

FIREFIGHTER

THE MAGAZINE OF THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION | WWW.FBU.ORG.UK | OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2021

OUR PLANET UNDER ATTACK

FIREFIGHTERS AND
CLIMATE CHANGE

SEE P8 & P14

WINNER!

RESULTS OF THE
FBU PHOTOGRAPHY
COMPETITION

SEE P22

**FBU WINS COVID
BIAS CASE**

See P5

**UNION STEPS UP
BA CAMPAIGN**

See P6

**FIREFIGHTER NUMBERS
HIT NEW LOW**

See P4





MATT WRACK AT THE FRONTLINE OF CLIMATE CHANGE

COP26 – CLIMATE EMERGENCY

This issue of *Firefighter* is focused on the upcoming COP26 meeting, being held in Glasgow in November.

As firefighters, we're at the frontline of climate change, and have pulled together some striking images, together with alarming statistics, which illustrate this relationship.

It is clear that the threat from climate change is growing increasingly stronger.

We are hearing about floods and wildfires more and more. Scientists are clear: climate change makes these events more likely.

There are some truly horrible stories across the planet. Recently, I saw a clip on BBC News where water gushed into a closed elevator, with people inside, during the New York flooding.

They were lucky enough to escape. But, in that round of flooding, over 40 others in the New York region were not. That is a terrifying death toll.

Clearly, you, our members, expect me to fight hard on issues that directly affect us. And I will continue to do this.

One part of this is fighting for a green new deal. A green new deal is a series of measures designed to take control of our climate out of big business's hands, where it has been neglected.

Together with allies, this month we passed a green new deal motion at this year's Labour conference. This is just one step, but it is one of the many we will take on this vital firefighting issue.



FIREFIGHTER NUMBERS CUT AGAIN

In future generations this period of history will be remembered for, among other things, austerity.

Austerity is a political choice, and one that has harmed all of us.

While government likes to proclaim that austerity is over, the numbers tell a different story.

New figures show that firefighter numbers, in decline since the start of austerity

in 2010, have reached a new low point, with another decline from 2020 to 2021.

Not only has the government failed to put back what it has taken away in the years since austerity, it is still making the situation even worse.

There has now been a decline in firefighter numbers of 11,680 since 2010. That is a huge amount – about 20% of the workforce.

No workforce could

be expected to operate at the same level with such a huge cut. And fire and rescue is no different.

If government ministers are serious about funding fire and rescue, then making sure we have enough firefighters is a good place to start.

DECON

The DECON campaign launched with a bang last month and I am pleased that it has resonated so much with members and officials, with branches across the country holding training sessions and distributing the campaign posters and stickers.

We even spotted a baby wearing a DECON sticker on social media – it is certainly never too early to start!

The DECON campaign takes aim at an extremely serious health threat for frontline firefighters: contaminants which, it is thought, could cause cancer and other diseases.

We all know people in the fire and rescue who have been affected by cancer.

I want to thank all members who have taken part so far, watched the training, put up the posters, and shared with colleagues.

Each of you has played a significant part in the initial success of the campaign, and I'm looking forward to developing the campaign further.

I also want to thank those employers who have supported this and look forward to seeing how much the campaign can achieve over the coming months.



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NEWS

LABOUR BACKS FBU POLICY

Delegates back FBU building safety and climate change policies p7



BA CHANGES

Members keep up the pressure against dangerous proposals p6

IAN SKELTON/ALAMY



Senior service managers have said that the public should lower expectations that large wildfires can be tackled

FBU WARNS OF THREAT TO SAFETY AS FIREFIGHTER NUMBERS HIT NEW LOW

AUSTERITY

Firefighter numbers have reached a new low point as a result of government austerity policies that began in 2010.

One in five of the firefighter roles available then no longer exists, figures released by the Fire Brigades Union reveal. There has been a fall in numbers of 11,680 since 2010.

Matt Wrack, FBU general secretary said: "There is a real threat that fire and rescue services may not be able to deal with every incident and fight all fires.

"For example, we have heard senior service managers state that the public should lower their expectations that large wildfires can be tackled."

Wrack said the cuts also pose a threat to the ability to respond to large-scale incidents, particularly if more than one were to occur at the same time.

Since 2010 more than 8,000 wholetime firefighter posts have gone, out of the 11,680 total.

London alone now has 1,112 fewer firefighters than in 2010. There have been falls of 615 in West Yorkshire, 631 in Greater Manchester, 551 in Devon and Somerset and 470 in the West Midlands.

Other standout figures include a cut of 70 firefighters between 2020 and 2021 alone in Hampshire, and 49 in Devon and Somerset.

The overall figure for the UK compared to last year is a loss of 185 firefighters and control operators – a 0.4% decrease.

Fears that the fire and rescue service has been short-staffed to breaking point is further evidenced by a range of other figures.

Response times across all types of

fires in England have been increasing since 2010, and fire audit and home fire safety check numbers in England have fallen constantly in this period.

New threats could mean that firefighters will become even more stretched. Climate change is believed to have increased both flood risks and the number of wildfires in the UK.

Wrack said: "Households deserve to feel protected. We all want to be able to walk past fire stations and know that there are enough people in there to protect us.

"Firefighters will always do whatever they can to save lives. It's time the government does the same."

The new figures have been compiled from a freedom of information request by the FBU. The union defines firefighting roles to include wholetime, retained and control staff.



Tollcross, Edinburgh, firefighters taking part in the weekly clap for carers in May 2020

FBU WINS GROUNDBREAKING COVID DISCRIMINATION CASE

SCOTLAND

The FBU has won a discrimination case against the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service. It argued successfully that forcing staff with disabilities to use annual leave or time off in lieu (TOIL) when shielding from Covid, amounted to discrimination.

The Employment Tribunal case is thought to be the first in which an employer has been found to have discriminated against employees following government Covid guidance.

The decision could have implications for employers and employees across the UK.

In the same case, the union also argued that some female members were being discriminated against by being forced to use annual leave and TOIL for additional caring responsibilities during

the pandemic.

While it was successful in its theoretical argument, the tribunal felt that the union had not proved its case in the context of specific facts. The union is considering an appeal against this part of the judgement.

Denise Christie, the FBU regional secretary in Scotland, said: "In principle, we are delighted with this result. It is another example of a trade union fighting and winning for its members.

"Covid is like any other major burden that falls on society: a disproportionate amount of it often ends up being put on people who are already discriminated against, like women or disabled people."

Despite the partially successful ruling by the tribunal, there has been no sanction on the employer – and no instruction that it should reinstate the annual leave that it wrongly removed.

NEGOTIATIONS WIN PENSIONS JUSTICE

PENSIONS

Firefighters not currently receiving their correct pension (immediate detriment cases) after the introduction of the 2015 scheme, will be able to have their cases dealt with within 90 days of notifying their employer.

This is the result of negotiation between the FBU, the Local Government Association and fire and rescue authorities' lawyers which secured the correct

pensions for eligible members before legislative action is taken to remedy discrimination in the 2015 scheme.

The Court of Appeal has ruled that firefighters are entitled to return from the 2015 scheme to previous schemes if they wish.

In most cases the 2015 scheme is worse.

However, legislation may not take effect until October 2023, meaning firefighters who have retired since 2015 or will

retire before 2023 were set to lose out, as they have been since 2015.

Mark Rowe, FBU national officer, said the union "has been clear throughout that significant delays in members receiving the pensions they deserve are unacceptable.

"The union will always fight for the best possible outcomes for its members," he said.

More information is available at <https://bit.ly/3Am9zi4>

SOUNDING OFF

TUC General Secretary Frances O'Grady says government plan robs low-paid workers

INCREASING NI NOT THE RIGHT WAY TO TACKLE THE SOCIAL CARE CRISIS

Anyone who works in or uses social care knows that new funding for the sector is long overdue.

We desperately need a social care system that delivers high-quality care and high-quality employment.

But the government's plan to achieve this by increasing National Insurance contributions just isn't the answer.

Ministers are raiding the pockets of low-paid workers – while leaving the wealthy barely touched.

It is plain wrong that the government's plans will see a low-paid social care worker paying extra to fund the social care system, while the private equity magnate who profits from asset-stripping care homes to sell on sees no change.

Instead, the prime minister should be asking those who make a fortune from their property and assets to pay a fairer share of tax.

We should tax wealth at the same rate as we tax those who rely on work for an income. A rise in capital gains tax would give our social care service the money it urgently needs.

And it would fund a pay rise for social care workers to at least £10 per hour, a wage they can live on.

Social care workers and the families that rely on the service deserve a proper plan for the future now.

We urgently need to tackle the endemic low pay and job insecurity that blights the social care sector – and is causing huge staff shortages and undermining the quality of care people receive.

It's time to start taxing wealth fairly, at the same rate as we tax income, so that we can fund social care properly and guarantee decent pay for all social care workers.





PA IMAGE/ALAMY

Firefighters at Shirley Towers in Southampton, where Hampshire and Isle of Wight firefighters Alan Bannon and James Shears died in April 2010 while tackling a fire in the 15-storey housing block

MEMBERS KEEP UP PRESSURE IN BA FIGHT

BREATHING APPARATUS

FBU members are continuing to oppose at a national and local level dangerous changes to breathing apparatus (BA) policy for fighting high-rise fires.

Mark Chapman, secretary for the Hampshire and Isle of Wight brigade, highlighted the danger in the Portsmouth media outlet *The News*. "This is the most retrogressive step backwards in safety that I have ever seen in my 21 years of service. This is putting lives at risk. It's an absolute disgrace," he said.

The previous *Firefighter* reported National Fire Chiefs Council (NFCC) guidance recommending major changes to BA policy that could see firefighters told to go beyond BA entry control without BA turned on.

Local union officials in Greater Manchester, Kent, Hampshire and Isle of Wight, and Humberside are all challenging the guidance, where it is in various stages of implementation.

Portsmouth South MP Stephen Morgan has written to the Hampshire and Isle of Wight service asking what its

justification for the changes is.

Mark Chapman warned in *The News* that the changes are "the biggest threat to crews' lives in decades," and said they could "lead to tragedy".

The policy change could have even broader significance than its immediate effects, "opening the door" for similar changes to BA policy beyond high-rise fires. FBU national officer Riccardo la Torre said: "The union will challenge this practice wherever it is raised, using all legal, political and industrial resources at our disposal."

WRACK WARNS MPS OF THE ROLE OF CUTS IN REDUCED FIRE SAFETY

FIRE SAFETY BILL

Government ministers from both major parties in England have, for years, reduced the emphasis on fire safety, FBU general secretary Matt Wrack has told MPs.

He was giving evidence to an all-party committee of MPs considering in detail the government's Fire Safety Bill.

Wrack pointed out that ministers had repeatedly said fire is a declining risk so the emphasis on fire safety could be reduced.

"There has been a deep, deep complacency about fire safety," said Wrack. "Grenfell, hopefully, is a major turning



Matt Wrack giving evidence to MPs

point on that".

He told the MPs: "We have had incidents where our own members have died and it has emerged that the fire risk assessor for the building concerned had no qualifications.

"I think that's quite

shocking and that's a sign of a deregulated sector."

Wrack highlighted reductions in the number of fire safety inspectors.

"I do not see how you can cut in the London Fire Brigade, for example, 25% of your fire safety inspectors and not think that will have implications for public safety.

"Something like 20% to 25% of fire safety inspecting officers have gone in the past 11 years, and something like 40% over the past 20 years".

Wrack said the Bill would allow the new Building Safety Regulator to seek private sector assistance if fire and rescue services could not

help them.

"If we've got a problem with resources in the appropriate public service then those resources should be provided," said Wrack.

He also questioned the resources available to the new Building Safety Regulator, who would be part of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

HSE inspectors have been reduced by something like a quarter, Wrack told the MPs.

Unprecedented cuts in fire and rescue services' staff over the past decade "will raise questions about resources in their ability to cooperate with the requests of the regulator."

FBU BRINGS ITS VITAL CAMPAIGNS TO LABOUR CONFERENCE

Rosa Crowley-Bennett:
‘This debate is about real people, with real fears, suffering grave injustices in what should be one of the most basic of rights: the right to a decent and safe home’



ANDREW WARD

The FBU brought several of its key campaigns to the Labour party conference in September, with motions and fringe events pushing forward its ideas on building safety and fighting climate change.

The union had a central role in the passing of two motions. It submitted motions on a green new deal and on building safety. Policies on both topics were later passed by delegates in Brighton.

The green new deal motion that was

passed advocated a range of measures to fight the climate crisis including investment in fire and rescue, and public ownership of key resources.

The building safety motion backed the victims of Grenfell and the building safety crisis and, among other things, called for investment in particular public services that can help fight the crisis.

FBU member Rosa Crowley-Bennett's speech on the building safety motion, receiving a standing ovation from the conference hall.

She had told delegates: “In all the discussion of regulation and legislation, we must never forget that this debate is about real people, with real fears, suffering grave injustices in what should be one of the most basic of rights: the right to a decent and safe home”.

The FBU organised fringe events on both the building safety crisis and a socialist green new deal.

The event on the building safety crisis heard from FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, Bell Ribeiro-Addy MP, Mike Amesbury MP, Kate Ewert of the Labour Campaign for Council Housing, Chloe Waite of Action for Fire Safety Justice, building safety campaigner Natalie Carter, Yvette Williams of Justice4Grenfell, with Rosa Crowley-Bennett chairing.

Chloe and Natalie are both leaseholders currently living in unsafe accommodation.

The event on the green new deal heard from Matt Wrack, John McDonnell MP, Rebecca Long-Bailey MP, and Kate Hicks of Labour for a Green New Deal, and was chaired by Zarah Sultana MP.

Many people visited the FBU's stand at conference, including several MPs and plenty of delegates, many of them from other unions.

At the stand the union was promoting its campaigns on building safety, climate change, and attacks on the Grey Book, using both literature and conversation.



Matt Wrack
addresses the
conference

ANDREW WARD

WILDFIRE

Blackstone Edge above Littleborough, Greater Manchester, at around midnight on 25 April 2020. Four pumps attended to protect a nearby farm. The moors of North West England have been a hotspot for wildfires in recent years.

PICTURE: JOHN MITCHELL

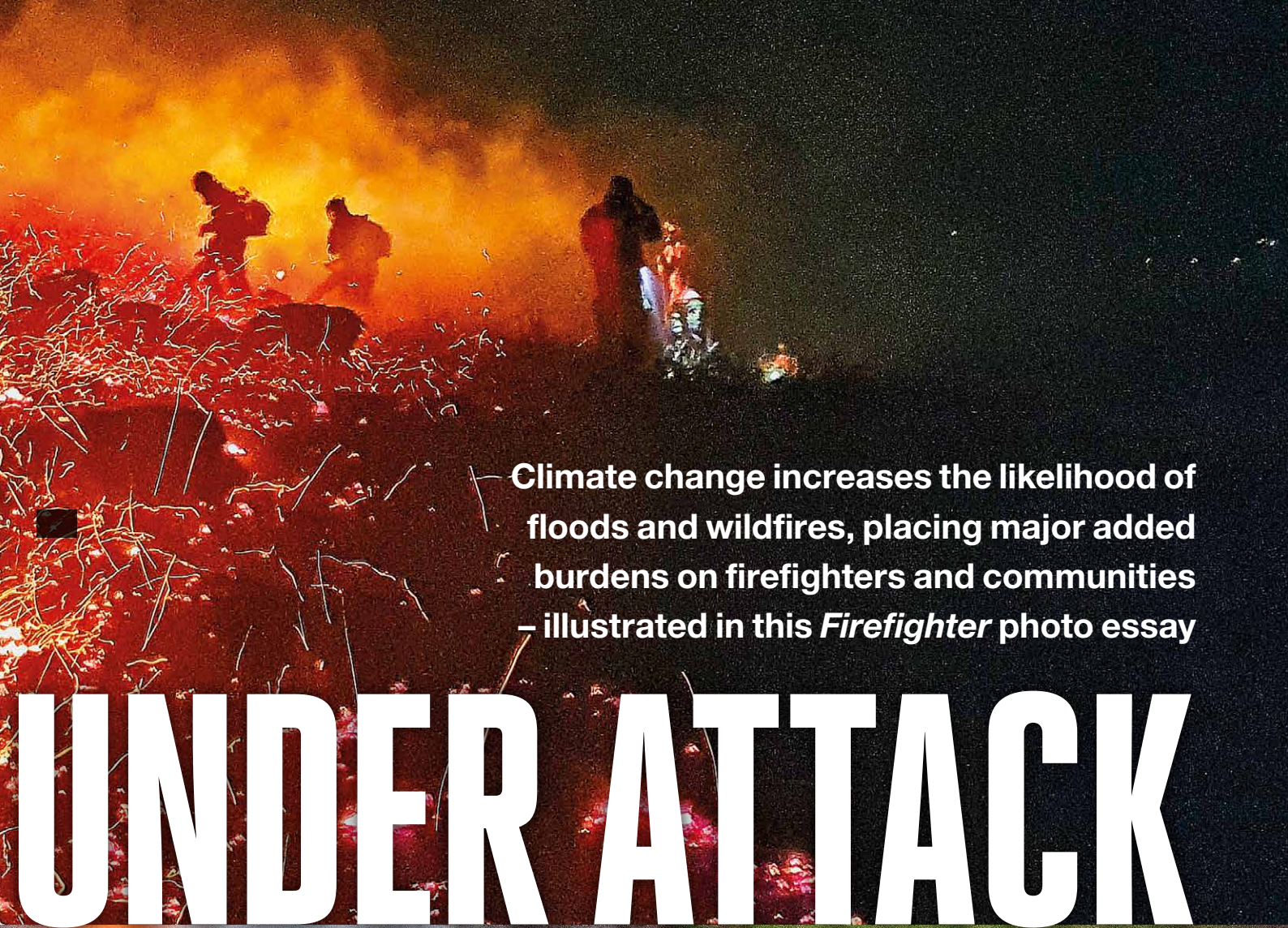
OUR PLANET,

FLOODING

Flooding in West Sussex, December 2019. About one in six (5.2m) properties in England alone are at risk of flooding from rivers or the sea and 3.6m are at risk of surface water flooding.

PICTURE: EDDIE HOWLAND





Climate change increases the likelihood of floods and wildfires, placing major added burdens on firefighters and communities – illustrated in this *Firefighter* photo essay

UNDER ATTACK



WILDFIRES

111

The number of days with conditions hot and dry enough for serious wildfires in the south of England will climb from 20 a year today to 111 by the 2080s



In 2019, the UK had already had more wildfires by April than any year on record

Flooding is considered the UK's biggest threat from climate change, but even rare wildfires can cause disruption – from the toxic smoke created by massive fires on Saddleworth Moor near Manchester to large blazes in the West of Scotland and Cornwall

  5X  

'As temperatures rise and summer rainfall decreases, conditions highly conducive to wildfire could be nearly five times more common in some regions of the UK by the latter part of the century'





DESTROYED

This fire on the Mourne mountains in Northern Ireland in April this year completely destroyed an area of outstanding natural beauty which will take years to recover

PICTURE: KELVIN BOYES/
PRESS EYE

AIR SUPPORT

A firefighter wipes sweat from her brow at a major incident on Slieve Donard on 24 April this year in Newcastle, Northern Ireland. Firefighters were assisted by helicopters from the Irish Air Corps. The National Trust said the fire damaged more than 200 hectares (threequarters of a square mile) of land.

PICTURE: CHARLES MCQUILLAN/
GETTY IMAGES

SEVEN-DAYS

Swinley Forest fire in Berkshire in May 2011 affected hundreds of hectares. It took local crews and others from London, Surrey, Hampshire, Wiltshire, Buckinghamshire, Norfolk, Oxfordshire, West Midlands, Gloucestershire, Hertfordshire, Worcester and Northamptonshire. seven days to extinguish.

PICTURE: PA/ALAMY



FLASH FLOOD

Flash flooding in Gowerton, Swansea, in January 2013. UK homes are now more likely to be flooded than burgled.

PICTURE: JAMES DAVIES / ALAMY



SO FAST

Flooding in Haworth, West Yorkshire, on Boxing Day 2015. In 2019 a local councillor for the area told *Keighley News*: 'Every Boxing Day we look to the sky and think back to what happened in 2015. It all happened so fast.'

PICTURE: GROUCH.CO.UK/ALAMY

RAF MOBILISED

Flooding in Doncaster in June 2007. A nearby village saw RAF Chinook helicopters mobilised to boost flood defences and search for missing people.

PICTURE: PA/ALAMY

FLOODING



34%

Parts of Scotland face a 34% increase in flooding in the next 50 years. In South East England an 18% increase is expected



December 2015 was the UK's wettest ever month and 2015 was the second wettest winter (December–February) in a series started in 1910 by the Royal Meteorological Society



7X

Extended periods of extreme winter rainfall are now seven times more likely according to the Meteorological Office



The winter of 2015-16 saw devastating floods in North West England, with the country's highest recorded daily rainfall and the highest peak river flows



Firefighters arrive to tackle a large grass and gorse wildfire near Harburnhead wind farm in West Lothian, central Scotland, in May 2017
PICTURE: Brendan Stutt



COP26 and FIREFIGHTERS

FBU Scotland regional secretary **Denise Christie** explains why climate change and the forthcoming COP26 meeting in Glasgow have big implications for firefighters

You might have heard a lot about COP26 over the past few weeks, months and even years. Hosted in Glasgow, the climate change summit will see the world's attention turn to the UK, and Scotland in particular.

But what may be not so clear is what COP26 actually is, and how the issues it will cover relate to firefighters.

WHAT IS COP26?

COP26 is the 26th "Conference of Parties" – essentially all of the world's countries getting together to discuss climate change progress and agree further steps.

The conference of parties tends to happen annually, and does not always end in agreement, with late night sessions towards the end of the conferences common in past years.

A lot of people think that this year's COP is a make-or-break



Bath college and school students taking part in a climate change protest

PICTURE: LYNCHPICS/ALAMY

safely and fairly. We must also be fully active in the campaign to make COP26 a focus to organise against climate crisis in solidarity with all working people.

The climate crisis is a crisis of social justice, with those who have done least to cause the crisis and who are least able to address it, facing the worst impacts.

WHAT'S IT GOT TO DO WITH FIREFIGHTERS?

Firefighters are on the frontline of tackling the climate crisis. Climate change is increasing the risk of wildfires, such as grassland and forest fires, and floods, including from surface water, rivers and sea.

It will also affect the supply and availability of water and may give rise to more extreme weather events.

These hazards will have implications for the working conditions of firefighters.

The climate emergency will require significant changes to appliances, to the equipment available to firefighters, and to training.

We will also need greater awareness of the implications for firefighters' health, greater pumping capability and water use, and increased capacity in our operational fire control rooms.

The fire and rescue service needs the staff, resources and equipment to tackle the impact of this climate emergency. There is no logic to job cuts and shutting fire stations and control rooms when these risks are likely to increase in the years ahead.

FBU TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

The FBU in Scotland has been proactive in raising these issues with politicians as far back as 2016 when I organised and chaired an FBU fringe meeting at the Scottish Green Party conference titled

"Climate Change – Key Issues for the Fire and Rescue Service".

The point was well made that fire-fighters are the primary emergency responders to climate related incidents that affect communities, and that the FBU is committed to political and industrial campaigning on the climate emergency.

The union campaigns in the fire and rescue service and works with others in our movement to tackle one of the most fundamental questions of our age.

Meanwhile, on the ground, firefighters all over the UK are engaged with the practical battle against the climate crisis.

For example, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service received 350 flooding-related calls over just one week at the end of 2015 and start of 2016, with around 1,000 people being evacuated.

While it is right that we are proud of our work here and at incidents like it, they should also serve as very real reminders that climate change is here, and is affecting our lives and our work today.

PROTECT FIREFIGHTER JOBS

Our fire and rescue services are not yet fully prepared for the enormous implications of the climate crisis.

Over the past decade, we have seen a loss of more than 11,000 frontline fire-fighter jobs in the UK.

We have seen the closure of operational fire control rooms and fire stations and fire budgets slashed year on year.

There is no logic to these cuts when climate risks are likely to increase in the years ahead.

The FBU will continue to be front and centre in campaigns to reverse these attacks on our profession.

We will be front and centre at COP 26 supporting the many campaigns and ask our members to join us in demanding a just and green world for everyone.

moment for bringing climate change under control.

WHAT ELSE IS HAPPENING AT COP26?

Big conversations on climate adaptation are also likely to happen, with the conference's website stating that work on protecting ecosystems, and "building defences, warning systems and resilient infrastructure and agriculture to avoid loss of homes, livelihoods and even lives" needs to take place.

The conference is also an opportunity for the FBU to demonstrate solidarity with working people and their communities around the world and to organise together to create the just and green world we want and need, to allow us to live

THE CLIMATE EMERGENCY WILL REQUIRE SIGNIFICANT CHANGES TO APPLIANCES, EQUIPMENT AND TRAINING

DECON CAMPAIGN BURSTS INTO LIFE

National officer **Riccardo la Torre** updates on progress in the FBU initiative with the potential to save the lives of firefighters and their families

The FBU's DECON campaign is designed to reduce the impact fire contaminants have on firefighters. We know from research that exposure to fire contaminants can make a range of serious illnesses more likely. Research has also found that firefighters are not always taking straightforward steps that could help reduce the risk posed by contaminants.

The campaign consists of training sessions and awareness-building materials, both targeted at firefighters.

It aims to raise awareness of the risk that fire contaminants pose to individuals, colleagues and families, and to arm firefighters with knowledge that will help them to mitigate risk.

DECON has the potential to have a huge impact on our health and safety as firefighters – and that of colleagues and families.

What's more, we are starting to see these impacts already. The campaign consists of just 11 very straightforward actions that every firefighter can

begin to start taking now.

We are delighted to see the posters up in stations across the UK.

The 11 behaviours are themed before, during and after incidents, and continue past the fire station doors.

They range from cleaning kit regularly, to keeping BA on until the job is done, to showering as soon as you get in through the front door of your house.

You can read the full list at <https://bit.ly/2YAfinx>

I would encourage everyone to do so.

The impact we could see is huge. Firefighters who answered a University of Central Lancashire survey were more than four times more likely to have cancer than the general public.

LIVES TOTALLY UPENDED

That might seem like just a number. Where this really hits home for me is thinking of the members with cancer I have spoken to – lives totally upended by diagnoses, the mental health issues caused, so severe that quite often they stay even after the cancer has gone.

You do not easily forget having your

life so seriously threatened. Something I have heard is that cancer never really leaves you, even if you receive the all-clear.

And all this is not even to mention the other diseases that contaminants are thought to cause in firefighters, such as respiratory and digestive tract diseases.

DECON was launched with a special event at Basildon fire station in Essex on 7 September. It was livestreamed online to more than 1,000 people, and has been watched by even more since.

FBU general secretary Matt Wrack, Professor Anna Stec of the University of Central Lancashire, European Public Service Unions general secretary Jan Willem Goudriaan and TUC health, safety and wellbeing officer Shelly Asquith all spoke at the launch.

Since then, DECON training sessions have begun to be delivered to firefighters around the country, primarily by FBU officials through branches and by employers.

The training sessions centre around four videos featuring affected members, the science behind the campaign, and the behaviours firefighters can change to protect themselves.

FBU officials have also been active in putting up the DECON posters around their stations, with numerous examples posted on social media, including on Twitter under the #DECONFBU hashtag. For a chance to see your station in the next mag, post your photos using this hashtag.

Seeing the posters pop up at stations around the country, and the training taking place, has been great to see – this campaign is nothing without the support and engagement of you, our members and officials.

The campaign has seen also engagement by fire and rescue services themselves, with a number of services agreeing to deliver the sessions through the service.

The FBU is looking to further engage with services on this vital work. Employers can help us deliver this campaign, and thereby help save lives. Every training session, every poster that goes up – will help to bring down those horrendous numbers on cancer in firefighters. We can all play our part here.

**ALL BRANCHES WILL FIND
THIS POSTER IN WITH THEIR
COPY OF FIREFIGHTER**

EVERYDAY DECON HABITS HELP TO PROTECT YOU AGAINST CONTAMINANTS



DECON

TO PREVENT & PROTECT

Learn how to make these 11 simple changes at home and at work

fbu.org.uk/decon

BEFORE THE INCIDENT



1 Clean kit regularly.

Your PPE should be cleaned regularly and after fire incidents. If you are cleaning it, always cover exposed skin, use disposable gloves, and wear a face mask. Even if firefighting gloves are clean, never store them in boots or helmets.



2 Handle dirty kit with care.

Make sure your kit is clean before carrying it. If you have to touch dirty kit, use disposable gloves.

AT THE INCIDENT



3 BA on until the job is done.

Wear BA at all stages of firefighting and keep it on during salvage, turning over and damping down. Don't put it on too late or take it off too early.



4 Contain your dirty kit.

Seal any clothing or PPE exposed to fire in an airtight bag or box before taking it into the appliance.

AT THE STATION



5 Shower within an hour.

Back at station, shower within an hour of returning to station after attending a fire. Use soap and scrub your skin, and wash and dry your hair. If you need to go straight from a fire to another incident, use wipes or soap and water to clean your face, neck, hands, and forearms.



6 Scrub before grub.

Only eat or drink at the station once you and your clothes are clean. Don't get water from a cooler or go into clean zones such as the mess until you've washed and changed.



7 Watch out for wear and tear.

Check your kit for visible damage every shift, and make sure your brigade gets it checked at least every three months by someone who is trained to find damage.

GOING HOME



8 DECON before you drive.

If you have attended a fire, shower and change your clothes before you drive. If you're carrying clothes exposed to fire in your car, make sure they are sealed in an airtight bag or box. Wipe down your steering wheel, handles and dashboard regularly.



10 Straight to the shower.

If you couldn't shower and change at station after the last fire you attended, get straight in the shower once you get home. Don't hug, kiss, or touch anyone until you've washed and changed.



9 Clean what you carry.

Regularly wipe down your phone, wallet, and other belongings you take to work, using one wipe for each item. Put bags that you take to the station through the wash regularly. Wash the bags alone then run the 'rinse and spin' cycle after.



11 Dirty clothes in the machine.

If you have taken home clothes that have been near a fire, put them straight into the washing machine from the bag or box they are sealed in. Don't touch these clothes with bare hands, let them mix with other laundry, or leave them lying out. After washing them, run the 'rinse and spin' cycle. Facilities should be made available to wash work clothes at work, away from home. Not all fire and rescue services have this in place yet.

HERITAGE OF 100 YEARS

National officer **Tam McFarlane** traces the development of projects launched to mark the centenary of the FBU

Firefighters packed Southwark Cathedral in central London on 13 October 2018 to celebrate 100 years of their union.

They heard a powerful and moving service, marking the strength of a small union that, through its campaigning work, has won major victories both for its members and the wider trade union movement, shaped the modern fire and rescue service, and improved public safety immeasurably.

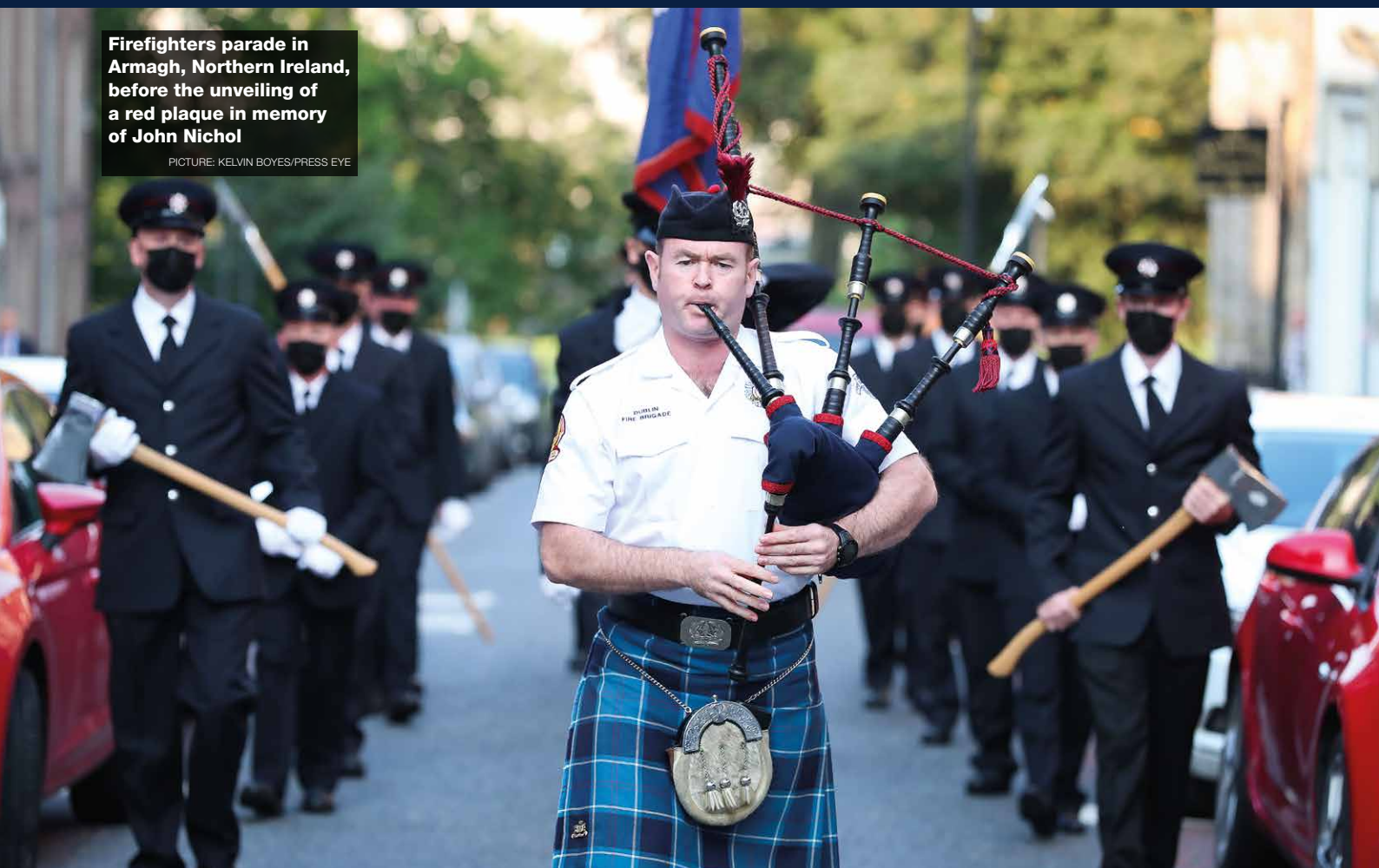
The FBU's centenary was a chance to reflect on the union's history and past successes – but it was also about looking to the future and the challenges to come.

In the lead up to the FBU's centenary celebrations, major projects, including the Firefighters 100 Lottery and the Red Plaque Scheme, were launched to mark the occasion and create the groundwork to build on the union's successes from the last 100 years.

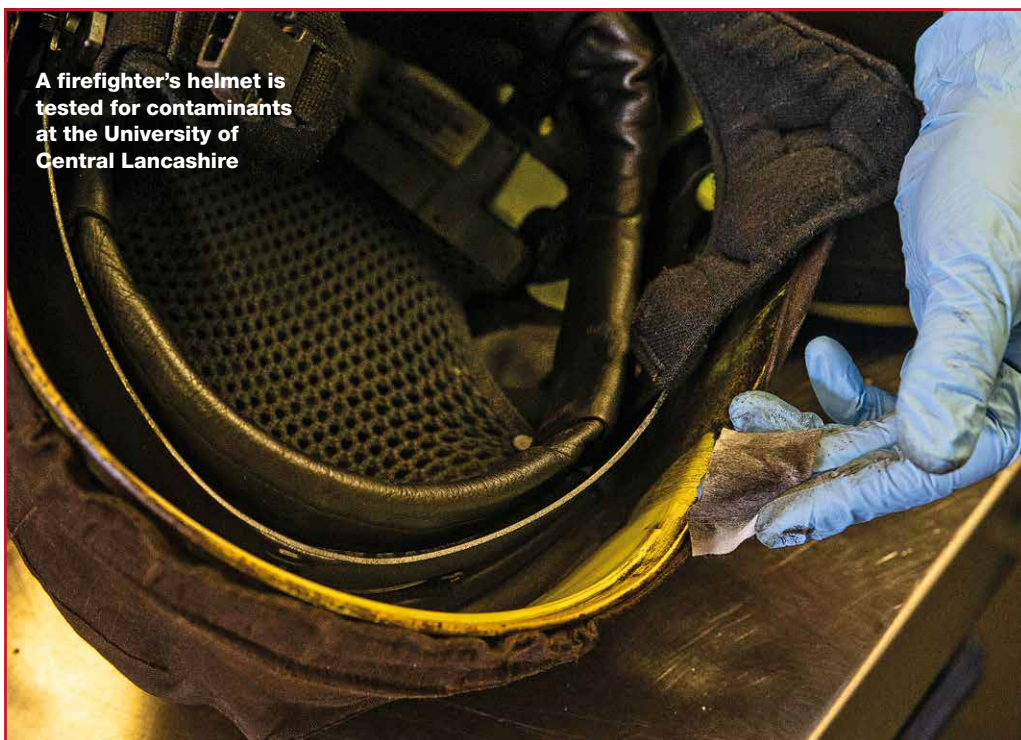
Over the past three years, these projects have grown and provided vital resources for firefighters.

Firefighters parade in Armagh, Northern Ireland, before the unveiling of a red plaque in memory of John Nichol

PICTURE: KELVIN BOYES/PRESS EYE



A firefighter's helmet is tested for contaminants at the University of Central Lancashire



FIREFIGHTERS 100 LOTTERY

MORE THAN £685,000 RAISED FOR GOOD CAUSES SINCE 2016

Since its launch in 2016, the Firefighters 100 Lottery has raised over £685,000 for good causes.

Some of this money has helped to fund vital groundbreaking research, working with the University of Central Lancashire, to understand the links between firefighting, fire contaminants, cancers and other diseases. The launch of the FBU's DECON "prevent and protect" campaign shows firefighters what can be done to minimise contact with toxins at work and at home, to help protect them, their colleagues and families.

The lottery, one of the central legacies of the union's centenary year, has been making a real difference to the lives of firefighters injured in the line of duty, the dependants of firefighters who have died in the line of duty and, of course, in remembering fallen firefighters through the innovative Red Plaque scheme.

Following the guidelines set by the Firefighters 100 Lottery "good causes" criteria, the lottery distribution panel has recently provided substantial funds to adapt

the home of a firefighter seriously injured while on duty. The adaptations have given the firefighter the space needed to undertake rehabilitation, as well as ensuring that he and his family can stay in their house and maintain a dignified family life.

The panel has also recently been supporting the widow of a firefighter who lost his life as a result of his duties, ensuring that money is made available to support four dependant children left behind.

These initiatives have proved life-changing for the people involved and every member who contributes to the lottery can be proud of the support that goes to those in need.

Everyone present during the FBU centenary event in 2018 will have the memories of that special day, but, through the Firefighters100 lottery, we have made sure that the FBU centenary was not just one day or one year but, instead, a legacy that supports individuals, their families and the firefighter family overall.

■ firefighters100lottery.co.uk



RED PLAQUES

FROM STRENGTH TO STRENGTH

Firefighters put their lives on the line every day to protect others. Tragically, some do not make it home when their shift is over.

Such tragedies are woven into the fabric of the union's history, with FBU campaigns born out of these events securing significant improvements in firefighters' working conditions and safety procedures.

The FBU established the Red Plaque scheme to pay tribute to firefighters who have lost their lives on the front line and to give their loved ones a place to honour and cherish them for all time.

Since the launch of the scheme in 2017, 24 red plaques have been created, carrying the names of 57 firefighters. A further 13 are in the pipeline.

The most recent plaques were unveiled for Hector Keeley (*above*) from Chelmsford fire station who died in the line of duty on 29 July 1950, and for Northern Ireland firefighter John Nichol, whose plaque

was unveiled on 27 August 2021, the anniversary of his death 45 years ago.

Earlier this year, a new red plaque website was revealed allowing the public to view memorial sites honouring fallen firefighters and to apply for future red plaques.

The scheme, which aims to ensure that the sacrifice of fallen firefighters is permanently remembered in their communities, is going from strength to strength.

■ redplaque.org.uk



BLACK HISTORY MONTH FOOD FOR THOUGHT



ROD LEON

Karen Bell, vice chair of the FBU's Black and Ethnic Minority Members (B&EMM) section, on Black History Month and its significance for us all

In October each year, Black History Month, we take a look at black history around the world and the contributions made by black historical figures and black communities.

Often, our first thoughts are of historical figures like Martin Luther King Jnr, Mary Seacole, Nelson Mandela and Rosa Parks. Their contributions to the history books and society are today unquestionable.

Additionally, we have started to look at more modern day notable and inspiring black figures and

those providing impactful change on how we live today, including poet and activist Maya Angelou, boxer and civil rights campaigner Muhammad Ali, Michelle and Barack Obama and sporting giants like Sir Mo Farah, Usain Bolt, Lewis Hamilton and Marcus Rashford.

CHANGE AND HOPE

All of the above have provided meaningful change and hope for change for people who are often marginalised because of their skin colour.

To grow societal change and acceptance of diversity, it is important to continue to educate all and empower those marginalised, to showcase the importance and beauty of diversity within all communities.

This year when I started to think of the importance of celebrating Black History Month I thought of my own life journey as a black female, born in the UK, with my early years during the end period of the Windrush Generation.

I remember the struggles my parents had, mum working nights and dad working days in jobs that were influenced by societal perception that black people could only fulfil certain roles within communities.

I remember people wanting to touch my skin and hair out of curiosity!

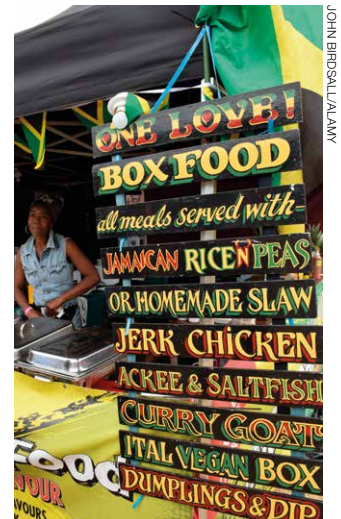
I remember being educated in schools where the numbers of black pupils in each year group were in single figures and there were no black teachers.

I remember schools focusing on my sporting ability and not putting any emphasis on my academic abilities.

I also think fondly of all the traditions I grew up with – “Sunday dinner” coupled with Otis Redding and Al Green, being one of my favourites.

When I reflect upon my memories, I think of the contributions that black people have made upon everyday life.

Contributions to music and food always come to mind. I don't think that there is a country out there that has not heard of and enjoyed the music of Bob Marley. The words sung are words



JOHN BIRD/SAL/LAMMY

of redemption, love, faith, harmony and hope.

The variety of foods that are now available in the UK from around the world is vast.

With that variety comes the shared traditions – “Soul Food” and “Sunday Dinner”.

These shared traditions are enjoyed by all, whether it be a visit to your local Caribbean or African takeaway or to a street food festival or an invitation to join a West Indian or African family for a meal.

Black History Month is a time to explore not only historians, but also a time to explore how, where and when black culture and life styles have influenced your life today.

It's also a time to explore how societal changes have influenced the lives of black people today.

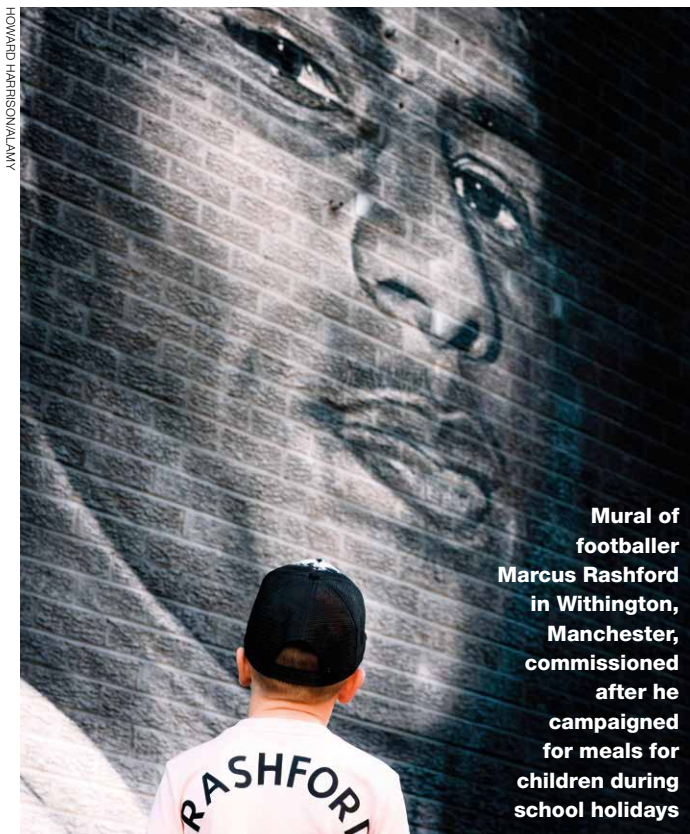
SOMETHING YOU ENJOY

So, as well as looking at the contributions of those aforementioned black historical figures, this year, think about something that you enjoy in your day-to-day life, whether it be a particular food, piece of clothing, song, festival, church or activity, and think about where it originated.

How have the contributions made by the parents of your black friends and colleagues influenced how you live today?

I think you will agree that this is “food for thought”.

In the words of Bob Marley: One Love.



HOWARD HARRISON/LAMMY

Mural of footballer Marcus Rashford in Withington, Manchester, commissioned after he campaigned for meals for children during school holidays

SEXUAL HARASSMENT GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS LIGHT ON DETAIL

Jo Seery of social justice law firm Thompsons Solicitors discusses the government response to a consultation on sexual harassment – and what this could mean for FBU members

Discussion around sexual harassment in the workplace has been brought to the fore in recent years – from Alyssa Milano's tweet relaunching the "Me Too" campaign four years ago, to the UK Parliament's Women and Equalities Select Committee (WESC) publishing its recommendations on sexual harassment in the workplace in July 2018.

In both cases, the government faced widespread calls to take robust action against workplace sexual harassment.

An overdue formal consultation on sexual harassment took place in 2019. It took a further two years, until July this year, for the government to publish its belated response.

THE CONSULTATION

The consultation took place between 11 July 2019 and 2 October 2019 and sought views on:

- The introduction of a mandatory duty on employers to protect workers from harassment
- How best to strengthen and clarify the laws in relation to third party harassment
- Whether protections should extend to interns and volunteers
- Whether the time limit to lodge a legal claim should be extended from three to six months.



SATOSHI KAMBAYASHI

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE?

A mandatory duty on employers to prevent sexual harassment.

The government says it intends to introduce a duty requiring employers to take all reasonable steps before sexual harassment occurs. But what will amount to reasonable steps? And how will the duty be enforced?

In answer to the first question, it seems that the reasonable steps will be set out in a statutory code of practice.

Employers have recently been warned, in the case of *Allay (UK) Limited v Gehlen*, that reasonable steps must be effective in preventing harassment.

In that case it was held that simply providing equality and diversity training at some point was not enough, since the duty on the employer is to take all reasonable steps.

If the training is stale, and

ineffective in preventing harassment, the employer will be open to criticism if they fail to do more.

As to how the duty will be enforced – it seems from the government's response that an employer will be liable for failing to take preventive measures when there is an act of harassment.

It is unclear whether there is going to be a stand-alone liability for failing to take steps to prevent sexual harassment.

It is also unclear if the duty is going to be limited to sexual harassment or if it will include other forms of harassment.

THIRD PARTY HARASSMENT

In the face of widespread condemnation, the Conservative-LibDem coalition government repealed the law on third party harassment in 2013.

Previously, an employer

was liable where a worker was harassed by a third party (a customer or service user, for instance) on more than two occasions.

The government is now committed to re-introducing workplace protections against third-party harassment.

While there are no details yet on what form the duty will take, we can assume that to avoid having to concede that withdrawing it before was a mistake, it is unlikely to be the same as before. It seems likely that employers will be able to rely on a "reasonable steps" defence.

EXTENDING THE TIME LIMITS

The current time limit to lodge a legal claim is three months less one day of the act of harassment. Even though the government recognises the difficulties this causes for those subject to harassment, it has said, having one eye on the backlog of claims in the tribunal, that it will only "look closely" at extending it.

CONCLUSION

Reform of the law on sexual harassment has been a long time coming from a government that has been in power since 2010.

So it is frustrating that the government's proposals for reform – when they have eventually been produced – are light on detail. For that there is no excuse.

It is going to be some time before we know whether the reforms are robust enough to prevent harassment in the workplace given that, even after all this time, draft legislation will only be published "when parliamentary time allows."

■ For more information, visit [Thompsons Solicitors' FBU hub](https://www.thompsonsunion.law/Trade-Unions/FBU)



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FBU PHOTO COMPETITION 2021

Judges considered a wide variety of images in this year's FBU photo competition. There was a creditable entry, possibly affected by lockdown, with few problems picking an initial dozen candidates for next year's FBU calendar.

Si Peck's image of ALP training at the Humberside FRS Peaks Lane station in Grimsby, taken this year, was the winner.

Judges appreciated the combination of a striking image with a clear depiction of firefighters at work. The lack of any terrestrial reference point and an almost surreal sky background ensured that it stood out from other entries.

Runner up Ben Dent-Willoughby's image stepped outside the need to show actual firefighters and skilfully captured the fascination of everyday objects seen from a different viewpoint.

"This is a photo I took whilst trying out my new camera in a dark engine house," he said.

"I loved the way the locker lights lit the pump and the way the red colour of the pump really punched out in the image. I really like the contrast with the silver elements on the pump too."

Tomas Hargreaves took his runner-up entry in April this year on common land near Silvermere golf club near Cobham in Surrey, close to the A3/M25 junction.

Another striking image, it also features a highly topical subject – wildfires – and the nature of a firefighter's work, with a Unimog crew damping down at 2am.



TOP: Tomas Hargreaves' image of damping down after a wildfire
LEFT: Ben Dent-Willoughby's image of a pump's locker transformed by light and colour
BELOW: Si Peck's image of ALP training – see cover for larger image



TWEETS

Natalie Mortimer
 @NatalieMortim12

Decontamination, making it an essential part of every BA Wear #DECONFBU



7:31 AM · Sep 1, 2021 · Twitter for iPhone

15 Retweets 1 Quote Tweet 37 Likes

All branches should have received a DECON to 'prevent and protect' campaign poster pack. If your station needs another pack please fill in the form (link below) and we'll get one out to you:
<https://bit.ly/2YgrrOK>

FIREFIGHTER SURVEY

A big thank you to everyone who took part in the recent *Firefighter* magazine online survey.

We wanted to know your thoughts on how it could be developed to better suit your needs.

Your responses will help us to ensure that *Firefighter* is a relevant and valuable resource to everyone who reads it.

STATION CAT RULES AND REGULATIONS

Should they go
to Specsavers?
See Standard
Eyes

LEE MARTIN/ALAMY



STANDARD EYES

Dorset and Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service (DWFRS) has confirmed that it has updated its eyesight requirements and is encouraging anyone who has not applied previously, or perhaps failed mid-process, because of their sight to get in touch.

A DWFRS spokesperson said: "We've standardised our requirements, but it's too complicated to explain the various nuances."

Your Cat cannot confirm a rumour that Dominic Cummings is thinking of applying.

IT'S ALL GONG WRONG

Your Cat could be wrong, but she thinks if you have drawn Gavin Tomlinson in your watch's Queen's Fire Service Medal sweepstake then there is a good chance you are not going to be a big winner.

The problem is, the chief fire officer of Derbyshire has rather excluded himself from getting an award this, or any other year soon for that matter, by disagreeing with the government.

CFO Tomlinson has expressed concern about a government consultation on *Building Bulletin 100: Fire Safety Design in Schools*.

The original guidance, issued in 2007, acknowledged the important role of sprinklers, stating that all new schools should have fire sprinklers installed, except in a few low-risk cases.

In the latest revision of the guidance, this requirement has been removed.

CFO Tomlinson believes the updated version of the



Breathing apparatus:
see High Stakes

guidance represents a real lessening of fire safety and has urged the government to rethink its new guidance on sprinklers in schools.

He also said it provides a potential loophole which could allow building developers to follow alternative design guidance, circumventing the requirement for the fitting of sprinkler systems.

In Scotland and Wales sprinklers are mandatory in all new and substantially refurbished schools.

So, no gong for Tommo, but at least it's something less to worry about for the academy school trusts the Tories seem to love so much.

HIGH (RISE) STAKES

It is fair to say that your Cat is not in the first flush of kittenhood. She dates back to nearly two decades before the command and control of breathing apparatus (BA) was covered by TB 1/97.

Back then the wearing of a BA set was seen as more of a luxury than the necessity it was and still is in the protection of a firefighter's respiratory tract.

So, when your Cat heard that Hampshire and Isle of Wight Fire and Rescue Service had plans to change its procedures for dealing

with high rise incidents, she was incredulous.

The new working methods would allow firefighters operating as stairwell safety

teams beyond the entry control point (ECP) to work without BA.

BAECPs have been employed for decades for a reason – to ensure the safety of operations within the risk area.

Your Cat wonders how the command structure beyond the ECP would work. Is it a tad truculent to suggest that the closer to the seat of the fire you got, the lower the rank of firefighter you would find?

FLAMING TREES

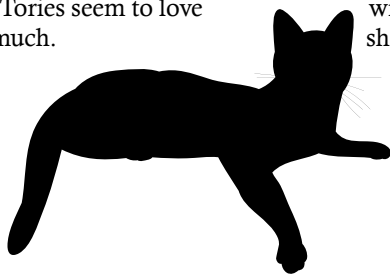
Your Cat recently came across the story of the firefighters in America who are battling raging forest fires in an unconventional manner.

In California fire crews are protecting a group of ancient giant sequoias threatened by a wildfire by wrapping aluminium foil around the base of the tree trunks.

At first your Cat thought it was *acorn-y* April Fool joke, but on checking the calendar found it was *Sept-timber*. *Wood* you believe it she thought; *alder* thought it, are they *barking* up the wrong tree, but then again such *blue spruce* thinking could get to the *root* of a very *thorny* problem.

If this *elemen-tree* solution is a success it could become *poplar* and *branch* out to other areas of firefighting *leafing* many doubters *shrub-ing* their shoulders.

Acacia didn't realise, *yew* have to *stick* to a *root-ine* when *sap-lying* the foil, *fir* what it's worth it could be the *holly* grail in wildfires.



25-YEAR BADGES



Neil Hitchen (r), white watch, Hyndburn, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Stu Roxburgh



Tony Wenger (r), protection department, Shrewsbury HQ, Shropshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Louise Fletcher



Carl Taylor (l), Bacup, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Chris Howarth



Dave Forth (l), Rawtenstall, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Richard Horrocks on his retirement with colleagues and retired members looking on



Nick Bourke (l), brigade secretary, Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from Southern region EC member Steve Wright with members from Slade Park, Oxford, looking on



Simon Belcher (r), Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from former brigade chair Jimmy Harris



Phil Garside (r), headquarters, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Kev Wilkie with colleagues from Skelmersdale looking on



Alexander Johns (l), National Training Centre, Cambuslang, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from NTC chair Fabrice Dubois



Tulsa Davidson (r), National Training Centre, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from NTC chair Fabrice Dubois



Thomas Mitchell (r), National Training Centre, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from NTC chair Fabrice Dubois



Steve White (c), blue watch, Kings Lynn, Norfolk, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Adam Walford-Dunn (l) and branch secretary Jamie Hodkinson



Phil Clarke (l), red watch, Chesterfield, Derbyshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Andy Holmes, with red and white watch members looking on



Steve Mead (r), Rewley Road, Oxfordshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Nick Bourke with colleagues looking on



Pat Baker (r), white watch, Basingstoke, Hampshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair Matt Davis



Deborah Ashmore (r), white watch, Corby, Northamptonshire, receives her 25-year badge from FBU rep Jed Goodfellow



Paul Rich (r), Feltham, London, receives his 25-year badge from EC member David Shek



Paul Kemble (r), RDS, Yeovil, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dan Gillard with colleagues looking on



Anthony Welden (l), green watch, Bethnal Green, London, receives his 25-year badge from North East area organiser Micky Bhasin, in front of his colleagues



Jason Bettinson (r), Surbiton, London, receives his 25-year badge from SW area secretary Dave Young



Paul Rourke (l), Littleborough, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade secretary Steve Wiswell with colleagues (l-r) Andrew Rourke, Ben Calvert and Krzysztof Wyzlic



Lee Jacques (r), Erith (formerly Islington), London, receives his 25-year badge from North East area organiser Micky Bhasin



Craig Wilson (r), white watch, Kilmarnock, Scotland, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Craig Clark



Tony Belmont (r), green watch, Sidcup, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Neil Fox



Terry Jewell (l), Essex HQ, receives his 25-year badge from officer section rep Richie Green



Matt Cawley (r), Kingston, London, receives his 25-year badge from SW London area secretary Dave Young, with colleagues looking on



Steve Passmore (r), RDS, Yeovil, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dan Gillard with colleagues looking on

25-YEAR BADGES



Stephen Tilbury (r), Surrey, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Simon Harris



Steve Mitchell (r), Preston, Lancashire, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Alan Pearson



Barry Mullan (l), Northamptonshire, receives his 25-year badge from officers' rep Ro Shelm Doogan Cutler



John Trott (r), RDS, Yeovil, Devon and Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dan Gillard, with colleagues looking on



Gary Kay (l), Cheadle, Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Neil Messenger



Mark Watkins (l), on call duty system, Bridgend, South Wales, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Sean Cayford



Ed Symons (r), training centre branch, Kent, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Dave Turner



Andy Wildsmith (l), Brixton, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Chris Jones



Simon Dedman (r), Manningtree, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from officer section rep Richie Green



Quentin Sage (l), Manningtree, Essex, receives his 25-year badge from officer section rep Richie Green



Neil Fenwick (r), Essex HQ, receives his 25-year badge from officer section rep Richie Green



Neil Barlow (2nd r), Castleford, West Yorkshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Ryan Binks with colleagues looking on



Gary Witney (r), blue watch, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Jo Foot, with watch colleagues looking on



Martin Stanley (l) and **Ray Turner (r)**, Kent, receive their 25-year badges from group rep **Paul Moore**, who is also the Mayor of Broadstairs and St Peters, with the crew of Canterbury fire station



Sean Dartnell (l), green watch, Lewes, East Sussex, receives his 25-year badge from branch chair **Steve Oakman** with (l-r), **Alex Edwards**, **Tim Cook**, **Andy Watson** and **Josh Caswell** looking on



Stuart Kirkcaldy (r), blue watch, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser **Jo Foot**, with watch colleagues looking on



Gary Nolan and **Mark Conroy**, Paddington, London, receive their 25-year badges from South West area secretary **Dave Young (l)** and EC member **David Shek (r)**



Ian Pearce (l) and **Andy Griffiths (r)**, Maidstone, Kent, receive their 25-year badges from branch rep **Ray Hare**, with colleagues looking on

Please send high resolution digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE

For your image to look its best, we need the original, full-resolution image. One lifted from a website may not do justice to a unique occasion. We do our best with images that are low resolution, taken directly into a bright light or suffer from camera-shake, or have other problems, but cannot perform miracles. Please include details for each image – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where/when it was taken.

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Region 13 Avon, Cornwall, Devon

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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.

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FIREFIGHTERS WATCH MADE SPECIALLY TO
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Elliot Brown, creators of the previous firefighter watches have created special 'Thin Red Line' editions of their proven Canford and Kimmeridge watches – only available to firefighters, serving and retired.

To register your interest in the 'Thin Red Line' firefighters special edition watches, go to [Bit.ly/EBxFBU](https://bit.ly/EBxFBU)

Check the December/January issue of Firefighter for news on delivery timing and how to order yours.

Elliot Brown are donating £35 from the sale of every watch to Rock2Recovery to fund mental health wellness for the blue light and military communities.