



FIRE BRIGADES UNION

Scotland *Newsletter*

THE PROFESSIONAL VOICE OF YOUR FIREFIGHTERS

May 2021

Welcome to this month's edition of the FBU Scotland newsletter where we aim to keep members updated on the work FBU officials are carrying out on your behalf. Regular updates are sent out to the Scottish Regional Committee and passed on through our structures to branches. It's vital that members have active branches and branch reps in place in order to be kept fully updated on FBU activities and campaigns.

Firefighters Pay in Scotland

Members will be aware from previous communications that the FBU have always remained open to further discussions with the SFRS on broadening the role of firefighters for pay. We previously advised that both the FBU and SFRS met on 31 March to carry on discussions on pay and both have remained committed to continue this dialogue to build on the positive aspects of the previous discussions in order to secure improved pay for firefighters in Scotland.

Following on from that meeting, both the FBU and SFRS have exchanged further positive letters. The FBU have confirmed that we believe the next discussions can build upon the work undertaken previously in 2019 and that we are committed to address the concerns members previously raised with SFRS to see if a mutually acceptable agreement can be reached.

We were pleased that in the discussions that culminated in the previous pay proposal made by the SFRS in 2019, both sides recognised that a pay settlement would not be funded by cuts to jobs and services. The FBU's commitment to this principle still remains unchanged.

During the recent Scottish parliament elections, the FBU mobilised our

members and campaigned for investment in the SFRS. The outcome of those elections returned an SNP government in which we welcome the commitment made in their manifesto stating: ***"We will support the modernisation of our fire and rescue service so that SFRS can do more to protect communities and deliver positive outcomes for the people of Scotland. We have continued to invest in the modernisation of SFRS with an additional £8.7 million allocated for 2021-22. Central to this modernisation - which must be achieved in partnership with the trade unions - is broadening the role of firefighters in Scotland."***

During the Scottish parliament elections campaign, we also secured a question on firefighters pay from one of our members at the STUC hustings with the leaders of Scotland's political parties. The full details of that debate can be accessed in the following link <https://fb.watch/58MSsbqy-6/>

A point to note from that debate where the FBU asked our question on firefighters pay is the response from the leader of the SNP and now First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon MSP, where the following was said: ***"The point about firefighters is very well made, we have been trying to get a pay deal that modernises and changes the role of firefighters but also ensures fair pay. The point that was made that that will require investment from the next Scottish government is one we have recognised. I'm not going to pre-empt the negotiations but I'm really, really hopeful that we can get to a fair, decent settlement that provides firefighters with the pay they deserve but also brings the role up to date in a way I know that many firefighters want. Fair pay,***

progressive pay, recognising the low pay issues that many live with is an absolutely key principle"

This was a key moment in the FBU's campaign for investment in the SFRS where we secured a question to be asked of the party leaders during the final weeks of the election. This clearly shows the benefits from our political engagement and we welcome the First Ministers positive response to our question. As these discussions on pay progress, we will keep members updated through the FBU structures with any further developments.

**Denise Christie, Regional Secretary
FBU Scotland**



**FIREFIGHTERS 100
LOTTERY**

THE GOOD CAUSES

The Firefighters 100 Lottery Fund shall be administered appropriately by the Fire Brigades Union for the future benefit of all firefighters and their bereaved families in accordance with the good cause criteria.

<https://www.firefighters100lottery.co.uk/support/firefighters/buytickets>

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FBU Membership Support and Representation

All FBU members have access to advice, support, and representation from your local FBU Officials, who have the experience and training to advise, represent and support you to a resolution. This may be on an informal basis for advice or guidance or, where required, through the formal processes. Either way if you need help then the FBU is there to support you.

If you believe that you may need representation or advice on any issue it is important that you contact your Branch or Sectional Rep as soon as you possibly can. It is consistently the case that the earlier a member contacts an FBU Rep the higher the chances of achieving the best outcome possible for them. Making early contact with your Branch Rep also allows for them to access your situation fully and make suitable arrangements if it is agreed that an Area Official would be more suitable to represent you.

Please see below the areas that our fully trained officials can assist you with and the steps to take to receive this support.

Absence Support & Managing Attendance Meetings

If you receive notification of an ASM you should request that an FBU Rep attends the meeting with you, if required. You should contact one of your Branch/Sectional Reps in the first instance to make them aware of the meeting and to make any arrangements required to attend with you. In some cases, it may also be appropriate to meet with them beforehand to discuss and prepare for the meeting. In the absence of a Branch/Sectional Rep, you should contact one of your Area Officials as appropriate.

Capability Meetings

If you receive notification that you are due to attend a Capability meeting then the support and representation of an FBU Rep is also available and will greatly assist. The Capability process has three stages which progress logically from Stage 1 through to Stage 3 if the capability issue cannot be resolved. **It is imperative that you contact your Branch/Sectional Rep as soon as you are informed by the Service that you are due to be placed in the Capability process.** Again, your Branch/Sectional Rep will discuss the most suitable level of representation for you on a case-by-case basis and, if required, your case may be passed on to a local Area Official.

Discipline Investigations/Hearings

Understandably being notified that you are subject to a disciplinary investigation can be a very distressing time for members and having the support and expertise from a trained FBU Official is important to help you through it. If any member receives notification from the Service that a disciplinary investigation has been instigated, they should contact one of their local Area/Sectional officials as soon as possible to arrange for support. Your FBU Official can attend interviews during the investigation and,

should your case subsequently progress to a formal discipline hearing, provide representation and support. **Please ensure you contact your Officials immediately to allow sufficient time to assist with any disciplinary procedures.**

Grievance Process

The Service's Grievance Policy provides you with firstly an informal and, should this be unsuccessful in resolving your concerns, then formal process to raise a concern about your employment, which you have been unable to resolve through normal communication with your line manager. Our fully trained FBU Officials can assist with advice and support with the grievance process and you should contact your Branch/Sectional Rep in the first instance or in their absence your Area Official to discuss this. **Please note the grievance must be raised within three months of the issue of concern or management decision causing the grievance, unless otherwise agreed.**

Legal Assistance

Any requests for legal assistance relating to your employment, should be submitted to either your local Area Secretary or Chair who will then liaise directly with the Scottish Regional Secretary via the 'Application for Legal Assistance' form, available at <https://www.fbu.org.uk/form/application-legal-assistance-fbu-members>

Your FBU membership also entitles you to access to advice from Thompsons solicitors, with Personal Injury Claims, special terms for Lasting Powers of Attorney, re-mortgaging, conveyancing, Payment Protection Insurance (PPI) Claims and a free will service. You should contact Thompsons directly to discuss any non-employment related business.

Workplace Issues

Workplace issues can usually be

resolved quickly via one of your Branch/Sectional Rep via their regular meetings with the local Station Commander, etc. In the absence of a Branch Rep please contact your local Area Officials for advice.

Workplace H&S Issues

Each branch should have an appointed FBU H&S Rep who is best placed to deal with any health and safety related concerns within the workplace which can be raised and usually resolved quickly via their regular meetings with the local Station Commander, etc. The FBU also has a full health and safety structure with Area and Regional Officials and up to national level to support workplace health and safety issues/concerns.

Occupational Health/ Ill Health Retirement (IQMP/IDRP)

We have specially trained FBU Officials that can support and represent members through any ill health retirement process. As soon as you become aware that you may be a candidate for ill health retirement it is imperative that you contact one of your Area/Sectional Officials in the first instance as quickly as possible.

All Different All Equal

If you have been accused of discrimination, bullying or harassment the FBU have union policy that must be followed. Please contact either your local Area Secretary or Chair so that they can advise of the process that is required to be followed to request representation. Full information on this process can be found at <https://www.fbu.org.uk/publication/all-different-all-equal>.

If you are enduring Discrimination, Harassment or Bullying, don't doubt yourself. Contact your FBU Official or a trusted friend or colleague immediately for support.

Why it's Important to be an FBU Member

The FBU has a history spanning over 100 years and today represents the overwhelming majority of firefighters in the UK. Through that time, generations of firefighters have built our union and made it, as important a part of being a firefighter as wearing the uniform.

Our role as Firefighters is an exciting and fulfilling profession, but it can also be a dangerous one. In the Fire Brigades Union we never take any member for granted. We value the contribution of every single individual and continually develop our services to make sure you get the assistance you need.

The very nature of our work means that we run towards situations that other people are running away from. To do this you don't just need courage, you need the skills, knowledge and tools which make you a professional firefighter and as an FBU member you have the assurance of being a member of a union with the experience and commitment to make sure you get the skills, knowledge and tools you need, throughout your career.

The FBU have a proven track record of fighting to keep our members safe:

- The breathing apparatus procedures we use as modern firefighters were developed and won by the Fire Brigades Union – they have saved countless lives since their implementation.
- The flame-resistant leggings and tunics we wear as modern firefighters were fought for and won by the Fire Brigades Union – previously, firefighters were forced to wear plastic leggings that melted on their legs.
- The dry suits and life jackets we wear as modern firefighters in flood situations were fought for and won by the Fire Brigades Union – previously, firefighters had to wear fire kit and tie lines around their waist.
- Training time, critical attendance standards, fitness tests, rescue equipment, rest periods, standard tests even the helmet you wear on your head – fought for by the Fire Brigades Union.

- We won a change of title, 'Firefighter Control' in recognition that our emergency fire controls should never be considered as 'call centres' but instead be recognised as a vital and lifesaving part of the firefighter family.
- We have fought on behalf of our members, winning determined campaigns to stop job losses through regionalisation, challenging failing systems, and introducing key workplace policies such as maternity, rest time, working hours etc, the list literally goes on and on.

Safe systems of work are crucial in our profession and unionised workplaces like our fire stations, control rooms and training centres are proven to be safer workplaces. The FBU enables all our members to organise around key health and safety issues which improve our lives and keep us safer.

The FBU is the only trade union within the Fire and Rescue Service that has campaigned and negotiated hard to get the best deal for our members. It's also the only union in the Fire & Rescue Service to stand up effectively for firefighters and protect them from the worst excesses of cuts and austerity.

We achieve all this, because the union gives us a strong and effective voice. The reason we have good terms and conditions – and even more importantly, the reason why we keep them – is because we all stick together and speak with a strong, united voice through our union. When we stand together, through our union, we protect each other and our profession, that's why being in the union is so important.

FBU Scotland officials are currently exploring a regular online new membership event to support branches, more details to follow in the June Newsletter. Meantime, if any branch/individual requires any information or support, in relation to becoming an FBU member or FBU membership in general, please contact your Area Organiser:

East Area – davey.strachan@fbu.org.uk

West Area – ian.sim@fbu.org.uk

North Area – scott.macrory@fbu.org.uk

Don't forget that a comprehensive list of legal services are available to members and their families.

Information leaflets are available and details can be found on the legal services website



**Contact the FBU Legal Service on
0808 100 6061
www.thompsonstradeunion.law/fbu**

Direct Debit

The Fire Brigades Union paid out nearly £150,000 nationally on administration fees to Fire and Rescue Services to process FBU Contributions on behalf of members! Switch your membership to Direct Debit now to avoid these unnecessary costs

www.fbu.org.uk/form/direct-debit-form

FBU Political Fund Contributions

In December 2015 the FBU re-affiliated to the Labour Party, a decision taken by our national Conference. However, delegates to Conference were clear that such an affiliation would exclude contributions made by our members who work in Scotland and Northern Ireland, taking into account the different political positions within these parts of the UK.

The law states that unions must have a separate Political Fund to pay for certain types of political campaigning. The amount currently paid into the FBU political fund from member's overall monthly contributions is 78p.

Keeping the Political Fund is vital to defend the rights the FBU has already won, to ensure that the Union can continue to campaign for new rights and improvements for members and continue to take workplace campaigns into the political arena - influence political decisions and have a say on changes in the law.

If the FBU were to lose its Political Fund, much of the work the Union does could be seriously hampered. Campaigns such as

NO2 Fire Deaths, the defence of Emergency Fire Control members and our risk management framework strategy would be put in jeopardy. Indeed, any number of bread and butter workplace campaigns to improve your health and safety would be undermined.

Ensuring that politicians understand the implication of their decisions for Firefighters and Firefighters (Control) working at the sharp-end of service delivery is central to the FBU's work - work carried out by the FBU on your behalf to ensure your employers provide you with what you need to get the job done properly at emergency incidents, in Control Rooms, in Fire Safety Departments and so on.

Without a political fund, our ability to influence the risk management framework decision-making process will be severely affected. For for FBU members, working on the frontline, this affects your health and safety. It affects your ability to work effectively at emergency incidents in line with the Standard Operating Procedures you train against and your ability to prevent a fire injury becoming a fire fatality.

As the law defines much of the Union's work as potentially 'political', this is why we need to keep the Political Fund to pay for our current and future campaigns.

FBU members recognise that in the current climate, our political fund is more important than ever to our efforts to stand up for firefighters and the communities we serve.

Politics is at the very heart of everything the FBU does, with firefighters currently facing two of the most significant challenges we have ever faced: government attacks on pensions and the worst cuts in the history of the fire and rescue service.

Contributing to the political fund allows us to engage with politics and politicians on every level.

The fund is used to support lobbies of the Scottish government to demand budget investment in the SFRRS, to finance online campaign activity, produce reports, organise rallies and demonstrations and pay for leaflets, posters and petitions.

FBU Scotland - Officials

EC Member - chris.mcglone@fbu.org.uk
Regional Secretary - denise.christie@fbu.org.uk
Regional Chair - john.malcolm@fbu.org.uk
Regional Treasurer - seona.hart@fbu.org.uk

North Area Secretary - colin.brown@fbu.org.uk
North Area Chair (Interim) - simon.leroux@fbu.org.uk
North Area Vice Chair - Vacant
North Area Organiser (Interim) - scott.macrory@fbu.org.uk

West Area Secretary - Vacant
West Area Chair - alex.muir@fbu.org.uk
West Area Vice Chair - jamie.mccallum@fbu.org.uk
West Area Organiser - ian.sim@fbu.org.uk
West Area 5th Official - angus.young@fbu.org.uk

East Area Secretary - john.mckenzie@fbu.org.uk
East Area Chair - gus.sproul@fbu.org.uk
East Area Vice Chair (Interim) - steve.weir@fbu.org.uk
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Regional Health & Safety Rep - david.hart@fbu.org.uk
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Regional Women's Rep - rachel.rogers@fbu.org.uk
Regional RVDS Rep - ian.aitken@fbu.org.uk
Regional Officers Rep - Vacant
Regional B&EMM Rep - Vacant
Regional Fairness at Work Rep - melanie.gibb@fbu.org.uk
Regional Education/Learning Rep - kim.ferguson@fbu.org.uk
Regional LGBT Rep - neil.pearson@fbu.org.uk