



# TIME TO LISTEN!

## LOBBY YOUR MP - FBU DEMANDS POLITICIANS ACT ON PENSIONS & FLOODS!

The FBU is urging all firefighters to lobby individual Members of Parliament in an attempt to hold politicians to account over pension cuts and a lack of action on flooding.

Just follow the link on Firefighter Contributions, fill in your address and email your MP - Simple!

The Union has set up an easy to use email option where firefighters can demand action from their MP over planned pension increases which the Union has slammed as “*unjustified and self-defeating*”.

The proposals would see a further increase in the pension contributions paid by firefighters from 1 April 2014. They would mean that the rates paid by firefighters earning more than £21,000 and up to and including £30,000 band would increase to an incredible **14.2%** for members of the 1992 FPS and to **10.4%** for those on the 2006 NFPS.

The Union has made a formal response to the Department for Communities and Local Government consultation on the proposed increases and has outlined our severe concerns over the plans, describing them as “unfair on firefighters” and warning that the increases could actually “wreck the pension scheme”.

The FBU Parliamentary Group, which is a group of MP's in Westminster who support the FBU, has tabled an “Early Day Motion” entitled “**Firefighters Pensions Contributions**” and we are asking that all members lobby their MP to sign the motion and register their concerns with the Government plans. This can be done with the click of a button on the FBU website at [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk) and selecting the “Lobby Your MP” box on the right of the page.



### Flooding

Once more Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff have been working tirelessly across the South West dealing with severe flooding in many parts of the Region. With many of our members serving their communities in the most difficult of circumstances, the FBU has continued to fight to get this vital part of our work recognised by Government. A motion has been submitted in the House of Commons that argues for a formal obligation for firefighters to attend flooding.

Despite an expectation that fire and rescue services attend flooding, there is currently no formal requirement that they must do so in England and Wales.

In order to best prepare for future occurrences, there must be a statutory duty for fire and rescue services to attend flooding

incidents.

An Early Day Motion on this issue has been submitted and the FBU has also launched a campaign to ask MP's to use their influence to convince the government to create a statutory duty.

Ask your MP to support our campaign by using the “Lobby Your MP” option on our website or using the model letter (also available on the website) to write to them directly: Remember - *They work for you!*

***Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service***



***Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff***

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## ***FBU leader Matt Wrack attends mass meetings in Swindon & Bath***



**General Secretary Matt Wrack addresses Swindon members with South West EC Member Tam McFarlane**

The FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack recently addressed 2 large meetings in the South West and answered members questions on the ongoing pension dispute as well as giving a full update on the campaign so far.

Thanks to all those members who attended the meetings, which were held in Swindon & Bath, and we can confirm that we are liaising with FBU Head Office to put in place more meetings across other areas of the Region at the earliest opportunity.

The General Secretary gave a full update on the pensions campaign and answered many questions from members about all the different aspects of the dispute. He praised the unity and determination of FBU members and said "Firefighters in the South West were among those who helped keep the public safe during the devastating floods over the last month and their input into our campaign is vital to our ability to protect their pensions."

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### **PENSIONS – UPDATE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY MATT WRACK**

The General Secretary has written the following update for members regarding developments in relation to our ongoing campaign and dispute over pensions:

#### **Update on Northern Ireland**

The most encouraging development relates to the position in Northern Ireland in relation to the Public Service Pension Bill. You will be aware that despite our lobbying and campaigning the Public Service Pensions Act was passed in Westminster in 2013. This act applied to England, Scotland and Wales. It set many of Government's pension proposals into law including imposing a Normal Pension Age of 60 for Firefighters. The FBU had attempted to amend this position but unfortunately our suggested amendment did not receive the political support required. Significantly, Northern Ireland was not covered by this Act and a separate legislative process provided us with another opportunity to attempt to amend the legislation.

This campaign has included a presentation by FBU Officials to the Finance Committee of the Northern Ireland Assembly as well as dialogue and lobbying of Northern

Ireland politicians of all parties. Last week an amendment on the issue of Firefighters' pension age was supported by the Northern Ireland Assembly. This amendment means that the legal position for FPS/NFPS members in Northern Ireland is quite different to that for members in England, Scotland and Wales.

It is important to be clear that this does not set a lower NPA than elsewhere but it does allow the scheme regulations to take a more flexible approach in writing the scheme rules applicable to Firefighters in Northern Ireland. Over the coming weeks we will be working on ways of ensuring that we can maximise the impact of this flexibility. What is of particular note is that the politicians of all parties, acknowledged the strength of the evidence presented by the FBU on behalf of our members on the issue of pension age. One key task facing all of us is to demand a similar approach (i.e. listening to the evidence) from politicians in the rest of the UK.

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## PENSIONS – UPDATE FROM THE GENERAL SECRETARY MATT WRACK

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### Consultation on Employee Contributions

The proposed contribution increases for 2014 are known for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. The proposal is to apply the full increase of 1.3% FPS and 0.8% NFPS for Firefighters earning between £21,000 and £30,000 with higher tiered contributions for higher earners.

This is an extremely disappointing proposal which ignores many of the outstanding concerns we have presented showing that Firefighters are simply being priced out of their pension schemes.

The consultation for England has closed and the Union has submitted a detailed response which is available to read on the FBU website [www.fbu.org.uk](http://www.fbu.org.uk).

### Consultation on 2015 Pension Scheme

A further consultation on the 2015 scheme has opened in England. This sets out the scheme specifics and legislation and is due to close on 12 March. The FBU is preparing a response to this formally highlighting our concerns. This is a very detailed process and will require considerable effort and attention as well as significant legal advice.

### Legal Update

We are still exploring all legal challenges in relation to the Government's pension proposals. Some of these challenges have arisen from recent events and may require further discussion and specialist legal advice. This is currently being arranged while some are already being progressed. It is too early to judge the prospect of being successful in any of these but members can be assured that we are leaving no stone unturned in this. Once any specific challenges are identified and registered, further information will be provided to members.

### Talks

The Union is still involved with talks with the English Fire Minister (DCLG) and both sides are currently utilising professional actuarial advice to explore some particular areas. Meetings have been scheduled for 22 and 28 January where these will be discussed further. Executive Council meetings have also been scheduled following these meetings so that the negotiation team can report any developments as soon as possible. The Union is also attempting to progress the No Job No Pension element of the dispute with Government officials and the National Fire Service Employers. The FBU position is clear that the best way of getting the guarantee that Firefighters need would be by means of a regulation under the pension scheme to specifically address this concern. This will also be a focal point of all the meetings.

Members should be aware that all aspects of our dispute remain under discussion. We continue to explore every possible avenue to challenge these outrageous attacks on our

pensions. These may include legal or political routes or, of course, further industrial action.

### Next Steps

The current proposals remain unacceptable and still point to a pension scheme which is unworkable, unaffordable, unsustainable and unfair. As our Conference agreed, we will explore any and every opportunity to make progress and to seek improvements to the Government's proposals. However, we fully accept that these may bear no fruit and recognise that there is a real possibility of further strike action being necessary. We do not want to prejudge the outcome of any discussions but members must also be prepared for this possibility and should continue to make arrangements and hold strike committee meetings.

We are still facing the prospect of a further increase in employee contributions and have stepped up our political pressure including laying an Early Day Motion 946 and writing to all MP's asking for their support. You have a role to play in this and members are being encouraged to lobby their local MP. The situation in Northern Ireland is yet another example of how political lobbying can influence decisions.

### A Campaign for Everyone

The issues at stake in this campaign are extremely serious for all existing members and for the future of our pensions and our Service. We will never give up campaigning for decent pensions which reflect the occupation our

members undertake.

In this campaign there is a part for everyone. Many FBU members have made a powerful impact by lobbying local politicians. That has had a significant effect in Northern Ireland. Writing to, emailing or speaking to politicians is something everyone can do.

All Branches are asked to:

- **Ensure all members remain informed about developments.**
- **Flag up questions and ensure they are passed up through local officials.**
- **Make use of all sources of information; circulars, FBU website, FBU videos etc.**
- **Organise local lobbying events.**
- **Invite MPs to the workplace to listen to your concerns.**
- **Engage with local communities, trade union, tenants groups etc. to explain our case.**
- **Ensure any further strike action is locally planned and active so that local people and the local media understand what we are doing and why**

Thank you for all your efforts so far,  
MATT WRACK





## UNITED & DETERMINED!



**South West EC Member Tam McFarlane**

**As 2014 begins, it is clear that we are starting this year as we ended the last: fighting a battle against dangerous cuts to our service and to defend our pensions from government robbery!**

However, I want to start by praising the FBU members in our Region for your determination and resolve in the recent industrial action. I have stood on many picket lines

throughout our Region and the dignity and unity of those involved has been inspiring. Nobody wanted to strike, but we have been left with no option by a Westminster government who has created this mess but refuses to clear it up.

Throughout the whole pension campaign the FBU has taken a professional, evidence based approach. We have proved beyond doubt that the Government proposals are unsustainable, unworkable and would leave vast numbers of firefighters with no option other than to leave the service with a greatly reduced pension or face the sack under capability.

*"I want to congratulate all South West FBU members for their determination, unity and resolve in the recent action"*

### **That is a situation that we cannot, and will not accept.**

Every firefighter, in all duty systems, in every role, is at threat in this way and the FBU is the **only** body standing up to defend them.

As the General Secretary makes clear; we remain ready for real talks - But we have to act to protect our pensions and our members. If the Government isn't prepared to listen then we have no choice other than to stand together and fight together, in order to achieve justice and a fair and sustainable future for firefighters.

The unity shown by you in recent months has stood as a powerful message to the government and employers that firefighters and the FBU will not be pushed around by politicians. Picket lines have grown across our Region as Firefighters stand shoulder to shoulder to fight for a fair future for everyone in the Fire & Rescue Service and the tremendous public support we have received stands as testament to the understanding that people have for our campaign.

There is now a period of talks and the government has the opportunity to resolve this dispute through proper negotiation. We all hope that this occurs. However we need to stand ready for further action if necessary and continue to send a clear message to **all** politicians that our Service and our Pensions are not up for grabs.

I am calling on every Member to use the tools on our website and email or write to their MP to lobby them against cuts to our Service and our Pensions.

It is time that Politicians started to put the needs of our Service and the safety of the public before political dogma and ideology - and we need to demand that they do!

Doing nothing is not an option; join with the FBU and fight for our future.

Unity is Strength.

**Tam McFarlane**  
**South West FBU**



Follow us on our own 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.



Follow us on Twitter at @southwestfbu

Keep up to date with our videos at 'South West FBU'



You can also follow us on our website at: [www.southwestfbu.com](http://www.southwestfbu.com)

## Contact Your Rep:

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## 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](http://www.southwestfbu.com)

