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To: **All Members**

Dear Brother/Sister,

Anti-strike laws: some good news from Wales
Welsh Government response to minimum service levels

The Welsh Government has responded to Westminster setting new 'minimum service levels' for the fire and rescue service under the 'Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act'.

This legislation will give fire service employers the power to issue 'work notices' during a period of strike action. In England, the regulations require that 73% of appliances will be expected to be on the run on a strike day, with control rooms operating as if it was a non-strike day.

These regulations were issued by the Westminster government, and apply only to services in England.

Hannah Blythyn, Welsh Deputy Minister for Social Partnership has written to the fire minister at Westminster, Chris Philp, stating that the Welsh government opposes the imposition of minimum service levels.

Blythyn condemns the regulations, describing them as "fundamentally flawed, damaging and counter-productive". The letter highlights the large proportion of retained firefighters in the Welsh workforce, and the fact that trying to force retained firefighters to attend work on a strike day would be untenable. She states that trying to apply the law to Wales would be an "unworkable intrusion into devolved matters". The argument regarding retained firefighters obviously also would also apply to much of England, where retained firefighters make up a large proportion of the workforce.

The Scottish government has also stated that it will not issue regulations to make the Act operable, and the legislation does not apply at all to Northern Ireland.

The Fire Brigades Union has written to all fire service employers in England calling for them to publicly commit to refuse to issue work notices against named employees. With pressure, there is scope for fire service employers in England to take the lead from the Scottish and Welsh governments and publicly oppose the implementation of this draconian legislation.

I attach a copy of Hannah Blythyn's correspondence. Please keep up the campaign.

Yours in unity,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Wrack". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "M" and a stylized "Wrack".

Matt Wrack
General Secretary

MW/rs