



Scottish Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters  
Westburn Drive, Cambuslang  
G72 7NA

[firescotland.gov.uk](https://firescotland.gov.uk)

Matt Wrack  
General Secretary  
The Fire Brigades Union

Our Ref: CO/CCL/027-21  
Contact: Martin Blunden  
Contact No. 0141 646 4508  
Email: [Martin.Blunden@FireScotland.gov.uk](mailto:Martin.Blunden@FireScotland.gov.uk)  
Date: 1 March 2021

### **Via Email**

Dear Matt

Thank you for your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2021 where you have asked the NJC Secretariat to arrange a convenient date for us to meet again.

The Chair and I are both willing to continue discussions and hope we are able to build on the positive aspects of the previous round of talks. We are open to discussion on how we can move matters forward here in Scotland and secure improved pay for SFRS firefighters on a multi-year, above inflation basis. As we have both set out in letters between us during 2020, both sides are *“committed to continued dialogue...and not walking away from the talks.”*

These exploratory talks will, however, be set in a very different environment from the broadening of the role negotiations that took place in the Autumn of 2019. I would like to set out why I believe that the environment is different ahead of our first meeting.

In my letter of 20<sup>th</sup> August 2020, which you acknowledge in your response of 1<sup>st</sup> September 2020, we reiterated that further discussions would be set against the background that there is no further money to fund a pay settlement from Scottish Government. This is because negotiations concerning the broadening of the role of firefighters ended following the rejected offer in February 2020. Both the Chair and I said, on numerous occasions, before, during and after the ballot period, that the Scottish Government was prepared to financially support an agreed deal, but that if a deal was rejected this financial support would not be available. This is where we now stand.

Since the outcome of the broadening of the role ballot, we have undertaken a substantial piece of staff engagement regarding our future direction. We are at an early stage of identifying the route map to support this direction and vision and are now engaging further with our staff, all staff unions, the public and our wider stakeholders on this matter.

The attainment of our long-term vision for the Service will likely take several years to fully realise and it will have important implications for the roles and responsibilities of the Service and consequently of firefighters. I would like this, and other developments, to inform our joint discussions and how we improve pay for firefighters in Scotland. We remain fully committed to doing more for our communities and working with our staff, and the Fire Brigades Union, to achieve this in Scotland.

If we can secure a mutually positive outcome from our discussions, the Chair and I will undertake to meet with the Scottish Government to seek their financial backing for a future pay offer in addition to any UK wide NJC pay settlements. However, I would like to reaffirm that the support from the Scottish Government is likely to be conditional on real progress, i.e. tangible deliverables, being made on the future roles and responsibilities of firefighters in meeting community needs in Scotland.

I look forward to hearing from the NJC Secretariat.

Yours sincerely

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

Martin Blunden QFSM MIFireE  
Chief Officer