



*The Premier Trade Union for Professional Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff: August 2012*

## FBU TELLS WILTSHIRE AUTHORITY: PLANS ARE “UNFIT FOR PURPOSE”!



### **“UNSAFE” PLANS MUST BE WITHDRAWN SAYS UNION!**

The FBU has demanded the withdrawal of plans that the Union says will cut the frontline operational capability of Wiltshire Fire & Rescue Service.

The Union has submitted its formal written response to a cuts package put forward by the Service which include cutting the number of Firefighter posts, reducing aerial appliances to only one, removing emergency tenders, halving rope rescue capability, creating 96 hour shifts and massive change to RDS contracts.

Wiltshire FBU Officials handed the submission to political leaders at a meeting of the Fire Authority stating that the cuts should

be withdrawn on the basis that they are both “unsafe” and “unfit for purpose”. Wiltshire FBU Secretary Brent Thorley said “we consulted widely with members in order to develop our formal response which we believe represents the true voice of professional Firefighters in Wiltshire. We have told the Service that we are willing to enter into a proper and formal dialogue on the issues involved but they should be under no illusion: the FBU will not accept cuts to the frontline Service which compromise public or firefighter safety”.

You can read the full response and receive updates on our website: [www.southwestfbu.com](http://www.southwestfbu.com).

### **TUC TELLS MP's: NO PAY CUT FOR THE SOUTH WEST**

The West Country stands to be relegated to the bottom division of the Chancellor's proposed new pay league, the South West TUC has warned. George Osborne has announced measures to introduce regional pay measures for public servants - a move that would see workers in the South West earn less than their counterparts in other parts of the country.

SW TUC Secretary Nigel Costley said: "The government claims that by setting lower pay for about a third of the local workforce it will somehow boost the private sector. There is no evidence for this, however, and cutting the earnings of the police, teachers, nurses etc will do nothing but harm to an economy that relies on consumer spending. We call on the region's MPs to oppose this measure, or risk the wrath of working people at the next election."

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



***Protecting Firefighters &  
Control Staff***

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# March for a Future that Works



As part of the ongoing campaign against cuts and for a better future, the TUC has organised a mass demonstration in London on 20 October. The FBU fully supports this and we are trying to mobilise as many

members as possible, from across the country, to show the government the true scale of opposition to their economic programme.

Austerity isn't working. Our country faces long-term economic problems. But our political leaders have failed to face up to them. For the next five years or more, unless policies change the economy will not grow, incomes will not rise, and there will be almost no new jobs.

If the government keeps on with big spending cuts and austerity we face a lost decade. Even on their own terms government policies are failing. To close the deficit we need a healthy growing economy that generates tax income. But austerity has led to a vicious circle of decline.

Instead of just letting the banks go back to business and bonuses as usual, we need policies that promote new and old industries.

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## POLITICAL SUCCESS AS FORMER FBU OFFICIAL ELECTED AS COUNCILLOR

A former FBU Brigade Official has won a seat as a Councillor in the recent local elections with the support of the FBU. Joe Tray, a serving Watch Manager in Wiltshire FRS and former FBU Brigade Secretary, was elected as a Councillor to Swindon Council representing Labour in the new ward of Penhill and Upper Stratton. Joe is a long standing and highly experienced FBU Official who received support and sponsorship from the South West FBU in his election campaign.

Joe now joins colleagues like Chris Jackson, Jeff Lovell and Leigh Redman in the ranks of former FBU Officials who have gone on to be elected as Councillors with the practical support of the FBU in the Region. They are all Labour Councillors and have a proven record of giving Firefighters and working people a strong and effective voice in local politics within the South West.

South West EC Member Tam McFarlane said "We have sent our wholehearted congratulations to Joe and thanks to everyone who helped in any way to get Joe elected. Joe has previously been a

This new approach would create jobs, especially for young people. It would encourage companies to raise average pay, penalise big bonuses and invest in training and new industries. It would crack down on tax evasion by big companies and the super-rich. It would tackle the growing inequality between the super-rich and everyone else. Rather than deep, rapid spending cuts, we need to reverse our decline and build an economy that works for ordinary families. We need a future that works.



Please take the pledge to march with us for a better future for Firefighters, the Fire Service and the country as a whole. Your Brigade's FBU banner will be there and we want you to march under it.

Your local Brigade Officials are taking numbers for the march and will be organising transport so please contact them as a matter of urgency and pledge to come.

fantastic representative and advocate for Wiltshire Firefighters as a senior FBU Official and now working people in Swindon will have an experienced, determined and effective voice fighting for them in the Council. The FBU in the South West knows from experience that Firefighters need an effective political voice fighting for them and the service in the council chambers and fire authorities throughout the Region. We have built a political strategy where the practical and financial support we have given to individuals has even seen former FBU Officials go on to sit on the Fire Authorities that they used to work for. This has obvious and considerable benefits for Firefighters & Control Staff in the FBU and I am delighted that Joe has added to these recent successes. At last some good news!"



**Former FBU Official & now  
"Councillor" Joe Tray**

Joe Tray thanked the Region by saying "the support received from the South West FBU has been a key part in my election success. As a long serving Firefighter and former FBU Official I know the importance of giving Firefighters and working people a political voice and that is what I pledge to do. The South West FBU is a Region that members should be proud of, they recognise that Trade Unions cannot achieve the objectives of their members without political action and they have acted to support this aim across the Region. At this point in time it should be obvious to everyone that politics matters and now, as a politician myself, I will fight to make sure that politics is not the exclusive preserve of a small, rich and powerful elite who seem to want to rule over us but not for us."



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## BANNERS FLY IN SUPPORT OF ESSEX FIRE CREWS

Essex Fire Crews started a 24 hour strike on Wednesday 18 July at 0900 until 0900 on Thursday morning. They accuse managers of being wholly intransigent, dictatorial and hell bent on confrontation. Delegations of Firefighters from across the UK, including members and officials from the South West Region, joined a march and rally in Chelmsford on Wednesday to show their support for the Essex crews who are fighting against cuts in the frontline 999 service.

At a rally after the event speakers gave the facts of the dispute:

- Despite currently having £12 million in reserve Essex has cut 100 wholetime FF posts since 2008;



Banners fly in Essex march

- 60 RDS Firefighter posts have been cut since 2008;

- Response times have increased since 2008;

- Back Office staff numbers have increased since 2008;

The dispute in Essex is about stopping further frontline cuts in the emergency service; and they need our help.

With such a belligerent management it is likely that this could be a long dispute which could cause significant hardship unless we all help out. We are asking members in the Region to

start and support collections at watch, station and control room level. It could make all the difference and would show support for colleagues who are fighting so hard for their Service and the public. Contact your local Official for more details or see our website at [www.southwestfbu.com](http://www.southwestfbu.com)

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## FBU RAISE POISONING CONCERNS ON WATER TRAINING COURSES



The FBU has raised concerns after firefighters from various regions suffered sickness during, and immediately after, Swift Water Training.

Training at the Slalom Course at the National Watersports Centre in Nottingham has seen some Firefighters develop serious stomach complaints while others were violently ill with vomiting and diarrhoea.

One recognised complication of acute stomach complaints from water born bacteria is the development of Post Infective Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS).

The water on the course is diverted directly from the River Trent and is suspected to be infected by Campylobacter, the bacteria which causes food poisoning. The nature of the course means the firefighters are submerged for long periods of time and have to undertake arduous swimming during the exercise.

Consequently they can inadvertently consume large quantities of water and develop stomach cramps, diarrhoea and vomiting. They can go on to develop IBS, a lifelong condition, which can be managed but not cured.

Thompsons solicitors have advised the FBU that Swift Water Training Courses, whilst essential, need to be safe. In order to provide a safe environment for the training it is essential that the organisation carries out a pre-training assessment of the venue and the water to ensure it is fit for the purpose of training which involves submersion and the likely ingestion of the water. Such assessment would include testing water samples, stopping courses going ahead if they knew about the sickness outbreaks during previous courses and asking the venue to confirm if any sickness had occurred at the venue previously.

FBU Regional Secretary Phil Jordan said: "When firefighters have to perform specialist training they rightly expect that their health and safety is fully considered before being exposed to potentially dangerous situations. If they are being poisoned doing this type of training then they are being badly let down by training providers, their employer and the centre itself. FBU Officials are currently working closely with legal experts and will be raising our concerns with Brigade managers."

"If any FBU member who has been on this course believe that they have been made ill as a result then they should contact the FBU without delay."

Kevin Digby from Thompsons Solicitors added: "Our experts are clear that the poor quality of the water in the Slalom Course can cause infection and that the primary mode of infection was ingestion whilst swimming. Given the arduous nature of the course and the long periods of submersion it is no surprise that these members consumed large quantities of this water. With this knowledge any employer sending staff to train in these conditions without carrying out a proper risk assessment is showing an appalling disregard for the safety of the course attendees. Clearly there is a risk that such a difficult course would involve the swallowing of the water and this should be considered."

If you believe that you have been made ill as a result of being on this course then contact the FBU or Thompsons without delay.



THE MOST EXPERIENCED  
PERSONAL INJURY FIRM IN THE UK

## WE WON'T BE FOOLED INTO DELIVERING CUTS!



### South West EC Member Tam McFarlane

The TUC has recently exposed statistics which will create anger and concern for all of us who live and work in the South West.

The figures, from the Office of National Statistics, show that an incredible one in 14 public sector workers in our Region lost their jobs between July and September last year. This means that a total of 37,000 workers - at 7%, the largest fall in the country - employed in the Region by local government, the police, the forces and the NHS lost their jobs. All of this at a time when finding work has never been harder.

As Firefighters we understand that behind every job loss is not just the job consequences but the loss of vital public services. Ministers must see that their economic policies are doing huge harm with public servants being chucked on the scrap heap and the public denied vital services that they once provided.

Our anger at this situation is made worse by some local Fire Service bosses and politicians who seem to be exploiting the economic climate as an excuse to force through damaging cuts in duty systems and working conditions. The Union has received reports from members who apparently have been told by unscrupulous bosses that they should consider themselves "lucky to have a job" and "accept the need for change" by bosses

proposing cuts. The plan seems to be to scare Firefighters into meekly accepting damaging cuts in order to save our own skins.

Tactics such as this aren't just totally unacceptable, they are also insulting to our profession and we reject them entirely.

***Politicians who think that we can be frightened into selling out each other's jobs or conditions clearly don't understand Firefighters or our profession.***

We have to send a clear message to any Fire Authority who deliberately cuts its own budget and then expects Firefighters to pay for it through job cuts or longer working hours: ***you have a fight on your hands!***

Firefighters will not be made culpable for budget cuts not of their making; they must not be made to work longer in order to deliver and hide job cuts or see their conditions and pay reduced due to sheer political opportunism.

You will see in this bulletin that the South West FBU is fighting back for its members in every possible way. We have deployed professional consultations, political engagement, expert lawyers and Union solidarity to fight for and protect FBU members; and we will not stop.

Ours is not a "job that we are lucky to have", it is a skilled, professional vocation which delivers a life saving emergency service. We value our Service and we will not be fooled into helping destroy it through cuts.

Our message is clear: the FBU opposes cuts in the frontline Fire & Rescue Service and we will fight against them in any way necessary. If any politician doubts this then they should visit Essex.

**Tam McFarlane**

### FOLLOW THE PROFESSIONALS!

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 @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)

