



# FIRE BRIGADES UNION

GENERAL SECRETARY : MATT WRACK

Established 1918

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2011/Pensions/SS/MW

8<sup>th</sup> November 2011

Bob Neill MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

Dear Bob

We have previously provided a range of evidence relating to the current discussions on pensions. These have included documents which provide evidence on:

- ◆ Our general opposition to the proposed changes and which make the case for protecting fire service pensions;
- ◆ Our actuarial advice regarding various claims made by GAD or by Treasury regarding fire service pensions;
- ◆ Evidence relating to the operational and occupational health impact of a retirement age of 60 for firefighters.

In relation to this latter point our **'Scoping study: review of aging and the demands of firefighting'** document made numerous references made to an earlier document **'Age limit for serving firefighters.'** This was a 1996 report for the Home Office Fire Research and Development Group by Dr Michael Haisman.

This study (a copy of which is enclosed for your information) was undertaken to ascertain whether the current retirement age for firefighters of 55 (compulsory at the time) is justified. It looks at the fitness demands of firefighting and the various effects of aging on operational firefighters. It also covers a wide range of considerations that are still very much applicable in the current discussions such as the potential risks and difficulties involved in both maintaining and achieving appropriate fitness levels; the effects of aging on firefighters; limitations placed on firefighters ability to fulfil the full role; and the potential additional cost of necessary increased medical screening and training regimes.

It recognises that:

*'the fitness demands of firefighting can be very severe; heavy work such as climbing stairs carrying heavy equipment is made more extreme by the need to use BA and wear heavy and restrictive protective clothing'.*

And in concluding it also finds that:

*'Raising the current retirement age limit of 55 years would result in diminishing numbers being able to meet the requirements; there is, therefore, no case for raising the limit'.*

It finally recommends that:

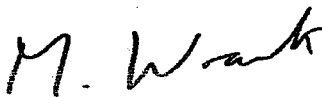
*'the existing limit of 55 years is retained'.*

The Independent Public Service Pensions Commission recommendation number 14 states that the government should therefore consider setting a new Normal Pension Age of 60 across the uniformed services. This recommendation is totally dependent on there being evidence to consider that substantiates such a decision. The FBU has provided evidence, which is supported by this Home Office report which indicates that in reality this is not an option for a variety of reasons ranging from efficiency, cost effectiveness and practicality.

This further evidence strongly supports the position of the FBU in opposing the proposed retirement age of 60 for firefighters.

I look forward discussing with you this evidence and the next steps in these discussions.

Yours sincerely



**MATT WRACK**  
**GENERAL SECRETARY**

Cc: Mr Terry Crossley - Deputy Director Workforce Pay & Pensions

MW/SS/jr