,174), while the figure exceeded 3,500 (3,577) in the South West, 3,200 (3,213) in the East Midlands, 2,700 (2,740) in East Anglia and 2,400 (2,434) in the North East.

Road traffic collisions

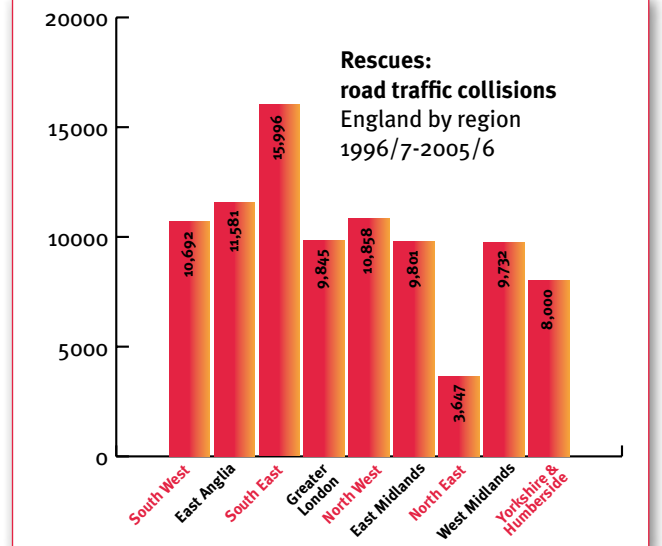


Source: answer to parliamentary question 21 April 2008.

Note: figures based on a very conservative estimate of one person rescued per road traffic collision involving persons rescued.

Rescues by fire and rescue services from vehicles involved in road traffic collisions (RTCs) peaked at close on 12,000 (11,946) in the year 2005/6, the most recent year for which comparable data is available for England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Just under 60,000 (58,468) people were rescued across the UK in the five years to that date. These figures are absolute minimum figures as they are based on an estimate of one person rescued per RTC involving persons rescued in England and Wales.

In England alone, over 90,000 (90,151) people were rescued by fire and rescue services from traffic incidents in the most recent ten years for which data is available, with a 32 per cent increase in 2005/6 compared to 1996/7. Over 10,000 (10,006) people were rescued in England in 2005/2006.

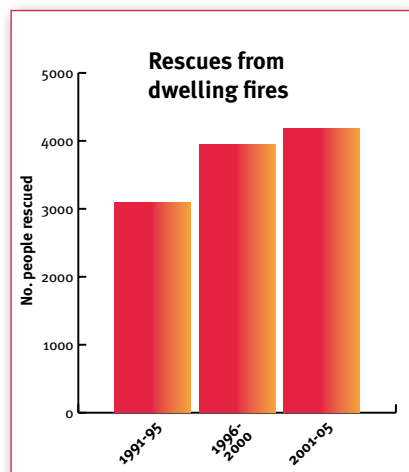


Source: answer to parliamentary question 21 April 2008.

Note: figures based on a very conservative estimate of two people rescued per road traffic collision involving persons rescued.

Rescues from road vehicles involved in accidents rose in double digits between 1996/7 and 2005/6 in all but one region of England with increases of over 30 per cent in the South West, South East, East Anglia and West Midlands. The number of people rescued from RTCs in London rose by 91 per cent.

Scotland

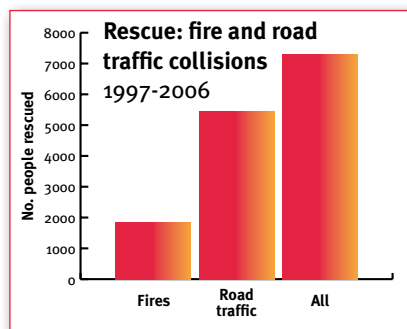


Source: Scottish Executive.

Rescues from dwelling fires in Scotland are running at record levels with around 4,200 (4,181) people rescued by the Scottish fire and rescue services in 2001-2005, the most recent five years for which data is available. In 2005 just over 700 (709) people were rescued.

Over 4,200 (4,280) people were rescued from road traffic collisions between 2001/2 and 2005/6. The number increased in four out of the five years and is running at record levels.

Wales

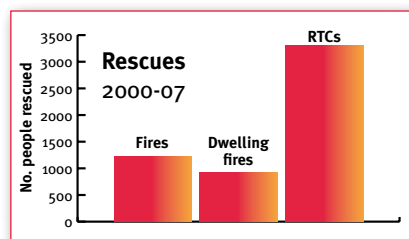


Source: Welsh Assembly Government.

Note: RTC rescues are calendar year with 2006/7 = 2006

Over 3,600 (3,609) people were rescued from fire and road traffic collisions (RTCs) in Wales in 2002-2006, the most recent five years for which data are available. Since 1997 the number rescued is just under 7,300 (7,292). Just under 5,500 (5,445) were rescued from RTCs between 1997/8 and 2006/7 and over 1,800 (1,847) were rescued from fires in 1997-2006. In 2006 alone, 190 people were rescued from fires and in 2006/7 542 people involved in RTCs were rescued. RTC rescues are an absolute minimum as the figures are based on the number of RTCs involving persons rescued.

Northern Ireland



Source: Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service.

Northern fire crews rescued over 4,600 (4,605) people from a range of incidents between 2000 and 2007, the most recent year for which data is available.

More than 1,200 people (1,230) were rescued from fires and of this, over 900 (917) were rescued from dwelling fires. In 2007 alone 154 people were rescued from all fires.

The number of people rescued from road traffic collisions in 2007 reached a record high of 447. This compares to 419 in 2006.

Where the figures come from

These figures, the most recent and reliable available, are based on answers to parliamentary questions, Freedom of Information Act questions and some historical data contained in the official UK fire statistics. While many rescues are recorded, central Government does not make the figures public.

→ The full report is available on the FBU website: www.fbu.org.uk



LONDON FIRE BRIGADE/PA PHOTOS

PA PHOTOS



CHRISTOPHER FURLONG/GETTY IMAGES



PAUL WATERHOUSE/PA PHOTOS



ALASTAIR GRANT/AP/PA PHOTOS



Fire crews responding to fires and road traffic collisions. The UK fire and rescue service is now an all-round emergency response and rescue service



'It's about peace, security and justice for us all'

HATEM MOUSSA/AP / PA PHOTOS

On a trade union delegation to Palestine in June, three FBU officials met firefighters struggling to protect their local communities in the face of extreme danger. They also saw and heard from trade unionists, human rights activists and other progressive organisations of the humanitarian disaster created by the illegal Israeli occupation.

Palestinian firefighters put out a fire at a factory in northern Gaza. The factory was set on fire by Israeli artillery, according to witnesses

'Bullet holes in fire engines – and firefighters'

As a trade union official I was aware, at some level, of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. As a political activist I was aware of some of the many issues requiring resolution before peace could be a possibility. As a human being nothing could have prepared me for the visit to the occupied Palestinian territories (OPTs) in June 2008.

It started with a briefing from United Nations Office of the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) on the wall,



Israeli settlements, checkpoints, road closures, land seizures, military exclusion zones and unequal access to water. I instantly understood that the rest of the world is not being told about what is happening in Palestine.

For the next week our delegation saw and experienced the day to day life of Palestinians across the OPTs, whether being confronted by settlers and armed security/ Israeli Defence Force (army) whilst walking along a street in Hebron accompanied by a member of 'Breaking the Silence', an organisation of veteran Israeli soldiers, or being teargassed when attending a peaceful protest against the apartheid wall in Bil'in.

The wall separates cities, towns, neighbourhoods and even farmers from their land – all unlawful according to the International Court of Justice.

The wall and checkpoints impact on every aspect of daily life, turning the West Bank into one huge prison with people penned in like cattle, having to form queues in order to do routine chores such as shopping, working or even going for medical treatment.

Our meetings with leaders of the PGFTU (the Palestinian TUC) outlined the frustration but resilience of those under occupation in the labour movement, especially when the economy is all but bankrupt.

International aid cannot replace control over one's own economy – a message repeated

over and over by those we met.

We saw the refugee camps in Bethlehem and Nablus, where thousands of families are packed together in conditions totally unsuited for human occupation.

As a firefighter I could only imagine the horror of a property fire in these conditions. As a firefighter I also watched aghast as a fire engine, responding to an emergency call, was stopped and delayed at one of the checkpoints.

Firefighters we met in Nablus told me this is not uncommon, nor is it uncommon for one of these vehicles to be detained for up to an hour. Pumps – and firefighters – also received bullet holes when providing emergency deliveries of water to hospitals.

I carry these images with me, and everyone I meet will be told about them otherwise the Palestinians' story and struggle for everyday existence and dignity will remain hidden and forgotten.

Kevin Brown, Regional Secretary

Abu Azam and his 'Palestinian F-16'

"Climb aboard my Palestinian F-16," declares Abu Azam, and we can't possibly refuse. However, Abu Azam is not the 'terrorist' Israel would claim, but an energetic and articulate 65-year-old Palestinian farmer from the West Bank town of Jayyus, and his F-16 is perhaps the oldest working tractor I have ever seen.

Abu Azam drives us to a gate in the Israeli 'separation barrier'. The electrified wire, ditch and road stand out like a fresh scar on the landscape, forming part of the 700km 'apartheid' wall that snakes through Palestinian land in the West Bank. It was built here in 2003 and cuts off two thirds of Jayyus' 3,200 acres of farmland from the village.

The gate is one of only two access points hereabouts to the other side of the barrier and is only opened by Israeli guards for an hour three times a day, though not always and not always when farmers need to be on their land.

Under Israeli law areas not cultivated for three years become state property, so

I watched aghast as a fire engine, responding to an emergency call, was stopped and delayed at one of the checkpoints

the barrier helps to lever Palestinians from their land. For the last five years Abu Azam has struggled to go on farming, but Israeli authorities also require Palestinians to apply for 'visitor permits' to farm their own land, and these are refused to all but a few. Out of 32 Jayyus farmers requesting permits in June, only four including Abu Azam were granted them, and only then for three months. So there is no guarantee of even being able to see crops through to harvest. Abu Azam has three sons but none have been granted permits, so he must farm



largely alone.

Israel claims the barrier protects its citizens, in this case an Israeli settlement called Zufin. But Zufin is itself illegal under international law since it was established in 1989 on land everyone in the world except Israel says is Palestinian.

In addition the barrier encloses ten times the current built up area of Zufin, has taken six out of seven of Jayyus's ground wells, and uprooted over 6,000 olive trees, devastating

Following the visit, the Union agreed:

- FBU branches should be encouraged to affiliate to Palestine Solidarity Campaign
- FBU should continue to be involved in future delegations
- FBU should continue engagement with progressive Israelis and organisations campaigning for peace, justice and equality with the Palestinians
- FBU should continue to develop links with Palestinian FRS workers, including twinning fire stations
- FBU should seek funding for training Palestinian FRS staff and raise this issue with politicians, fire authorities and CFA

Nablus firefighters struggling to do their job in the Israeli-occupied West Bank

the livelihoods of Jayyus' 3,500 inhabitants, 85% of whom used to be farmers.

The fortitude of Palestinians like Abu Azam is inspiring, somehow managing to maintain pride, joy and humour despite the injustices heaped on them. Israeli occupation is relentless however. A new plan to reroute the fence has just been released which would return about a quarter of the land to the Jayyus side, but remove the gates completely, leaving no access at all to the other 1,500 acres of land! It would be annexed, and deemed Israeli state property in three years. In other words, stolen.

The day before our visit the European Union voted unanimously to upgrade its relations with Israel, with the UK a key supporter. Meeting Abu Azam I feel ashamed to be British and party to such hypocrisy and callous disregard. When crimes like these receive support rather than condemnation it undermines peace, security and justice for us all.

Dave Chappell, Regional health and safety rep

From Tel Aviv to the West Bank – a world apart

We arrived at Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion airport terminal – a very modern and comfortable building. Later, on the West Bank, we saw other 'terminals,' or at least that's what the Israel authorities call them. But the Qalandia and Eretz checkpoints are a world apart from Ben Gurion airport. No air conditioning, no designer shops, no bars or cafes. Instead, there are armed soldiers, five-metre high fences, watchtowers, razor wire, turnstiles designed for one person at a time, restricted access for vehicles and an atmosphere of harassment.

I saw mothers with young children struggling with bags of shopping trying to get through the turnstiles. Israel says these checkpoints are necessary for its security – but all I could see was an elaborate system of control, humiliation and outright harassment.

These people are not anti-semitic, terrorists, or fundamentalists, they are mothers, fathers, sisters and brothers – and they are desperate to be allowed to live in peace.

John McGhee, National Officer

➔ More info: www.fbu.org.uk/campaigns/international/ and www.palestinecampaign.org





In May, a record 25 FBU officials visited Cuba – thanks to participants paying half the cost themselves, their respective FBU regions covering the Union's share of costs, plus savings from flying Cuban national airlines and staying in budget accommodation

The FBU's first ever study tour to Cuba, 26 April-May 2 this year, coincided with the May Day celebrations in Havana. More than half a million people – including 130 trades unionists from the UK – lined the streets. The energy and enthusiasm of the marchers was inspirational and in marked contrast to the much less livelier affairs that we have in our own towns and cities to commemorate International Workers' Day. The large and enthusiastic delegations from other countries in Latin America demonstrated what an inspiration the Cuban revolution has been to people in that region.

Despite the best efforts of the USA – who have been responsible for defeating progressive Governments elsewhere in the region, such as in Chile and Nicaragua – the Cuban Revolution is still going strong in its 50th year. Fidel Castro was able to step down from office at a time and in the manner of his own choosing, rather than being forced out by the efforts of the one remaining world superpower.

That is not to deny that the people of Cuba face problems. They clearly do. Forty

seven years of a US economic embargo, plus the collapse of Cuba's main trading partner, have exacerbated economic problems on the island. Much of the island's housing stock – particularly in central Havana – is in a poor state of repair. Wages – despite subsidised food, housing and public transport – are barely enough to survive on. Yet, despite these problems, the achievements of the Cuban people in areas such as education and healthcare are remarkable. Infant mortality rates and life expectancy are among the best in the region and compare favourably to the USA and the UK.

Living standards improved

The economy is growing steadily, trade with other countries in the region plus China is growing considerably, tourist numbers are rising and slowly living standards are being improved. Nowhere was this more evident than in Havana, where a shiny new fleet of Chinese buses have immeasurably improved the public transport system.

On the tour, we had a chance to



REVOLUTION!

Fifty years an

TOM MURRAY, CHAIR, FBU EAST MIDLANDS

"We got the coach from our hotel in Havana and after a one and half hour drive arrived in Pinar Del Rio for a meeting of a local Committee for the Defense of the Revolution (CDR) [one of Cuba's mass grassroots organisations, community groups based in every neighbourhood representing people living in a block of houses, or neighbourhood area].

The whole neighbourhood turned out. The reception they gave us was moving. Five young boys, each with the name tags of the Miami Five, gave a minute's

speech on what they would do when they returned to Cuba. There was a tremendous community spirit. And what organisation! We were made to feel very welcome.



FBU delegates at the May Day rally

We could learn from them.

But it works both ways. From our visit to a fire station outside Havana we could see there was lots we could do to assist. The

Cuban firefighters gave us a rope rescue demonstration. We showed them a different way of handling the rope. They were very interested. In the short space of time we were there, they learned something valuable that advanced their professional skills."

KARL HORAN, EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBER, FBU SOUTHERN REGION

"People seemed very happy. I didn't meet anyone who didn't have a smile on their face. We visited a school and provided them with calculators and exercise books that we had brought from England. We spent £30-40 on these educational materials but in Cuba this makes a big difference. At the fire station they had very little but they were very enthusiastic to show us what they could do. Since we've been back, we've kept in contact with the firefighters at the fire



President Mick Shaw with a senior Cuban fire service official

PICTURES: JEAN SUMERS

visit fire stations in Havana and Pinar del Rio; see a school, a clinic and a doctor's surgery; attend a neighbourhood meeting in a Havana suburb; and attend a conference of Cuban and international trades unionists. Everywhere we went we were overwhelmed by the hospitality that was shown to us and by the genuine warmth of the Cuban people.

Low fatality rate

The training and equipment provided to Cuban firefighters clearly left something to be desired compared to our own provision.

However, the commitment to safety, both of firefighters and the community, was impressive. The Cubans are proud of their very low fatality rate.

I think that all the tour participants found the experience a valuable one. To see what can be achieved in a small developing country struggling against an economic blockade imposed by its powerful neighbour is instructive.

Where human need is placed before private profit, where Governments decide economic priorities rather than leaving major decisions at the mercy of "the markets", it is possible to construct a better life for the majority of people.

That is why Cuba is seen as such an inspiration to the people and Governments in countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua; and it is also why the USA Government has spent so much time and effort in trying to strangle the island's economy and topple its regime.

Unfortunately, our own Government here in the UK too often repeats the USA line. I hope that the Union will increase its efforts to persuade the UK Government to engage constructively with the Cuban Government and its people; and that we will have an opportunity in the future to organise other tours such as this, in order to assist a larger number of our officials and activists to experience this remarkable country first hand.

Mick Shaw, FBU President

→ Why not affiliate to Cuba Solidarity Campaign?

For more information www.cuba-solidarity.org.uk

→ Next year Cuba and Unions in the UK will be celebrating 50 years since the Revolution. Why not get your branch involved?

More info: www.cuba50.org/

→ Miami Five: Watch a short film produced by Unite: www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KIKBq1d84w

d going strong

station via email. I'd absolutely go again."

JIM CURRY, BRIGADE CHAIR, LINCOLNSHIRE

"The biggest thing for me was the issue of the Cuban Five. It was in the press here in Britain when it first kicked off and then it died down. But in Cuba the issue is being discussed and highlighted in every arena. I was truly shocked by the way these people are being treated by the American Government. The solidarity of the people of Cuba with the Miami Five is very strong.

We visited a hospital. It was very clean but the equipment

looked outdated. In the fire station too the equipment – including BA sets – was very basic and outdated. The US embargo against Cuba means it's incredibly difficult for the public services to get the modern equipment they need."

DENISE CHRISTIE, WOMEN'S REP, SCOTLAND

"When I became actively involved with the FBU I became more interested in politics and the workings of socialist countries such as Cuba. I began to read a bit more on Cuban life and history so the Cuba Study Tour gave me the opportunity to experience

it for myself. While in Havana, I was struck by the fact that there is no litter on the streets, there were no beggars and everyone is immaculately dressed. During the May Day celebrations, seeing thousands of people dancing,



FBU delegate tries out Cuban fire truck

singing and celebrating what Cuba has achieved was fantastic. Shouts of "viva Fidel, viva Raul, viva Cuba" was so empowering that you ended up chanting along with them. Anyone who didn't have the hairs on their neck stand up that day must have been in a different place.

Coming back from Cuba I have now affiliated [as an individual] to CSC and get regular updates on the Miami 5.

Cuba celebrates 50 years of the revolution next year, which would be amazing to experience. That would be some hell of a party and a few more quiet nights in might just see me there..."

WHAT DOES A FIREFIGHTER (CONTROL) INSTRUCTOR DO?

The emphasis is on teamwork when control staff are trained and the link between local control staff and crews comes into its own in emergencies, says one of the most experienced control trainers in England

Lynne Harding brings experience and commitment to her role in charge of training for control staff at Essex Fire and Rescue, one of the largest county fire and rescue services in the UK. She has 42 years experience in the fire and rescue service – including a stint representing control staff on the FBU executive council. As deputy manager in charge of Essex Control since 1987, Lynne's responsibilities include management of the control database, alongside training.

When a distraught caller dials 999 and asks for "fire" – a member of the control will be their first point of contact. And their humanity and professionalism in keeping that person calm will enable them to extract crucial information to pass on to fire crews. Minimising search time and providing precise intelligence means lives could be saved. It's a job that demands a range of skills – and it's not surprising that Lynne Harding argues that control staff are at the "heart" of the firefighting operation. The majority of emergency calls in the county are dealt with in less than a minute from the point of speaking to the caller, with control staff deciding the correct attendance and alerting the fire crews.

New trainees learn the basics of the job in the six-week initial training course that takes place in "back-up" control. This is followed by six weeks of watch-related training led by fire control managers.

All control watches in Essex are linked to firefighting watches – Red, Blue, Green and White. Lynne says this plays a vital role in bolstering teamwork across the service, benefiting public safety.

Newly qualified control trainees join frontline firefighting colleagues on a pass-out parade. But the training does not stop here. "You never stop learning in this job," says Lynne, who relishes her training role throughout control.

New trainees have to "work extremely hard" to reach the required standard to be a team member, she says. And it's not just about handling emergency calls, mobilising appliances and fire crews and dealing with station personnel.

Control staff also have to be adept at managing resources, recording incident details and liaising with other emergency services and utilities including gas and electricity operators. Once initial training is over,

control staff are encouraged to embrace individual professional development.

New technology has brought many changes in recent years. Control now plays a key role in gathering information both for central statistics, and local management. New control trainees have to be able to

operate all equipment, including graphic information systems, call concentrators, (touch screen), recording systems (everything in control is recorded), radio telecommunication systems, mobilising systems, database retrieval systems and electronic mailing and PC-based programme use.

Emergency procedures must be adhered to at all times. And if someone is trapped in a blazing building, a fellow human who is also a trained professional will be on the end of the line to comfort, calm and extract vital and potentially life-saving information. This is where

All control watches in Essex are linked to firefighting watches. This plays a vital role in bolstering teamwork across the service.

PICTURES: JESS HURD

Lynne Harding with recent trainees





PICTURES: JESS HURD/REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

ongoing training pays off, says Lynne: "The emphasis is on teamwork inside operational control and with fire crews and managers attending the shout.

"With New Dimensions and Urban Search and Rescue we have to be in a state of constant preparedness for a terrorist or national disaster. Operational control have been trained in mobilisation and call handling under extreme circumstances, and all emergency fire control systems across the UK have contingency plans and backup secondary controls with fully tried and tested procedures."

Lynne is keen to mention the integral role Essex Control plays in the county's incident command system, providing crewing, whenever they are able, to assist with the incident command support vehicle which is mobilised to large incidents.

They team with the support fire crews and managers, to provide computer-aided booking in and out of all

'It's my personal opinion as a manager that severing the link between control crews and watches could risk ripping the heart out of the fire service'

personnel, radio message handling and other associated tasks from the CSV.

"All of Essex Control Staff are trained for this role on the fire ground, and are proud to be not only the heart of the service in operational control, but part of the total operational task in hand," Lynne says.

Lynne has also trained firefighters in radio and communications, so that they can fulfil their side of the teamwork with control and incident command in Essex.

"Firefighters and firefighters (control) are a brilliant working team, especially in emergencies," she says. "Training is much richer if we have both sides of the team involved in training exercises. I've been proud to be part of it especially working on the command support."

But, in a personal capacity and drawing on her knowledge and experience, Lynne has some concerns. The turnover of control staff is higher than ever across England, due to the uncertainty of fears over job security in local authority emergency fire control rooms amid government plans to replace all 46 with nine regional centres.

Essex is not immune from these fears, says Lynne, who is quick to add that despite this uncertainty, control staff "still deliver an excellent service".

Control management teams, "sometimes against the odds, have to work hard at maintaining morale, but my experience is that the ability to carry on in the face of adversity is a quality that most operational fire service personnel possess."

She adds: "It's my personal opinion as a manager that severing the link between control crews and watches could risk ripping the heart out of the fire service. Control has always been at the heart of operations. There are a lot of young people training up, learning the job and doing it well. But there's also certainly a lot of uncertainty."



Steady on the comfort food

It's tempting in the cold weather but don't overdo it on foods high in fats and sugars

NUTRITION

With the cold weather and darker nights upon us, many of us turn to 'comfort foods,' to help us feel warm and satisfied.

Unfortunately, many of these foods are high in fat salt and sugar, and despite the fact that they can make us feel better for a short time they don't contribute to feeling well in the long term. This article gives some practical ways to have a healthy diet, including tips for shift work and for other members of the family.

What is a healthy balanced diet?

A healthy balanced diet contains a variety of different foods, including lots of fruit and vegetables, meals based on starchy foods particularly wholegrains, some protein-rich foods such as meat, fish, eggs and beans and some dairy foods. It is also important to make sure we don't eat too much food that is high in saturated fat and sugar and we should try not to eat more than six grams of salt a day, including salt that is found in the foods we buy.

Many of us don't eat enough fruit and vegetables; we should be aiming for at least five portions of different fruit and vegetables every day. Adding vegetables to a meal or recipe such as pasta sauce or as a side dish to meat can make a meal much more filling and provide lots of important vitamins and minerals. Having a glass of fruit juice at breakfast or adding fruit to cereal is a good way of starting the day with one or more of your daily portions. Frozen, tinned and dried fruit and

KEY POINTS

- ◆ Eat a variety of foods, including plenty of fruit and veg
- ◆ Cut down on saturated fat, salt and sugar
- ◆ Drink plenty of fluids and don't skip breakfast
- ◆ Keep active and eat three healthy balanced meals a day

vegetables count too.

Starchy foods such as bread, pasta, rice and potatoes are a very important part of our diet and should make up about a third of everything we eat. They are a major source of energy, and choosing wholegrain options increases the amount of nutrients and fibre. Wholegrains are digested more slowly and make us feel full and satisfied for longer.

Fish is a good source of protein and other nutrients and we should try and eat two portions a week, one of which should be oily. Oily fish such as salmon, fresh tuna (but not tinned) and mackerel are rich in omega fatty acids, which are a good type of fat that can keep our hearts healthy. Meat is also an important source of protein, aiding growth and repair, but it is important

to avoid too much fatty meat which is high in saturated fat that can increase the amount of

cholesterol in the blood and is bad for our hearts.

Other practical tips towards a healthy balanced diet:

Don't skip breakfast; you need the important energy and nutrients to start the day!

Drink plenty of fluids, especially when you're active, and don't drink more than three or four units of alcohol a day (for men) or one to two units per day (for women). A pint of beer is two or three units and a small glass of wine is two units.

Tips for eating healthily during awkward shift patterns:

Try to stick to regular meals; freeze or refrigerate your evening meal so that you can take it to work and reheat at dinner time (make sure you reheat thoroughly!)

Try not to snack on sugary or fatty foods such as chocolate, biscuits and crisps. Eat more starchy foods at lunch and dinner times that will make you feel full for longer.

Other members of the family

Make sure your family eats a balanced diet, especially if you have children or dependent parents. The same guidelines apply; making sure they eat plenty of fruit and vegetables and meals based on starchy foods, and limiting the amount of saturated fat, salt and sugar. Portion sizes for children do not need to be as big, but it is important that they eat three healthy meals a day. They should also drink plenty of fluid, but avoid soft and fizzy drinks that are high in added sugar. Dietary intakes of older adults can sometimes be affected, for example, by loss of appetite due to illness and medication, so it is important to follow medical advice about changes that may occur.

It is also suggested that adults over the age of 65 take vitamin D supplements if they are unable to go outdoors regularly, or cover their skin when outside, as well as eating food sources, such as oily fish and margarine, regularly.

→ For more information visit the British Nutrition Foundation website www.nutrition.org.uk, or the Food Standard's Agency www.eatwell.gov.uk

Article by Rebecca Foxen from the British Nutrition Foundation



Try not to snack on sugary or fatty foods

Repossession

Q I am faced with my house being repossessed. Is there any way of avoiding this?

A Yes.

Check ways which could increase income

- Check if you are claiming all benefits you are entitled to.
- Take in a lodger, a certain amount per year is tax free.
- Move out of the property and let it. You may be able to get the mortgage paid by others and live somewhere cheaper yourself until you are financially back on your feet.

Negotiate with the lender

Get advice through the FBU's free legal advice service before negotiating with the lender yourself.

After taking advice, put a proposal together in a financial statement of how much you will pay each month towards any arrears as well as your normal monthly payments. This should be demonstrated in a financial statement showing your incomings and outgoings and what your monthly disposable income is which can be used to pay this off.

Make an offer

Send a letter stating:

- why you got into arrears
- note any previous good payment record
- detail how you will deal with the arrears
- how long it will take to clear the arrears
- show that this is the best, quickest way of them getting their money as well as retaining you as a customer

Start to make payments

This will help show you intend to continue to pay and have the means to do so as well as stopping the arrears from building up further.

Complaining about the lender's decision

If the mortgage lender refuses to



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

Legal Beagle

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

accept any proposals you could complain:

- through the lender's internal complaints procedure
- to the Financial Ombudsman Service if the lender has failed to operate within the Financial Services Authority's guidelines for dealing with mortgage arrears

Q I am in mortgage arrears and fear it won't be long before my home is repossessed. Are there any alternatives to repossession?

A There are some alternatives to repossession.

Mortgage Rescue Scheme

Mortgage rescue schemes are sometimes referred to as "buy back" or "sale and rent back" schemes. They can be run by either a lender, a local authority, a local authority and a registered social landlord together, or a private company. But they are

not available everywhere.

This is where one of these organisations purchases all or part of your home and rent/lease it back to you, taking away the mortgage liability and releasing you from the burden, but allowing you to continue to stay in the same home as either a tenant or shared owner.

Use a flexible tenure option

Anyone living in shared ownership accommodation in England which is owned by a registered social landlord may be able to reduce their mortgage payments through flexible tenure. This is where a registered social landlord can buy back a proportion of the property from you so your mortgage costs are reduced, and their rent payments are increased.

Flexible tenure is discretionary, so you need to contact your landlord to find out if it is available.

Sell the property yourself

You may wish to consider selling your home voluntarily.

You would need to:

- Find out if the lender gives permission to sell. If the lender refuses, you could apply to court for an order of sale although this is lengthy and costly.
- Establish if there will be enough equity to pay off the mortgage and arrears. If there is 'negative equity', where the home is sold for less than is owed on it, you will still be liable under the mortgage contract to pay for the difference. This is known as a mortgage shortfall.
- Know where you will live once the home is sold. If you sell your home yourself you may be classed as making yourself "voluntarily homeless" and therefore will not necessarily qualify straight away for local authority housing.

You also need to consider the costs of selling.

Stay in the property until evicted

You could stay in the property until the lender has a court order to evict you. For example if you needed more time to find alternative accommodation.

You don't have to leave by the date stated in the possession order as the lender must apply for a possession warrant. But the costs of them doing this will be passed on to you

Voluntary repossession

Some people consider handing the keys back to the lender. This should only be done as a last resort as you are still liable for any ongoing mortgage payments, arrears, interest, costs involved for the lender to sell the home and charges on missed payments and you may still be classed as making yourself intentionally homeless. This will also seriously affect your future chances of getting another mortgage.

→ Write in with your legal problem to legalbeagle@fbu.org.uk and those of widest relevance to FBU members in the workplace will be selected and answered in future editions. With thanks to Thompsons solicitors.

'I can be a bit irreverent and tongue in cheek'

Finlay Mackay announces the teams, operates the scoreboard and picks the tunes for half-time – and a lot more besides. He's living many a fan's dream

It sounds like every young football fan's dream – announcing the score as your team romps home to victory, getting into every home game for free and picking the tunes played over the club's public address system.

Even the best teams don't always win – but that tiny detail apart, diehard Clyde fan Finlay Mackay has been living the dream since he was 12 years old.

And it's all down to a series of "flukes", says the Cowcaddens firefighter, explaining an extraordinary chain of events that gave him his first break as an announcer more than 20 years ago, at the club's old ground at Shawfield in Glasgow's East End, which backed onto a greyhound race track.

We'd sneak into the stand

"I used to go to the Clyde games with a friend," says Finlay. "We would start off on the terracing, but in the last 15 minutes of the game we'd sneak round the dog track and into the stand. We sat next to a boy one time and he said, 'I've been watching you doing that for ages. My dad's the announcer – do you want to come back and sit beside him for a while?'"

The rest is history. The boys started helping out, learning the ropes, choosing tunes and enjoying the buzz of being in the box. Then one day, the announcer, a bus driver, said he had to go into work on New Year's day –

could the boys take over?

"So we did it," says Finlay. "And eventually he just stopped coming and left it to us – my pal dropped out a few years back but I've been doing it ever since."

Clyde have been playing at Broadwood, its ground in Cumbernauld eight miles outside Glasgow, for the past 11 years, after years spent "sharing" grounds. First there was Firhill, home of Partick Thistle in the north of the city, Clyde's "biggest rival," according to Finlay. The "homeless" club then moved on for a stretch co-habiting with Hamilton Academicals at Douglas Park before moving to its own new ground.

Finlay has, of course, announced the score and more at all four grounds. But what does the announcer's job actually entail? It's not actually a job, it's entirely voluntary – as Finlay is keen to point out. "I wouldn't take money off my club. No way. But you do get into the ground for free."

Apart from announcing the teams and operating the scoreboard with a computer, there's a lot more besides. You've got to deal with everyone who comes in – the press, the police even. There's meet the mascot and half-time competitions sometimes. I've been on the park a few times with the hand-held microphone introducing dancing troupes before a game."

One such performance led to Finlay getting a brief



PICTURES: ALAN WYLE





FINLAY MACKAY

Finlay Mackay is temporary crew manager on white watch at Cowcaddens station in Glasgow. He started his firefighting career on Easterhouse 11 years ago – swapping life in the front line of Glasgow benefit offices for life as a frontline firefighter. And for decades now he's managed to get in free to watch his favourite football team.

moment of glory on Sky TV, at the ground to film a Celtic versus Clyde game. Finlay was filmed during the pre-match crowd warm up – on the pitch, mike in hand, introducing a dancing troupe. “The ball came in my direction and I managed to deflect it from hitting the girls. I put my leg up, trapped the ball and kicked it back to Celtic player Bobo Balde. The Celtic fans even clapped.”

But two seasons ago, the cameras came right into the announcer's box – when Sky descended on the ground as Roy Keane, newly signed from Manchester United, was about to play his first match for Celtic. The match was again Clyde versus Celtic.

The cameras were behind me

“There was masses of media interest, and ten minutes before I was due to announce the teams in the Scottish Cup match, the Sky presenter asked if they could film me live announcing Roy Keane's name when reading out the teams. So the cameras were behind me and the next guy in the team had a really hard to pronounce Japanese name so I had to concentrate hard and was quite proud that I'd got it right on live TV. But, of course, they were off as soon as I'd announced Roy Keane.”

As a multi-tasking midfield defender in the old Clyde supporter's team, Finlay once announced his own and other team members' names before running down the steps to play against the Clyde side – “They wanted a bit of build-up and atmosphere before the game started. So

I played some music, announced the teams and got myself down to the pitch straight after.”

Finlay has had a taste of celebrity on Radio Scotland where he was studio guest a few years ago on the station's cult Saturday teatime Off the Ball show, introduced by footie fan Stuart Cosgrove, then head of Channel Four. “They contacted Clyde, so I went along and had a wee blather, told a few stories. They were amazed I started doing it when I was 12.”

So what tone does Finlay adopt when announcing?

“Probably not as serious as I should. I can be a bit irreverent and tongue in cheek about the whole package. I know when I go to football

grounds I don't want to hear people taking themselves too seriously.”

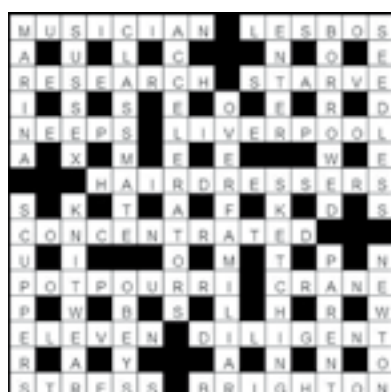
Quite so.

➔ www.clydefc.co.uk/



2009 marks the 50th anniversary of the Cuban Revolution. Philosophy Football, 'sporting outfitters of intellectual distinction' have produced a set of teeshirts to celebrate. Featuring an iconic Fidel, Che Guevara and the bright colours of la revolucion, the shirts are available from www.philosophyfootball.com or on 020 8802 3499

We have three of each of the shirts to be won in this month's quiz (right)



Solution to the October puzzle



4

10 Prize Quiz

Win a Christmas hamper – 9 runner up Cuba shirts to go too!

The theme this month is football

1. Jamaica International Robbie Earle played for a club nicknamed 'the crazy gang' – which club was this?
2. Which Paul was the first black player to captain England?
3. Which Eric was the first overseas PFA Player of the Year winner?
4. What is the Boca Juniors' stadium called?
5. Cuba have qualified for the World Cup on one occasion, which year?
6. The world famous brazilian football player Edison Arantes do Nascimento is better known by which nickname?



3



1

HOW TO ENTER

To win the Christmas hamper or one of nine Cuba teeshirts please send your answers to the Prize Quiz by 15 December 2008 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (Nov/Dec 2008) 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.

Answers to the October quiz
1. The Colour Purple
2. Winnie The Pooh
3. Geoffrey Chaucer
4. Leo Tolstoy
5. John Le Carré
6. London and Paris

Winner August/September
Craig Stephenson, Gourock



StationCat

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

Technical glitch



There are yet more delays for the FireControl project. But don't worry, they're just technical glitches. Station Cat hears it may be a small matter of the mobile data terminals being incompatible with fire appliances. And that the process of data capture is also perhaps running a tad behind schedule.

This can't be confirmed. At Planet DCLOG no-one is letting on. The department, which has repeatedly insisted FireControl would use "tried and tested" technology, is "currently resolving technical IT issues which are likely to result in the need to change timescales".

Days ahead of the admission that there would indeed be further delays, MPs heard that there might possibly be a need for "some rescheduling" because of "proposed changes to the hardware solution and issues regarding access to the Airwave infrastructure for testing" (answer to parliamentary question, 20 October). Airwave is the one installing mobile data terminals into all FRS vehicles to provide "voice and data capability".

As no announcements have been made on re-scheduled roll-out dates – and the national business case was, as of the end of October, still due out "later this year" (yes, the one that is coming to an end) – **the uncertainty surrounding the project is understandably growing.**

What we do know is that the cutover was scheduled for Oct 2009 – itself a delayed date put back from November 2007. Control staff from the 'home' regional control centres (RCCs) – the brigade in which the RCC is based – in some regions were earmarked to move in June or July 2009.

The long-delayed admission by DCLOG of further delays has been welcomed. The chair of East Midlands Regional Management Board, Councillor Peter Roffey, has applauded the "official recognition" by the department of further slippage in the £1.5 billion project, saying: "We have been aware that the predicted timescales were looking less and less achievable."

The Union has long been warning of ever-greater delays. And it has always said CLG were under-estimating the technical

problems of what is the most ambitious Government IT project ever. Readers will be aware of the disastrous track history of Whitehall and IT schemes.

Yet another good reason to scrap FireControl? Yes minister.

New Minister



Talking of ministers ... Nick Raynsford, Jim Fitzpatrick, Angela Smith, Parmjit Dhandra, the rollcall of former fire ministers is long.

With Parmjit now out of Government and back with his lucky constituents, the latest New Labour fire minister is Sadiq Khan, Labour MP for Tooting, south London with a majority of just over 5,000.

Elected in May 2005, he became a Parliamentary Private Secretary to Jack Straw, then entered the Whips' office and is now a junior minister at CLG.

He was awarded 'Newcomer of the Year' by the Spectator Magazine Parliamentarian of the Year awards 2005, was runner-up in Channel 4's 'Rising Star' award, and has been described as 'one to watch' by both The Independent and The New Statesman.

Sadiq is clearly, then, a rapid riser.

So despite a desperate need for stability and continuity in the fire service, **sadly**

the odds on him hanging around for long as Fire Minister may be long.

But (OK, I'm getting ahead of myself here) what are the odds on Sadiq rising further? Or will he end up joining Parmjit on the back benches? Gamblers will ignore the curse of the station cat at their peril.

Cheshire cat



In a bid to rebuild some bridges after the staff dissatisfaction survey and the categorisation of staff as terrorists and corpses, Big Steve McGuirk's middle managers were sent out to stations to talk to the troops and try to get us all pulling together.

By all accounts these cosy little chats were

very productive (as yet nobody has been disciplined anyway which is a start).

But the brigade didn't want to leave the troops in any doubt about how much they really do love them. **So they ordered a group of embarrassed senior managers to descend on a couple of stations in the wee small hours – unannounced.**

Now nothing should be read into the fact that Cheshire have form where bed police are concerned, since the introduction at wholetime fire stations of the blue reclining chairs (or velvet clams as they are known) some 18 months ago at a cost of £76,000.

No doubt this visit was to check that Cheshire firefighters had drunk their cocoa, brushed their teeth and weren't sitting in any nasty draughts. And of course, were resting comfortably.

Perhaps Mr McGuirk should spend a bit more effort on building bridges and less energy on burning them.



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

25-year badges



Branch sec Steve Quinn (r) receives his 25-year badge from **Adrian Crampton, St. Helens, Merseyside, branch chair**



Martin Stevens (l) receives his 25-year badge from station rep **Tommy Steel, White Watch, Esher, Surrey Fire & Rescue Service**



Peter Chirgwin (l), Edmonton White Watch, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep **Barry Payton**



Nigel Bodin (l) Rawtenstall, Lancashire branch, receives his 25-year badge from **Tony Cavanagh membership secretary**



Mark Newton (l), Dunkirk Fire Station Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from **Dave Limer, regional secretary**



M Cassidy, Northern Ireland F&R, receives his 25-year badge from **Allan Guest ONC chair**



Phil Jones (l), group manager, Salisbury, Wiltshire, receives his 25-year badge from **Steve Garraway, brigade membership secretary**



Peter Moss (r) Lancashire Officers Branch Secretary, receives his 25-year badge from officers branch chair, **Paul Haydock**



Les Williams (centre) former branch secretary, receives his 25-year badge from new branch secretary **Aimi Molloy,** with brigade secretary **Les Skarratts,** all from **White Watch, West Derby Road Fire Station, Liverpool**

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



Gordon McCalmont (r), station manager, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, receives his 25-year badge from **Clive Bush, Branch Chair.** Looking on (l to r) **John Smith, Terry King, Rob Skinner, Dave Copeland, Ian Herdman, Jamie Wyatt, Sam Pick (Branch Secretary)**

FBU REGIONAL OFFICES

→ **Region 1 Scotland**
52 St Enoch Square, Glasgow,
Scotland G1 4AA
0141 221 2309
01rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 2 N. Ireland**
14 Bachelors Walk, Lisburn,
Co Antrim, BT28 1XJ
02892 664622
02rs@fbu.org

→ **Region 3 Cleveland, Durham, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear**
1 Carlton Court, 5th Avenue, Team Valley,
Gateshead, NE11 0AZ
0191 487 4142
03rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 4 Yorkshire and Humberside**
9 Marsh Street, Rothwell,
Leeds, LS26 0AG
0113 288 7000
04rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 5 Greater Manchester, Lancashire, Isle of Man, Cumbria, Merseyside, Cheshire**
The Lighthouse, Lower Mersey St,
Ellesmere Port, Cheshire, CH65 2AL
0151 357 4400
05rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 6 Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, Northamptonshire**
Little Dennis Street South (above Dawsons)
Nottingham NG2 4EU
0115 947 2042
06gen@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 7 West Midlands, Staffordshire, Warwickshire, Hereford and Worcester, Salop**
195/7 Halesowen Rd, Old Hill,
West Midlands, B64 6HE
01384 413633
07rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 8 Mid and West Wales, North Wales, South Wales**
4 Ffordd yr Hen Gae, Pencoed,
Bridgend, CF35 5UJ
01656 867910
08rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 9 Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex, Norfolk, Suffolk**
28 Atlantic Square, Station Road,
Witham, Essex, CM8 2TL
01376 521521
09rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 10 London**
John Horner Mews, Frome Street,
Islington, London, N1 8PB
020 7359 3638
london@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 11 Kent, Surrey, Sussex**
Fire Station, Coldharbour Road,
Northfleet, Kent, DA11 8NT
01474 320473
11rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 12 Buckinghamshire, Berkshire, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Isle of Wight**
The Fire Station, St Mary Street,
Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 2HE
01494 513034
12rs@fbu.org.uk

→ **Region 13 Cornwall, Devon and Somerset, Avon, Gloucestershire, Wiltshire, Dorset**
158 Muller Road, Horfield,
Bristol, BS7 9RE
0117 935 5132
13rs@fbu.org.uk

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.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

0808 100 6061

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