



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

020 7219 4198

10 February, 2014

Dear Mr. McFarlane,

Thank you for your letter of 3 February on behalf of the S W Region of the Fire Brigades Union about introducing a statutory duty on fire fighters to respond to flooding. I have been touch with Ministers at the DCLG about this issue.

I fully recognise the breadth and depth of the work undertaken by our Fire and Rescue Service and the bravery, dedication and professionalism of the men and women who work within it. They provide a trusted local service to their communities, whilst also responding to national emergencies when required.

As you will be aware, there are presently a number of agencies involved in rescuing people from floods, particularly in coastal areas, where as well as Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA), the Royal National Lifeboat Institute (RNLI) and Search and Rescue Helicopters can become involved. In any area, individuals and agencies with boats may also volunteer to help. Usually the FRA takes the lead in co-coordinating the flood rescue co-ordination as the lead Category 1 responder.

The issue of formalising these arrangements with a statutory duty was considered as a possibility as part of the Pitt Review, following the floods in 2007 and again after Exercise Watermark in 2011 and has been raised on a number of occasions by the FBU.

In 2012, the Department for Communities and Local Government wrote to a number of interested parties and they generally supported the Government's view that Local Resilience Forums are best placed in leading and organising the local response, as they do for other emergencies, rather than introducing a statutory duty.

On the wider question of funding for Fire Authorities, I believe it is right that every part of the public sector does its part to reduce the deficit we inherited from the last Labour Government. The Knight Review 'Facing the Future', found huge variations in the way fire and rescue authorities operated and concluded that

Mr Tam McFarlane



there were significant opportunities for savings. To help Fire Authorities make the changes necessary, the Government is making available a £75 million transformation fund for fire and rescue authorities in 2015/16.

Thank you again for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,
Andrew

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