



## FIGHTING FLOODS & CUTS!

**FBU TELLS MPS - IF YOU WANT US TO FIGHT FLOODS, STOP CUTS!**



After the extraordinary professionalism of fire crews, who worked around the clock for weeks 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 flooding on an enormous scale which saw the fire service's biggest mobilisation since the Second World War. Over 20 Fire and Rescue Services from across the country sent assistance under national resilience arrangements, including staff and equipment such as 12 high volume pumps and Unimog all-terrain vehicles.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack accepted an invitation from the South West FBU to visit flood hit Somerset and see first hand the prolonged challenges facing Fire Crews working 24/7 to serve communities in

the area. The visit, on 14 February, began at Bridgwater Fire Station where Matt and other FBU Officials talked with on and off duty Firefighters and heard first hand of the problems and shortages that Fire Crews faced during the deployment.

The visit included looking at command arrangements, discussions with the Devon & Somerset Chief Fire Officer and the Environment Agency, visiting FBU members on the ground and seeing at first hand the flood hit areas.

The union has demanded that politicians now recognise the enormous demands placed on the service and provide necessary investment instead of further threatened cuts.

Tam McFarlane, South West FBU said: "Once again the professionalism and commitment of fire crews during devastating floods was highlighted for all to see. Crews worked around the clock and in the most difficult of circumstances to serve communities.

"Its now time for politicians to face up to what should be an obvious fact: cuts in the frontline fire service lead to public safety being compromised. Once again we are taking our message direct to government and demanding that every politician pays heed. We need investment in the Service to ensure we receive the training, equipment and necessary numbers of Firefighters to do the vital job required of us. ***The cuts must stop and the investment must start.***"



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

***Protecting Firefighters & Control Staff***

## Joint meeting of FBU in Wiltshire and Dorset to discuss merger plans

Proposals have been agreed by Dorset and Wiltshire Fire Authorities to, as they put it, “*work towards developing a business case for a potential merger in April 2016*”. Since this announcement was made in December 2013, FBU Officials from both Brigades have been liaising closely, sharing relevant information and seeking the views and concerns of our members across the two affected areas.

Initial joint meetings of the FBU in Dorset and Wiltshire have been held, facilitated by the FBU South West Region, and a further series of meetings are now being put in place to build on this work. Initial concerns that have been raised include a lack of openness and transparency around the plans for the potential merger together with our deeply held concern that the sole motivation of the potential merger is being driven by central Government budget cuts.



This is best exemplified by the short sighted and highly inflammatory proposal, motivated solely by cost cutting, to have a single Command and Control Centre for the two Services.

Against this background, FBU members have understandably raised their real concerns regarding this proposal. The FBU can assure all Members that the we will all be working together, across the two Services, in order to voice these concerns, demand answers and fight for the interests of Firefighters and Fire Control Staff, however this process develops.

All members are urged to attend your local FBU meetings to voice your concerns and have your say.

**FBU = fighting for Firefighters & the Fire Service!**

## Floods & the Fire Service: What does your MP say?

After yet another period of extraordinary professionalism and commitment from South West Fire Crews, the FBU has written to MP's in the Region demanding that they lobby Government to stop the cuts agenda and provide additional investment in the frontline service.

In the letter, the Union calls for recognition of the incredible work Firefighters have undertaken, demands an end to cuts in the frontline Service, calls for the Fire Service to be given a statutory duty to deal with flood incidents and demands extra investment in equipment, training and staff.

Replies are starting to come in and here are a few of the comments we have received so far from MP's across the different parties in the Region:

- Dawn Primarolo (Labour, Bristol) - “*I appreciate your concerns about the level of resources required to provide the necessary response... I have raised your concerns with the Fire Minister*”
- Ben Bradshaw (Labour, Exeter) - “*Dear Tam: I quite agree. Two of my Labour colleagues specifically raised the issue of Fire Service cuts and the floods in our urgent question to Pickles yesterday.*”



- Alison Seabeck (Labour, Plymouth) - “*I have been in very regular contact with FBU members in Plymouth...I have been raising the matter with Ministers and have very recently probed the Government on the specific issue of statutory duty*”
- Adrian Sanders (Lib Dem, Torbay) - “*I do agree that we need to see an end to cuts in the fire service, especially in light of recent demands. I am raising this with DCLG...*”
- Richard Drax (Conservative, Dorset) - “*I do appreciate that there is only so far you can go before a professional service runs the risk of imploding and not delivering. I have written to Brandon Lewis...*”

See these, and other letters, in full at our "What Your MP's Say!" webpage on this link: <http://www.southwestfbu.com/what-your-mps-say>

Some MP's have not even bothered to reply to our concerns - Is your MP one of them? Have you asked your MP about frontline cuts in the Fire Service?

The FBU has launched a campaign to ask MP's to use their influence to stop cuts and create a statutory duty and **we are asking for everyone to get involved.**

Please email your MP and give us your support to stop cuts and get a statutory duty for the Fire Service: **Remember - They work for you!**

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## PENSIONS- UPDATE FROM GENERAL SECRETARY MATT WRACK

The General Secretary has written the following update for members outlining developments in our ongoing campaign and dispute over pensions:

### RECENT DIALOGUE ON PENSIONS AND LETTER FROM DCLG FIRE MINISTER

The Executive Council met on 27 February to consider the most recent developments in relation to our campaign against attacks on our pensions. The meeting also considered a letter which had been received from Brandon Lewis, the DCLG fire minister. The letter is available at the FBU website for your information.

The union continues to pursue all aspect of our concerns regarding the government proposals for pensions, although clearly in some areas, we face greater obstacles than in others. This appears to be the case for example, in relation to the current proposals on transitional protection, which remains a key issue for the union. Nevertheless, the Executive Council remains committed to exploring every possible area for potential improvement. We know very clearly that the current proposals are unworkable and unacceptable. We may need to take further strike action against them. However, what is not currently known is whether a revised set of proposals will be presented, or (if such revised proposals are presented) what the details might be. But our conference mandated the Executive Council to explore every single avenue and every single option to seek improvements and that remains the case. Should revised proposals emerge, the Executive Council would need to consider whether they were worthy of consideration by our members.

It is in this context that you are asked to consider the letter from Brandon Lewis. It confirms that several areas of the current proposals are currently being re-examined. Indeed, we understand that the DCLG has invested some financial resources to ensure that the Government Actuary's Department (GAD) completes various aspects of work. This work arises from discussion between ourselves, our own actuarial

advisors and GAD over recent weeks. The letter also confirms a point raised during earlier discussions in which the DCLG confirmed that they are willing to continue discussing some scheme design issues beyond the formal close of public consultation on the proposed 2015 scheme.

In addition, the letter confirms that progress in relation to the retained pension settlement should be made very soon. The Executive Council agreed that we will need to undertake an exercise to ensure that RDS members are made aware of the settlement and the implications for themselves.



Matt Wrack

Members should also note that we continue to explore all other avenues to try to defend pensions. This includes political and legal aspects as well as industrial action. We are aware that many members continue to lobby local MPs and other politicians, and this should continue. Branch officials are asked to assist members in this campaigning work. FBU members have regularly raised various concerns about the legality of the government's attack. We have discussed these regularly with our legal advisors and continue to do so. It is obviously not sensible to publish any legal advice received on such matters, but Regional and Brigade Committees will be briefed on this aspect of our campaign.

Despite acknowledging that in certain areas the letter from Mr. Lewis provides positive signals, the Executive Council was clear that this in no way provided any guarantee that revised proposals would be forthcoming. The Executive Council was also concerned about the need to clarify the timeframe for any further discussions. This issue will now be raised again with the DCLG and with the Minister. It was agreed that the next meeting of the Executive Council should be scheduled depending on the response to this issue.

Yours fraternally  
**MATT WRACK**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**

## INVESTMENT, NOT CUTS!



### South West EC Member Tam McFarlane

I want to start by praising the incredible efforts of Fire Crews, not just in our Region but also from across the Country, who deployed into the South West to deal with the most devastating, large scale flooding in living memory.

During this extraordinary time, the professionalism and commitment shown by members of the Fire & Rescue Service who worked around the clock, for days on end and in the most difficult of circumstances, was there for all to see.

From the Emergency Fire Control Staff who received and co-ordinated huge levels of calls, to the Fire Crews on the ground carrying out numerous rescues and pumping operations, everyone gave their all to serve and protect our communities before, during and after the floods.

Against this background, and for the second time in as many years, the FBU has taken our message directly to Parliament and made formal contact with every MP in the South West.

We are demanding that Politicians recognise the complex and highly demanding role of the modern day

Firefighter and, with large scale floods becoming such a regular feature of the work that we do, that Government give us the necessary support and resources to do our job safely and properly.

We are demanding an end to the serious budget restrictions and cuts that are devastating our Service and that, instead, we receive the proper investment, equipment, training and Firefighter posts needed to fulfil our role properly.

Our intervention is already having an effect with several MP's responding to say they are taking up our case. We have also seen the Secretary of State being challenged in Parliament during a flood debate by an MP who, after a discussion with the SWFBU, told him "*South West Firefighters are working extremely hard and for long hours.....BUT THEY ARE BEING HAMPERED BY JOB CUTS!*"

We need to build on this work and hold every Politician to account on this issue. I am asking every FBU Member to play their part and contact their individual MP demanding that they lobby Government to provide proper investment into the frontline Fire Service. All the necessary information, including, standard letters/emails etc is available on the FBU website.

**"Its time Politicians understood the value of the Fire Service!"**

We need to force Politicians to face facts about the damage that cuts do to the Fire Service and the safety of the public:

*In recent weeks we have fought house and high rise property fires, warehouse and large scale building fires, rescued people from road traffic collisions and collapsed buildings, dealt with high voltage electrical arcing and chemical spills, and have worked day and night in unprecedented floods pumping water, saving people trapped in flood water and bringing relief to communities cut off from basic necessities.*

Its time for politicians to understand the value of the front line Fire & Rescue Service:

**We Rescue People, Not Banks:  
STOP THE CUTS!**

**Tam McFarlane**



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)

