



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Mr Tam McFarlane
Executive Council Member
Fire Brigades Union
158 Muller Road
Horfield
Bristol
BS7 9RE

11 February 2014

Ref. C/Ind/MCFA01005

Please quote in further correspondence

Dear Tam,

Thanks for your letter. I quite agree. Two of my Labour colleagues specifically raised the issue of the Fire Service cuts and the floods in our urgent question to Pickles yesterday. Please see the Hansard record attached.

With very best wishes,

Ben Bradshaw MP



**Ben
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10 Feb 2014 : Column 563 Flooding 3.35 pm

John McDonnell (Hayes and Harlington) (Lab): I met Fire Brigade Union representatives, representing firefighters in the south-west, last week, and they report that firefighters are working extremely hard for long hours. I pay tribute to them. But they asked me to make the point that they are being hampered by job cuts—2,000 firefighters over the last 18 months. In addition, although there has been an improvement in equipment, the Government still have not decided to establish a statutory duty on fire authorities to deal with flooding, which would protect investment in equipment in the future.

Mr Pickles: I am sure that the hon. Gentleman would also like to thank the thousands of retained firefighters for working hard on behalf of their local communities. I, too, had the opportunity to speak to firefighters this morning in Croydon. I was remarkably impressed by their dedication, hard work, cheerfulness and adaptability in ensuring that an important water pumping station remains open. We will ensure that firefighters have the best possible equipment to deal with this issue, and we have a strategic reserve of high-volume pumps that are being used extensively throughout the Thames valley and the Somerset levels.

John Cryer (Leyton and Wanstead) (Lab): Will the Secretary of State now answer the question from my hon. Friend the Member for Hayes and Harlington (John McDonnell) and tell us what assessment he has made of making flood attendance a statutory duty on fire services? If he has not made that assessment, will he do so and then report back to the House?

Mr Pickles: That is contained within the Civil Contingencies Act 2004, with the local resilience forum. With enormous respect to the hon. Gentleman, I saw in Croydon what I have seen at all major incidents: a number of services working together very well. The local resilience forum, as I saw today in Croydon, is an exemplar of the way to do things. Making this a statutory duty would not help anything and would not make a single community safer.