



NO TO COMBINATION!

FBU STOPS "MISGUIDED" COMBINATION AFTER POLITICAL LOBBYING!



tells us that bigger is not necessarily better for the public or for firefighters. Devon and Somerset only merged six years ago, yet it already plans to make cuts to one in five frontline firefighter jobs. Clearly the previous merger has not protected frontline services and this proposal would simply have been repeating the same mistake"

Following the announcement the union immediately launched a sustained campaign of political lobbying which resulted in the following resolution being passed at the Avon Fire Authority meeting: ***"This Authority, having considered the implications of forming a combination or merger with other Fire and Rescue Authorities, believe it is not in Avon Fire & Rescue Service's interests to proceed."***

A surprise proposal to merge the Fire & Rescue Service in Avon with Devon & Somerset has fallen at the first hurdle after the FBU condemned the plans as "misguided empire building" which would do nothing to improve the service for the public.

The union was responding to a surprise announcement by the two fire authority chairs that they had held initial talks with a view to a full merger. This was announced via a press release with no prior discussion or consultation with staff, the union or even, it would appear, other Fire Authority members!

Phil Jordan, FBU regional secretary for the South West said: "This surprise proposal is a diversion from the main issue, which is central government cutbacks to funding the fire and rescue service. "Experience

Chris Taylor, Avon FBU brigade secretary commented: "This surprise proposal was clearly not in the interests of FBU members in either Brigade or the public across these counties. Where was the democracy and accountability? There had been no assessment of the impact on response times or what it would mean for our conditions. This was a case of senior management wanting to build their mini-empires of influence – but we're interested in defending our service and protecting our communities.

"The FBU is adamantly opposed to the idea of a merged 'mega brigade' and we made this view clear to Avon Fire Authority members, many of whom had been taken completely by surprise at the announcement and who then agreed with the FBU. This should be a lesson for all involved!"

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



***Protecting Firefighters
& Control Staff***

FBU GENERAL SECRETARY IN REGION FOR PENSION UPDATE!

The most senior Officials in the Union were in the South West in the last few weeks to discuss the vital issue of pensions with FBU members across the Region. The Officials, who have been directly involved in talks with the Government, included General Secretary Matt Wrack and FBU president Alan McLean.

A series of well attended meetings were held across the Region and Matt Wrack was able to give full briefings and updates to FBU Members in Poole, Truro, Gloucester, Plymouth, Exmouth and Bristol. FBU Members were then able to ask a series of questions directly to the General Secretary and give their views and opinions to him and the President.

The meetings came at the same time as the Fire Brigades Union condemned central government for its imposition of further increases in firefighters' pension contributions.

Firefighters already pay one of the highest pension contribution rates in the public or private sector and now face further increases, which threaten the future of their pension scheme. The increases mean that an experienced firefighter will pay 12.9% of salary, with another hike expected next year.

Matt Wrack said: "Firefighters already pay some of the highest pension contributions anywhere in the UK. Firefighters will be angry and disappointed at this announcement. We will now be discussing with our members our response to these increases and to the government's ridiculous proposals for forcing firefighters to work longer and longer.

The increases mean that a competent firefighter in the Firefighters' Pension Scheme will pay 12.9% from April, with officers such as station managers paying 13.5%.



General Secretary Matt Wrack in Bristol

Younger and retained firefighters in the New Firefighters' Pension Scheme will pay 9.6% from next month – with the prospect of 13.2% from 2015.

Matt Wrack added: "We have presented a huge amount of evidence to government about all pension matters where they have proposed change. The government is ignoring all the evidence about the risk of making the pension unaffordable. They are ignoring their own evidence of firefighters opting out. They are pressing ahead with ill-thought out changes.

"Firefighters around the country are currently meeting to discuss these latest attacks, which seem designed to undermine and destroy pensions in the fire service."

The battle to defend our pension has been a long struggle so far and crucial decisions are fast approaching. It is vital that all members play a role in this stage of the campaign. The FBU has produced a series of bulletins for members

and has also sent a dvd to all workplaces across the UK in order to give all our members the most up to date information possible.

The Union is also asking all members to write to their MPs about the Government's plans for our pensions. You can use a model letter which is available via the FBU website or write your own using the arguments that matter to you most.

Please make sure that you attend the meeting nearest to you and have your say against cuts to our pensions!



Dorset members fill Poole Fire Station

PUBLIC SAYS “NO CUTS IN FIRE SERVICE”

FBU tells management to “think again on Fire Cuts” after massive public campaign

“Hands off our fully crewed fire engines! Don’t compromise our emergency fire cover!” That’s the message more than 25,000 people – and rising – are sending to Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Service (DSFRS) and local politicians over cuts proposals now being considered.

The £5.5M cuts package includes slashing *by half* emergency fire cover provided by full-time firefighters in Plymouth, Taunton and Torquay, and removing *all* full-time firefighter posts in the whole of the DSFRS would be axed, in what are the worst cuts proposals ever to fire and rescue in Devon and Somerset, even including the 1980’s Thatcher Governments.

The Fire Brigades’ Union (FBU) warns the cuts would have a very damaging effect on the fire and rescue service in Devon and Somerset, increasing emergency response times, compromising emergency cover and increasing the risk to local communities and firefighters.

FBU Chair Bob Walker said “These proposals are a kick in the teeth for local people, as well as staff, and it is therefore no surprise our campaign against the cuts has won massive support from local communities and politicians.”

The FBU has held public meetings, used Facebook, Twitter, leafleting, and even taken out “Don’t Let Them Squeeze Your Fire Service Dry” adverts in local newspapers to alert citizens of the threat posed by the cuts proposals. Local newspapers have

launched petitions and politicians, including MP Adrian Sanders, MP Alison Seabeck, MP Jeremy Browne and numerous Councillors and candidates across the two counties want the DSFRS to withdraw the proposals to cut fire cover.

The FBU has now published its official response to the cuts proposals and distributed it to every

politician in Devon & Somerset. This report does not just condemn the latest, unprecedented central Government cuts in funding, but also charts Service management’s skewed spending priorities since the (previously separate) Devon and Somerset Fire and Rescue Services combined in 2007.

FBU Secretary Trevor French said, “Before combination, we were told savings would be made from economies of scale in support

services, with the frontline protected. But since the two fire services merged in 2007 we’ve lost 40 frontline firefighter jobs, and they are now after *another* 149 more. Meanwhile there has been a massive switch from the frontline to the backroom and consultants, with an extra 67 employed, and while the cost of firefighters has actually **fallen** by over £600k since 2007, the cost of support services has **increased** by over £4 million.”

The FBU are demanding that DSFRS management and Fire Authority politicians think again on these flawed proposals. The union will continue its opposition to the cuts beyond April and have called on local residents and businesses to join them by speaking out to help stop these cuts to their frontline fire and rescue service.

See the formal FBU written response to the consultation at www.southwestfbu.com



NO TO FRONTLINE CUTS



South West EC Member Tam McFarlane

The FBU has now published our formal response to the unprecedented, and shocking, set of cuts proposed by Devon & Somerset FRS.

The document was researched and written by the local FBU and followed countless meetings with members and a highly effective public campaign involving local members from Stations across the Service.

Having accompanied local FBU members in these "campaign days" I want to pay a tribute to every member who took to the streets of local communities, handed out flyers, corresponded with local politicians, and engaged the public to get support against frontline cuts in our Service.

The response from the public has been clear: **they support their local fire crews and reject cuts to the frontline service.**

The commitment shown by local FBU members to fight for their profession puts to shame senior managers who offer up frontline cuts and confirms that the real voice of the Fire & Rescue Service is represented by the professionals who actually deliver the service to their communities on a daily basis.

The FBU is now entering into a sustained period of political lobbying at every

conceivable level as, although the consultation period is over, our campaign of opposition is still ongoing at pace.

We have sent a copy of our consultation response to every single MP who has a constituency covering the area and demanded their support against cuts to the frontline of the Service.

We have also sent a copy to every member of the Fire Authority and even written to every single prospective candidate in the local elections inviting them to sign a pledge against cuts to the frontline Fire & Rescue Service.

We have made clear our view that a Fire & Rescue Authority has a responsibility to ensure that the financial pressures being created by central Government do not impact on the ability of our members to keep our communities safe and protect the infrastructure and businesses within our counties.

Our experience tells us that in economic downturns we can expect to see an increase in the work of the Service as properties become empty (and so become more at risk from fire & arson) and people who are struggling to afford basic necessities look to find short cuts in household bills and use open flames such as candles more often.

This, together with numerous plans being put in place across the South West for new housing projects, roads, buildings and even a new nuclear power station, will obviously increase the risks faced by the Fire and Rescue Service.

To deal with this properly our Fire Authorities must place their responsibility for the people and places they represent at the very front of the decision making process.

This is true across the South West and especially so in Devon & Somerset where the public and the professionals have made their views clear: **withdraw these damaging cuts and think again!**

Tam McFarlane

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

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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

