



# Fire Brigades Union Region 1

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All Members  
Region 1  
Scotland

23<sup>rd</sup> September 2013

Dear Comrades,

## Strategic Intent

You will know that the SFRS are presenting a Strategic Intent document to the SFRS Fire Board on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September and this document refers to their plans for the future of Emergency Fire Control Rooms in Scotland. It is apparent that these proposals will cause our members serious concern as the recommendation is to reduce the current 220 Control Firefighter posts to 170 or so and also to reduce the numbers of Control rooms to 3 and ultimately to 2.

FBU Officials were informed this document (we have yet to see it or to be consulted on it) was going to the Board this week on Thursday 26 September. We received a SFRS briefing paper on the Strategic Intent document on Friday that referred to the proposals on Control Rooms and immediately forwarded this to all FBU Brigade Officials and Brigade Control Reps. We have been aware of the work ongoing in relation to the properties that the service currently has and have been consulted on the long term future of a number of these. This work on the strategic intent for properties did not refer to any single option for control rooms. It is however interlinked with other work ongoing on the future of Emergency Control Rooms. We have yet to see the outcome of this work and are disappointed that the Strategic Intent proposals makes specific recommendations in relation to the future of control rooms.

FBU Officials including our Regional control representative have previously had discussions with the SFRS over the future of Emergency Fire Control Rooms in Scotland. We knew the Service were developing plans which we understood would review the number and location of Controls and this has been reported to FBU Regional Committee delegates. However we shall only be in a position to fully consult FBU Control members, in order to develop our response to these proposals when we have received both the Strategic Intent document as part of the Board Agenda and the detailed proposals that relate to Control rooms.

These proposals are very unwelcome but not entirely unexpected.

Members may know that in 2010 as a result of the planned austerity cuts being inflicted by the Tory led UK government on all public services for the lifetime of this parliament including to the then 8 FRS in Scotland; the 8 previous Fire Board Conveners developed a 4 year strategy. This involved ongoing year on year cuts to front line service at brigade level for the next 4 years and at the end of that period to

deliver further savings they would then consider mergers and amalgamation of services. The main political parties in Scotland rightly decided this was unacceptable and in order to protect the front line from the austerity cuts to the FRS budget they agreed on a single FRS as their preferred option..

By now under the Fire Conveners strategy their plans would have led to the closure of both Fife and Dumfries and Galloway Control Rooms. FBU Officials raised our concerns and lobbied the Scottish Government over this ill thought out and dangerous strategy and as a result they agreed to introduce a moratorium that guaranteed no changes to control rooms before 2014.

FBU Officials and particularly FBU Control reps also realised that the SFRS would consider the future of Control rooms thereafter as they would clearly need to develop a fully inter-operable command and control system for Scotland that had sufficient functional capacity to comply with exacting resilience requirements and (the Board shall insist) provide the legally required best value. In addition as you will know a number of mobilising systems in existing control rooms are near the end of their useful life and considerable investment in upgrading and renewing them would be required should the SFRS deem them to be viable. We also knew that transitional funding is available in this year only to the SFRS. This can assist with the investment in any required new buildings and technology and also to underpin any potential relocation or other options for our members and funds would have to be set aside and earmarked for this purpose this year although clearly any changes to control rooms will be implemented over more than one year.

In response to our concerns over the future of control rooms FBU Conference 2013 passed the following resolutions.

*This Conference notes the creation of the new Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, which replaces the eight previous Fire and Rescue Services in Scotland.*

*Conference is concerned over the maintenance of the existing 8 Emergency Fire Control Rooms and also the maintenance of the current number of Firefighter Control posts in the new service.*

*Conference is opposed to the loss of any Emergency Firefighter Control posts and should the commitments given by the Scottish Government and the Fire and Rescue Board to protect the front line service during the transition and also their commitment to no compulsory redundancies not be upheld, through the transition period and beyond that the FBU will campaign against any proposed reduction in Firefighter Control Posts using all means necessary, up to and including strike action.*

Therefore FBU Officials have informed the SFRS that as a minimum we would demand a guarantee that all FBU Control members who wish to remain as Emergency Fire Control Firefighters be allowed to do so and that they would also need to provide an equitable range of options for members who may not wish to continue in their current duties; including access to Uniformed non-operational posts at the appropriate rank, early retiral options and potentially voluntary severance.

This would meet the requirements of our Conference resolution but until we have the actual detail of the proposals from the SFRS we are not in a position to fully inform members of all of the options available to them.

We are currently pressing the SFRS managers to provide the full control room proposals with as much detail and information as possible and to discuss the range of options that might be made available to our members. We are in the process of arranging branch meetings to discuss these proposals with our members.

I urge all FBU Control members to attend these forthcoming Branch meetings, to discuss the strategic intent paper and the full detailed proposals once they are known and to make your views known. We shall also require the help and assistance of all FBU Control members if we are to develop the most effective response to these proposals.

Yours Fraternally

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Robertson', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Roddy Robertson  
Executive Council member  
Region 1  
Scotland