



The Premier Trade Union for Professional Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff: April 2011

FBU SAYS NO RETURN TO “VICTORIAN” AGE!



“DISGRACEFUL” SHIFT PROPOSALS WILL FORCE FIREFIGHTERS BACK INTO THE VICTORIAN AGE!

The FBU has slammed proposals that the Union says will cut frontline jobs, compromise safety and take Firefighters back in time to a “victorian age”.

The proposals, called “day crewed plus” are being considered by FRS’s throughout the South West and a version is currently under consultation in Devon & Somerset. “These proposals are about mass job losses and creating dangerous cuts in frontline fire cover” according to FBU Official Tam McFarlane, “they are both unprofessional and unsafe”. The Union has raised its strong objections

regarding this system at a political level and is campaigning heavily for its rejection amongst local Councillors and the public. The proposal is outside the working time directive, outside the Grey Book and totally outside of national pay rates.

The FBU has been contacted by Firefighters furious at Chiefs for considering a system which would imprison them in a fire station and devastate their family lives. Read more on this issue and how you can get involved on page 2.

Frontline Cuts in the South West will affect safety

Despite political promises to the opposite, Fire Authorities and CFO’S are planning major front-line cuts in South West Fire & Rescue Services.

The Government had promised Firefighters and the public that budget cuts would not mean cuts in “frontline” services but the opposite is true.

Although not all budgets have been finalised, the FBU has been told of plans to cut front line posts across the Region to save money. This would clearly have a serious impact on public safety.

Every Service in the Region, from Wiltshire down to Cornwall, has informed the Union that establishment levels will suffer if these budget cuts go ahead.

The FBU has responded by stating that we will fight against **any** cuts that compromise Firefighter or Public safety.

The cuts come at a time when Firefighters are told to expect pay freezes & pension cuts. The FBU has told Government that we do not accept our Members having to pay with their pensions or wages for a crisis caused by the banking sector. More information can be found at www.southwestfbu.com

CUTS COST LIVES!

Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service



Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff

“DAY CREW PLUS” A RETURN TO THE VICTORIAN AGE

SAY NO! TO MASS JOB CUTS

As the debate over cuts in the Fire Service continues, one of the worst aspects has been the role of some politicians and principal officers in proposing systems which would take our service back in time to the Victorian age. The proposals are based on deceiving the public into believing that the same level of service can be delivered with half the number of Firefighters. The plans are called “Day Crewed Plus” or “Self Rostering” or the “Lancashire system”.

These are all slight variations on the same disgraceful idea:

Reducing the number of firefighters on a station by half and making those who are left work twice as long for much less pay.

The basic premise of such systems is this:

- Cutting the number of firefighters on a station by at least half (on a WT Station this means getting rid of 2 watches entirely);
- Making those who are left work double the hours; between 84-96 continuous hours on duty a week;
- Giving a minimal allowance of around 20% (which actually takes the hourly rate of pay for a Firefighter to just slightly above the minimum wage!);

The FBU is of the view that such systems are outdated and draconian. The sole aim is to make savings at the expense of jobs and Firefighters working lives.

The consequences of this system would see Firefighters having to work between 84-96 hours a week for a combined hourly rate of pay far **below** that of the nationally agreed rate for a competent Firefighter.

Employers use budget constraints as an excuse for introducing these systems, but the fact is that such systems would not make the claimed savings. If introduced, these systems would have a massive, and detrimental impact on our Fire Services. They would remove resilience from the rest of the service, they would massively reduce Firefighter numbers, they would put surrounding stations under greater strain and they would enslave

Firefighters to a Victorian working week with no regard to staff and their families.

Employers say that this system is up and running in places like Lancashire and Merseyside. What they are less keen to point out is that in South Wales, which is far similar in make up to the South West, the plans were kicked out as unworkable!

Employers say that they want “volunteers” for this system and our Members are telling us that in some areas they are being written to, at home, and asked to sign an “expression of interest” in carrying out this system. Members go on to tell us that their employer says that if they do not sign the form then the employer will approach other people to do so. The FBU believes that this is a crude attempt to try and get Firefighters to sell out their colleagues jobs by offering second rate financial bribes and applying subtle pressure to accept them.

However employers dress these systems up the truth is that they are a crude attempt to massively cut our Service whilst pretending to the public that Emergency cover remains unaltered.

The effects of these systems are:

Impact of job losses

1. Half the workforce gone, never to return;
2. Far fewer Crew and Watch Managers. Around 1 WM and 2 CM per station, as opposed to the normal 4 WM and 4 CM now, so chances of promotion drastically reduced;
3. Resilience in the service hugely reduced;
4. Fewer firefighters during protracted incidents, particularly in smaller FRS;
5. Reduction in Fire Cover as neighbouring Stations have to provide cover across different areas when Firefighters reach exhaustion point.

Impact on Pay

1. Firefighters may be offered a % increase in salary but this is non-pensionable. Anything less than an increase of 100% means that the hourly rate for the job decreases massively. For a Firefighter this

means the hourly rate drops to around the minimum wage!

2. Destroying national pay rates and severely hampering future pay negotiations and potential rises

Impact on Family

1. Firefighters would spend up to 84-96 hours at a time on the Fire station. The impact on family life will be devastating. The facilities, if any, would be basic at best - think cheap hotel.
2. They would expect you to work a 12 hour shift then carry out standby duties at the station for a further 12 hours.
3. In effect you would be imprisoned at the workplace. If in the future you have loans etc based on the extra money then you will be unable to transfer, no matter how bad it gets.

Such systems are not fit for purpose let alone for the 21st Century Fire & Rescue Service. They are:

- ***Outside the Grey Book;***
- ***Outside the Working Time Directive;***
- ***Outside National Pay Rates;***

These plans have been raised in Brigades throughout our Region and the FBU is forcibly challenging this attempt to drag our service into the past. We will not stand back and see our jobs destroyed, our family lives wrecked and the working hours & pay of our Service torn apart. We will fight this in any FRS where the proposals are put forward and we need every member to play their part.

These are some myth busters about the DCP system. There are more to come. The FBU will oppose these shift systems where they appear but we need your help to do so. At this stage we ask that you:

- ***Do not sign expression of interest forms***
- ***Do express your opposition during any watch visits by senior managers***
- ***Write to your elected councillors to express your opposition***
- ***Attend Branch meetings to put forward your views on this important matter***

More on this issue will follow!

SOUTH WEST FIREFIGHTERS CONDEMN PENSION CUT PLAN

Firefighters across the South West have expressed anger at the recent report published by the Hutton commission on public sector pensions. The Hutton proposals suggest increasing Firefighters retirement age, cutting pension provision, and upping pension contributions.

The proposals are totally unjust and are a further attack on our profession when we are already facing pay freezes and job cuts. The FBU has promised to oppose any attack on the pension scheme and has pointed out that Firefighters already pay up to 11% contributions and that Fire Service pensions underwent a major reform and "modernisation" only a few years ago.

Tam McFarlane FBU Executive member for the South West said: "FBU members across the South West, from Avon to Cornwall, have contacted the Union and expressed their opposition and condemnation of the Hutton proposals. The Hutton proposals will mean that Firefighters will have to pay more, work longer and get less. There is absolutely no recognition of the dangerous and physically demanding nature of a Firefighters role or the massive personal financial contribution that Our Members make towards their pension." "The firefighters' pension is already fair, sustainable and affordable. The Union rejects as an insult and a myth any suggestion that Firefighters pensions are "gold plated". Firefighting is a very physical profession which is at the cutting edge of front line emergency services. Our Members put themselves at enormous risk to serve the public in the most dangerous of circumstances. Their pensions are not a privilege or a bonus; they are a very

hard earned and necessary part of the profession. If Hutton gets his way these hard earned pensions will be lost and our Members plans for the future will be destroyed".



Phil Jordan, FBU South West

Phil Jordan FBU Regional Chair said: "Our Members are united in their condemnation of these proposals and we will do everything necessary to protect them. This is a politically motivated attack. We have seen our pensions substantially

altered in recent times and they are

clearly sustainable and affordable. Despite this one of the first things that this new Government has done is to paint our pensions as "gold plated" and target them for change using the current deficit as an excuse. We will not accept this. The greedy bankers who caused this massive deficit are already back to enjoying huge bonuses and yet our members are expected to pay for it with their pensions. We are already working very closely with other Unions in the South West and will use our combined efforts to defend working people's pension rights which have been hard won over many years."

LET THE UNION DO ITS JOB!



In the run up to the last General Election and following the introduction of the Tory led coalition, the FBU has been campaigning hard for our Service.

We have lobbied politicians at all levels expressing our view that any cuts to the Fire & Rescue Service would have a devastating effect.

We have been clear that we will fight any cuts to the front line of the Fire Service which impact on Firefighter and public safety. Politicians & principal managers

know that the FBU will stand in the way of cuts and they have been increasing their attempts to undermine the negotiating power of the Union.

One of the tactics in increasing use in the South West is when employers write or email to Members on a "one to one" basis seeking "expressions of interest" or asking for input on working groups or forums on particular issues.

These letters, groups and forums have been organised by management in regard to a variety of issues such as wholtime/retained in Gloucestershire, Gartan in DSFRS, Day Crewed plus, the Newquay project in Cornwall etc. We urge all our Members to think very carefully about the potential impact of this issue on us all.

If FBU members are asked by employers to participate in this way then you should consider this question: *whose interest is this really in?*

Time after time the FBU has had the "outcome" of such working groups or "expressions of interest" used to try and undermine our ability to negotiate on behalf of all our Members. This is usually done by employers suggesting that the results of these "staff consultations" show that the majority of staff actually agree with the proposals they are suggesting!

Participation in these areas is of course voluntary and there is no doubt that the majority of Members get involved for the best of reasons. But we ask all Members to consider the effect of the smoke screen that can be caused by this issue and if in any doubt contact your rep.

The FBU is an open and accountable Trade Union and we will always fight and negotiate on behalf of all Members *as a collective*.



FOLLOW US ON FACEBOOK:

Follow us on our own dedicated facebook page: Go to **South West Region of the Fire Brigades Union** and hit the "like" button. You will receive updates on our work and links to how we are fighting for you locally. You can also follow us on our dedicated website at: www.southwestfbu.com

NO TO FRONTLINE CUTS



South West EC Member Tam McFarlane

I know that every Firefighter & Emergency Fire Control Member in the South West will join with me in condemning the disgraceful cuts being proposed across our Service and our Region.

The cuts represent the biggest political attack on the Fire & Rescue Service and other public services in living memory. Across the public sector as a whole the Government says that 500,000 jobs will be axed, with as many again from the private sector. It is sickening that while the Government attacks Firefighters and Public Servants, the bankers who caused the crisis are set to receive £7 BILLION in bonuses in this year alone (Centre for Economics and Business Research). Clearly we are NOT "all in this together".

In the Fire Service across the South West we are now seeing the first wave of proposed cuts being rolled out and the scale is staggering. Dangerous plans to reduce fire cover, cut jobs and downgrade Fire stations are being proposed across the Region. Such plans would increase the risk to both the public and Firefighters alike and exposes as a lie previous promises to "protect front line services".

Proposals such as these are ill thought out, unprofessional and ultimately dangerous and we need to be absolutely clear: the FBU will oppose any cuts that reduce fire cover and put public or Firefighter safety at risk and we expect all FBU members to stand and fight together for our future.

Politicians and principal managers who want to cut our Service know that the FBU will stand in their way. That is why they try to split us. Up and down the country we have recently seen management tactics designed to cause friction between Firefighters on different Duty Systems, or isolate Officer and Control Members. We must see such tactics for what they are: an attempt to undermine our Unity to achieve cuts in our Service.

I urge every FBU member to resist any tactic designed to split us.

The proposed cuts will hit us all: Wholetime, Retained, Officer & Control and we must all send the message that **an attack on one is an attack on us all.**

A common feature in our Region relates to plans for so called "Day Crewing plus". People do not call this "the victorian system" for nothing and I believe that managers who propose such a backward step should be ashamed of themselves. Such systems would create mass job losses and imprison Firefighters at their workplace for days at a time. It would destroy our family lives and destroy pay rates in our job as well.

The FBU has experienced these proposals in other parts of the country and I want to caution members of the tactics being used. Under National Conditions of Service if FRS's want to change Duty Systems then they should reach agreement with the FBU. However instead of this, some FRS's have deliberately undermined the majority of the workforce by offering substantial sums to individuals in an attempt to bribe them into working these systems.

Members should not be fooled: these plans are about reducing establishment levels and achieving massive job cuts. Be under no illusion: these short term bribes are about selling out you and your colleague's jobs. Do not fall for these tactics. If any member is approached regarding signing up to such a system then they should refuse and inform the FBU immediately. **Any agreements must be made by the collective, through the FBU, not through bribing individuals.**

This is clearly a worryingly time for all of us in the Fire and Rescue Service and across the public service. Our pay, pensions and even our jobs are under threat **but the FBU is determined to fight back.** We are joining forces with other Unions across the TUC to fight back in a co-ordinated way to protect our Members and their hard won conditions.

The FBU, as the professional voice of our service is sending a clear message to politicians and principal officers: We will fight **against** dangerous cuts and **for** our service.

We are not going to see Firefighters enslaved or stand by and watch our jobs and our service cut. I am calling on every Member to play their part and unite in the campaigns that are coming. Doing nothing is not an option; join with the FBU and fight for our future. Unity is Strength.

Tam McFarlane

Contact Your Rep:

Avon: Chris Taylor

chris.taylor@fbu.org.uk

Cornwall: Dom Keen

dominic.keen@fbu.org.uk

Devon/Somerset: Trevor French

trevor.french@fbu.org.uk

Dorset: Karen Adams

karen.adams@fbu.org.uk

Gloucestershire: Mike Tully

mike.tully@fbu.org.uk

Wiltshire: Paul Lawler

paul.lawler@fbu.org.uk

Retained: Leigh Redman

leigh.redman@fbu.org.uk

Control: Simon Jones

simon.jones@fbu.org.uk

FBU SOUTH WEST

The Fire Brigades Union is the premier Trade Union for professional Firefighters and Control Staff across the UK. The South West Region is the largest Region in England and we cover Avon, Cornwall, Dorset, Devon & Somerset, Gloucestershire and Wiltshire FRS's.

We represent over 85% of uniformed staff across the UK. Our members cover every role from Firefighter to Area Manager, including the retained duty system. We are committed to protecting our Members, their interests at work and to ensuring that the public receive an excellent and professional Fire & Rescue Service. Join the professionals, contact us at:

www.southwestfbu.com

