



Our fire and rescue service is UNDER ATTACK

We face the most serious onslaught on our service in living memory:

- **25% cuts**
- **Pay freeze**
- **Attacks on pensions**
- **Thousands of jobs facing the axe**
- **Duty systems and conditions of service under threat**
- **Regionalisation of fire controls to proceed**



**The FBU is organising a national lobby
and rally of parliament on Wednesday
17 November.**

**Come and tell MPs –
“Public safety first – No cuts in the fire
and rescue service”**

Please make sure your branch is represented

Matt Wrack, general secretary writes:



Under so-called ‘modernisation’ we have seen our service and our profession attacked. Jobs have gone, conditions of service have been attacked and the service to the public has worsened.

- Over the past ten years we have seen the number of wholetime firefighter posts cut. There has been no period of significant investment and expansion in our service.
- During the same period response times to fires has slowed by more than 18%

The lessons from these facts are clear:

We get attacked – and the public get a worse service.

Yet now we face an entirely new level of cuts. The government has said that it wants to see cuts of 25% over four years. They have

also asked departments to look at options for cuts of up to 40% over the same period.

This is complete lunacy in the fire and rescue service. We have had no period of expansion. Firefighter jobs have been cut – not created. Further cuts will simply threaten our safety as well as public safety.

It seems that nothing is to be protected. The new fire minister in England recently said that there would be far less central government direction and instruction under the new government’s ‘localism’ agenda. What this will mean is that local fire authorities are told that they have less money but they will have to find their own solutions to the problems created as a result. The sick joke is that the chaos which results will be presented as an increase in local choice and accountability.

- The financial squeeze is likely to lead to more proposals to cuts jobs – threatening our safety and that of the public.
- Fire and Rescue Authorities and Boards are likely to increase attempts to make



local cuts in services – closing stations or reducing emergency cover – all in order to cut jobs and save more money.

- We can expect further attacks on shift and duty systems – again, as a mechanism to cut jobs and night cover.
- From central government we can expect further attacks on our pension rights. We have already seen significant changes in 2006. But before the impact of these have even been assessed, more attacks are already on the way.

There is another way

Despite what the government may say, there is nothing inevitable about the cuts. The Fire Brigades Union has shown before the capacity to resist cuts.

- In 2006 we fought off the worst aspects of the proposed pension attacks.
- In Humberside, in Tayside and up and down the country we have fought successful campaigns to defend fire and emergency cover and resist the cuts.

- In South Yorkshire we fought off the most serious threat – to sack and re-employ members on new contracts.

- All of these challenges are likely to be back on the agenda again. We will need to fight as never before to defend ourselves.

But the only way we will be able to defend ourselves and to protect our service is by building a campaign showing that the cuts proposals will seriously undermine our ability to provide an effective, professional and safe service to the public.

This is entirely possible if we work together and if we build alliances with others in our communities who don't want to see their fire service destroyed.

Despite promises about 'protecting front line services' there is no indication whatsoever from the government that the fire and rescue service will be protected at all. We face the same attacks as others in the public sector.



What you can do

- Ensure that your branch starts to discuss the issues in this bulletin.
- Build links with other local trade unions.
- Build contacts and links with community groups.
- Ask to meet your local councillors and your local MP.

FBU officials have already met the ministers dealing with fire in the different parts of the UK. Over the summer we will be preparing the case against cuts in our service. This will feed into the unions submission to the government's consideration of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) over the autumn.

The FBU is organising a national lobby and rally on Wednesday 17 November on these issues.

Come to parliament on 17 November to say:

“We won’t let our fire and rescue service be destroyed”

www.fbu.org.uk

