



# Fire Brigades Union - South West Region

*The Premier Trade Union for Professional Firefighters and Emergency Fire Control Staff:* NOVEMBER 13

## UNITED & DETERMINED

PICKET LINES GROW IN STRENGTH AS FIREFIGHTERS FIGHT FOR PENSION JUSTICE



**Fire Crews at Speedwell Fire Station in Avon get the message across!**

Firefighters across England and Wales took their fourth period of strike action between 10am and 2pm on Wednesday 13th November over Government plans to tear up their pensions and force through a set of proposals which have been described as “unfair, unsustainable and unsafe.”

Crews from across the South West took to Fire Station picket lines in an incredible show of unity and determination and were once again overwhelmed by the extraordinary level of public support they received.

Talking about the strike, South West FBU Official Tam McFarlane said “Picket lines are growing across our Region as Firefighters stand shoulder to shoulder to fight for a fair future for everyone in the Fire & Rescue Service.

“I want to congratulate all South West FBU members for their determination and resolve. Our unity stands as a powerful message to the Government to get back to proper talks with our national negotiators and come up with a fair and just pension for Firefighters now and in the future.”

Fire Brigades Union general secretary Matt Wrack said: “After 35 years of service — and paying at least £4,000 a year — firefighters could now receive just over £9,000 a year or the sack simply because fitness declines as they get older.

“Firefighters simply want an affordable and workable pension that reflects the job we do. But with employee costs going up, firefighters are being priced out making the scheme threatening its sustainability.

“We’re keen to resolve this through negotiations, but the government is simply ignoring all the evidence we have submitted.”

In this second special bulletin we publish a series of photos of some of the picket lines across the South West where spirits were high and firefighters were united & determined!

If you have photos of your Station picket send them to us at [southwestfbu@fbu.org.uk](mailto:southwestfbu@fbu.org.uk) and, for all the latest information and updates, don't forget to follow our facebook page , twitter and website - Full details on the back page!



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



***Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff***



**Public support in Kingswood, Avon**



**Crownhill, Plymouth**



**Yeovil, Somerset**



**Taunton, Somerset**



**Newquay, Cornwall**



**Cheltenham West**



**Springborne, Dorset**



**Redhill, Dorset**



**Penzance, Cornwall**

**SECOND BALLOT  
ACTION SHORT OF STRIKE**

The fight against the government's attacks on pensions and retirement age is at a critical stage. Fire Brigades Union officials across the country have reported that firefighters are keen to campaign in other ways on non-strike days to maximise pressure on the government.

As a result, the FBU has decided to hold a vote of members over other forms of action.



This vote will supplement but not replace the current strike ballot, and the FBU is urging members to take part in the ballot and vote 'Yes' to provide additional tools for firefighters to use to defend their pensions.

Ballot forms will be issued shortly. You can read more about the issue in the FBU's most recent circular for members at [www.fbu.org.uk/archives/8310](http://www.fbu.org.uk/archives/8310).



**Kingswood with Councillor Derek Pickup**



**Salisbury, Wiltshire**



**Fire Authority Chair Terry Walker & Alderman Brenda Hugill with Bristol Firefighters**



**Stroud with Parliamentary candidate David Drew**

## Generous? Five myths about firefighter pensions

Over the past few months, the government has repeatedly claimed that their proposed pension scheme for firefighters will be “one of the most generous” in the public sector. However, firefighters argue that they will be priced out by a scheme that will be far more expensive, but worth much less.

There are currently two pension schemes: the 1992 Firefighters Pension Scheme (FPS), and the 2006 New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS). Both schemes have already faced attacks and things will only get worse under the new proposals.

Here are five myths about firefighter pensions that can be easily busted.

### **MYTH 1. Firefighters' currently get a lavish pension deal**

As a result of two years of increased contributions, firefighters already pay significant sums for their pensions. Firefighters who take home around £1,650 a month will now pay around £320 a month (£3,800 a year) year into their pension if they are in the FPS scheme. This is scheduled to rise to more than £4,000 a year from next year. Higher earners pay an even larger proportion of salary.

### **MYTH 2. Firefighter schemes are very expensive to employers and the taxpayer**

The government's proposals will mean that the proportion that employers pay in contributions compared to firefighters is among the worst in the public sector, meaning it is far from generous. Conversely this means the proportion of pension costs paid by firefighters will be one of the highest in the public sector. For most firefighters this will be 14.2% of their salary from April next year, with many paying even more.

### **MYTH 3. Firefighters will be able to retire with a pension of £19,600**

This is only the case if a firefighter joins at 20 (which of course many firefighters don't), and is able to work until 60. The reality is that the majority won't be able to achieve this. In fact government's own research says that up to 92% of current firefighters won't be able to maintain operational fitness until 60 and will have to leave with a significantly reduced pension to avoid a fitness related dismissal.

### **MYTH 4. Firefighters can retire at 55 with a pension.**

Under the government's current proposals, firefighters who are forced to retire at 55 because their fitness is declining will lose 47.1% of their pension. This will mean instead of the £19,600 sum they will get just over £9,000. The government in Westminster had proposed that this reduction would be 21.8% (a proposal that is still the position in Scotland). It was withdrawn by Brandon Lewis on 1 November when firefighters refused to endorse or agree to the unworkable proposals.

### **MYTH 5. This is just a temporary measure because of the need to cut costs as a result of the economic crisis**

There is no end in sight for the government's attacks. Proposals for 2014 will see FPS members paying over £4,000 a year, and NFPS members almost £3,000. In 2015 contributions for most NFPS members will increase to over £3,600 per year as they transfer into the new scheme. As a result, their pensions contributions will have increased by 50% in four years. Firefighters have also been told to expect further increases in 2016 and subsequent years (although these details have not yet been released).

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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)



### **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



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.



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