

FireFighter

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

November/December 2012



**FIREFIGHTERS MARCH
TO DEFEND SERVICE**





Matt Wrack

We are right to sound the alarm

The FBU recently launched an advertising campaign against the cuts. It upset a few people. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG), which is responsible for the fire service in England, issued a press comment. The *Daily Telegraph* accused us of being "gratuitously offensive" and "playing on fears instead of protecting us from them".

It is interesting that an advert should cause such hostility from some quarters. But we make no apology for the need to be hard hitting, because these cuts will put safety at risk. We make no apologies for giving that warning.

Cuts cost lives

The truth is that cuts to our service will mean the closure of fire stations, the cutting of fire engines and the loss of fire-fighter jobs. It will take longer for firefighters to get to fires and other emergencies. And we know, in turn, that taking longer to get to incidents will mean a worse service for the public.

Taking longer to get to fires means fires will be more developed and people will be at greater risk of injury and death. Taking longer to get to fires means firefighters are at greater risk of injury or death. Taking longer to get to fires means that insurance and other financial costs will rise.

Those are the simple facts. That is what FBU members



told MPs in Westminster on 7 November. That is what we need to be telling our communities and that is what we need to be telling local councillors on fire and rescue authorities/boards.

Our service

I travel around the country a lot trying to meet and talk to our people. They are fine, committed, professional people. They know their job and want to be able to do it.

It is our members who are out there talking to young people to reduce arson. It is our people visiting homes across the country to advise on safety and to fit smoke alarms. It is our people who respond to floods, saving thousands; who went down into the Tube tunnels after the 7/7 bombing to rescue hundreds. It is our people inspecting and advising to make all workplaces and public buildings safer.

It is our people who every

day respond to emergencies and save thousands of lives every year.

We are proud to do it. And that's why we have to tell the government: stop slashing our service and let us get on with doing our job.

Our tasks

So our job is this.

1 Above all, we need to be organised. We need our members involved. That means officials getting onto stations, talking to members and helping them to organise. We need a rep in each branch.

2 We need to make our case. We may not win every fight, but if we don't shout from the rooftops we will surely fail. There is no shame in not winning, but there is in not trying to win.

3 We need the research to challenge their arguments. We have produced that on fatalities, on floods, on attendance times. We have



produced materials on the cuts. We will produce more.

4 We will need to talk to people in our communities. We know they will not support the slashing of their fire service.

5 We will need to talk far more to politicians of all parties about what is going on. We need to do that regularly at every level. Councillors should all know our brigade officials and be regularly briefed on our concerns.

6 We will need more events like the Westminster lobby and the West Yorkshire demonstration. If MPs and councillors want to slash our service to pieces, we need to be in their faces every step of the way putting forward our arguments.

7 We need to be part of a wider movement against the cuts and austerity. That means identifying local campaigns and supporting them. Supporting other workers on strike and building a much broader movement against this government.

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Labour Party leader Ed Miliband meets FBU officials (l-r) Kevin Brown, Ricky Matthews, Steve Shelton and Pete Smith at the union's stand at the party conference

Denise Christie nominated for Woman of the Year

The Fire Brigades Union is delighted to report that our comrade and sister Denise Christie has been nominated for Woman of the Year, in recognition for her work as an FBU official and activist.

Denise was nominated for the award by Frances O'Grady, the first woman general secretary of the TUC.

Although Denise (right) was put forward as an individual, she accepted the nomination on behalf of the FBU's national women's committee for the work it has done



supporting women and campaigning against the many inequalities women face in the workplace and in wider society.

Denise has been a firefighter with Lothian and Borders fire and rescue service for 16 years and an activist since joining.

Until the recent FBU special conference, she held the post of executive council member for women, representing the national women's committee.

Denise served as an elected member of the STUC women's committee and the TUC women's committee where she was highly regarded for her campaigning to progress women's equality.

Although there have been women operational firefighters in the UK for over 30 years, they are still less than 5% of the workforce. With recruitment freezes and cuts this figure is unlikely to rise, so there is still plenty of work to be done.

Activists like Denise have campaigned on all our key issues including pay, cuts and pensions alongside making the service more family-friendly and inhabitable for all firefighters.

Kerry Baigent
National women's committee secretary

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PHOTO: STEFANO CAGNONI

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FBU members gather in Westminster

Voice of the professionals

Lobby

Firefighters made a big impact at Westminster this month with a successful lobby of MPs over fire service cuts and firefighter pensions.

Some 400 Fire Brigades Union members and officials descended on the Westminster parliament for a rally, followed by meetings with MPs. The whole event had been spiced up by FBU advertisements on 5 November, bluntly warning the public that government cuts cost lives and that if budgets are slashed, people would suffer.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, said: "I make no apology for the need to be hard hitting because these cuts will put safety at risk. We make no apologies for giving that warning."

He argued that reductions in fires and fire deaths in recent years were the result

of the active prevention work by fire-fighters – and that these improvements would be jeopardised by cuts. He warned that cutting firefighter jobs and closing fire stations would slow response times further and put lives and property at greater risk.

Wrack said the FBU had been right about all the key issues in the fire and rescue service in recent years. "The only organisation which has consistently highlighted these issues and warned of the risks is the Fire Brigades Union."

"On FiReControl we were right. On AssetCo we were right. On the excessive pay of chief officers we were right. We were right because we are the voice of the professionals. We are the voice of the experts delivering this service every single day of the year."

The lobby also heard from MPs Kate Hoey and John McDonnell, who urged firefighters to speak to MPs at their

constituency surgeries and make the case for investment, not cuts, in the fire and rescue service.

Dave Williams from West Yorkshire explained what the FBU is doing in his brigade to oppose the cuts.

Mark Serwotka, PCS civil service union general secretary, urged firefighters to oppose cuts in all areas, from the fire service to the NHS, on welfare and in education. He said: "If we don't turn the tide, working people will suffer for generations. We have to fight, fight and fight again. If we don't fight, then we will lose."

After the rousing speeches, FBU members swamped the central lobby inside the Palace of Westminster to buttonhole MPs. Many MPs from all parties certainly heard the voice of the professionals and all went away with much to think about. The campaign to save our fire and rescue service has begun.

Part of the
memorial at
Liverpool's
Anfield stadium
to those
who died at
Hillsborough



www.fbu.org



FBU members march through Leeds

FBU launches 'life or death' campaign

West Yorkshire

Firefighters marched through Leeds earlier this month as they campaigned to defend the fire and rescue service.

West Yorkshire fire and rescue service plans to close 11 fire stations and cut 225 frontline firefighters if the government carries out its plans to slash its central government grant.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack told the demonstrators: "They say austerity is necessary because of the economic crisis. We did not cause that crisis. The bankers did, and your taxes were used to bail them out."

The FBU was ready to stand and fight to defend the fire service, he said. Around 250 FBU members were led through Leeds by four firefighters carrying a symbolic coffin.

Representatives from East and West

Midlands, North and South Yorkshire, Essex, the North East and Devon and Cornwall marched in solidarity. Members of the public applauded the firefighters.

West Yorkshire FBU secretary David Williams said the number of non-frontline staff paid more than £50,000 a year had doubled from 25 to 50 with a salary bill of £2.5m, while recruitment of firefighters had been frozen.

Ian Murray, FBU Yorkshire region executive council member, said job cuts and fire station closures would leave a "disastrous hole" in fire cover. "These proposed cuts will cost lives, you can't close dozens of fire stations and make those left cover areas twice the size. Response times will slow for the communities we serve and when seconds count, it's the difference between life and death," he said.

'The biggest threat since the Luftwaffe'

London

The Fire Brigades Union has expressed grave concern over London Fire Brigade plans to close 17 fire stations and slash 600 jobs.

They looked set to be discussed by London's fire authority on 22 November after the brigade was told by London mayor Boris Johnson to save £65m over two years.

Paul Embery, FBU regional secretary for London, said: "These proposals present the biggest threat to the brigade since the days of the Luftwaffe."

"The stations under threat of closure have protected local residents from bombs, fire and terrorism for generations, yet Boris Johnson is about to hammer a 'For Sale' sign

on to their front doors.

"Chief fire officers are beginning to warn publicly of the danger of catastrophic cuts.

"So far, the commissioner of the London Fire Brigade, Ron Dobson, has remained silent. Surely now it is time for him to speak up.

"LFB leaders must do the right thing and tell the politicians these cuts are wrong and dangerous."

SOUNDING OFF

FBU assistant general secretary Andy Dark sets the record straight on the role of firefighters at Hillsborough

As the media covered the report of the Hillsborough Independent Panel into the tragedy at the Sheffield Wednesday football ground on 15 April 1989, few could feel anything other than a sense of relief that the truth had been revealed, while recoiling at the memory of the event itself.

As the coverage continued, it became apparent that some commentators could not help but use the opportunity to cloud the name of all the "emergency services" beyond the police officers, whose evidence had obscured the truth for so long.

Even the Prime Minister joined in when making his statement to MPs.

But close scrutiny of the report reveals that firefighters do not deserve criticism for the events that day.

The independent panel endorsed the earlier Taylor Inquiry, which said "no valid criticism" could be directed towards South Yorkshire Fire Service.

Prompt response

The emergency services had "responded promptly when alerted", bringing "appropriate equipment" and made an efficient personal intervention.

Vehicles outside the gymnasium had hindered the ambulance operation.

The panel gave many examples of correct, safety-conscious activities and reports made by the South Yorkshire Fire Service fire safety officers during the design phase of the security arrangements at the ground – too few of which were heeded by the club, the police or the city council.

If you have got 10 minutes to spare, open up the report on your computer and put the word "fire" into the "Find" box and the full picture will be revealed.

It will show that the fire service in South Yorkshire did a good job – in the days when fire services were properly funded and had fire safety departments, which were adequately funded and staffed.

Mourners from across country attend funeral

Alan Soards

Brother Alan Soards, an FBU member from Lowestoft South fire station and a member of Suffolk fire and rescue service's maritime incident response group, died last month while engaged in water rescue training.

He was taken suddenly ill during training at the Lee Valley White Water Centre in Hertfordshire. He died despite the efforts of colleagues and paramedics on the scene to revive him. Alan was aged 38.

There was a good attendance of firefighters from across the country at his funeral, reflecting the close-knit nature of the profession. Alan's coffin was carried from Lowestoft South fire station on a restored turntable ladder fire engine, as is the tradition.

A piper led pallbearers into the church through a guard of honour of firefighters from Suffolk and across the country.



FBU Suffolk brigade chair Andy Vingoe said: "I hope that Alan's family and friends will have received some comfort from the funeral and that the support of the community will help at this difficult time."

The tragic events are being jointly investigated by SFRS managers and local FBU officials.

'Widely respected and greatly missed'

Paul Witt

Brother Paul Witt, an FBU member from Cambridgeshire fire and rescue service, died last month while driving on fire service business.

He died while on duty following a road traffic collision in Brentwood in Essex on 4 October. He was aged 59. It is thought that he had been taken ill shortly before the collision. No one else was injured.

More than 100 past and present firefighters joined family and friends at Paul's funeral to pay tribute to his life.

A fire engine from Cambridge fire station crewed by retired firefighters followed the hearse from his home village of Burwell. The retired firefighters worked alongside Paul when he was a control operator at Parkside fire station.

They were met at the chapel by a guard of honour and a standard bearer carrying a Cambridgeshire fire and rescue service flag.



Paul leaves a wife, Alison, and two adult children.

Cambridgeshire FBU brigade chair Clive Griffin said: "I would like to express our condolences to Paul's family, friends and colleagues. Paul was widely respected and will be greatly missed."

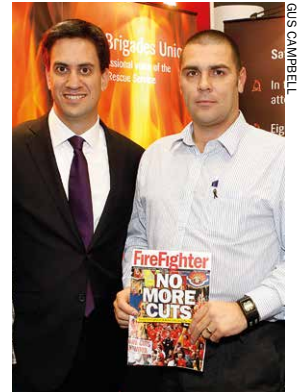
IN BRIEF

FBU lobbies Labour Party

FBU officials made a big impact at the Labour Party conference last month, with delegates eager to engage with the union.

Officials reported brisk business at the stand and more than 800 FBU information packs were distributed to delegates. Senior figures from the Labour Party, including leader Ed Miliband, visited during the week and several lively discussions took place.

FBU national officer Dave Green said: "We need investment in our fire service and we must use every opportunity to get this message across."



Ed Miliband with FBU official Ricky Matthews at Labour party conference

Cuts and private firm in Surrey

Surrey fire engines could soon be off the road because of acute crew shortages caused by lack of investment by the county council, the FBU has warned.

Surrey brigade secretary Richard Jones said: "We need to see investment in crew levels now. We need the recruitment freeze lifted and the numerous vacancies filled."

The FBU's warning came as the council's cabinet gave the go-ahead for a pilot to link up with the private search and rescue company Specialist Group International.

"If the money can be found to fund this pilot scheme with the private sector, why can't it be found to fund fully crewed fire appliances throughout the county?" Jones asked.

Essex fire dispute ends

The long-running industrial dispute in Essex fire and rescue service has been brought to an end following months of detailed negotiations.

Firefighters voted by two to one to accept the settlement terms negotiated and recommended by FBU officials.

Keith Handscomb, FBU executive council member, said: "This has been both a very bitter and the longest-running dispute in fire service history. Negotiators from both sides deserve credit for overcoming deeply held differences to negotiate the compromise terms needed to settle the dispute and to lay the foundations for rebuilding industrial relations."



Celebrating another successful B&EMM school

Thought-provoking education for liberation

B&EMM school

The fifteenth annual FBU black and ethnic minority members (B&EMM) school took place in October at Wortley Hall in South Yorkshire. Some 45 students were confirmed for the school, which also had general secretary Matt Wrack and vice-president Jim Barbour in attendance.

Workshops were organised around the theme of "Organising B&EMM in the FBU". Matt Wrack gave his overview on future B&EMM organisation in the union and took part in a lively session, which had many questions and comments about the recent reorganisation decisions made at June's FBU special conference.

The film *Salute* was shown. It details the iconic civil rights protest at the 1968 Mexico Olympics, the political aftermath and the role of the

white athlete Peter Norman, who fully supported the protest.

The film is available to buy and is a must-see for all who have an interest in political history.

Dr Brian Kelly of Queen's University, Belfast spoke on the emancipation of American slaves and their impact on United States political and trade union history.

What Dr Kelly presented was both educational and thought-provoking – especially when compared to black history in the UK.

Special thanks are due to Michelle Marshall who was our lead tutor and ROOT member Simon Green who organised all the school filming and photographs which will be on the FBU website shortly.

It was another successful B&EMM School and we hope to see more new faces next year.

Michael Nicholas
B&EMM national secretary

Support for officers leading professionals

ONC seminar

The FBU's officers' national committee (ONC) and officer members met in October for the committee's annual seminar at Wortley Hall.

After meeting friends old and new participants took part in the main session led by Trevor Cave. It worked on discipline and grievance procedures, both in large-group discussions and in smaller workshops. An increasing part of officers' jobs is, sadly, to deal with discipline cases.

Two case studies reminded the meeting that everything is not always as it seems

The workshop most certainly provided every one of us with food for thought.

Group discussions continued into the evening.

Guest speaker Damien Coll, a forensic road traffic collision investigator from Northern Ireland, gave a fascinating presentation about his work.

The highlight was two case studies that reminded the meeting that everything is not always as it seems. It was an excellent session with some great learning points for all to take away.

The seminar closed with a group discussion and a farewell to all, especially to the ONC's executive council member Jack Ford who retires early next year. It was an excellent couple of days, providing our officers with support and education for as we say, "Officers leading professionals".

Marti Pottinger
ONC chair



Energy Bill REVOLUTION

Energy price increases call for a revolution

British Gas announced last month that it would increase its prices for electricity and gas by 6% and other major energy suppliers have also raised prices.

The increases come at a time when there are already six million households (1 in 4) in fuel poverty across the UK. This means they spend more than 10% of their

income on energy. The problem is likely to get worse.

The main reasons are that gas, oil and coal prices are high and the UK's homes are some of the most energy inefficient in Europe. Homes that leak heat from their doors, walls and windows cost much more than they should to heat and they also

contribute to climate change.

The Energy Bill Revolution Alliance is calling for carbon tax to be recycled back to households to make their homes super energy efficient. This is the only permanent way to drive down household energy bills and end fuel poverty. It could also reduce carbon emissions and create up

VIEW
FROM THE
AERIAL LADDER
PLATFORM

A 100-year-old woman, who lives at home on her own, deals with fuel poverty

PAUL BOX/
REPORTDIGITAL.CO.UK

to 200,000 jobs.

Ed Matthew, campaign director of Energy Bill Revolution, said: "These price increases will plunge many more homes into fuel poverty.

"That means more financial hardship, more hospital admissions and more suffering for children and the elderly. The

government's energy efficiency policies are badly under-funded and must be supported by major public investment if they are to have any chance of success.

"The government must support the Energy Bill Revolution to use the billions it will raise in carbon revenue to super-insulate all the homes of the fuel poor.

It is the only permanent solution to end the suffering."

➤ The Energy Bill Revolution campaign is now supported by over 100 major national organisations across the UK, including the FBU. To find out more about the campaign, visit www.energybillrevolution.org



NO CUTS

68 is too late

COALITION RESISTANCE

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

COALITION RESISTANCE

FOUNDED

LONDON

REGION

NO CUTS

NO CUTS

STANDARD CLASS

Socialist Worker
GET THE BODIES



**Firefighter spoke to
some FBU members
who demonstrated
on 20 October**

Marching for our future

On a crisp autumn day in London, firefighters were out in force, banners and heads held high, some flanked by family members, in a show of strength against the government's austerity cuts, joining the chorus of voices calling for more investment in vital public services to build a better future.

Led by a rousing pipe band from Humberside, the Fire Brigades Union contingent marched with tens of thousands of trade union colleagues in the TUC's march for A Future That Works on 20 October. From Embankment, past Parliament, down Piccadilly and onwards to Hyde Park, balloons, banners, placards and whistles brought a carnival atmosphere to the streets, proving protest doesn't have to be po-faced.

The march – scantily covered by the news media – showed public protest alive and flourishing as the ConDems' austerity drive continues to squeeze household budgets and inflict deep cuts on vital public services. In Glasgow

and Belfast, trade unionists were also turning out to protest against austerity and argue that there is an alternative.

The FBU knows all about the devastating impact cuts can have – and has been in the frontline when calling for the government to stop the cutbacks. Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary, spelt out the scale of cuts so far in the fire and rescue service at the Hyde Park rally.

"We've seen 1,500 jobs cut over the past year and hundreds more planned. We've learned 17 fire stations and 600 jobs are under threat here in the capital city. It's the same story across the country. These cuts will mean it will take longer for firefighters to get to emergencies. This will increase the risk to life, to homes and to workplaces. So please join us in our campaigns to defend our service. Likewise, we will support the wider campaigns to defend all public services. We don't accept the need for these cuts.

"Austerity is about shifting resources from the majority to the minority at the top. It's about robbing us to protect the billionaires and big business. Let us remember, the banks sparked the crisis – not us. Our taxes bailed them out. So we paid once. We are now being asked to pay again by suffering falling wages,

*Firefighters from all over the country
joined the TUC demonstration*

PICTURES: STEFANO CAGNONI



cuts to our services and the destruction of our pensions. Instead of us bailing out the banks to restore and protect their profits; we should take over the banks and run them as a public service."

When it comes to speaking out against cuts to the fire and rescue service, it is not just union officials who see the need. Clued up and engaged FBU rank and file firefighters are making the case for a properly funded fire service to keep communities safe.

Jamie Chalk, a wholtime blue watch firefighter at King's Lynn fire station, travelled to London with FBU colleagues from Norfolk. "We've lost a fire engine and a firefighter per watch at King's Lynn. It's important for us to join this march as firefighters and union members to show the strength of feeling against cuts and the impact they are having.

"The public only find out about cuts to the service when something goes wrong. We need to raise the argument and that's what we are doing. Everyone's struggling at the moment – particularly public sector workers." Jamie has recently had to take a retained job to make ends meet.

New situation

Ben Sprung, FBU London regional organiser, who has been campaigning against the threat to London fire stations, was out among the marchers hearing what they had to say, and capturing it on film.

"The message we were getting from a lot of members from around the country is that there is an alternative to the cuts. They are not inevitable. We have a chance to shape our own history by not accepting the government's line that there is no alternative. Firefighters are getting out there and telling the public just what's at stake."

Kerry Baigent, secretary of the FBU's national women's committee, said: "Clearly everybody's feeling the pinch. Many of our members are struggling to make ends meet and are nervous about their jobs. I wanted to be in London to support a campaign for a different sort of future for the country – a future that works. It's good to see so many women attending the march as we are so few on the ground."

Mandy Buchanan came down from Tyne and Wear to speak out against the cuts and for jobs and investment. As a member of control staff, she was under the threat of wide-scale job losses posed by the now scrapped plans to replace local control centres with regional control centres, each covering a vast swathe of the country. While that immediate threat of a jobs cull in





Firefighters joined thousands of trade unionists on 20 October



control has gone now the botched plan for regional control centres has been torn up, there is still uncertainty: 45 firefighters' jobs have already gone.

Richard Stevens, North Yorkshire FBU brigade secretary, down for the march with colleagues, warned the threat of redundancies among control members remains high. Additionally, the threatened closure of Snainton, a retained station, highlights the risk of lengthening response times. A decision is due in mid-December.

"If the station goes it will hit attendance times," said Richard. "It's a rural area. At the moment attendance times are five to ten minutes for local homes. This could stretch to 20 minutes if the closure goes ahead.

"We need to campaign with the public, presenting a united front to oppose cuts to the service. This march shows the strength of opposition to cuts and austerity".

There was a strong presence on the march from FBU members from the South West – from stations in Avon, Dorset, Cornwall and Somerset and Devon, where the ConDems are in power.

The FBU has been battling against privatisation plans in Devon and Somerset as well as a Wiltshire Fire Authority drive to get firefighters to live and work on fire stations.

Tam McFarlane, executive council member for the region, said: "Firefighters are having their pensions slashed at the same time as we are seeing tax cuts for the rich. We are here as firefighters marching for a society based on

justice and fairness for all, as opposed to this government which is serving only multimillionaires at the expense of ordinary working people."

New situation

Daniel Giblin joined Euston blue watch 12 months ago from Birkenhead, where his long-term partner, an NHS worker, still lives.

"I love the job but what with the worry over station closures, job cuts, the future of pensions and pay, people are really feeling the pressure – me included," he said. "My partner can't find work down here, so there's a lot of travelling up and down to Merseyside. It's good to see people getting out here marching."

Godfrey Shaw, a red watch firefighter at Grays station in Essex, was marching with colleagues from the county. "The austerity cuts are not working," he said. "We all know that. It just seems those in power at the moment don't know it.

"Ordinary working class people are feeling austerity. The bills are going up, but there have been no pay increases for public sector workers. Instead of investment there are massive cuts to the service.

"We know as frontline firefighters that cuts can lead to slower response times when every second can count."

In the coming months, this is a message many more firefighters will be getting out to people in the communities they serve.

Matt Wrack's speech and Ben Sprung's film are available on the FBU website: www.fbu.org.uk

Youth speak out

DAISY HANDSCOMB, AGE 14

"I went on the march because I felt it important to not only support my dad (FBU executive council member Keith Handscomb) and other unions, but to make the government realise that we 'young 'uns' care about the future – such as what awaits me after university, if money allows me to get that far?

"I do not trust the coalition government in any way, shape or form with my future; in my eyes they are far too ignorant in the ways of the 'common man' (I use the term loosely) – they went to Eton (I know no-one who even thinks about going there) and move in the same circles as the Murdochs. While some may say I am naive about the politics of our country (I profoundly disagree), I know enough to see that the plans put in place by the Conservative-led government will lead to rack and ruin for all

(except the fat cats).

"I understand that taking to the streets in peaceful protest is one way we can make the government see how we are struggling, and how wrong austerity is.

"I think that the only way we, the next generation, can ensure that our future is safe, is to make them see that we care. After all, it is us who will make up the next government – we all need to see what they are doing is wrong. There is no future in austerity. We must all strive for a Future That Works."

RESPONSE TI

New figures mask continued slowdown and

The public rightly expects fire-fighters to respond rapidly to any emergency, because our intervention saves lives, prevents injuries and protects property. For the FBU and most members of the public, response times are a vital measure of the quality of service firefighters provide.

It has been very difficult in recent years to find out how quickly the fire and rescue service as a whole is responding to incidents. After removing national standards of fire cover, the Westminster government dismissed response times as unimportant and was coy about reporting the slowdown in response times. The FBU has had to rely on sympathetic MPs who ask questions in parliament to get the data.

Make that difference

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack said: "Firefighters will not accept the argument that response times are irrelevant. Built into a firefighter's DNA is the desire to intervene swiftly – to make that difference as to whether someone lives or dies, whether they are temporarily overcome with smoke or maimed for

life, or whether someone loses their home and their prized possessions."

Earlier this year the fire minister promised that response times data would be published. The Department for Communities and Local Government (CLG) has now published a report, *Fire Incidents Response Times 2011-12*, although its figures only cover England.

The CLG report provides a great deal of information, although it does not get to the heart of why response times are so important.

The report shows that average response times in England slowed over the past decade from 6.1 minutes in 2001-02 to a peak of

7.4 minutes in 2010-11. Last year's figure was 7.2 minutes, a slight improvement, but still a long way from the norm when there were national standards.

Previously CLG has attributed the slowing of response times to increased traffic levels. However this report reveals that traffic levels peaked in 2007, so other factors are important.

Staff shortages

The FBU believes that the effects of cuts are a central reason for the slowdown in response times. Fewer firefighters, fewer fire stations and fewer appliances have led to a worsening of the speed of emergency intervention. Another cause is the increasing number of occasions when a shortage of staff has meant that appliances and crews are taken off the run for training and to deliver community fire safety.

Sadly, the CLG report does not consider the impact of cuts. Instead it blames control staff for longer call handling times and policies on "drive to arrive" and PPE changing for worsening response times.

There are also possible accounting

The FBU believes cuts are a central reason for the slowdown

A fire doubles in size every minute. The fire service is being reduced in size every year – adding minutes to our response times.



MES MATTER

the stark reality of threats to life and limb

differences, which make comparisons with older figures difficult. The new figures are calculated from the electronic reporting system and are given weights, unlike the old paper system. Some incidents such as late calls, heat smoke damage only incidents, responses over an hour and other cases, which account for a quarter of incidents, are excluded.

Behind the figures, other issues lurk. Response times are defined as the time from the call to the arrival of the first appliance. It is not clear whether some fire and rescue services are reporting the use of targeted response vehicles (TRVs) and other smaller vehicles, which might arrive swiftly but cannot deal with bigger incidents.

Wide variations

The figures do not record the arrival of second or other appliances and therefore do not indicate whether sufficient resources are available for bigger fires. The single average figure also masks wide variations in response times.

Breaking down the figures further, just five years ago firefighters were able to reach one in three incidents

22% take 10 minutes for an appliance to arrive — up from 16%

in five minutes or less. In 2011-12, only one in six incidents were reached in less than five minutes. At the other end of the scale, the latest figures show that 22% of incidents take 10 minutes or longer before an appliance arrives, up from 16%. This slowdown has occurred despite far fewer incidents than five years ago.

Planned cuts will have a massive impact on response times. Even chief officers are warning that thousands of firefighter jobs are under threat and more than 50 fire stations could be closed. With fewer firefighters, fewer appliances and fewer fire stations, the quality of service is likely to worsen. With

slower response times, more people, property and workplaces will be put at risk.

That is why the FBU is asking its members to campaign against the cuts. The union wants members to explain to politicians and the public why response times matter. FBU officials are coordinating efforts locally and nationally to save our fire service.

Cuts will kill

Matt Wrack said: "The stark reality is that these cuts will kill people. Firefighters want to work in the fire service, not a funeral service. Response times matter because people and lives matter. The FBU is determined to defend our service and the central role of emergency response within it."

More information

■ *The FBU's report, It's about time, explains the importance of response times. It can be downloaded from the FBU website:*

<http://tinyurl.com/c8tr97h>

■ *CLG, Fire Incidents Response Times, England, 2011-12*

<http://tinyurl.com/c7vtox6>



CREEPING PRIVATISATION OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

Radical plans to transform firefighting in Cleveland are a warning for us all

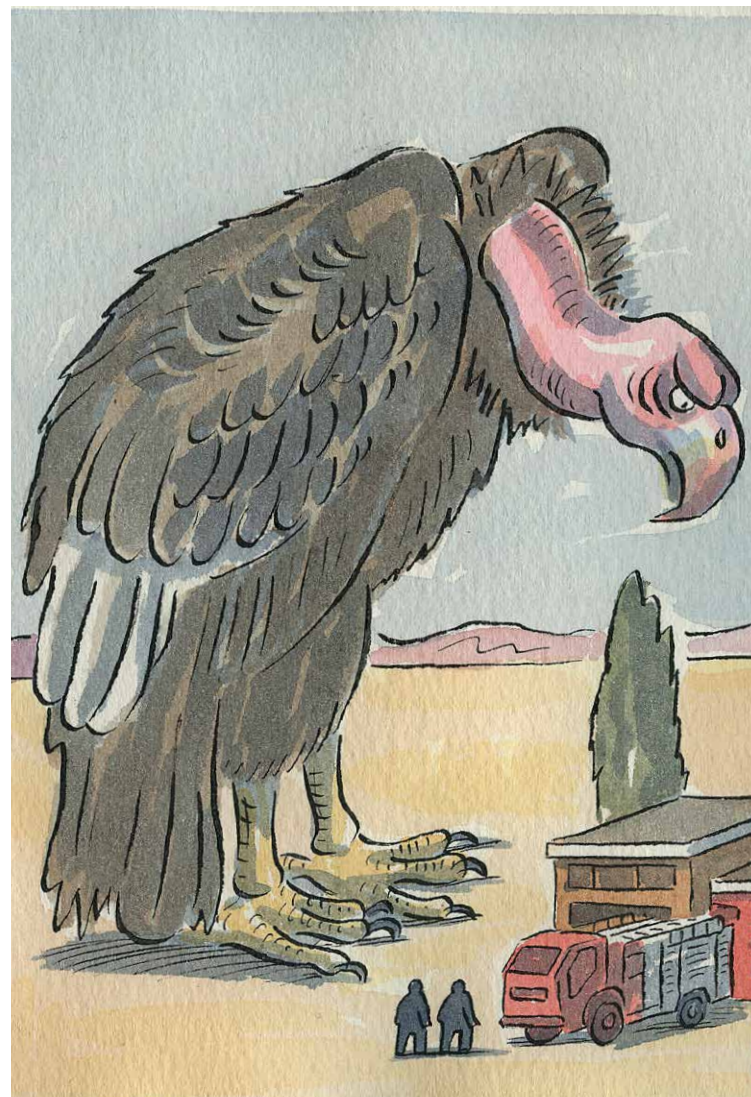
Moves to privatise the fire and rescue service have lurched forward, with plans in Cleveland to turn the whole brigade into a “social enterprise”. The Fire Brigades Union is warning that this is a first step towards implementing the Tory-led government’s plans to sell off our fire and rescue service to profit-seeking vultures.

FBU Cleveland brigade secretary Dave Howe said: “Despite management claims, there is no desire amongst firefighters and emergency control staff in Cleveland to adopt such a business model. Indeed staff are extremely concerned it would not only lead to worse terms and conditions for themselves but, more importantly, it could prove to be the stepping stone towards the eventual privatisation of a publicly owned, publicly governed essential emergency service.”

Escalation

Chief fire officer Ian Hayton wrote to Cleveland firefighters last month about his plans to turn Cleveland fire and rescue service into an “employee-owned social enterprise”, a form of mutual organisation like the retailer John Lewis. Such a move would take Cleveland out of the current arrangements for every other fire and rescue service in the UK and effectively outside the public sector.

The CFO’s briefing states that, in a social enterprise, the “business” is “owned by its employees, which trades for a profit, then reinvests that profit to increase social value and public safety”.



Hayton tells Cleveland firefighters he is looking at “every option” because “funding has been cut and continues to decrease”. However, turning the brigade into a “social enterprise” would not solve this problem – never mind protect firefighters and the public.

What is a social enterprise?

Becoming a social enterprise on its own does not bring in more money. But it does make firefighters’ jobs less secure, worsens our conditions and opens the service up to privatisation.

The social enterprise may transfer all employees from the current fire and rescue service on existing pay and conditions – but the government is seeking to change these rules.

Once outside the current arrangements, the business can vary those conditions – including pay, hours and pensions. In other social enterprises spun out of the public sector, this usually starts with worsening the conditions of new recruits and later hits all others. Either way, it would break with the national Grey Book pay and conditions applying to all UK firefighters.

Gambling with your future

At present it is not possible for social enterprises to operate in the fire and rescue service – but the government is promising to change the law.

If Cleveland firefighters become a social enterprise, the

business would have to secure a contract to provide fire services from Cleveland Fire Authority. This means it would have to follow public procurement rules.

These rules involve tendering and fixed-term contracts, so the social enterprise might not get the job at all. Even if it did, the contract may be for five years or less. It might go bust part-way through the contract.

After the first contract other firms, including vultures from the private sector, could outbid the social enterprise and move in. There are no guarantees the social enterprise would survive.

The social enterprise might be bought by a private firm. It would have to follow certain rules shortly after the takeover but, in the long run, could drastically worsen conditions.

Profit from the workers

It is well known in economics that profits come from making workers work longer and harder for less. If the social enterprise makes a profit, it will do so off the backs of its workforce.

At no point has Cleveland Fire Authority asked firefighters whether they want this new arrangement. It has not discussed the matter properly with the FBU. It is a top-down, management-driven pet project that will not improve the fire and rescue service in Cleveland.

Why now

Hayton has so far set up a “Community-Interest-Company” (CIC) as an arm of the existing fire and rescue service to secure outside contracts. Now he plans for the whole fire and rescue service to become a social enterprise.

In September, Cleveland received £95,000 from the government’s Mutual Support Programme. Minister for the Cabinet Office Francis Maude said: “If a fire brigade can spin itself out as a mutual business, it shows there are few no-go areas of public service where this innovative approach to delivery cannot reach.”

The message is clear. This is the government’s model for fragmenting the fire and rescue service, ready for venture capital and profiteering vultures to move in.

Lessons

The fire and rescue service has already seen the results of private sector practices. The AssetCo experience is a warning for what they have in mind.

Dave Howe said: “We’ve already witnessed what happens when the private sector gets involved in the UK fire and rescue service. In London, AssetCo were responsible for the whole operational fleet of fire and rescue service vehicles and they were in the courtroom more than the boardroom trying to stave off bankruptcy.

“The same company had a contract cancelled in Lincolnshire because it couldn’t deliver what it was meant to.

“I can’t understand why any fire authority would consider a business model which might place them in a similar position in years to come.”

Even if a social enterprise did win, the contract might be for only five years or less



It would make a cracking movie

Brighton firefighter Steve Liszka has written a novel, *This Machine Kills*

This Machine Kills

Brighton firefighter Steve Liszka, a green watch crew member at Preston Circus, has written a deeply political novel. But don't let that put you off; *This Machine Kills* is also a gripping action-packed page-turner.

It's set in the "all too near future" and kicks off with a band of trigger-happy private security guards patrolling the badlands in an armoured truck. They police hungry feral gangs scavenging for food. A sinister Big Corporation bankrolls it all. There are bloody clashes.

Camaraderie and banter

You couldn't get further from life on green watch at Preston Circus, surely? Well, yes and no. Both firefighters hard-wired to save lives and mercenaries tasked with keeping the poor away from the rich must bond as teams to get the job done. Steve captures the camaraderie, the leg-pulling and the banter that results – though the violence, and the swearing, is, of course,

pure fiction.

"I love the wholetime watch system," says Steve, FBU branch chair. "You build up really good relationships, there's a lot of trust, a lot of camaraderie which you really need when working in tense situations. Working on the watch helped me write the book."

That, and generally being alert to what's going on. Like noticing that reality TV is getting crueller and that all those designer label tops and trainers and electronic gizmos are maybe distracting people from protesting.

Steve runs workout sessions on Brighton beach when not firefighting, writing, boxing or playing rugby. He became more actively involved in the FBU four years ago when Preston Circus station was under threat. "They wanted to sell it off. We were up in arms. Our station is the



perfect location for fighting fires in Brighton." It was also a prime slab of city-centre real estate with lucrative development potential. The council planned to flog it, cash in and build another station on a less pricey site.

Steve was elected branch chair, the FBU fought a vigorous campaign, won over local people through the media and the council backed off. The campaign whetted Steve's appetite for union activism – he was on the TUC march for A Future That Works – and he keeps a keen eye on how the austerity measures are panning out.

Sports science

While studying sports science, he read his way through classic futuristic novels, including Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and George Orwell's *1984*. He is also a huge fan of Robert Tressell's *The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists* – "every kid should read it" – and John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath*, set in the 1930s depression in the USA.



Steve Liszka (front, right) with fellow FBU rep Chris Scholes and the campaigning firefighters who saved Preston Circus station

STEVE LISZKA

Brighton Preston Circus FBU branch secretary, workout trainer, rugby player and novelist, Steve Liszka's first novel is set in a frightening future that looks more and more prophetic

Steve is a fan of Woody Guthrie, the folk singer who chronicled the depression and inspired the young Bob Dylan. This *Machine Kills* Fascists was the famous sticker on his guitar.

He finished his book three years ago. That was before the riots, before the ConDem government and before the savage austerity cuts. "It's weird to see how milder forms of what I wrote about have come about since. And blaming the poor for the mess we're in and penalising them has really taken off since the election."

There's a scene in the book where youths engage in pointless looting – stealing TV sets when electricity supplies have run out. Footage of people mindlessly loading up with stolen TVs, laptops and designer goods in the UK riots can't help but spring to mind.

In *This Machine Kills*, prison fights are screened to amuse the masses – and damp down the urge to protest. In the real world, reality TV has got crueler and people don't trust politicians.

Recent reports of Chinese workers making iPhone parts for Apple rioting over working conditions chime with the lot of downtrodden production workers slaving away to meet consumer demand in *This Machine Kills*.

In the dark

In the book, the prosperous live in Hope City, a gated community where the key civic duty is to carry on consuming. The crumbling Old Town is the badlands the security team patrol.

As the action starts, a 50-foot-high concrete wall is to be built around the city's perimeter. Readers can judge for themselves how the real world is shaping up.

Nobody on the station knew Steve was writing a novel. His parents were also kept in the dark – but Steve's wife Ange, a teacher, provided vital proofreading.

Steve bought a copy into the station once the book was published – some colleagues have already read it and given

feedback on plot twists and characters. Steve took the self-publishing ebook/print on demand route which is rapidly reshaping publishing.

"There was a bit of interest from publishers, but it faded. So I thought: 'Publish and be damned!' It was quite cheap and easy," says Steve, who has just finished a novella involving superheroes, wrestling and big business.

The main character in *This Machine Kills* is Taylor, a man with a troubled past. According to an admiring five-star review on Amazon: "Liszka has cleverly blended the brutal warrior characteristics of a private military contractor, part-time mixed martial arts fighter with a conscience into a world full of the worst examples of human idealism and suffering."

The buzz is starting to build. And it would make a cracking movie.

➤ To learn more or order *This Machine Kills* as an ebook or paperback: www.thismachinekills.co.uk

Prize quiz



PLUS, we are giving away three copies of the limited edition (only 500 copies printed) 2013 Fire and Rescue Calendar. Send emails with name, address and membership number by 14 December to firefighter@fbu.org.uk. The first three out of the hat get the calendars.

Win £150 of John Lewis vouchers

To win £150 of John Lewis vouchers please send your answers by 14 December 2012 on a postcard to: Prize Competition (Nov/Dec 2012) FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE. Please include your name, address and membership number. The winner will be selected at random from all correct entries.

1 'Sons of the desert' is whose appreciation society?

- A Laurel and Hardy
- B Reeves and Mortimer
- C Morecambe and Wise
- D Bob Hope and Bing Crosby



PA PHOTOS

2 There are almost 600,000 what in the Antarctic?

- A Polar bears
- B Seals
- C Emperor penguins
- D Whales

4 Which ship picked up all 710 Titanic survivors?

- A RMS Mauretania
- B HMS Dreadnought
- C RMS Aquitania
- D RMS Carpathia

3 Irvine Welsh's Skagboys is the prequel to which of his novels?

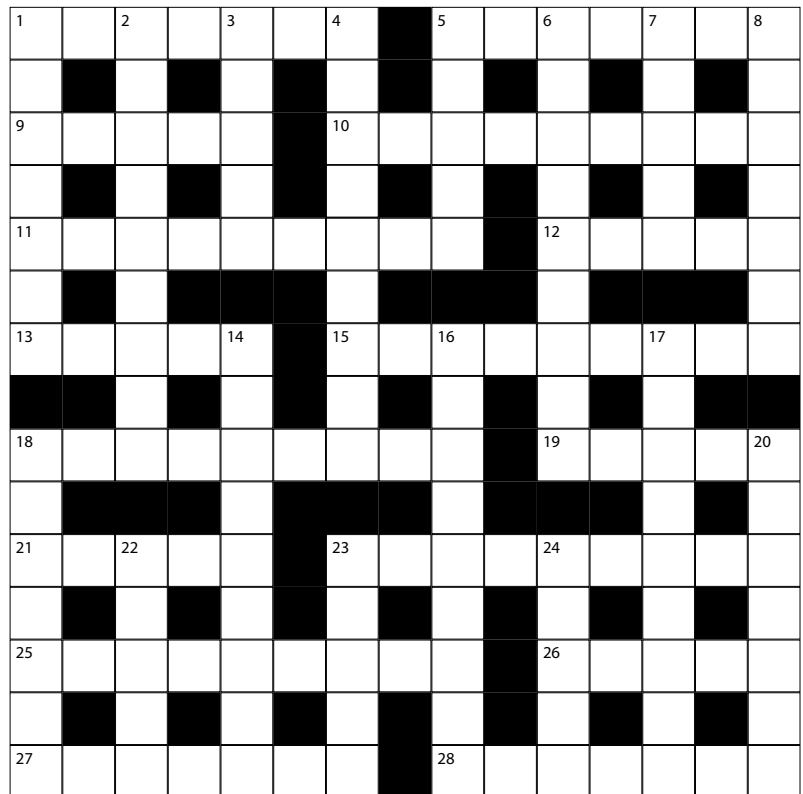
- A Trainspotting
- B Ecstasy
- C The Acid House
- D Glue

5 Jane Tennison, in the TV police drama Prime Suspect, was inspired by which real life character?

- A Lynda La Plante
- B DCI Jackie Malton
- C Helen Mirren
- D Cressida Dick



DPA/P A IMAGES



CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 1** Valved outlet for fluid - especially 5d (7)
- 5** Argue the toss (7)
- 9** South African antelope (5)
- 10** Prescribed heroin substitute (9)
- 11** One on the move (9)
- 12** Malevolent spirit (5)
- 13** It's measured in decibels (5)
- 15** John, FBU's parliamentary group secretary (9)
- 18** Blow for blow, 'equivalent retaliation' (3,3,3)
- 19** Dessicated, dehydrated (5)
- 21** Abbreviated name of heavy, horned ungulate mammal (5)
- 23** Aware; awake (9)
- 25** Attacker (9)
- 26** Supple, lithe, nimble (5)
- 27** Without pause (3-4)
- 28** Small curl of hair (7)

DOWN

- 1** Devon town once famed for lace (7)
- 2** Playwright (9)
- 3** Astonish (5)
- 4** Pass this and you're too late (4-5)
- 5** Essential bit of kit - drawn from 1 across (5)
- 6** Left to fend for oneself (9)
- 7** Low level of light or mood (5)
- 8** Everlasting (7)
- 14** One who studies or champions the environment (9)
- 16** Widget that sets off explosive (9)
- 17** Leader column (9)
- 18** Lie of the land: type of ground (7)
- 20** Pudding (7)
- 22** Norwegian 2 (5)
- 23** Muscle spasm (5)
- 24** Series of links (5)

Last month's answers and winners



Crossword solution October

October quiz answers

- 1.** A - Pumpkin
- 2.** B - Multi-coloured leaves
- 3.** C - French
- 4.** D - Northamptonshire
- 5.** D - Roger Williams

Winner of the August/September quiz
David Walsh, Preston

Station Cat

Boris and Brian in a spot of bother

Andrew Dismore:
A good day's work

JOHNNY GREEN/PA PHOTOS



Boris and the vision thing

 Your Cat spent a happy hour watching London mayor Boris Johnson (*right*) squirm during mayor's question time. Labour assembly members would keep banging on about a confidential document showing that the London Fire and Emergency Planning Authority (LFEPA) was looking at 611 fewer fire-fighters and 50 per cent fewer fire stations in inner London. Johnson was curiously reluctant to own up even to seeing the document.

"I have seen various options," he said, rather too often, before finally admitting that, yes, the thing had crossed his desk and he had glanced at it.

"You mean," asked Labour's Andrew Dismore triumphantly, "this document?" And he held the thing aloft for the television cameras to see. At once a chorus of indignant Tories protested furiously that the document was supposed to be confidential, and not for the hoi polloi to see.

James Cleverly, the man Boris appointed to chair the LFEPA, tried desperately to push the toothpaste back in the tube, spitting fury at Dismore for mentioning it. Members couldn't discuss it, he said, because they hadn't all seen it. Well, said the chair, Labour's Jennette Arnold, with a fiendish grin on her face, then we'll circulate it to them all.

Poor Cleverly was reduced to pleading



with her that before she did a thing like that, he'd like a private word with her, but to no avail.

Dismore, clearly pleased with his day's work, said: "Everyone has now had sight of the document except the public, who are the people who ought to have sight of it."

The elephant is still in the room

 Now, Mr Cleverly was the replacement as chair for the wretched Brian Coleman – and Mr Dismore was the man who defeated Coleman and now sits on the Greater London Authority for Barnet and Camden.

And what of Coleman? He had a lot of troubles – and one massive piece of good luck, which he owes to Communities

Secretary Eric Pickles.

Coleman, who is still a Barnet councillor, has been charged

with assaulting local café owner Helen Michael and also faces a driving charge. He is due to appear before Hendon magistrates. Normally, he'd be suspended as a councillor. But Richard Cornelius, the leader of the Tory Party in Barnet, decided not to suspend him, pending the court's decision.

So he calmly walked in to chair a recent meeting of Barnet's budget and performance overview and scrutiny committee. Barnet blogger Mrs Angry writes: "When we arrived in the committee room, there was his name in the chair's place at the table, and as members took their seats, in came a familiar figure: the elephant entering the room."

It was, she says, a rather less cocky Coleman than usual.

Cornelius can only get Coleman off the hook because Eric Pickles abolished the local government Standards Board, which would have forced Coleman to stand down.

The truth can hurt

 FBU adverts telling the truth about cuts earlier this month have upset a few people. Andrew Haldenby, director of right-wing think-tank Reform, wrote in the *Daily Telegraph* that the adverts were "gratuitously offensive" and played on people's fears.

Reform has a track record for spouting nonsense about the fire service. Two years ago it hosted a seminar at which our old acquaintance, the former Merseyside chief fire officer Tony McGuirk, said "frontline is

fire engines and fire stations – not firefighters". He told other public sector bosses "we've got some bone-idle people in the public sector – there, I said it – bone idle people". He advised them to show "muscle" and sack some people.

Startled by the angry response, McGuirk apologised to firefighters in Merseyside. Mr Haldenby was not so forthcoming – and he still supports sacking firefighters.

Regulating the media

 The Leveson inquiry into the media naturally got the Cat thinking about firefighters' brushes with the tabloid press. There was the *Sun* journalist who wanted a comment on a story that FBU general secretary Matt Wrack and assistant general secretary Andy Dark had racked up a huge figure in personal expenses the previous year.

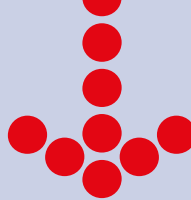
The figure she had was everything the union had spent on accommodation in the previous year – including the annual conference, all training schools, the lot.

There was the tabloid paper which, as soon as the union called a strike, sent a reporter to doorstep the general secretary's former wife and his student son, and another to root through his son's dustbins.

Leveson is likely to come out with a call for statutory regulation, and if you want to know why we need it, read Brian Cathcart's short, hard-hitting Penguin Special: *Everybody's Hacked Off*. It will make your blood boil.



25-year badges



Kevin Hardwill (r), Yeovil, receives his 25-year badge from region 13 EC member Tam McFarlane



Carl Fentham (r), West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary (since retired) Chris Downes



Phil Lingley (r), green watch, Huyton, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Les Skarratts



Michael Rushton (l), Biddulph, Staffordshire receives his 25-year badge from region 7 EC member Rose Jones



Andy Kelman (l, centre), North Anderson Drive, Grampian, receives his 25-year badge from Scotland women's rep Colleen Christie



Kevin Bacon (l, centre), Burton, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Pete Wildman. Back (l-r) L. Hawkings, K. Harrison, M. Ahmed, G. Nicklin. Front (l-r) R. Critchlow, S. Bacon, K. Bacon, P. Wildman, P. Marshall, D. Wheeler



Paul Yarwood (r), Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from Merseyside officers' rep Ged Phelan



Nigel Stockton (l), Sandyford, Staffordshire receives his 25-year badge from region 7 EC member Rose Jones



Ray Greggs (r), Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from officers' national committee chair Peter Moss



Ian Black (r), blue watch, Tynemouth, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Billy Scott



Clive Webster (r), Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from Merseyside officers' rep Ged Phelan



Norma Putman (l), PFI team, Staffordshire, receives her 25-year badge from brigade secretary Rich Williams



Julian Tobin (l), red watch, Dorking, receives his 25-year badge from Surrey brigade organiser Nigel Burchell



Nick Triner (l), Sandyford, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from region 7 EC member Rose Jones



Kevin Harte (r), blue watch, Sale, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Rhodri Jones



Kevin Deacon (r), brigade chair, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from region 5 chair Ian McGill



Kev Storer (r), Adwick-le-Street, South Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary John Gilliver



Paul Poynter (r), South Yorkshire headquarters branch, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary John Gilliver



Paul Webster (l), South Yorkshire headquarters branch, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Sarah Eratt



Eric McIntyre (r), group 1, Clydesmill, receives his 25-year badge from Strathclyde brigade secretary John McFadden with members of group 3 looking on



Pete Byrne (centre, l), blue watch, Southsea, Hampshire receives his 25-year badge from Hampshire vice-chair Nigel McCullen with blue watch colleagues looking on



Grant Small (r), Clarkston, receives his 25-year badge from Strathclyde brigade secretary John McFadden with members of group 3, Clydesmill looking on



David Page (r), Hook Norton RDS, Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Rachel Dobson



Raymond Finlayson (l), red watch, Inverness, Highlands and Islands, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Calum MacNeill



Paul Radcliffe (l), Stafford, receives his 25-year badge from region 7 EC member Rose Jones



David Gray (l), Merchant Navy Training Centre, Tyne and Wear, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Russ King



Mark Taylor (l, centre), Longton, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Rich Williams



Ian Smith (centre), East Sussex control, receives his 25-year badge from EC member for control Sharon Riley



Phil Watkins (r, centre), blue watch, Feltham, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Matt Sephton



Don Miller (r), blue watch, Tynemouth, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Billy Scott



Dave Thomas (l), receives his 25-year badge from St Helens branch chair Adrian Crampton



David Shubrook (r), red watch, The Mounts, Northampton, receives his 25-year badge from regional chair Tom Murray



Dave Davies (l), Hanley, Staffordshire receives his 25-year badge from region 7 EC member Rose Jones



Niall Wilson (r), Ilford branch secretary, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack with watch members (l-r) Mark Simons, Peter Watson, Chris Plumridge, Monty Hewison and James Trew looking on

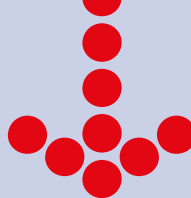


Pat Hegarty (r), white watch, Ilford, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Niall Wilson with watch members (l-r) Jemma Doddington, Bob Lampard and Bobby Johal



Mark Simons (r), green watch, Ilford, London, receives his 25-year badge from general secretary Matt Wrack with watch members (l-r) Chris Plumridge, Niall Wilson, Monty Hewison, Peter Watson and James Trew looking on

25-year badges



Mike O'Meara (l), Wrexham, North Wales, receives his 25-year badge from Wrexham branch secretary Richie Clutton



Val Hampshire (r), south west regional treasurer, receives her 25-year badge from the region's EC member Tam McFarlane



Darren Goulding (r), white watch, Huyton, Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Les Skarratts



Craig Moore (l, centre), blue watch, Avonmouth, Avon receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Chris Taylor with blue watch looking on



Dave Allen (l), Cornwall HQ, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Mike Tremellen with Truro orange watch looking on



Dave Lane (l), Sandyford, Staffordshire, receives his 25-year badge from region 7 EC member Rose Jones



Stefan Poplawski (l), East Leake, Nottinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade membership secretary Ian Young



Paul Costello (r), Merseyside, receives his 25-year badge from officers' national committee chair Peter Moss



Mark Lawton (r), West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from regional secretary (since retired) Chris Downes



Larry Harris (l), B watch, Great Baddow, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Mick Weald



Kenny Spouse (l), Humberside, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Rich Walker



Dave Leigh (c), white watch, Broughton, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from divisional rep Dave Allsey (l) and branch secretary Phil Mellor



Tony Lewis (l, centre), Patchway, Avon, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Chris Taylor with members of his watch looking on

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

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Change of address or next of kin

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

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE 0808 100 6061

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.



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.