



THE FIRE BRIGADES UNION

CONFERENCE 2018

EXECUTIVE COUNCIL POLICY STATEMENT

**STOP THE ROT – DEFENDING THE FIRE AND RESCUE
SERVICE**

Conference notes that since 2010, the Westminster government has systematically cut central funding to fire and rescue services across the UK. The National Audit Office report, *Financial sustainability of fire and rescue services* (2015), found that more than 30% of central funding was cut from fire and rescue services in England between 2011 and 2015.

The latest local government settlement figures show that planned central funding for fire and rescue services in England will be cut by 20% over the 2016-20 period. Funding for devolved administrations has also been cut, with impacts on fire and rescue services there. These cuts mean:

- More than 40 fire stations closed across the UK
- Dozens of fire engines axed
- 999 emergency response times in England are at the slowest level in 20 years
- Reductions in night time emergency cover
- Introduction of unsafe, ill-equipped fire vans to replace fire engines
- Crews reduced from 5 to 3 (or 2) in some cases
- Delays in arrival of support crews
- Failure to implement safe policies on relief of crews at fires and other emergencies
- Firefighters increasingly required to enter fires in breathing apparatus multiple times
- Specialist fire engines – such as high reach appliances – only available by removing other appliances from availability ('jump crewing' or 'double jumping').

Last year, nearly 1,300 frontline firefighter jobs were cut. Firefighter jobs were reduced by almost 3%, damaging our essential emergency service. Over 1,000 jobs lost last year were wholtime firefighter jobs, with predominately urban fire and rescue services hit hardest. This is the seventh successive year that firefighter numbers have been slashed across the UK.

Since 2010, over 11,000 frontline firefighter jobs have been cut, almost one-in-five (19%) of the total firefighting force over this period. Over one thousand firefighter jobs have been cut in Scotland since 2010. In Wales nearly 300 jobs have gone, while Northern Ireland lost over a hundred. Although the FBU is aware of recruitment in some brigades since these figures were recorded, they still do not cover the retirements that have occurred or that are projected in their employee retirement profiles and the squeeze on jobs also continues unabated.

Over 70% of those cuts are to wholtime firefighters, while nearly 3,000 retained firefighters have also been cut. More than a quarter of control staff have been lost. Every brigade has suffered – metropolitan, combined and county services – in all parts of the UK and under all devolved administrations, although not to the same degree.

Conference resolves:

1. To campaign for investment in the fire and rescue service and for a moratorium on cuts.
2. To demand the recruitment of a new generation of firefighters on Grey Book terms and conditions to replace personnel who retire and to rebuild the professional workforce.
3. This recruitment process should include the development and implementation of a new equality and diversity strategy and which includes recruitment targets to improve diversity within the service.
4. To demand high-quality national standards. Such standards for appliances, equipment and other operational requirements would cut down on waste and duplication in research and development and to enhance cross-border cooperation.

5. Such standards should include:
 - a maximum response time standard of five minutes from the time of call to arrival of the first pumping appliance
 - a maximum response time standard for the second pumping appliance
 - a minimum of 5 riders on all pumping appliances
6. There should be research undertaken to assess the response time to optimise the key aims of
 - reducing deaths and injuries
 - reducing fire-spread and damage to property
7. In the meantime, there should be a general requirement on all fire and rescue services to work to:
 - regularly and continually **improve** emergency response times
 - improve the time taken to safely implement intervention at incidents
 - fire and rescue services should be required to evidence these improvements
8. To demand risks and resilience to be assessed nationally as well as locally, to ensure adequate resource planning and response and to guarantee standards are maintained and improved.