

Firefighter

The magazine of the Fire Brigades Union

SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINIAN FIREFIGHTERS

Firefighters deliver
vital equipment

See p10

BIG STEP FORWARD ON
RETAINED PENSIONS

See p4

HELP FOR BETTER OFF,
PRECIOUS LITTLE FOR POOR

See p16

ALL DIFFERENT,
ALL EQUAL

See p14

April/May 2022



www.fbu.org.uk

Thanks to everyone who filled in the survey and gave us valuable insights into what you want from the union's magazine. You'll see some new content and a slightly different look overall. We hope you enjoy it, and as ever, please do get in touch if you have any feedback.

Much has changed since the last issue of the magazine.

UKRAINE

The war in Ukraine shocked the world, and I am proud of our members who have co-ordinated vital firefighting equipment to get to the region.

These lifesaving supplies will inevitably have real impact on the ground.

We stand in solidarity with Ukrainian firefighters and other emergency service workers, who are working tirelessly in the most appalling conditions.

Firefighting is a humanitarian service, and no more so is that true than in a war zone.



Matt Wrack

Welcome to the new look Firefighter!

In one of the richest countries in the world, it is simply unfathomable that we find ourselves in this position

We will continue to support humanitarian efforts and I congratulate all those who made the mission to Ukraine a success.

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Our first in person annual conference in three years takes place next month in Brighton.

Officials will meet for four days to debate wide-ranging



Matt Wrack speaking at a protest in Dover over the sacking of 800 P&O ferry workers. Next to him (r) is Labour MP John McDonnell (p8)



Did you know ...?

Firefighters in England rescued 2,500 people from flooding last year, and 1,500 the year before

resolutions on union and other matters and I am so looking forward to seeing all the delegates after so long, and not through a screen!

The next issue of *Firefighter* will report back on the policy decisions made at conference, but keep an eye out on the union's website and social media channels for regular updates.

EDUCATION

Speaking of in-person events, the union's education programme is back with a bang with loads of interesting courses for all levels. Take a look at fbu.org.uk/education for more info.

COST OF LIVING

FBU annual conference comes at a time of real concern for members, with the cost of living crisis becoming increasingly real.

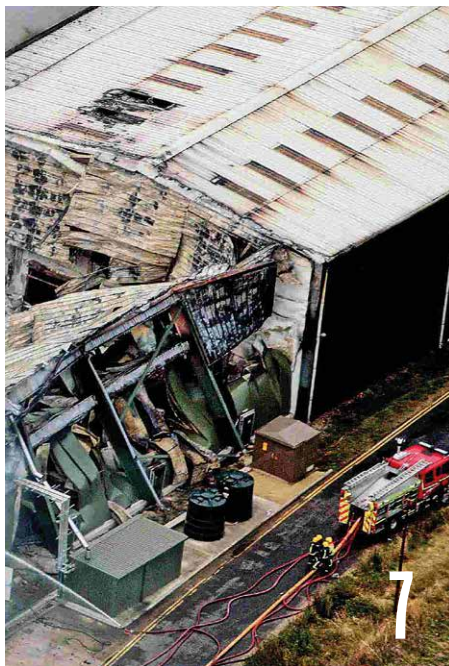
In one of the richest countries in the world, it is simply unfathomable that we find ourselves in this position.

The government must do more to keep fuel and energy costs down, and pay our key workers what they truly deserve.

We know how hard this is hitting and we are here to support you. In the upcoming pay discussions we will be fighting hard for a pay rise that considers the rising costs of our basic services.

We'll be organising members to attend a national demo on Saturday 18 June in Parliament Square, London, to make our voices heard. Join us.

■ **Wrack on the Road: p21**



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Firefighter

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NEWS

GRENFELL INQUIRY

Former chief fire and rescue adviser Sir Ken Knight questioned over previous disasters **P7**



JIM BARBOUR

Remembering the executive council member for Northern Ireland **P6**



RETAINED PENSIONS

FBU deal 'big step forward'

The FBU has taken a big step forward towards pensions justice for retained firefighters, by reaching a formal agreement with the Home Office and fire employers.

This agreement means that many retained firefighters in England will have more of their career taken into account when their pension entitlements are calculated.

Before this agreement, only employment dating back to the introduction of the Part Time Worker Regulations, on 1 July 2000 was counted for the purposes of retained – on-call, or part-time – firefighters' pension entitlements.

Mark Rowe, FBU national officer said: "This is very good news for retained firefighters who will now be provided the opportunity to have previous employment as a retained firefighter count towards their pension, under the conditions of the Second

Options Exercise Memorandum of Understanding.

"Some retained firefighters were previously losing out, so we're delighted to successfully conclude these negotiations for our members.

"The government has been proved wrong time and time again when it comes to pensions, and we will continue to fight for justice for all of our members."

Members affected should expect claims to be resolved once the necessary amendments to the pension scheme regulations have passed through the Westminster parliament, which will take around 18 months.

The second options exercise is open to firefighters with relevant retained

service which began before 6 April 2006, regardless of whether the retained firefighter presented a claim to the Employment Tribunal or not.

Crucially, this applies to retained members who served between 7 April 2000 and 5 April 2006, regardless of whether they declined under the first options exercise.

Retained firefighters with exclusively post 1 July 2000 service will be excluded from this agreement because the offer they would receive under the second options exercise would not include any service in excess of that which should have been included in the offer under the first options exercise.

If a fire authority is able to prove that such retained firefighters were given an opportunity to take part in the first options exercise, they will not be entitled to take part in the second options exercise.

■ More information is available at bit.ly/3JOV2kk

'We're delighted to successfully conclude these negotiations for members'



Fire control rally London, 2009

CONTROL STAFF

'Include fire control staff in royal medal award' FBU tells Home Office

The FBU has accused the Home Office of "disrespecting" fire control staff by refusing them the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Medal.

The government announced last year that all serving frontline emergency service workers with five years continuous service would receive the commemorative medal, but fire service call handlers would not be eligible for the honour.

The FBU has written to the Home Office urging it to reverse the decision and has appealed to chief fire officers across the UK to voice their support for fire control staff.

Mark Chapman, FBU Southern regional secretary, said: "Fire control staff play a crucial role in the fire and rescue service and are a vital part of every firefighting operation.

"Without them, we wouldn't be able to respond to incidents and keep our communities safe.

"Excluding them from this award shows the low regard from the Home Office for the important work that they do.

"We urge them to rethink this decision and give our fire control staff the recognition that they deserve."

LGA FIRE CONFERENCE

Union highlights DECON campaign

The FBU had a significant presence at this year's Local Government Association fire conference at Gateshead in March.

The conference, attended by fire service leaders and elected officials with responsibility for fire and rescue, was an opportunity for the union to promote its campaigns and issues.

This year the central aim was to highlight the FBU's DECON

campaign on best practice around fire contaminants and preventing cancer and other diseases.

The union's stand at the conference was focussed on the issue and there were productive conversations with conference members on this campaign and its importance. They revealed a good level of support for the aims of the campaign, which is growing at pace in services across the country.



Sounding off

Borders Bill is a racist attack on human rights

*Weyman Bennett, co-convenor,
Stand Up To Racism*

The Nationality and Borders Bill is a racist and brutal attack on human rights, removing the ability to claim asylum for all refugees except those arriving via "legal" routes.

Tom Pursglove, the Tory minister for tackling "illegal immigration", claims the government is "cracking down" through the Bill which will make it a criminal offence to knowingly arrive in Britain "illegally".

Care4Calais says less than 1 per cent of the world's refugees follow "legal" migration routes, such as resettlement schemes. Refugee organisations have repeatedly pointed out that the vast majority of asylum claims come from countries listed by the Global Peace Index as the most dangerous in the world.

NO SAFE LEGAL ROUTES

Because there is no safe legal route to enter the UK for most refugees, the majority have no choice but to seek unsafe routes. The repeated tragedies in the Channel are a direct result of the UK government refusing to allow safe and legal routes for refugees.

Stand Up To Racism calls for the scrapping of the Nationality and Borders Bill and the rapid expansion of safe and legal routes for refugees to enter the UK and claim asylum.

Clause 9 of the Bill could result in six million people losing British citizenship without warning – a major breach of international human rights obligations.

The Bill is part of the intensification of a racist offensive by Boris Johnson's cabinet, as it tries to divert blame onto refugees and migrants for a crisis caused by the rich.

We need a mass, united anti-racist movement. The FBU has a proud tradition of acting in solidarity with refugees. Stand Up To Racism has called protests and will continue to work as part of a wider campaign to keep the fight on the streets and defeat home secretary Priti Patel's attack on refugees.

Support, involvement and action by trade unionists will be crucial to its success.

FBU preparing for new legal action over government delays

The FBU is preparing legal claims on behalf of members over delay by the government in acting on a court decision to remedy an injustice for firefighter pensioners.

The delay, caused by the Home Office and Treasury, means that fire and rescue service employers are not able to put the court ruling onto effect. Legislation to put right the injustice is not due to be introduced to parliament until October next year.

The injustice affects firefighters who are receiving or have received pension benefits under the 2015 pension scheme, which the Court of Appeal has ruled discriminated illegally against younger firefighters. Most of those

affected are not due to receive pensions before October 2023, but the group of members who are receiving benefits now is a substantial one and the union is committed to fighting their cause.

As well as planning legal action, the union has also sent a joint letter with Local Government Association employers, voicing "continued frustration" over the delay.

Mark Rowe, FBU national officer, said: "We do not accept Treasury and Home Office delays in abiding by the decision of the court.

"The FBU never misses a meeting or any opportunity to fight for those suffering immediate detriment to have their pensions paid to them right now."

OBITUARY

Jim Barbour, executive council member for Northern Ireland

Shortly after joining the Northern Ireland Fire Brigade in 1983, Jim developed a keen interest in the FBU and rapidly rose from branch representative at Belfast's Central Fire Station to playing a leading role on the Northern Ireland regional committee.

Jim had tremendous belief in the power of political activism and immediately following his election to the executive council in 1998, plunged the Northern Ireland region into the deep end of local politics, choosing to lobby and interact with the entire range of conflicting political ideologies that formed the body politic there.

In 1999 Jim led the region to win a dispute with brigade management on proposed changes to contracts.

This victory paved the way for a very successful period in the region's history

when, against a backdrop of swingeing cuts across the UK fire service, no fire stations were closed and no jobs were lost in Northern Ireland.

Jim was a graduate of Queens University Belfast where he gained an honours degree in geology. He had a ferocious interest in world history and would often surprise contemporaries in discussions on current affairs with his deep background knowledge and understanding of obscure regions and peoples.

Jim enjoyed debating any issue at hand, he was great company and was a loyal, kind and warm friend to his comrades.

Jim Barbour died after a lengthy illness and is survived by his wife Roberta, daughter Alex and grandchildren Megan and Erin, upon whom he absolutely doted, and a wider family circle.



Jim Barbour
30 December 1958 –
8 March 2022

In brief



Joint H&S course

The first day of a three-day health and safety course run jointly by the FBU and the pilots' union BALPA in March. Participants shared expertise and knowledge. For more information on FBU education courses: fbu.org.uk/education



Dying to Work charter

In a move that was initiated by the FBU and took three years to complete, the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) has signed the TUC's Dying to Work charter. It sets out an agreed way in which employees will be supported, protected and guided throughout their employment, following a terminal diagnosis. With the charter (above) Pat Rafferty (left), president of the Scottish TUC, and Martin Blunden, chief officer, SFRS.



Firefighters' Memorial Day, 4 May

Please send your fire station photos from Firefighters' Memorial Day 2022 to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk



Aftermath of the fire at Atherstone-on-Stour, Warwickshire, in which four firefighters, John Averis, Ian Reid, Ashley Stephens and Darren Yates-Badley, died in the UK fire service's worst loss of life at a single incident in 35 years

PA IMAGES/ALAMY

Sir Ken Knight was commissioner of London Fire Brigade from 2001 to 2007. He then became Chief Fire and Rescue Adviser (CFRA) serving in this role until January 2013.

As CFRA, Knight's role included advising ministers on emerging issues of national significance in the fire and rescue service, as well as providing guidance to services.

While giving evidence to the Grenfell inquiry, Knight was asked about his role as CFRA and what he knew of the dangers of the use of combustible materials in external wall constructions and what action he took, if any, to inform and support fire and rescue services.

The inquiry heard how, after the Lakanal House fire in 2009 in which six people lost their lives, Knight failed to press government to instruct housing providers to actively check the walls of their buildings for compliance with building regulations.

This was despite receiving a letter from the then LFB

commissioner, Ron Dobson, warning Knight that tests on the external wall panels revealed they did not have adequate fire safety properties and that housing providers ought to check their own buildings.

Instead, the letter sent by government to local housing authorities merely

He could not give a reason as to why he omitted to reference the importance of training as highlighted in the report



News Focus

Sir Ken Knight's evidence to the Grenfell inquiry

encouraged them to check if they had concerns and not as a matter of course.

Knight agreed that if housing providers chose to do nothing, the risk of another similar fire increased.

Another missed opportunity came after the Atherstone-on-Stour fire of November 2007 in which four firefighters lost their lives.

Findings of the investigation into the fire were published in "FRS safety critical issues" and sent to Knight.

The investigation called for incident commanders to be familiar with building

construction types and risks arising from various different types of construction, and that this should have an impact on initial and continuation training requirements for firefighters.

Lack of training for firefighters on different types of construction was identified as a key failure in LFB's pre-planning for Grenfell Tower.

But Knight made no mention of the training aspect in his circular 18/2009 of March 2009. He said that, although it is not expressly addressed, the fire and rescue authority has a responsibility to keep firefighters safe and, through that, should be carrying out suitable training.

He could not give a reason as to why he omitted to reference the importance of training as highlighted in the report.

Knight is currently chair of the independent expert advisory panel formed in the immediate aftermath of Grenfell by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to advise on fire safety.



THE BIG PICTURE

Solidarity with sacked P&O workers

FBU members and general secretary Matt Wrack joined members of the RMT and Nautilus trade unions in Dover after news broke of the mass sackings of 800 P&O workers.

A short pre-recorded video message told employees that they were to be made redundant with immediate effect. No prior collective consultation as required under legislation took place (see Legal Beagle, p19).

Workers were escorted off ferries by masked security men with agency workers waiting to take their places.

P&O is owned by DP World, a multinational ports and logistics company based in Dubai.

In 2020, the firm claimed almost £15m in government grants, which included furlough payments for its employees and paid a £270m dividend to shareholders.





West Midlands firefighters Steven Knott and James Allsop with friends Chris Hanley and Alex Willis, deliver supplies to refugees fleeing Ukraine at the Polish border village of Medyka



Ukraine: 'It puts it all in perspective'

The response of firefighters to the needs of people in the Ukraine has been both massive and swift, writes **Will Stone**

FIREFIGHTERS across the UK have been taking part in a huge drive to donate fire and rescue equipment to Ukraine – with one even offering to volunteer to help firefighting in the war-torn country.

One convoy saw 40 firefighters join more than 60 volunteers from Fire Aid, the charity co-ordinating one of the donation drives, to help transport two lorries full of vital equipment, including sets of PPE, hoses, body armour and thermal imaging equipment, and fire appliances.

Claire Hoyland, project manager at Fire Aid, said the “mega convoy” on 19 March was made up of 22 vehicles, which included an incident response unit and a hydraulic rescue platform,



Kent firefighter Mike Pitney with the convoy ready to set off from Ashford fire station

PA IMAGES/ALAMY

along with more than 5,000 pieces of equipment.

She said: “We’re calling this a mega convoy as it is not only mega in size, but it has been truly a monumental effort from all involved.

BIGGEST EVER DONATION

“Within two weeks we have put together the biggest ever donation of aid from UK fire and rescue services.”

Leading the convoy, firefighter Mike Pitney, of Kent Fire and Rescue Service, described the firefighting equipment in Ukraine as “past-life” and said “something needed to be done with it”.

Fire Aid has been supporting emergency services with firefighting equipment in over 50 countries for more than 25 years. Following Russia’s

‘We’re calling this a mega convoy as it is not only mega in size, but it has been truly a monumental effort from all involved’

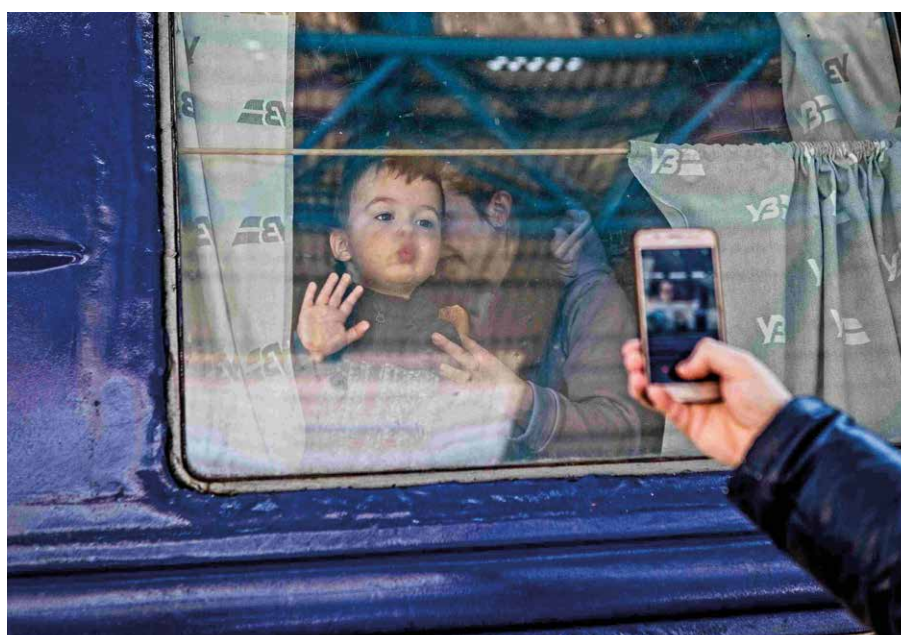
invasion of Ukraine, Fire Aid volunteers mobilised quickly to gather and transport donated equipment to Poland from where it will be transferred to Ukraine.

Another convoy, organised by the Scottish Emergency Rescue Association (SERA) charity, drove four fire engines and an 18-tonne box lorry full of life-saving equipment including body armour and helmets.

Scottish FBU member Michal Stachowicz was among them and says the 80 flak jackets, donated by the Scottish Fire and Rescue Service (SFRS) after being bought to allow firefighters to respond to terrorist incidents following the Manchester Arena bombings, was “one of the best things” that they took.

He told *Firefighter*. “Firefighters are still firefighting under persistent





ANDREA CARBONARA/ANADOLU AGENCY/GETTY IMAGES

shelling, so the body armour helps to protect them.

“It’s nice to give them a bit of firefighting equipment that nobody thinks of, but are in fact essential to keep them safe like the ballistic vests. It’s a pleasure and a privilege to do that.

“The borders are full of people who walked for weeks, poorer people reaching the border with plastic bags with them, it puts it all in perspective.

“Even a little help or donation makes a massive difference to them.

“When we were showing the guys how to use the machines we brought, the guys were amazed as all they’ve got is old ex-Soviet trucks from the 70s and

Refugees, mostly from the Mariupol area, take a train in Zaporizhia to continue their journey west



Donated emergency service equipment at Ashford fire station

PA IMAGES/ALAMY



MYKHAYLO PALINCHAK/SOPA IMAGES/ALAMY

Ukrainian firefighters extinguish the fire from a badly damaged residential building hit by a Russian mortar shell

centres not knowing if they'd ever see husbands or family again.

"One lady we helped transport to a new life abroad, Olana, had lost her father (a radiological engineer) and her uncle in the aftermath of operations to make the Chernobyl nuclear plant safe.

"The centres try to make life bearable with activities for kids, info desks teeming with people seeking advice and making impossible decisions as to where they want their new home to be.

"There are also psychological counsellors ever present to help people with loss of home, possessions, relatives and certainty."

Another brave retired firefighter, Bruce Reid from North Yorkshire, flew out to Poland with the hope of crossing the Ukrainian border to help Ukraine's fire service.

He told *Firefighter*: "I went to the site of the Twin Towers after 9/11, but that's just one site.

IMMENSE STRAIN

"What's happening in Ukraine is city after city across huge swathes of the country. The strain on the fire service is immense, so I wanted to try and do my bit to help.

"I took two sets of full firefighter kit, leggings, tunic, one helmet, gloves, boots, a respirator and a few bits and pieces."

However, when he finally made it to the Ukrainian border at the rendezvous point near Lviv he was told the only way he would be allowed to cross the border would be to go to a military training post.

Having promised his family he would refuse to fight, he decided to make the long journey home – but not without the satisfaction that he tried.

"I've got no military experience and had no desire to do a crash course in using an AK47," Bruce said.

80s, so something like this is transformational for them."

He recalled being in Ukraine a few years ago to help train firefighters, but never believed they would ever need their new skills in a war zone.

Frank Johnson, a retired former watch manager at North Hull fire station, flew to the Polish border with his son to help shuttle people between refugee centres, the airport and railway station as well as transporting all kinds of everyday equipment for use in Ukraine.

ARRANGED VERY QUICKLY

"The trip was arranged very quickly realising that the needs of the fleeing families is immediate," he said.

"On a human level we saw mothers and children left at the border by young men returning to fight for their country, pregnant and nursing mums in transit

'I've got no military experience and had no desire to do a crash course in using an AK47'



FBU members at a Stand Up To Racism demonstration in Glasgow in March

Unity is everything – why the FBU's All Different All Equal policy is central to our union

National officer **Riccardo la Torre** explains the key role of the union's policy on discrimination and harassment, and how it works

A member of your family comes home from work crying at least once a week. Or they say they want to give up their dream job. This, more than anyone would hope, can be a sad reality and is often the result of how someone is treated at work.

Everyone who works in the fire and rescue service should be treated with dignity and respect at work, and bullying, harassment, sexist, racist or homophobic behaviour should not be tolerated.

But, until the day comes when unwanted and harmful behaviours are behind us, the FBU relies on its All Different All Equal (ADAE) policy to guide members and officials.

ADAE pulls together our most fundamental trade union values, of solidarity, democracy, unity and fairness.

Matt Wrack, general secretary, explains why it is so crucial to the power of the union: "Workers are weakened if we are divided. So, in order to be effective, we need to be genuinely united.

"That means opposing anything which seeks to divide us or undermine unity.

"That is why unions have to oppose and challenge racism, sexism or any other form of discrimination which seeks to target one group of people on the basis



of a particular characteristic.”

The union is committed to promoting fairness and equality at work, and is raising awareness of its ADAE policy among members, to ensure there is widespread knowledge of what support it offers, and what it means for individuals and the union as a whole when one or more of our own are accused of falling short of these principles.

Jamie Newell, regional secretary, Eastern region, says ADAE “shines a light” on the union’s commitment to equality in the workplace, but wants more members to know about what the policy is there to do.

FAIRNESS AND EQUALITY

Fairness and equality are cornerstones of the trade union movement, and what the union strives to achieve for all of its members.

Standing shoulder to shoulder with those who have been at the receiving end of abuse, ADAE supports members to boldly and unequivocally stand up to all forms of discrimination.

Kathryn Duncan, secretary of the national women’s committee, says ADAE is “ground-breaking”.

Harassment or bullying breaches the union’s rules and ADAE makes clear that a member who is accused of bullying or harassment is not automatically

represented by the union, but can apply to the regional secretary for this representation. However, many members are not aware of the overall scope of the ADAE policy and, where they are, there is often more focus on the individual who has been accused, whereas discussion should centre on the plight of those being bullied or harassed and the need for mutual respect.

For example, the policy covers what to do when you believe someone is being badly treated and has not spoken out – something many members will recognise.

Annabel Green, women’s education organiser in London, worked with FBU Education to organise an ADAE awareness day for reps from equality sections. Appetites whetted, six of them are now booked on a three-day residential ADAE course.

Tutor Helen Nolan says promoting values is a vital part of the course which

also provides a chance for self-scrutiny, encouraging reps to “look at your own actions and accept you have biases”.

The diversity and unity of our workforce are its strengths. In safety critical environments, the reliance on each other makes standing up for each other a way of life.

There is no place for racism, sexism, homophobia, or discrimination of any kind, in our union. The ADAE policy is a tool we can, and must, all use to organise around and help tackle and prevent it in our union and our workplaces.

ATTEMPTS TO DIVIDE US

Attempts to divide workers, to get us kicking at each other rather than kicking up at those truly to blame for our struggles, is a tactic we can see used by bosses, rulers and scabs throughout history.

It is imperative that we resist this as trade unionists and push back in the strongest way possible against any efforts to disrupt our unity.

■ ADAE can be found at fbu.org.uk/publications/all-different-all-equal. Get in touch with your local rep for further information. The union runs regular education courses on ADAE. Keep an eye out for these in *Rollcall* and at fbu.org.uk/education

There is no place for racism, sexism, homophobia, or discrimination of any kind in our union

Precious little help for the poorest

Inflation is set to hit 9% and taxation is at its highest since Britain struggled to recover from the Second World War. But government aid is targeting the better off says **Steve Bates**

A sign outside an Australian petrol station a few weeks ago said it all. Where normally prices were displayed for premium and diesel the words ARM, LEG and FIRST BORN had been substituted. You may well sympathise. Rishi Sunak's 5p a litre cut in fuel excise duty in his Spring statement on 23 March, though trumpeted by the government, made little difference – at my local petrol station which had just put up prices, it meant merely reducing them to what they had been a fortnight or so earlier.

Remember last September's petrol shortages? Then we were paying £1.37 a litre; now it's around £1.60. The Chancellor's cut, at most, lops a couple of quid off a tank of petrol, freeing a motorist to invest instead in a couple of Yorkie bars and maybe a takeaway coffee.

NO WINDFALL TAX

Sunak notably did not introduce a windfall tax on the petrol companies which have been making vast profits over the rising cost of crude oil and, funnily enough, putting up pump prices much faster than they will think about taking them down as the price of a barrel of crude oil drops from a high of \$130.

This, unfortunately, was all of a piece with the Spring statement which provided little help for those most struggling with the spiralling cost of living.

The Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) reckons we are due the biggest fall in living standards since 1956. Inflation, already at more than 6% may hit 9% by the end of the year and the overall tax burden is now 36.3% on earnings: the highest it has been since the late 1940s as the Attlee government struggled with Britain's post-Second World War recovery.

Petrol prices might be the most obvious rising cost at present, but household energy bills are now starting to hit family budgets too. Last year they

averaged £800, they are now heading towards £2,000 as the Ofgem regulated price cap is eased and in October when the cap is assessed again they are forecast to climb as high as £3,000, just in time for next winter. "That's my conservative guess, not the worst case," said Martin Lewis, founder of the MoneySavingExpert website.

RUSSIAN GAS

Some of this has been caused by market turbulence following Vladimir Putin's invasion of Ukraine and its effect on Russian gas supplies to Europe.

Other knock-on effects will follow. Ukraine is one of the largest grain exporters in the world and if many farmers there are unable to sow or harvest their wheat fields this year, you can expect the price of bread and other commodities to rise too.

Other increases in costs and reductions in the income of low and medium wage households – "hard-working families" as ministers patronisingly call them – are directly down to the government, however. Sunak's statement did little to alleviate them.

The decision last autumn to end the £20 a week top up for families on Universal Credit during the pandemic

SATURDAY 18 JUNE

**TUC demonstration
in Parliament
Square, London**

**Rally for action on cost of
living increases and for a
new deal for working people**

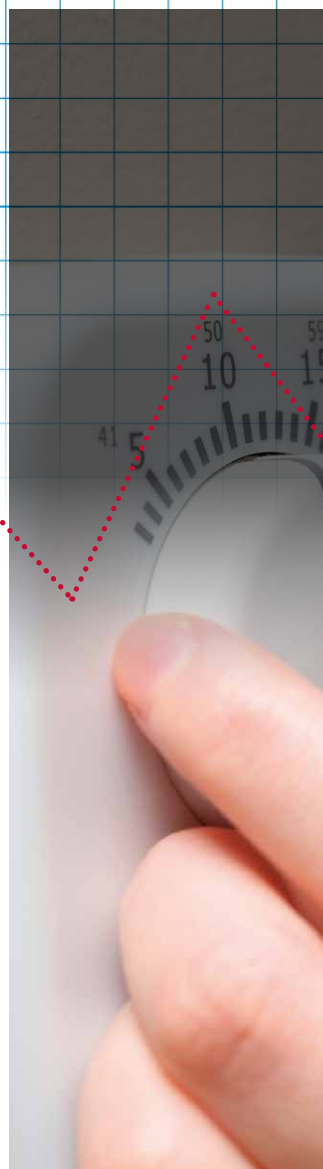


Inflation

UP

Energy bills

UP

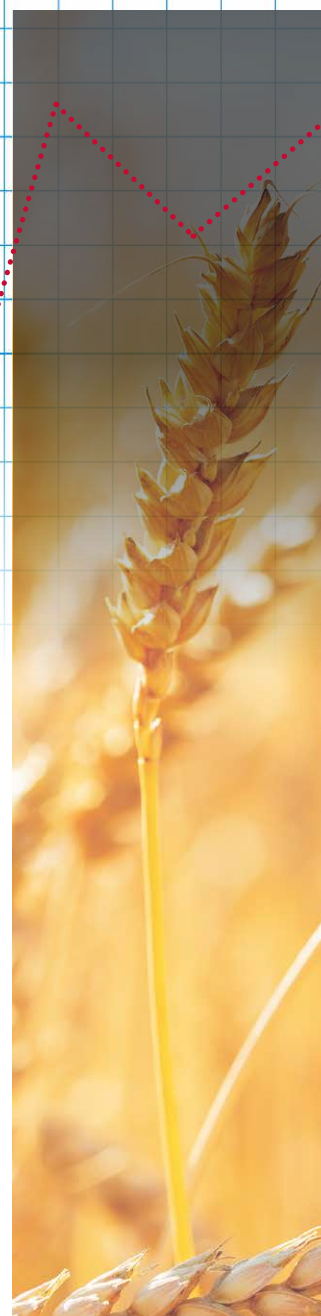


Petrol

UP

Food prices

UP



together with effective cuts in disability benefits have been described by Lord Freud, the former Tory minister in charge of welfare reform, as vicious.

Last autumn inflation was predicted to be 3%, so that was the basis on which benefits are now uprated. Inflation two or three times that high will mean some of the poorest families having to choose between heating and eating.

Sunak refused to rescind the 1.25% rise in national insurance contributions – his pet scheme for a health and social

care levy to tackle backlogs in NHS waiting lists and overhaul social care, though it will not fully cover that – but he did tinker with it, raising the threshold for paying NICs from £9,880 to £12,570 from July.

LOWEST PAID

This might benefit the lowest paid by about £300 a year, but any such savings are likely to be eaten up by inflation. The Resolution Foundation pointed out that, of every £3 of new help provided by the

Chancellor, £2 will go to those in the top half of income distribution.

Sunak boasted of the biggest net cut in personal taxes in a quarter of a century, but as the OBR observed, that only reversed a sixth of the tax rises the Johnson government has introduced in the last three years.

Never mind to the jubilation of Tory backbenchers: the Chancellor promised a 1p in the pound reduction in income tax in 2024 – just in time for the next general election. Hang on to that hope.

'We demand that employers make policy and provision for issues affecting women'

FBU members took part in the women's TUC and the women's Labour Party conference in March

Emergency motions on Ukraine figured at both the Labour and TUC women's conferences. They highlighted the impact of war on Ukrainian women and girls and called for protection for women fleeing the conflict – starting with making asylum routes more accessible.

Motions on flexible working, workplace sexual harassment and femicide were carried at the TUC conference.

UNISON brought a motion on equal pay, while the retail workers' union Usdaw spoke of the disproportionate impact of automation on women's work.

FBU delegates to the women's TUC conference were Diane Critchlow, Kathryn Duncan and Rosa Crowley-Bennett of the FBU's national women's committee (NWC).

Duncan, who is NWC secretary, spoke on the need for fair workplace policies: "We demand that employers make policy and provision for issues affecting women ... this should include standalone policies on menopause, domestic abuse, female illnesses such as endometriosis ... with the change in retirement age for firefighters it will soon be apparent just how detrimental it is for women to continue to respond to fires, road traffic collisions, flooding and many other incidents while turning 60 years old."

The Trade Union Co-ordinating Group alliance of unions, of which the FBU is a member, organised a fringe event on the cost of living crisis, at which panellists drew attention to the impact on women as heads of households managing family budgets.

Labour women's conference saw policy debates on women's healthcare, violence against women, women and the economy, food poverty, rights following pregnancy loss, social care, and women refugees.

Senior Labour frontbench figures gave speeches or appeared on fringe panels reiterating support for closing the inequality gap, including party



Emily Hollands



Kathryn Duncan



Diane Critchlow



Rosa Crowley-Bennett

chair Anneliese Dodds, leader Sir Keir Starmer, shadow chancellor Rachel Reeves and shadow secretary of state for levelling up, housing and communities Lisa Nandy. Starmer highlighted that gender inequality has worsened under 12 years of Tory rule.

FBU delegates were Kathryn Duncan and Emily Hollands. Addressing the conference on maternity pay unfairness across brigades, Duncan said:

'There is a postcode lottery on maternity pay ... across one region – the North East – the difference in maternity pay is more than £15,000'

"Firefighters up and down this country face the real dilemma of choosing when to go back to work after pregnancy.

"There is a postcode lottery on maternity pay ... the repercussions of returning to work too early for firefighters causes long term health problems," due to the physical nature of the job.

She added: "Across one region – the North East – the difference in maternity pay is more than £15,000."

Duncan also touched on the impact of climate change on firefighting, concluding: "We ask that there's a re-commitment to the Socialist Green New Deal," which has been previous Labour policy.

Delegates voted to take two motions to the party's annual conference in September: violence against women and girls, and women and the economy.



Meet the rep

Wayne Anderson – North East

1. What made you want to become a rep?

The pension dispute. Our officials at the time were touring branches organising before the vote on industrial action and my branch had recently lost its rep. I had no idea what I was letting myself in for, but the idea of a strong branch without a rep just didn't seem right.

2. What is your proudest moment as a rep?

I can't claim it as my own personal achievement, but the FBU Centenary Event where we walked across the Millennium Bridge in London was something very special.

3. Who is your ultimate hero?

Gordon Murray – automotive designer. Famous for designing F1 and Supercars, though I'm especially interested in his work on city cars and the flat pack truck he designed for Africa and parts of Asia where access to vehicles and transport is limited.

4. Describe yourself in three words.

Has great coffee.

5. What was the last conversation you had that made you think differently about something?

A recent conversation and learning about

neurodiversity. The idea that specific behavioural traits are part of the normal variation of the human population rather than issues or problems was eye opening for me.

6. Which TV show could you not live without?

Top Gear and its breakaway series The Grand Tour.

7. If you weren't a firefighter, what would you be?

I'd still be an engineer. Joining the fire service was a great opportunity and something I wanted to do rather than needed. I was lucky enough to already have a good job as an electronic engineer, but I've never looked back.

8. If you could travel back or forward in time, where and when would you travel to and why?

I would stay in the North East of England but travel back to when the heavy industries were the main employer (coal, shipyards etc.) to try and understand what life was like. I'd like to draw my own conclusions on what was better or worse and what we've lost or gained since then. My family has a proud history in the coal mining industry, so I'd probably start with that.



Legal Beagle

Trade union law specialist Neil Todd of Thompsons Solicitors, on the recent sackings of P&O workers

The sacking of 800 workers by P&O showed a shocking disregard for the most basic principles of employment law. The company's wholesale failure to engage in any collective consultation, as required under legislation, showed contempt for both the law and industrial relations.

A collective consultation exercise requires engagement on ways of avoiding, reducing and mitigating the consequences of proposed redundancies. This sort of engagement has repeatedly been shown to save jobs and forge new ways of working.

Fire authorities have attempted to utilise "s188 notices" – a required advance notice of dismissal, often used by employers as part of a "fire and rehire" attack on pay and conditions – to bring about changes to terms and conditions.

It is a step further to contemplate any fire authority ignoring legislative requirements altogether to force through contractual changes.

However, without legislative change to strengthen the rights of workers, it cannot be ruled out that any employer in this country could act as P&O has done.

Contact

FBU Freephone legal advice:
0800 100 6061

In Scotland: 0800 089 1331

**thompsonstradeunion.
law/trade-unions/fbu**



SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Have you noticed the changes to this issue of *Firefighter* magazine, both in the way it looks and in some of its content?

To reflect the comments and feedback collated from a survey of FBU members which was completed late last year, we have given the magazine a refresh with revamped layouts and some new and tweaked content.

We hope you like it and would welcome your comments. Please email us at firefighter@fbu.org.uk and let us know what you think of your new look *Firefighter*.

FBU PHOTO COMPETITION 2022

A firefighter's working life in pictures

Once again, we are looking for well composed images that show one or more aspects of a firefighter's working life whether striking, dramatic, creative, personal or humorous.

With kind sponsorship from College Hill printers, there will be one first prize of £500 and two runners up prizes of £100.

For more information on how to enter, please see the competition's official rules: fbu.org.uk/news/2022/04/04/photo-competition-2022

COMPETITION TERMS

This year's FBU photo competition closes on **1 August 2022**. By submitting an entry, each entrant agrees to the official rules.

WHO MAY ENTER

The competition is only open to current FBU members.

ENTRIES TO

Email: firefighter@fbu.org.uk with "FBU photo comp 2022" as the subject line.

Post: FBU Head Office, Bradley House, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston-upon-Thames KT2 7AE.



Last year's winning entry: Si Peck's image of ALP training at the Humberside FRS Peaks Lane station in Grimsby

SHOP.FBU.ORG.UK



SPECIAL DEAL FOR FIREFIGHTERS' MEMORIAL DAY

Ahead of this year's Firefighters' Memorial Day on 4 May, we are giving supporters a chance to get their hands on an FBU pin badge, car sticker and memorial wristband for just £6 with free postage and packaging.

All profits go to the Firefighters 100 Lottery fund to support seriously injured



firefighters and their families.

■ <https://shop.fbu.org.uk/products/firefighters-memorial-day-special-deal>



Wrack on the Road

■ Stand Up To Racism organised rallies in London, Scotland and Wales. Members and officials joined Matt at the London rally on 19 March.



JESS HARD

■ On 22 March Matt, and Cerith Griffiths, executive council member for Wales, met Hannah Blythyn, Wales deputy minister for social partnership. The main topic of discussion was broadening the firefighter role, but the meeting was also an opportunity to discuss broader issues.



■ Matt met FBU members at Feltham (London) fire station on 23 March, a selfie and cuppas all round.



COMING UP:

- 8 April – Women's school
- 10-13 May – FBU annual conference

Do as I say ...

Station Cat



When the government lifted the rules around wearing face coverings in England it became the responsibility of the employer as to whether staff are required to wear face coverings.

Your Cat understands that Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service (BFRS) is no exception.

BFRS's new deputy chief fire officer, Chris Bigland, has been issuing notes for files and threatening disciplinary action against firefighters NOT wearing face coverings when social distancing is not possible, and when en route and returning from fire calls..

So, imagine your Cat's thoughts when she saw this photograph of DCFO Bigland (right) next to the new CFO, Andy Hopkinson, and the police and crime commissioner Festus Akinbusoye (left) on social media at a Leicestershire Fire and Rescue Service demonstration of virtual reality road safety education by watch manager Paul Speight.

Will the CFO and DCFO be issued with notes for file?

Of course not.

They are reserved for frontline firefighters, (sometimes whole watches), many with unblemished records.

APOLOGIES

A Station Cat item in the previous issue of Firefighter (Buddy Awful) caused offence to some members – for which we apologise. The article, about cat rescue, was we were told, both insensitive and inaccurate.

Insensitive because there is a plaque in Central fire station (S Yorks) for a firefighter who died while trying to rescue a cat from a tree.

Inaccurate because it is not part of a firefighter's role to rescue cats from trees but the RSPCA's – with brigades providing the means to do so.

Once again, apologies for any offence caused.

■ If you have any comments please send them to firefighter@fbu.org.uk



THE FBU GIVES TOM WINSOR THE SEND OFF HE DESERVES

25-year badges



Jon Little (c), Bishop Auckland, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from FBU chair Dave Welsh, with colleagues from red watch



Colin Ford (r), blue watch, West Bromwich, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge with colleagues looking on



Andrew Pompei (r), education manager, Surrey, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Eric Daniels



John Chamberlain (l), white watch, Billesley, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Rob Hawkes



Chris Howell (l), green watch, Billesley, West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Rob Hawkes



John Waller (l), Chelsea, London, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Adam Shaw with colleagues looking on



Eric Richardson (r), Spennymoor, Durham and Darlington, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Dave Welsh, with colleagues looking on



Doug Farmer (r), Devon & Somerset, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Dave Lock with former colleagues (l-r) Steve Bussell and Dan Cooke



Karl James (r), West Midlands, receives his 25-year badge from H&S and branch rep Nigel Meredith



Johnny Houghton (r), green watch, Wigan, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade vice chair and Wigan branch secretary Kieran Roberts



Paul Dawson (r), driver training, Durham, receives his 25-year badge from FBU chair Dave Welsh



Gary Watts (l), white watch, West Ashland, Buckinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from branch rep Chris Montague



Lee Bloom (r), green watch, West Ashland, Buckinghamshire, receives his 25-year badge from brigade chair Chris Wycherley with colleagues looking on



Mark Walton (l), blue watch, Whitehill, Greater Manchester, receives his 25-year badge from brigade organiser Matt Fryer with colleagues looking on



Chris Bain (r), green watch, Easterhouse, Glasgow, receives his 25-year badge from branch secretary Tam Hanlon, with colleagues looking on

40-year badges



Tony Hey, Cleveland, (centre) receives his 40-year badge from brigade secretary Davy Howe (r), with red watch, Grangetown station, during Covid restrictions

Please send high resolution digital files or prints to: firefighter@fbu.org.uk or Firefighter, FBU, 68 Coombe Road, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7AE

For your image to look its best, we need the original, full-resolution image. One lifted from a website may not do justice to a unique occasion. We do our best with images that are low resolution, taken directly into a bright light or suffer from camera-shake, or have other problems, but cannot perform miracles. Please include details for each image – full names of everyone who is in it; their station/brigade/watch etc; where they are in the picture (eg: left to right); their union posts/branch if relevant; and where/when it was taken.

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Change of address or next of kin

Advise your brigade organiser of any change of address and head office of changes to next of kin or nominations for benefits.

FBU FREEPHONE LEGAL ADVICE LINE

England, Wales and N Ireland

0800 100 6061

Scotland 0800 089 1331

The line provides advice for personal injury, family law, wills, conveyancing, personal finance and consumer issues. For disciplinary and employment-related queries contact your local FBU representative.



THOMPSONS
SOLICITORS

DECON

TO PREVENT & PROTECT

Everyday DECON habits help
to protect you, your family
and colleagues against
contaminants

Firefighters are four times more likely to get cancer
than the average working person. This has been linked
to toxic contaminants released during fires.

Making DECON's 11 simple changes at home and at work
can help to prevent cancer and other diseases.

Are you DECON trained yet?

fbu.org.uk/campaigns/decon-fire-contaminants



HELP MAKE FIREFIGHTING SAFER

Sign up for the
UK Firefighters
Cancer and
Disease Registry

We need to hear from
all firefighters both
serving and retired,
including from those
who have never
received a cancer or
disease diagnosis
and from those who
have had or currently
have cancer or other
serious or chronic
illness.

**Research study
objectives are:**

- To obtain detailed knowledge of firefighter practice on an individual basis in relation to potential exposure to contaminants.
- To identify the frequency and severity of the most common diseases and cancers suffered by firefighters.
- To correlate the incidence of disease with specific work practices.
- To provide robust evidence of any occupational diseases in firefighters in the UK.
- To offer preventative health screening, education and support that is specifically designed to protect firefighters' health.

For more information
go to the UCLan
website:

[www.uclan.ac.uk/
research/activity/fcdr](http://www.uclan.ac.uk/research/activity/fcdr)