



## FLOODS - THEN CUTS!

### **FBU TELLS MPS' TO "WAKE UP" TO CONSEQUENCES OF CUTS!**



After the extraordinary professionalism of fire crews who worked around the clock for days on end to deal with massive floods in the South West, the FBU has written to politicians in the region demanding that the threat of cuts be removed.

The call follows large scale flooding throughout the region which saw fire crews in one South West brigade answer 1,357 emergency calls and rescue 218 people in only **five days**. These astonishing figures from Devon and Somerset Fire Service, give an idea of the massive task undertaken by all South West fire crews who dealt with the flood struck region.

The very serious weather situation pushed the service to the limit with local crews working around the

clock to deal with very high levels of emergency calls.

Fire crews were on the ground constantly operating in the most difficult and dangerous of circumstances to help people badly affected by severe flooding. Countless rescues of people trapped in flood water were made and crews also dealt with landslides and large scale pumping operations.

In the letter the union has told politicians that they expect recognition of the enormous demands placed on the capacity of the service and that planned cuts in the frontline are now removed.

Tam McFarlane, South West FBU said: "The professionalism and commitment shown by members of the fire and rescue service during these devastating floods was there for all to see. Crews worked around the clock and in the most difficult of circumstances to serve the public and their communities. But it should be obvious to everyone that we are working to the limit and, in some cases, beyond.

"Everyone should now be able to see that cuts in the frontline fire service would lead to public safety being compromised, and any suggestion of these must now be removed. The situation faced by South West Firefighters is a stark wake up call regarding the consequences of cuts to the front line fire and rescue service and we will be taking our message direct to government and every politician needs to pay heed."

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



***Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff***

## WILTSHIRE CHIEF THREATENS IMPOSITION!

In an extraordinary letter that has left staff "furious", Wiltshire Fire Chief, Simon Routh-Jones, said he intended "suspending" crucial negotiations and would instead "impose" cuts and "enforce" moves in the Service. In the move, which the FBU called "a tantrum" the Chief sent every member of staff a hand delivered letter followed by a 7 page bulletin outlining his intention to break away from nationally agreed NJC negotiation protocols and instead attempt to force through contractual change without agreement.

The negotiations, which had reached a crucial stage, were an attempt to achieve an agreed solution to the difficult budget situation within the Service.

Prior to the Chiefs intervention the talks had been described as "very productive" with a

number of potential solutions being explored.

FBU Official Brent Thorley said "up until this intervention talks, although difficult, had been constructive and detailed. The attempt by the Chief to derail talks and impose change took everyone by surprise, not least, it would appear, his own negotiating team! "Unfortunately for him, his plan to scrap talks has completely backfired and staff are furious at the attempt to force through cuts. The Union made it absolutely clear that we would not let our members contracts be



changed through force and we contacted the NJC to raise this flagrant breach of protocol.

"Shortly afterward the CFO retracted his threat through his negotiating team at a meeting with FBU Officials but staff have still not received confirmation from the CFO himself that he will withdraw his instructions for imposition and allow talks to resume. His extraordinary letter and 7 page bulletin left members in no doubt that this was always his intention and now his silence only adds to the anger and anxiety felt amongst them. Nobody should be in any doubt that we are involved in detailed and difficult talks. We are trying to find a negotiated solution to the situation we are in and that requires clear heads; not tantrums." Regular updates are being made available via the website and facebook site.

## BUDGETS SLASHED ACROSS REGION!

Following the financial settlement for Local Government and Fire Authorities, the implications for the six FRS's in the Region are now beginning to be announced.

The massive cuts proposed in Wiltshire and Devon & Somerset are being challenged and fought against by the Union but in other areas of the region the consequences of cuts are only now coming to light.

In Avon the FBU understands the budget reduction to be around £3.2m over 2 years. The Service equates this to at least 60 and possibly as many as 80 front line posts. The Fire Authority hasn't yet brought forward proposals and the FBU is lobbying hard in the interim.

In Dorset - The overall annual deficit could be in the region of £3.5m by 2017/18, which the

Chief Fire Officer has said "~~would require significant changes to DFRS and front line services.~~" The Fire Authority will be meeting in February to look at specific options and the Union is



undertaking political lobbying in the build up to this.

In Gloucestershire proposed savings of 1.28m include consideration of cuts in the frontline service. No options have yet been confirmed and in the interim the Union is working hard at a political level to combat cuts.

The Union has warned that the deep cuts threaten to strike at the heart of the service provided to the public.

FBU regional Secretary Phil Jordan said "Frontline Services are already being cut to the bone- yet even more cuts are threatened.

"The government is acting as if it has nothing to do with it. But it's the government that's slashing budgets. That means stations will close, fire engines will be axed and firefighters' jobs will go if planned cuts go ahead unchallenged.

"The Fire Brigades Union is ratcheting up its campaign to raise public awareness of the deep damage the further cuts will inflict. Unless politicians start taking responsibility and stop the rot, we'll look back in a few years time wondering how on earth they allowed the reckless dismemberment of the fire and rescue service.

## FBU FIGHTING FOR FIRE CONTROL IN GLOUCESTERSHIRE

An important, and very well attended, emergency Union meeting was recently held at Gloucestershire Fire Control. The meeting was called by FBU members in the Control who raised very serious concerns regarding staff shortages and plans by the service to increase workloads and introduce 12 hour shifts!

The many FBU members at the meeting (and some of their small children who also came alone) raised serious issues about the detrimental impact these plans would have on their working and personal lives.

## Gloucestershire TriService Emergency Centre.

The Service has not produced an equality impact assessment or any other evidence for the change; they haven't even said what the "extra work" would be!

Members raised concerns about the pressure they feel is being applied during "one to one" meetings with HR managers. The Service says these meetings are necessary because not everyone is in the FBU!

The Union has acted immediately by writing formally to the CFO. A meeting is now organized and further updates will follow soon!

# FBU "FIGHT BACK" AGAINST "ENORMOUS" CUTS

The Fire Brigades Union is urging the public to protest against the most savage cuts ever planned to their local fire and rescue service.

The coalition government has reduced its grant to Devon and Somerset fire and rescue service by 10.3% for the year 2013/14 and 7.3% for the year 2014/15. This means a loss of £3.4 million in the next financial year and £2.1 million the following, cuts three times more savage than any ever imposed on the service before, by any previous government, and gives the lie to Minister Eric Pickles' claim that the fire and rescue service is somehow being protected.

On 18 January, the fire authority and fire service senior managers put forward proposals for public consultation, including a set of cuts that would see fire appliances removed from local communities.

The planned cuts include:

- **Removal of around 150 Whole Time Firefighter Posts (20% of the wholetime workforce);**
- **Downgrading WT cover at Torquay & Taunton by HALF;**
- **Removing 1 WT from Camelshead to make it RDS at Crownhill;**
- **Downgrading the 1 pump WT shift Stations at Plympton and Plymstock to RDS only;**
- **Downgrading the WT Day Crew Station at Ifracombe to RDS only;**
- **Downgrading the aerial appliance at Crownhill Fire Station to dual crew**

Trevor French, Devon and Somerset FBU secretary said: "Rather than just accept these enormous cuts forced upon us by central government, the fire authority along with Chief Fire Officer Lee Howell should tell the coalition government that this scale of cuts is unacceptable, risks destroying the fabric of this important service, and ultimately puts more lives at risk.

As a rural service and one of the biggest in the country, Devon and Somerset have long argued that a 'sparsity' factor should be included in any grant settlement received. This would take into account the lack of neighbouring services for support and the sheer scale of area that has to be covered by one fire and rescue service.

Bob Walker, FBU brigade chair said: "If the cuts proposed go through, there will be fewer firefighters, fewer fire stations and fewer fire engines. After the recent floods and fires firefighters have dealt with so professionally, the cuts would be a real kick in the teeth for both the public and the service. The FBU is asking people in our communities to stand up against damaging proposals for the fire and rescue service before it is too late."

The consultation commences on 28 January and will end on 22 April 2013. A date for the Fire Authority to make the final decision has not yet been set although local elections, due this spring, may impact on the makeup of the fire authority around this time.

The FBU has organised a significant campaign of opposition and every member is being asked to play a full part. Leaflets are being printed which tell the public what the plans will actually mean and how dangerous the Union thinks they are. The Union is asking the public to register their protest by emailing, writing or calling during the consultation. The FBU is also preparing a detailed written response to the consultation which will be published and submitted as a formal response.

The union has been active in the media raising the issue with local papers, radio stations and news programmes. Political lobbying is also taking place at every level. A lobby of the Westminster parliament is being organised where MPs' will be lobbied by local Firefighters.

Union Official Tam McFarlane said "if politicians thought the FBU would accept front line cuts as "inevitable" then they have had a nasty shock, and more is coming! We are organising a full campaign of opposition to these dangerous cuts which will include engaging with the public, the press and politicians at every level. We will

leave no stone unturned to get our points across and we are asking every member to play their part. Please attend local Union meetings, have your say and take a full part in campaigning events such as leafleting the public and lobbying local politicians. If this consultation is going to be meaningful then we have to make sure as many people as possible say NO to cuts!"

More information will follow but in the interim if you live, work or visit Devon & Somerset then please have your say. Tell the consultation that there should be no frontline cuts in any of the following ways:

- **Telephone: 01392 872354**
- **Post: Consultation Officer DSFRS Headquarters,  
Clyst St George  
Exeter  
Devon  
EX3 0NW**
- **Fax: 01392 872300  
(Marked for the attention of the Consultation Officer)**
- **Email: [ConsultationOfficer@dsfire.gov.uk](mailto:ConsultationOfficer@dsfire.gov.uk)**
- **Twitter: @DSFireUpdates**
- **Facebook: Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service**

Further updates, information and campaigning events on this vital issue will be posted on our website and distributed via meetings, social media and email etc. Please follow us and keep up to date!



## NO TO FRONTLINE CUTS



**South West EC Member Tam McFarlane**

**Just before taking office, Prime Minister David Cameron pledged to protect frontline services from the impact of public spending cuts.**

Interviewed in May 2010 on BBC One's 'The Andrew Marr Show', he said that any cabinet minister "who comes to me and says, "here are my plans and they involve frontline reductions, they'll be sent straight back to their department to think again".

But, as every Firefighter & Emergency Fire Control Operator in the South West now knows, the Prime Minister's "pledge" has turned to dust.

In the Fire Service across the South West we are now facing proposed cuts to the frontline on a massive scale. Dangerous plans to reduce fire cover, cut jobs and downgrade Fire stations & appliances are being proposed across the Region. Such plans would undoubtedly increase the risk to both the public and Firefighters alike and exposes as a lie previous promises to "protect front line services".

The hypocrisy of politicians and their failure to recognise the importance of frontline emergency services, is especially galling following the largest and most devastating floods in living memory.

During this time, the professionalism and commitment shown by members of the fire and rescue service was there for all to

see. Crews worked around the clock and in the most difficult of circumstances to serve the public and their communities. But it should be obvious to everyone that we are working to the limit and, in some cases, beyond. In Devon & Somerset alone Crews answered an astonishing 1,357 emergency calls and rescued 218 people *in only five days*. **The fact that only a few weeks later this same Brigade proposes to cut around 150 Firefighter posts and downgrade 6 Fire Stations and multiple Fire Appliances is nothing short of a disgrace.**

Large scale floods are becoming a regular feature of the work that we do and every Brigade should have the necessary equipment and front line firefighting staff needed to deal with it effectively. Following these floods I wrote on your behalf to every MP in the South West to highlight the work that you undertook and to demand that the threat of cuts be removed.

We have demanded that MPs' raise our concerns with the Government as a matter of urgency because its time they woke up to the life saving work of the fire & rescue service and the consequences that cuts will have. Everyone should now be able to see that cuts in the frontline fire service would lead to public safety being compromised, and any suggestion of these must now be removed.

It is a political and professional scandal that massive cuts to lifesaving front-line posts and equipment are being proposed. The current and ongoing situation in the South West should be a stark wake up call regarding the consequences of proposed cuts to the front line fire and rescue service and the the FBU, as the professional voice of our service, will continue to fight until the government pays heed!

**Tam McFarlane**  
**Executive Council Member**  
**South West FBU**

### **FOLLOW THE PROFESSIONALS!**

The FBU in the South West is committed to keeping our Members posted about news, updates and the work we are doing on their behalf. By using modern communication tools we can keep you up to date quickly, no matter where you work. Follow us on our Facebook, Twitter and YouTube sites and get all the updates as they happen. Full details below:



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)

