



STOP PRESS.....***FIRE STRIKES ESCALATE: FOUR DAYS OF ACTION IN FIGHT FOR FAIR PENSIONS!***

Firefighters in England have announced a significant escalation of strike action, with four days of strikes commencing on 31 October until 4 November.

This follows a refusal from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) to bring any new offer to the table over pensions, despite *two months* of talks.

The strike will begin at 18:00 on 31 October until 18:00 on 4 November.

The union has been negotiating in good faith and we have taken up every opportunity to make our case and seek changes to the government's pension plans, which are **unfair, unaffordable and unworkable**.

Despite promising statements from Penny Mordaunt, the Westminster Fire Minister, it is now clear the government does not want to resolve this dispute and is spoiling for a fight.

Matt Wrack, FBU General Secretary, said: "Firefighters are incandescent following two months of negotiations which have led to no new proposals. Firefighters will not stand by and see our members' pension rights destroyed by a government which does not give a damn about the safety or wellbeing of firefighters in the long term. The public do not want 60 year olds tackling fires. Everyone understands the stupidity of these plans – except government Ministers. We remain committed to resolving this dispute in the interests of our members and the public at large."

The FBU has opposed government attacks on firefighter pensions and we have presented large quantities of professional evidence to prove that the Government proposals do not take account of the

real operational demands or standards of a firefighter's role.

Under government proposals firefighters will have to work until they are 60 instead of 55, pay more into their pensions and ultimately get less in retirement. Due to the rigorous fitness requirements of the fire service, many firefighters are expected to be unable to work to 60 and therefore risk losing half of their pension. The public will also be put at risk with every likelihood that increasing numbers of 60 year old firefighters will be attending the most serious of incidents.

The Westminster government now stands isolated as the **ONLY** government in the United Kingdom which has offered no new proposals, with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales all putting forward new proposals for firefighters to consider.

Matt Wrack added: "The fact the Westminster government now stands alone in this dispute shows they are ignoring all the evidence and spoiling for a fight. ***They do not care less about firefighters or the fire and rescue service.***"

Breakthrough in Wales

The 4 day fire strike called in England has been averted in Wales as a result of a significant change of direction by the Welsh government. While the Westminster government continue to ignore the concerns raised by firefighters, the Welsh government has now suggested an improved proposal that could significantly improve the position for a large number of firefighters in Wales.

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The Welsh government confirmed in a letter to the union on 23 October that its Fire Minister (Minister for Public Services) is now making preparations to consult on pension scheme design which will differ from the one proposed in England. These are arguments which have so far been rejected by DCLG in relation to the English proposals. The changed position in Wales will need to be fully considered in relation to the lack of any revised proposals from England.

To allow this issue to be fully explored the FBU executive council unanimously agreed not to call Welsh firefighters to take strike action with their

English colleagues on this occasion but clarified that this could be a temporary measure and that this decision will be kept under review.

In response, Matt Wrack said: "This could be a significant improvement for a significant number of firefighters and cannot be ignored. It is incredible that the Welsh government recognised this and acted on it whilst the Westminster government continues to ignore all the evidence. It does support our view that strike action is avoidable if there is a willingness to do so but the Westminster government doesn't seem to want that."

Pension Regulations - Lobby your MP



The Westminster Government has issued a statement relating to their firefighter pension proposals and followed this up by laying the regulations to introduce the scheme.

These can be found at the following link:

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/id/ukSI/2014/2848>

We have been coordinating our opposition to this, working with members of the FBU Parliamentary Group. We have also explained in circulars how important it is for FBU members to fully engage in the political lobbying campaign.

The process for laying the regulations uses a "Statutory Instrument in a Negative Procedure". This means that there will be no debate or vote and the only means of opposing them is by tabling a 'Prayer'.

A 'Prayer' is simply the Parliamentary procedure that applies in this case. The process will request that at the very least the Government allows a debate on the

issue. There is no requirement on the Government to respond to this. However, we are also in discussion with leading opposition politicians. We are calling on the Labour Front Bench to support this process which would clearly assist in challenging the Government's approach. Members of the FBU Parliamentary Group are currently approaching the Labour Front Bench to see if they are willing to support this.

In the meantime our Parliamentary Group are preparing to table a 'Prayer' on behalf of the FBU and are collating signatures from supportive MPs.

It is vital that you play your part in getting this supported. The FBU pension campaign is not simply about industrial action. It also needs to involve political action and members are key to any success here. Please take a few minutes to contact your MP and encourage them to support this action.

Please visit the FBU website www.fbu.org.uk (under campaigns and pensions) for assistance with identifying and contacting your MP. (If you are experiencing problems accessing the website this may be resolved by accessing using the Google Chrome resource)

Alternatively if you speak to your MP please ask them to contact Simeon Andrews (FBU Parliamentary Coordinator) who will ensure that their name is added to the Prayer when it is tabled – they can do this by emailing: simeonl.andrews@parliament.uk / or phoning 020 7801 2730.

It is important that we maximise the opposition to these regulations.

Please take a few minutes and do this today.