



FIRE BRIGADES UNION SCOTLAND PARLIAMENTARY BRIEF

September 2007 Regular Newsletter for all Members of the Scottish Parliament Issue 6

Fire Brigades Union Welcomes New Scottish Parliament

On behalf of Professional Firefighters & Emergency Fire Control Operators in Scotland, the Fire Brigades Union welcomes all MSPs to the new Session of the Scottish Parliament.

Re-Appraisal

The recent Scottish Parliament & Local Government Elections have changed the political landscape of Scotland.

This new era in Scottish Politics represents an excellent opportunity to take a fresh look at Fire & Rescue Services in Scotland and to re-appraise the many changes that have taken place and that are proposed to

take place in the near future.

The pace of change over the past few years has been relentless. Many of those changes clearly do not constitute improvements to the Service. **The time has now come to reflect on the impact & effectiveness of these changes.**

Opportunity

The next 4 years are likely to be hugely significant for Fire & Rescue Services in Scotland. This is a golden opportunity to influence change for the benefit of all the Communities throughout Scotland that we serve, and to stop the Cuts Agenda in the name of 'efficiency' savings.



The Fire Brigades Union
The Voice of
Professional Firefighters
&
Emergency Fire Control Operators

Fire & Rescue Service Additional Skills

Parliamentary Debate Discusses Water Rescue in Relation to Statutory Responsibilities & Funding

On Tuesday 6th June 2006, the first Members' Debate of the third Session of the Scottish Parliament took place on the subject of **Moving Water (Rescue Arrangements)**.

The debate took place as a result of a Motion submitted by Roseanna Cunningham MSP, which raised concerns regarding the inconsistencies across Scotland in relation to procedures & responsibilities for rescue from water and to urge the Minister for Community Safety, Fergus Ewing MSP, to urgently review the situation.

Statutory Responsibility

In response, Mr Ewing stated, in relation to Water Rescue, that "**the primary statutory duty for**

protecting life rests with the Police", not the Fire & Rescue Services.

Serious Flooding

He went on to say that whilst the Fire (Additional Functions) (Scotland) Order 2005 places a responsibility on FRSs to 'make provision for the purpose of rescuing people trapped, or likely to become trapped by water ... in the event of serious flooding in its area', that flooding was "**...areas that would under normal circumstances be classed as dry land**".

This would therefore not include such fixed bodies of water, as rivers, lochs & reservoirs. Even though Water Rescue is a Statutory Responsibility of the Police, some

FRS Authorities have undertaken Water Rescue initiatives, and appear to be funding them through Fire Service Budgets.



Funding

Furthermore, the Minister confirmed that "**the Executive has received no request from Chief Fire Officers in respect of funding for training**".

The Minister gave an assurance that he would consider the points raised and review the matter.

Review of Scottish Fire & Rescue Services

Outgoing HMI Chief Inspector's Report on the Future of Scottish Fire & Rescue Services Must Be Shelved

Last year Jeff Ord, Chief Inspector for the Fire Services in Scotland, published a Report, giving his views on the Operational Preparedness of Scottish Fire & Rescue Services in the event of simultaneous terrorist attacks.

Recommendations

Amongst his recommendations, in light of an **INCREASED** Terrorist threat, were to **DECREASE** the number of Fire Service Control Rooms, and to **REDUCE** the number of Brigades in Scotland to 1 single Brigade - "*without delay*".

Independent(?) Review

Despite making these very public and decisive views, Mr Ord was then appointed by the then Minister for Justice to head an '*Independent*' Team to Review the Fire & Rescue Services in

Scotland. This Review also included looking at working arrangements between other Blue Light Services and their structures.



Demands?

It has been alleged that Mr Ord, has demanded that the Scottish Government make a decision on the future of Emergency Fire Control Rooms before his departure from HMI in November.

Such a decision must be measured, evidence based and in the best interests of the Service and the

It must not be based on the timetable, agenda & view of one individual.

Due to concerns raised in many quarters regarding the '*impartiality*' of the Review, and its conclusions, it would prudent to shelve it and to instigate a new, proper, fully inclusive review, involving all major stakeholders in the Service, possibly under the auspices of the Ministerial Advisory Forum.

This will ensure more confidence in any recommendations / conclusions reached.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE TO COPE WITH INCREASES IN FIRE SERVICE RESPONSIBILITIES

- INCREASE FUNDING
- INCREASE RESOURCES
- INCREASE THE NUMBER OF FIREFIGHTERS
- INCREASE & IMPROVE TRAINING
- IMPROVE EQUIPMENT

Scottish Fire Conference 2007

On 12th & 13th November, the first Scottish Fire Conference will take place in Crieff, Perthshire.

Shaping the Future

The theme of the Conference is "*Shaping the Future Together*" and will discuss numerous issues including '*Shaping a Service Fit for the 21st Century*', '*The Pivotal Role of Partnership Working*', '*Scotland's Emergency Preparedness, Negotiation & Consultation*', '*Equality Matters*' and '*Performance & Efficiency*'.

Who Should Be Shaping The Future Of The Service?

Unfortunately, there are those who would have preferred that the Fire Brigades Union did not play any part in the Conference at all.

Exclusion?

Our exclusion, of course, would have been ludicrous & absurd. How do you "*shape the future together*" if the key organisation within the Service, that represents those who deliver that Service, are excluded? How can you discuss and progress negotiation & consultation processes when the very people who are required to be consulted & negotiated with are not present?

The desire for our exclusion is not exactly conducive with "*working in partnership*"!

Positive Dialogue

It is clear that positive dialogue and cooperation with politicians, employers and managers is the key to progressive and successful industrial relations. A collective approach will ensure a bright future for the Service.

This will be to the benefit of those who deliver the Service and, more importantly, to those in our Communities whom we seek to assist.

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