

FIRE BRIGADES UNION

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FBU welcomes decision to scrap Regional Fire Control Project

South west news desks:

The Fire Brigades Union in the South West today welcomed the decision to finally scrap the project that would have seen all 7 local fire control rooms replaced with one super call center based in Taunton.

Today (20th December) the Fire Minister has released a written ministerial statement saying that the requirements of the project cannot be met by the contractor and that the contract will be **terminated with immediate effect**. After a 6 year campaign by the FBU the Fire Minister, Bob Neill, today announced that the private company contracted to develop the computer system Cassidian (formerly EADS) had failed to deliver the project within a realistic timeframe and therefore Ministers have reached an agreement with Cassidian to terminate the contract, which sees the end of FiReControl. The terms of this agreement remain commercially confidential.

The minister goes on to say that "***We recognise that Fire and Rescue Authorities will now wish to review their control arrangements in the light of today's decision. This Government does not intend to impose any solution for the future of control room services.***"

The Executive Council Member for the South West, Tam McFarlane said "***This is good news for the Fire Service and good news for the public but we refuse to be complacent. We welcome the fact that the Government has finally accepted what the FBU has always said, that the Regional Control Centre project was a disaster that threatened the operational effectiveness of the Fire & Rescue Service and wasted hundreds of millions of pounds of tax payers money, and has now finally scrapped it. The FBU will now be strongly making the point to all concerned that the most effective, resilient, and safest solution for the public and Fire Service is to invest in the excellent Fire Control Rooms in the South West that we currently have. FBU Members in Emergency Fire Control Rooms have had to live with the threat of redundancy over their heads for years now and the Union will demand that they are now given an absolute guarantee over their future.***"

We take no comfort in saying "I told you so" but we have warned that this project had little or no chance of success and the voice of professionals in the Fire and Rescue Service were ignored. The big lesson for Government must be that in future they must listen to the professionals in the Service instead of wasting hundreds of millions of taxpayers £s on a project that no one in the Service wanted or believed could work. The fact is that we have been proved right and if Government wants an effective, value for money Service in the future then they must listen to us and not pander to private contractors."

John Drake, Regional Secretary of the FBU in the South West said “***Over £200 Million has been sunk into a project we knew would never see the light of day. This money could have been diverted into the Fire and Rescue Service which would have seen real improvements in firefighter and community safety. Unfortunately this didn’t happen. We will carefully monitor the situation over the coming months to ensure any future proposals meet the rigorous high standards our members provide***”

Media contact

John Drake Regional Secretary 07813 170755

Tam McFarlane Executive Council Member 07813170279