



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Tam McFarlane  
Executive Council Member, SW Region  
Fire Brigades Union  
158 Muller Road  
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12<sup>th</sup> March 2014

Dear Mr McFarlane,

Further to my letter of 11<sup>th</sup> February, I have now received the attached letter from Brandon Lewis MP about fire and rescue authorities and the flooding in the South West, which is self-explanatory.

I welcome the Minister's positive comments about fire and rescue authorities across the country and I hope that you find the rest of his response informative.

Yours sincerely,

Robert

Robert Buckland MP





Department for  
Communities and  
Local Government

Robert Buckland MP  
House of Commons  
London  
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Dear Robert

Thank you for your letter of 11 February enclosing another of 3 February from Mr Tam MacFarlane, Executive Council member of the Fire Brigades Union representing the South West, about cuts to fire authority funding in the South West and the impact on the fire sector's ability to respond fully and effectively to incidents including the large scale flooding in the region. I do echo Mr MacFarlane's praise for the excellent work that fire and rescue authorities from across the country and the South West, have done in supporting communities in the South West through the recent sustained flooding events.

Fire and rescue authorities do, of course, deliver a number of very important services for local communities beyond responding to emergencies. This includes working within their communities to target fire prevention and safety messages. In the last decade there has been a forty six per cent reduction in fire and rescue attendance at incidents and, thankfully, deaths from fire are now at an all time low. However, despite the increasing levels of public safety, expenditure has remained broadly the same. It is only right that fire and rescue authorities, along with other parts of local government, play a part in cutting the deficit.

I note that you have already replied to Mr MacFarlane in relation to the funding issues he has raised. I would add that under the 2014/15 local government financial settlement, single purpose fire and rescue authorities outside London are set to receive £1.46 billion of revenue spending power, of which approximately £0.74 billion is grant and business rates baseline funding, with further substantive funding to be supplied through council tax. South West fire and rescue authorities<sup>1</sup> are set to receive a total of £105.5million in 2014/15.

In terms of wider funding streams, a further £280 million of capital grants will have been provided over the four year spending review period to 2015 and the Government also continues to fund existing national resilience capabilities (for radios, and specialist national resilience capabilities to cover events such as flooding and search and rescue requirements) with a further £67 million being provided for this from 2013 to 2016. For 2015/16, Government is making available an additional £75 million for fire and rescue authorities to bid for. This additional funding will help them continue to make efficiencies, including further collaboration across blue light services.

<sup>1</sup> (Avon (£23.76million), Cornwall (£16.42million), Devon and Somerset (£34.66million), Dorset (£12.04million), Gloucestershire (£8.58million), Wiltshire (£10.18million))

Regarding the issue raised of introducing a statutory duty to attend flooding events, I do still consider that the current legislative framework fully recognises this work.

Both the Civil Contingencies Act 2004 and the Fire and Rescue Services Act 2004 detail the roles and powers of fire and rescue authorities in respect of both emergency response and rescue in a wide range of situations, including from flooding. Fire and rescue authorities are required to identify and assess the full range of risks that an authority's service is expected to face. The analysis informs each authority's decision on the appropriate allocation of resources to deliver its prevention, protection and emergency response activities, which is taken after effective consultation with the local community. Integrated risk management plans are expected to dovetail with the community risk register which is developed and implemented by the Local Resilience Forum (a multi-agency grouping of which fire and rescue authorities are key members). These expectations are clearly set out in the statutory National Fire Framework published in July 2012.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Brandon Lewis', with a large loop at the start and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**BRANDON LEWIS MP**