

THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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PITT REVIEW – FIREFIGHTERS URGE GOVERNMENT TO ACT QUICKLY

The Fire Brigades Union is urging Government to act quickly on the Pitt Review recommendations to ensure a better and safer rescue response to floods by the fire and rescue service. It said it was unacceptable for fire crews to continue to be put at risk by a lack of equipment and training.

The union challenged Government to commit itself to acting quickly and decisively on all of the recommendations in the report relating to the fire and rescue service.

The union welcomes a number of recommendations, findings and comments in the final report including:

the Review's finding that the public and rescuers were put at unnecessary risk by the current lack of clarity over who was responsible for the emergency response to flooding [Par 11.33, p181]

“It appears that, in the event of another wide-area flooding emergency, those responding would still not necessarily have the right resources or training to respond safely.” [Par 11.60]

RECOMMENDATION 39: “The Government should urgently put in place a fully funded national capability for flood rescue, with Fire and Rescue Authorities playing a leading role, underpinned, as necessary, by a statutory duty.”

Par 11.58 “the current provision of boats, PPE and training is predominantly for local rescue, not for the greater scale of response required for multiple rescues in wide-area flooding events.”

11.59 With regard to PPE [Personal Protective Equipment] submissions to the Review appear to mirror those cited in the CFRA's report in recounting how FRS personnel worked in difficult conditions, often using PPE designed for routine fire-fighting duties, or for infrequent, short-duration incidents in rivers, lakes and canals rather than an interoperable response. We have heard firsthand how fire and rescue personnel deployed in normal fire fighting PPE rapidly became wet, cold and risked contamination by flood water.

FBU General Secretary Matt Wrack said: “The review has clearly identified what needs to be done. Sir Michael Pitt has listened and his report will be strongly welcomed across the fire service.

“It is not acceptable that fire crews are still being put at risk by a lack of equipment and training. Government must give us the equipment, training and funding and we will get on with the job.

“This must be done as a matter of urgency. We challenge ministers to make clear Government will act quickly and decisively on these key issues.”

The union's own report and submission to the review is available at www.fbu.org.uk

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