



A “DISGRACEFUL” DECISION!

Gloucestershire Firefighters condemn Duty System “suspension” during consultation!



Union says decision “undermines public consultation”

The Fire Brigades Union in Gloucestershire has slammed senior managers in the county’s fire and rescue service for “suspending” full-time fire cover at Cirencester fire station, despite a public consultation into the future of fire cover at this station being inconclusive.

Fire cover in Cirencester is the subject of an ongoing public consultation being run by Gloucestershire County Council, who recently announced plans to cut frontline fire cover in the county. Full-time firefighters from Cirencester are being removed and Painswick fire station closed down. The council invited the public to comment

on the plans through a consultation which began on 1 October and is due to close on 4 January 2016. Local campaigning firefighters say that, 999 response times will increase and public safety will be jeopardised.

Although consultation is incomplete, senior fire service managers announced they were “suspending” the duty system at Cirencester and have now removed all full-time firefighters from the station saying that they are doing it “to comply with health and safety legislation”. The union has hit back at the decision, calling it “disgraceful” and saying it “totally undermines the ongoing public consultation”. *Cont page 3.*

Fighting for the Fire & Rescue Service



Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff

Firefighters compensated for sickness caused by polluted Training Centre in Nottingham

Fire Brigade Union (FBU) members from across the UK have secured compensation after several flood rescue training sessions that took place between 2008 and 2012 at the National Watersports Centre in Nottingham left them with stomach sickness.

Following widespread floods, the UK government required all fire brigades to undergo 'Swift Water Rescue Training' in fast-flowing water which replicated flood conditions.

Some Fire Brigades sent firefighters to train at the UK National Watersports Centre in Nottingham, a slalom course designed for use by Olympic canoeists. The water at the Centre flowed from the River Trent, a polluted source which had been found to contain harmful pathogens and bacteria. The physically demanding training resulted in the firefighters ingesting the infected water, which later led to diarrhoea and sickness.

Almost all of the firefighters fell ill after the training course, and the FBU instructed accident at work specialists, Thompsons Solicitors, to investigate the claims on behalf of some of their South West based members. Thompsons' investigation found that the water at the Centre posed a public health risk and went on to secure compensation for the firefighters who had become ill.

However, despite this investigation and evidence showing their illnesses had been caused by the dirty water at the National Watersports Centre, the venue was still advertised to other Brigades as a training location.

Between 2009 and 2012, more firefighters from across the UK attended the site and suffered the same physical symptoms.



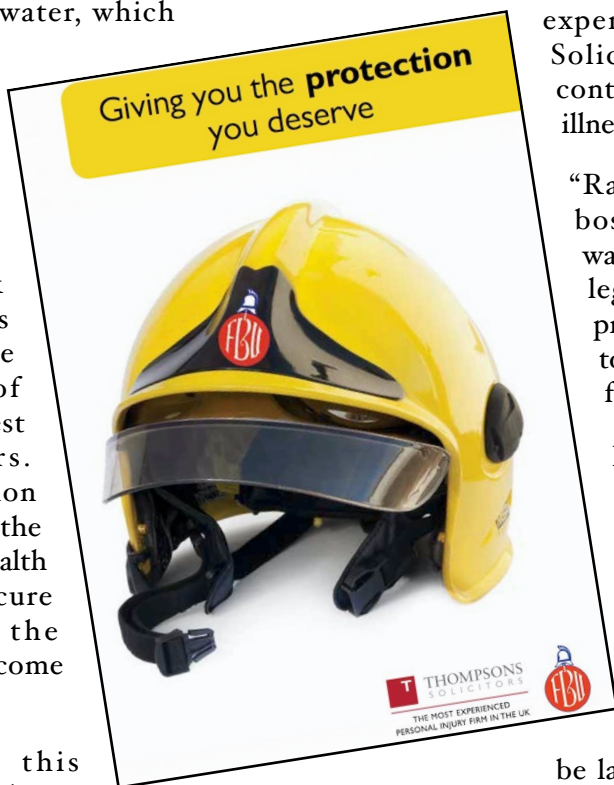
Tam McFarlane, executive council member of the South West FBU said: "Despite the overwhelming numbers of attendees becoming sick, and the expert evidence obtained by Thompsons Solicitors in the original case, Brigades continued to put my colleagues at risk of illness.

"Rather than accepting their mistakes, bosses have fought every claim in full, wasting vast sums of taxpayer's money on legal defence fees that should be spent protecting the public. We're very grateful to Thompsons for securing compensation for every member affected."

Kevin Digby of Thompsons Solicitors said: "The Brigades were adamant that the water was safe despite expert evidence in numerous cases to the contrary. Their suggestion that those attending the training course could or should have taken more care not to swallow the water during the sessions when it was a training session would

be laughable were it not for the impact on the firefighters health.

"The Brigades are meant as employers to guard FBU members from foreseeable risk, not arrogantly ignore facts staring them in the face. Sixty six FBU members have been laid low by this failure and there are many others who have been affected. Listening to your staff, listening to experts and basic health and safety isn't rocket science."



UNION SLAMS “DISGRACEFUL” DECISION

Cont from Page 1. South West FBU regional secretary Trevor French said: “They say they are doing it to “ensure legislative compliance” with health and safety but we believe that is just an excuse.

The FBU put forward a number of alternative options which would have ensured compliance with legislation and ensured that full-time cover would have remained available at Cirencester, but these were rejected. The union had registered a formal dispute and asked for an independent

review of the situation, but the service has chosen to press ahead regardless.”

Local FBU secretary Scott Turner added: “By pressing ahead in this manner local managers have not followed the agreed industrial relations negotiating procedures. We have made our views clear to principal managers. The union will continue to pursue all options available to us, including seeking formal legal advice. We will also be contacting the leader of the council and demanding that he reverse this decision.”

SERIOUS CONCERNS OVER “VISION DS”

The FBU has written to Fire Chiefs across the South West raising serious concerns with the Vision 4 DS mobilising system in use within Dorset & Wiltshire Fire Control. Since this system “went live” the Union has received reports of worrying failings and problems.

Specifically, serious concerns have been raised regarding delays caused by the gazetteer searching for addresses and freezing of screens during the processing of the call.

During a recent visit to the Service Control Centre, FBU Official Tam McFarlane personally witnessed these failings whilst a live fire call was being processed and saw the delays this created. Tam said “What I saw was shocking and led



Emergency FireControl = part of the team

me to write formally to the Chief Fire Officers involved to express our serious concerns and seek proper reassurances for the future. These delays impact on the operational effectiveness of the Fire Service and create delays in mobilisation. I also witnessed the very real stress this is causing to our Emergency Fire Control Operators who are actually using the Vision 4 DS mobilising system “live”.

“ The FBU is seeking urgent written reassurances regarding the actions being undertaken to resolve these serious issues and the timescales they will be completed within.”

Local Brigade Committees are urgently following this issue up and ensuring that Firefighters understand the issues that our control members are facing to give them their support and solidarity.

FBU LOBBY AGAINST “TRADE UNION” BILL

Firefighters from across the South West travelled to London on two separate occasions recently to lobby MP’s on vital issues. On the first occasion we joined colleagues from across the UK Fire Service to lobby about the future of the fire and rescue service amid huge concerns that public safety is being compromised by budget cuts, job losses and station closures. We took our case direct to Parliament and made sure that MP’s were aware of the danger that frontline cuts are creating.

On the second occasion we joined with FBU colleagues and other Trade Unionists in the campaign to stop the trade union bill.

The bill is a disgraceful and undemocratic attack which fundamentally undermines UK workers' right to strike, and attacks other key civil liberties. Please join the campaign to stop it! For more info please follow this link: <http://bit.ly/rWsWMPT>



South West FBU members at Parliament



South West EC Member Tam McFarlane

Against a background of budget cuts and attacks to the frontline of our Service, it is the FBU - and only the FBU - that is standing up for Firefighters and fighting back against cuts.

We have been using every means at our disposal to put the professional case against Fire Service cuts to politicians, the public and the press.

We have taken our message direct to Parliament where South West Firefighters joined colleagues from across the UK to lobby MP's about the future of the Fire & Rescue Service. We raised our serious concerns that budget cuts are compromising public safety and the safety of our members who respond to emergency incidents. We made sure that no MP can have any doubt about the concerns that Firefighters have regarding the future of our Service and we will continue to press for a fair and proper settlement for the fire service - for as long as it takes.

We have made full and detailed submissions in response to Government consultations that affect the Fire Service. These range from the comprehensive spending review, the absurd plans to put Firefighters under the control of PCC's and many others regarding pensions, flooding, privatisation and more.

We have taken our message direct to the public and received huge support. I recently joined with Gloucestershire Firefighters on the streets of Cirencester as we campaigned against dangerous cuts to the County's Fire Service. The response was amazing with members of the public actually queueing up to sign our petition against cuts which impact on wholtime and retained stations. This proved what Firefighters already know - that no Politician has a mandate to cut our Service and the public are fundamentally opposed to such plans.

We have made sure that our message is distributed widely - taking out half page adverts in local papers to raise awareness against fire service cuts and ask for support in an online petition. Once again the response is amazing with people signing in their hundreds.

We have directly challenged the disgraceful decision to "suspend" cover at Cirencester, despite an ongoing consultation into the same issue, taking formal legal advice, registering a dispute, involving the NJC and demanding an independent judgement.

"I challenge every serving member of the Fire Service to ask themselves a question"

We have also been supporting and fighting for members injured and mistreated at work - winning yet another landmark legal case for members injured during water safety & rescue training. We have won a

hugely important case for firefighter pensions and have committed to running several others as we fight for pension justice for all firefighters.

We have exposed and challenged a failing mobilisation system which is compromising our Service and causing untold stress to our members in emergency fire controls who have to use it.

Time after time we have shown that we are the only body with the knowledge, resources and, frankly, guts to stand up for our members and the fire service. Against this background - and with further attacks against pay, conditions and jobs set to continue - I would challenge every serving member of the Fire & Rescue Service to ask themselves a question: **"can I really afford not to be in the FBU?"**

Tam McFarlane
South West FBU

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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



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