

Fire Brigades Union submission

Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say consultation

30 June 2024



Introduction

This is the Fire Brigades Union (FBU) submission to the **Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS)** '*Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say*' consultation launched on 30 April 2024.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within Fire and Rescue Services across Scotland and the UK. The union represents the vast majority of wholetime (full-time), retained (part-time) and volunteer firefighters and fire control staff in the UK.

In October 2023, the FBU released '*Firestorm*' report in recognition of the longstanding and deepening issues faced by SFRS through inheriting an aging estate when the eight legacy Scottish fire and rescue services were amalgamated into one single service in 2013, and chronic under investment in both resource and capital budgets by successive UK and Scottish Governments.

Since 2010 SFRS uniformed operational headcount has reduced by more than 1,400 firefighters across all duty systems, amounting to almost one in five firefighter posts being cut. The FBU's report identified longstanding recruitment and retention issues with the retained that provides primary emergency fire and rescue cover for approximately 80% of Scotland's landmass, despite as of October 2023 a vacancy rate of around 30% and an annual attrition rate of 10%. These two factors alone combine to produce a significant financial drain on the SFRS and create a significantly increased risk over large areas of Scotland.

The consistent and recurring need to recruit and train retained firefighters creates a perpetual cycle of limited operational experience, negative impacts on appliance availability and lack of stability within retained and does not constitute a meaningful return on the investment made. The vacancy and attrition rates regularly result in large areas of Scotland not having adequate emergency fire and rescue cover, in turn resulting in available resources being spread thinly to attempt to meet SFRS statutory obligations.

The FBU has been clear that the current trajectory of cuts and erosion of the fire and rescue service cannot continue. The FBU welcomes the SFRS consultation and review of service, which in large part overlaps with many of the findings of the FBU *Firestorm* report. However, any proposals brought forward must be evidence based and seek to improve emergency fire and rescue cover across Scotland while protecting and improving the health, safety, wellbeing and working conditions of Scotland's firefighters. These outcomes cannot be achieved with further and deeper cuts to an already lean emergency service. The FBU believes the SFRS to achieve these outcomes needs significant investment if it is to be fit for the future.

Consultation questions

Question 1: About you

How would you best describe yourself? (Tick the one that best applies)

Trade Union/Representative Body

The FBU is the democratic, professional voice of firefighters and other workers within fire and rescue services across Scotland and the UK. The union represents the vast majority of wholetime (full-time), retained (part-time) and volunteer operational firefighters and operational fire control staff in the UK.

Question 2: Our People

To ensure the highest possible levels of community and firefighter safety, SFRS needs to have firefighter duty systems with the right staffing levels available to attend incidents at the time of day when there is most risk. Do you:

Agree strongly

SFRS have undertaken significant modelling work to assess the various risks across Scotland through their Community Risk Index Model (CRIM). This modelling has assessed historic incidents against population density and other metrics in an effort to understand where historic risks existed.

The FBU agree that emergency cover should be provided in areas where there is clearly identified risk. However, the FBU would caution that societal changes that cannot be easily predicted can create significant changes to risk factors. Historically the impacts and change to risk from the deindustrialisation of Scotland were not fully predicted. Equally the recent societal impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, which resulted in temporarily reduced risks across the transport network, and fire risks in commercial settings, due to an increase in members of the public working from home, but also an increased risk of incidents in domestic and rural settings, was not foreseen.

Additionally, the increasing use of lithium-ion batteries has resulted in increased risks in domestic and commercial (including transport system) settings when damaged or overheated batteries enter thermal runaway. Predicting future risks and the resultant demand on emergency services, is dependent upon the data and knowledge available at the time and cannot reasonably be expected to identify new risks emerging.

As our shared understanding of risks from climate change develop, it is inevitable that they will impact on both the type and scale of incidents the SFRS respond to. Such incidents are very challenging to assess and predict where, or at what time of day or night, they may occur. The increasing incidences of large-scale wildfires and flooding incidents, that have impacted so many local communities across Scotland over the last decade, alone demonstrate this point.

The known issues of recruitment and retention in the retained duty system, highlighted in the introduction to this consultation response, show that societal changes in how communities live, and work can develop over time, which can subsequently impact operational duty systems and SFRS ability to respond to operational incidents.

When faced with an emergency, the public expect to be able to dial 999 and receive an emergency response without delay and without consideration of what time of day or night they call.

Over the last decade average response times to incidents have continued to increase. Any proposed changes, developed as part of this consultation, or the wider public consultation, must not negatively impact on firefighters' ability to provide a timely emergency response, or on the vital community engagement work undertaken by SFRS.

Question 3: Service priorities

The 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document (Section 3) outlines the need for SFRS to change. From the list below, please select UP TO FOUR issues that you feel should be priorities for SFRS. Please RANK THESE IN ORDER with 1 being the most important

Rank	Issues
	Crews should be based in areas where there is more risk and demand
	SFRS should have the right resources (i.e. fire appliances) in the right place – based on analysis of risk
	SFRS should work alongside communities to build resilience and better prepare for significant events, including flooding and wildfire.
	Fire stations should have dignified changing facilities for firefighters
	Reassurance that any changes won't make me or my family less safe
	There should be a visible SFRS presence near where I live.
	SFRS should undertake prevention work to protect the most vulnerable in communities
	SFRS needs to demonstrate best value for public money.
	SFRS should strive to reduce its carbon footprint wherever possible

Not ranked – see below

The FBU has a number of concerns with the above question, asking stakeholders to poll which risk or cost they are willing to accept, or less likely to object to, is likely to illicit substantially different responses based on individual or collective experience of both SFRS, and the organisation or body on whose behalf they are responding, geography and geographical location, and other socioeconomic demographics.

For example, asking stakeholders to rank whether they believe firefighters should have dignified facilities against whether SFRS should have the right resources in the right place appears perverse when SFRS have statutory, legislative and moral obligations that intersect both statements.

For these reasons it is the FBU's view that this question is inappropriate and unlikely to illicit statistically significant or reliable responses when seeking to set priorities for the future of SFRS.

With specific reference (in order) to the issues within the table:

- It is sensible in terms of risk, emergency response, community engagement, and financial accountability that SFRS *crews should be based in areas where there is more risk and demand*. This statement is obvious and fully supported by the FBU.
- The FBU fully support the statement that *SFRS should have the right resources (i.e. fire appliances) in the right place – based on analysis of risk*. Recognition that risk is dynamic in

both the short and long-term based on multiple factors such as short-term population movement into city centres during traditional working hours, through to pandemics and impacts from climate change is vital in ensuring that risks to communities is not inadvertently increased by any proposed changes to how SFRS provide emergency cover or prevention activities across Scotland.

- The FBU is broadly supportive of the statement that *SFRS should work alongside communities to build resilience and better prepare for significant events, including flooding and wildfire*. However, the FBU would caution that attempting to back fill gaps in service provision with community partners and the voluntary sector has the potential to pose significantly increased risk to communities, to community responders and to firefighters. The FBU supports increasing community resilience and preparedness through education, signposting, and identifying individuals or groups who could need additional support or assistance during flooding or wildfires. The FBU does not support replacing highly skilled, highly trained professional firefighters with community responders whose training, skill and knowledge level, or understanding of fire and rescue service incident management and command and control, cannot be assessed or guaranteed.
- As identified in the FBU *Firestorm* report, *fire stations should have dignified changing facilities for firefighters*. This should be a priority for SFRS under their legislative obligations and their commitment to a diverse workforce and inclusive culture. The FBU fully support this being a priority for SFRS, however firefighters do not support the inclusion of this issue as part of a poll on future service priorities within this consultation. It should not be open for question or debate that SFRS should be providing dignified facilities for their employees.
- SFRS should go further than providing *reassurance that any changes won't make me or my family less safe*. SFRS should regard increasing public safety as their primary objective in any change proposals and should guarantee that safety will not be undermined. The FBU do not believe that this should be a choice for stakeholders or members of the public to poll against other SFRS priorities.
- Seeking views on whether *there should be a visible SFRS presence near where I live* is likely to give a false impression of the current reality. The FBU is aware that there are numerous rural and remote areas of Scotland where SFRS currently have a visible presence in the form of local community fire stations. However, the inability to recruit and retain operational firefighters in many of these locations (in part due to factors out with SFRS control) means that there is limited or no scope to provide an emergency response from these stations. The FBU make the point that it is less important to have a visible presence, and more important to have firefighters physically present to respond to emergencies, provide fire safety advice and education, and community engagement.
- The FBU has been at the forefront of making the case for increased prevention work and support the statement that *SFRS should undertake prevention work to protect the most vulnerable in communities*. However, the inclusion of this statement within the poll suggests

that dependant on the responses, preventative work may no longer be a priority for SFRS, which would impact SFRS obligations under the Fire Scotland Act 2005 (as amended). The FBU do not believe that any individual or organisation would attempt to make the case that SFRS should withdraw or refrain from this vital area of work and have concerns that this has been included as part of this consultation when seeking to rate one priority over another.

- The FBU views the inclusion of the statement that *SFRS needs to demonstrate best value for public money* within this consultation as unnecessary and of no benefit or value to setting SFRS future priorities. It is incumbent on all public sector and taxpayer funded organisations to provide best value.
- The FBU is fully supportive of the urgent need to reduce carbon emissions. However, the FBU does not believe the inclusion of the statement *SFRS should strive to reduce its carbon footprint wherever possible* within this poll provides any value or merit when setting future service priorities. SFRS, like all Scottish public bodies, have had a statutory obligation, and therefore legal requirement, to reduce their carbon footprint and emissions since 2011. This is set out in the Scottish Governments statutory strategic delivery plan for meeting emissions reduction targets, the Scottish Government Climate Change Plan and the Climate Change (Emissions Reductions Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

Question 4: Investing in change

Section 4 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document outlines the need for SFRS make better use of our resources. One way we can do this is to work in partnership with other public bodies (e.g., Police Scotland and others) to explore how we can provide better value for the public. Do you:

Agree

The FBU agrees that public bodies should seek to collaborate where appropriate. However, the driver for closer collaboration should mean improved outcomes for the people of Scotland, not on savings by reducing headcount.

The focus on best value across multiple sectors, including fire and rescue, has historically been used across the UK to justify cost cutting which has led to attacks on members terms and conditions and firefighter safety through the loss of jobs, resilience, reduced ridership factors and removal of pumps and stations. This has resulted in increased response times and increased risk to the public and firefighters. The FBU argue that the resultant societal cost of these historic cuts does not offer genuine best value. Since 2010 SFRS uniformed operational headcount has reduced by more than 1,400 firefighters across all duty systems, amounting to almost one in five firefighter posts being cut. This damaging trend cannot continue.

The FBU has sought to progress meaningful partnership working that is outcome led through our National Joint Council (NJC) facilitated negotiated principal agreement with SFRS to develop the role of Scotland's' firefighters. It is our view that closer collaboration with other services such as NHS Scotland and the Scottish Ambulance Service through co-response to appropriate emergency

medical incidents, expanded home safety visits and community engagement with vulnerable groups will deliver best value by delivering better outcomes for society.

Opportunities to share buildings and training venues are one area that the FBU broadly support however, the lack of dignified facilities and DECON procedures, including zoning, across much of the SFRS estate would need to be rectified before serious consideration could be given to such ventures.

Projects and reviews based principally on reducing costs for support functions such as payroll are likely to see fewer employees undertaking increased workloads and negatively impact output from these departments. The experience of the FBU in Scotland and across the UK, is that where support functions are streamlined as a cost saving measure, the service provided becomes poorer.

It is important to assess and understand that the trust placed in firefighters by the public is likely to be damaged if there is a shift, perceived or otherwise, away from being a humanitarian service due to closer collaboration with police or law enforcement. While the SFRS and the Scottish Government have no stated intention to alter their governance model, it should be noted that the FBU is firmly opposed to a move away from distinct governance arrangements for fire including the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner (PFCC) model used in parts of England. It has created significant issues for services and damaged public confidence.

Question 5: Our appliances

Section 5.2 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document (Changing Where our Stations and Appliances are Based) outlines why we need to review where our appliances are located. For communities to be safe, we need to have the right resources in the right place.

Agree strongly

The Community Risk Index Model (CRIM) carried out by SFRS provides important and valuable analysis of historical incident data and societal demographics including population shifts, age, and socioeconomic/deprivation indexing for all of Scotland.

This data is broadly useful in understanding where historic risk existed and identifying trends. Much of this data appears to confirm what was already known; where you have higher density of human activity, in domestic, commercial and industrial settings, or via transport networks, predominantly the road network, there will be higher levels of demand on the fire and rescue service. Where there are higher levels of deprivation and poverty, there will be higher demand on the fire and rescue service for both emergency response and community engagement.

The CRIM data does seek to identify changing risks and therefore demands from an aging population and climate change, it is impossible to fully predict events that have societal impacts. The necessity to work from home during the COVID 19 pandemic saw significant reductions in road use and population shifts into city and town centres during normal working hours. The impacts of climate change are constantly being modelled, it is impossible to fully predict where and when wildfires and large scale flooding events will occur. This has been evidenced in the wildfires that swept across London in July 2022 destroying homes, the wildfire at Cannich in 2023, Storm Arwen in 2021 which devastated large areas across the east coast of Scotland and Storm Babet that resulted in a number of deaths across the UK in 2023.

The FBU entered and committed to develop the role of Scotland's firefighters in 2022. The Scottish Government continue to state their support for the realisation of an agreement but to date have not provided the necessary funding to allow SFRS to progress the relevant areas of work.

It is vital that any proposals brought forward by SFRS are not developed purely on a cost saving basis. Understanding historic, anticipated shifts in human activity and accompanying risk alongside anticipated risks from external factors such as climate change, anticipated increases in demand from new roles and work will be vital in ensuring that proposals do not increase risks to communities. The FBU does not want to see risk increased through reduced firefighter numbers and increased response times, or reduced resilience across SFRS due to changes in appliance location, crewing models or resources being diverted or delayed via the proposed new areas of work, should the developed role be realised.

Question 6a: Where we're located

Section 5.2 of the 'Shaping Our Future Service: Your Say' document (Changing Where our Stations and Appliances are Based) outlines why we need to review where our fire stations are located. To do this, we must consider how the communities we serve have changed and are continuing to change.

Agree strongly

As stated in response to question 5, the FBU recognise the need for SFRS to assess and plan according to known and anticipated risks, societal and environmental changes. It is vital that when developing proposals, SFRS fully assess anticipated impacts from emerging risks and the impact of any proposed new work under the proposed developed role for Scottish firefighters. The location of SFRS stations and resources should take full consideration of the impact of large-scale flooding events that have previously cut off whole communities from traditional emergency response due to the road network becoming impassable for fire and rescue vehicles due to flooding and landslides.

The FBU recognise that changing population trends in some remote and rural communities has resulted in local recruitment and retention difficulties. SFRS have a legislative and humanitarian responsibility to ensure that adequate emergency cover is provided to all communities in Scotland. Any proposals in relation to station closures and/or relocation must ensure that response times are not further increased and that steps are taken to reduce risks in communities where known or anticipated recruitment and retention issues exist in order to protect and improve future service provision. Consideration must also be given to how any change proposals may impact other sectors or industries.

Question 6b: Shared premises

SFRS should consider sharing premises with partners (e.g., Scottish Ambulance Service, Police Scotland and local authorities) to provide a better service for our communities. Do you:

Agree in part.

Shared facilities should bring organisational, financial and societal benefits and opportunity. However, the FBU believes it is vital that any proposals to share facilities with other organisations

are based on more than potential savings. Robust assessment of community and societal benefits or impacts should be fundamental in developing any plans for shared facilities. Equality impact assessments should be conducted as a matter of course to consider all impacts from any proposed changes.

As has been noted in the FBU *Firestorm* report and by SFRS, much of the current SFRS estate is ageing and does not offer dignified or DECON compliant facilities for firefighters and existing premises users. It is vital that other workers are not exposed to these working conditions or the recognised risks of cross contamination from fire effluents transferred by firefighters into their surroundings. If SFRS are to develop proposals for increased sharing of facilities then this must be done alongside significant investment and modernisation of their estate to provide safe, fit for purpose workplaces for all staff groups and visitors.

The SFRS also needs to fully consider the full impact of which partner organisations are most appropriate to share facilities with. Firefighters and fire and rescue services have had widely recognised success in accessing many communities where other partners, for example Police Scotland, have experienced greater challenges. Consideration must be given to ensuring that recognised shared premises does not unintentionally undermine those successes and therefore we oppose the sharing of premises with police and/or other law enforcement agencies.

Question 7a: Our role in local communities

Our prevention, preparedness and protection work can help reduce the risk of fires and other potentially life-threatening situations. It can also help us better plan for events such as flooding and wildfires.

Agree strongly

The FBU supports a joint approach to risk reduction through community engagement and education. It is recognised that firefighters are on the front line of climate related emergencies and as such, SFRS should be a primary contributor to developing preparedness for such events. Ensuring that community resilience and action plans are evidence based, well founded and rehearsed is key to reducing risks and harm from these events.

While the FBU support closer partnership working to reduce such risks, the FBU does so with a note of caution, as it is firefighters that remain best placed to carry out emergency response to such incidents. While community responders play a key role, it is vital that professional, highly trained firefighters, who fully understand SFRS command and control and incident management procedures provide the emergency response. Due to their knowledge and experience of responding to such incidents, firefighters also remain key to developing and delivering community engagement in relation to large scale environmental incidents.

Question 7b: Our role in local communities

SFRS should contribute towards Net Zero by, for example, reducing our own carbon emissions. Do you:

Agree strongly

As previously covered in response to question 3, SFRS have legislative obligations to contribute to Net Zero. The FBU fully support the Scottish Government's intent to deliver on their climate targets and the need for all public sector bodies to contribute to the aim of Net Zero by 2045. The size of SFRS as a Scotland wide organisation, and scale of the issues faced in relation to reducing their carbon footprint poses significant challenges, but also offers significant opportunity to the organisation.

If the SFRS are to meaningfully reduce their carbon emissions, this will require significant investment in their estate and fleet as new technology is developed, which will subsequently require ongoing, long-term financial support from Scottish Government. This cannot be achieved through cuts to other areas of the service or changes that negatively impact operational response or community safety.

Question 8: Consulting with our communities

SFRS may wish to hold a future public consultation on some of the issues detailed below. Please tell us to what extent you think the public should be consulted on each issue.

<u>Change Proposal</u>	<u>The public should be fully consulted</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted, but should be informed</u>	<u>The public don't need to be consulted</u>	<u>Unsure</u>
Changes to firefighter role (e.g., to include emergency first aid responder)			Changes to firefighter roles are negotiated through recognised collective bargaining mechanisms – the NJC. Public consultation may be beneficial to assess the public desire for such changes but should not undermine this structure or the contractual or legal rights of firefighters.	
Modernisation / upgrade of a fire station(s)		The FBU do not believe there is a need for public consultation to deliver improvements to existing SFRS buildings. Building users/firefighters should be consulted on these improvements to ensure their ideas are considered. A positive example of this has been the upgrade to Inverness community fire station that involved watch based firefighters in design and implementation ensuring DECON factors were considered.		

Closure of a fire station	The closure of fire stations in local communities has the potential to negatively impact community safety. Communities should be fully involved in any decisions that could see risks increase.			
Moving a fire station to a new location	Moving fire stations to new locations has the potential to negatively impact community safety in one area while improving cover in others. Communities should be fully involved in any decisions that could see risks increase.			
Permanent removal or relocation of a fire appliance(s)	The permanent removal or relocation of fire appliances has the potential to negatively impact community safety in one area while improving cover in others. Communities should be fully involved in any decisions that could see risks increase.			
Changes to firefighter duty systems			Changes to firefighter duty systems are negotiated through recognised collective bargaining mechanisms - NJC. Public consultation may be beneficial to assess the public desire for such	

			changes but should not undermine this structure and the contractual or legal rights of firefighters to negotiate and agree duty systems in line with the scheme of conditions of service.	
Sharing locations with other partners (e.g., Police, Ambulance, local authorities.)		The FBU believe there is a need to consult with current building users and prospective building users to ensure their expectations of shared buildings and locations are considered and that the service provided is not negatively impacted. There is a possibility that changes such as these may be viewed negatively by some members of the public therefore, the public should be involved in the decision making process to ensure their expectations are considered ahead of making any changes.		
Building a new fire station	Beyond the need for normal consultation as part of the planning process, the public should be consulted to ensure their views and the needs of the local community are fully considered prior to building new fire stations. End			

	users/firefighters, through the FBU should be fully involved in each stage of any new design and build of fire stations to ensure their ideas and needs are fully considered, (see previous comment regarding upgrade of Inverness fire station).			
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Question 9: Any other comments

Please give us any other comments that SFRS should take into account when considering the future of the Service.

The FBU *Firestorm* report highlighted many of the issues that SFRS recognise in the documentation accompanying this consultation. The FBU welcomes SFRS undertaking a review of current service provision with the intent to develop change options to improve the service provided to communities of Scotland and to the working life of our members.

It is vital that changes of this potential scale, which are likely to have multi-generational impacts are well thought out, well planned and based on a desire to improve service provision, not based solely on savings. The FBU has been explicit in our statements, that this review cannot be used as a smokescreen for cuts, and welcome SFRS early commitment that this is a view shared by the SFRS senior leadership team. FBU's priorities are listed below:

- **The FBU will not accept further reductions to firefighter numbers as part of this change process – more firefighters are needed not less.**

In the last 14 years SFRS have cut over 1,400 firefighter posts through 'natural wastage'. This has seen increases to response times and will have undoubtedly negatively impacted the level and quality of community engagement. There are also concerns regarding current resilience levels and the ability to implement relief strategies at large scale incidents to allow firefighters who become exposed to fire contaminants to properly decontaminate.

- **The FBU will not accept reductions to the agreed safe crewing model.**

The agreed safe crewing model ensures that the initial response to an incident of a primary appliance allows a full crew of five firefighters to effect immediate rescue of casualties while maintaining minimum safety levels. The appliance reductions imposed in 2023 resulted in an increased number of single pump stations, increasing the likelihood of single crews being the sole attendance at incidents for protracted periods. Any proposals to reduce safe crewing levels on appliances undermines the safety of both the public and firefighters and will not be accepted by the FBU.

- **The FBU has significant concerns regarding any proposals to reduce fire cover at night.**

It is our view that reductions to fire cover overnight pose an increased risk to communities and to the health safety and wellbeing of firefighters. It is likely that any such proposals would negatively impact on the contractual conditions and work life balance of our members.

The FBU support the SFRS commitment to being an employer of choice, while this is not specifically referenced within the *Shaping Our Future* documents, it is accepted and welcomed that this is a long standing position held by the organisation. This review offers opportunities for SFRS to further this aim by increasing their commitment to implement best practice in relation to fire contaminants, cancers and diseases through both station design and crew availability ensuring relief strategies can be implemented to allow firefighters to decontaminate quickly following exposure to fire effluents.

- **The FBU demands support for pregnant firefighters**

The FBU campaign *Fight for 52* focussed on the need for firefighters to have 52 weeks maternity leave on full pay. SFRS should take the opportunity through this review to improve the working conditions of their staff. The FBU believe this will have positive outcomes in relation to diversifying the workforce while minimising secondary exposure risks to newborn children and demonstrating that SFRS are a family friendly employer.

- **The FBU calls for SFRS to acknowledge the vital role control firefighters play**

The *Shaping Our Future* documentation makes no detailed reference to the vital role carried out by our firefighters that work in control. This staff group has undergone the most significant changes since the inception of the single service with the reduction from eight to three control rooms, changes to shift patterns, changes to mobilising protocols and systems with further changes imminent when a new mobilising system is implemented in coming months/years. Control firefighters have seen the scope of their role change and the level of knowledge and understanding required in relation to incident types significantly increase. Control firefighters will be impacted by most or all changes brought forward following this review – the SFRS need to recognise and properly support the role our control members play in the service.

- **The FBU is committed to a welcoming, hospitable work culture**

The current work by the SFRS Cultural Development Group will require a commitment to training and development in soft skills and leadership, the current structures in training departments are unlikely to be able to deliver the required development, delivery or volume of training. This review provides opportunity to bolster training departments to enable increased levels of formalised training and development in all disciplines. Should SFRS identify frontline resources that are no longer protecting known risks (due to changes such as deindustrialisation) consideration should be given to moving the spare capacity into training roles to better equip remaining operational crews.

- **The FBU supports fair pensions for firefighters**

The SFRS, like all fire and rescue service employers, will be impacted by the changes to nominal pension age and will likely see increases to the number of operational staff working to sixty years old. Existing research identifies that maintaining operational fitness to this age will increasingly become a challenge for increasing numbers of staff. As part of this review, SFRS should consider opportunities and mechanisms to be able to move staff that are unable to maintain operational fitness into non-operational roles within departments such as community safety or training, ensuring that individuals can work to their normal pension age and SFRS can maximise benefits from the operational experience gained by such individuals.

The FBU believes SFRS needs significant investment if it is to be fit for the future.