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Minister for Community Safety and Legal Affairs  
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Matt Wrack  
General Secretary  
The Fire Brigades Union  
Bradley House  
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24 October 2013

Dear Matt,

The Scottish Government has made clear its opposition to the UK Government's handling of public sector pension reforms. Public sector pensions policy has been imposed on Scotland with insufficient engagement and consultation.

You will know from previous correspondence that I recognise the work of the FBU in seeking to ensure no serving member would unfairly face the prospect of working longer than they expected or signed up for in what is a physically demanding and stressful job. I know that those who now find themselves in that position have already paid more into their pensions through higher contribution rates in past years than many public sector workers – and I know firefighters in general remain concerned about the impact of the proposed high contribution rates in the new scheme. But I can currently do little about either this or the requirement to work longer. The Treasury threatened to fine us had we not imposed the recent rounds of contribution rate rises, whilst a Normal Pension Age of 60 is a requirement in Westminster's Public Service Pensions Act 2013. The Scottish Government currently has no powers to intervene in that reserved legislation - we supported the calls of your representatives to be able to negotiate directly with us, without any preconditions or threats from HM Treasury. Had we been able to do so, we would have delivered a fairer deal for firefighters in Scotland.

On 23 September the Scottish Government published "*Pensions in an Independent Scotland*" setting out our proposals for state, private and public pensions in an independent Scotland. This document makes clear that following a YES vote any future Scottish Government would be able to consider again the pension terms of all uniformed services.

I am grateful for the continued commitment firefighters show in tackling the many challenges they face in their daily work, and have demonstrated this by offering enhanced protection to firefighters beyond the terms of the initial UK proposal because Scottish Ministers believe there is a fundamental injustice in the transitional protection offered to firefighters relative to police. We have also offered Scottish firefighters the ability to retire at age 55 with a pension actuarially reduced from age 60 rather than from the state pension age and have removed the threat of reduced fitness resulting in no job and no pension.

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I wanted to take this opportunity to thank you and your officials for your helpful input in our partnership working over these past months, a partnership which I hope will continue for many years to come. To that end I would like to make clear my commitment that in an independent Scotland, with full powers over pensions available to us, the Scottish Government would be ready to enter into early discussions to re-visit the pension terms of Scottish firefighters. The precise details would need to be discussed, but I accept that some occupations are restricted by age and capability and firefighters are one. I confirm my willingness to work with FBU towards a solution that takes those factors fully into account.

Kind Regards,



**Roseanna Cunningham**