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### **Firefighters Manifesto:**

I am greatly concerned by the impact that years of cutbacks are having on the Fire and Rescue Service – on assets, training, and people. We now have nearly 10,000 fewer firefighters than in 2010. For those who remain, we have seen lower pay in real terms, problems with pensions and reports of firefighters using food banks. Public servants have been underappreciated and undervalued for too long.

Alongside funding and staffing cuts, standards have been impacted. The average response time has risen to its highest levels in 10 years. We also face significant new dangers as global warming leads to increased wildfires, with a 200% increase last summer. I believe that we need fairer funding for our Fire and Rescue Service.

I am aware that concerns have been raised about an occupational risk for firefighters due to the potential for exposure to contaminants. In January 2023, the University of Central Lancashire found that Scottish firefighters were nearly three times more likely to die of certain cancers than the general population. In response, the Government has said that it is for individual authorities to ensure that firefighters receive the appropriate equipment and training that they need.

The manifesto further calls for a continued right to strike. I remain deeply alarmed by the Strikes (Minimum Service Levels) Act, which I opposed throughout its parliamentary passage. This Act attacks the fundamental freedoms of working people and does nothing to resolve the underlying problems affecting our services. Please be assured that I support efforts to repeal it as soon as the opportunity arises. Trade unions should have the freedom to organise, represent and negotiate on behalf of workers and enable industrial relations based on good faith negotiation and bargaining.

Firefighters run into danger to protect us. I will continue to fight against cuts to the Fire Service and make sure their voices are heard.

**Marie Rimmer CBE, MP**

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