

# FBU Pensions Bulletin



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## FBU DEFENDS RETAINED FIREFIGHTERS' PENSIONS Government wants £700 over three years

The Fire Brigades Union is appalled by government attacks on retained firefighters' pension rights and is determined to resist them.

FBU members won the right for retained firefighters to join the modified pension scheme following an extensive legal battle. But the Westminster government are still dragging their heels on its implementation, whilst rushing through other attacks.

Now the government is planning to move the goal posts and dramatically worsen the pensions retained firefighters have earned. It wants retained firefighters to pay more, work longer and still get less for our pensions.

### Contributions

The Westminster government is proposing to increase all firefighters' pension contributions by at least 3.2%, phased in over three years. This will cost a retained firefighter earning £10,000 per year pensionable pay around £700 over the three years, whether they are in the modified scheme or the New Firefighters Pension Scheme (NFPS).

Retained firefighter (£10,000 pensionable pay)				
Scheme	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	Total extra contribution
NFPS	£60	£256	£320	<b>£636</b>
Modified	£130	£256	£320	<b>£706</b>

### Other attacks

In 2015, the government plans to close all firefighter pension schemes and transfer everyone into a new scheme with much worse benefits, including a retirement age of at least 60. They have already tried to change the way pensions are uprated for inflation, using lower consumer

prices (CPI) instead of retail prices (RPI). Even the government admits this will mean a 15% reduction in the value of your pension.

The changes to firefighters' pension schemes can only be described as attacks. Contrary to the spin by ministers, fire service pensions are not "first class" nor do they provide for "gilt-edged" or "gold-plated" payouts. They are in fact, reasonable pension schemes, worthy of being protected and in some aspects, in need of improvement.

A key issue with the fire service pensions is that they must reflect the firefighters' occupation. Currently the retirement age reflects the operational nature of the role and is taken into account in the contribution rates, which along with the police remain the highest in the public sector. A government that does not recognise the need for the pension to reflect the needs of the occupation is a government that is out of touch and creating a rod for its own back.

Sacrifice and selflessness are attributes common to all who work in the fire and rescue service. Across the UK, retained firefighters often give massive levels of commitment, are often overworked, often short-staffed and always taken for granted. Long hours, restrictions on leave and infringement on family life and terms and conditions are commonplace.

The Fire Brigades Union has always been the union for all people who work in the fire service and the natural home for all uniformed employees - wholtime or retained.

### Don't let them rob you of your pension rights

Support the FBU campaign to:

- Force the government to honour the pension rights of retained firefighters
- Stop them robbing from the pensions of retained firefighters

# The FBU: defending all firefighters

The FBU has already begun the necessary discussions with the relevant ministers, civil servants and fire service stakeholders to explain our case and to discover whether the Westminster government is prepared to withdraw its attack on firefighters.

It is the union's genuine hope that an acceptable outcome will result from discussions. We have no desire to engage in strike action. But we will also take the necessary steps to protect our members' interests, should the government simply plough ahead regardless and ignore the evidence we present.

## The FBU's record

The vast majority of retained firefighters are members of the FBU. They belong for good reason. Only the FBU has the commitment, expertise and desire to protect all uniformed members in the fire service.

Our record speaks for itself.

Only the FBU was prepared to:

- Challenge for fair pay in 2002
- Take action to secure part-time status for retained firefighters
- Oppose the FiReControl project
- Protect ill-health pensions, in the face of employer and CLG-led initiative to scrap them and to effectively sack all permanently unfit and injured firefighters on the grounds of capability
- Initiate the legal challenge against the CPI inflation uprating, which would reduce pension payouts by 15%. We are the only fire service trade union to have challenged this change.

## Only the FBU is prepared to:

- Take the necessary steps to convince the government to treat firefighters in all ranks and roles with respect when it comes to pensions
- Take the steps to defend our pensions, should talks prove inadequate.

## FBU – the only organisation fighting for retained pensions

As the governments race ahead with their plans, the RFU has:

- failed to take any legal action to stop them
- failed to undertake any political lobbying
- failed to produce any evidence to challenge the government on these attacks
- failed to launch any campaign at all to protect pensions.

The RFU's silence and lack of opinion on an issue that affects thousands of retained firefighters that are already members of the NFPS and those who are planning to join

the modified scheme is disgraceful. That isn't representation – it's taking their members' subscriptions under false pretences.

History shows that only the FBU will campaign against these attacks.

The attacks on pensions affects every firefighter, whatever their rank, role or duty system. FBU members can make a crucial contribution to the campaign and can help to secure a successful outcome, whether that results from consultation or from strike action.

## FBU campaign gains momentum

**Jim Quinn, FBU regional secretary for Northern Ireland gives his view on the meetings he attended: "Retained firefighters quickly recognised that this is a campaign that they needed to support.**

**"The branch meetings were well attended and there were always plenty of questions.**

**"Although members were very angry at the proposals, they were very supportive of the model resolution especially when I explained how the union was trying to resolve the situation through talks and that we were putting together some strong arguments in opposition, also that strike action would always be the last resort.**

**"We have spoken at every retained station in our region and the overwhelming majority of members supported the resolution.**

**"What is especially pleasing is that we are also signing up new members to the FBU."**

## So what can I do?

- Read the information and talk about it with colleagues
- Attend FBU branch and other members' meetings, ask any questions and discuss the pension attacks.
- Support the model resolution at those meetings.
- Contact your councillors, MSP's (Scotland) and AM's (in Wales and Northern Ireland) to urge them to take a public position opposing detrimental changes to the pension schemes in the fire service.
- Contact your MP in writing, and preferably in person at their surgeries to sign Early Day Motion 2049.