



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

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

11th February 2014

Dear Mr McFarlane,

Many thanks for your letter of 3rd February 2014 about flooding in the South West.

Though Swindon has been spared the worst, we are still feeling the effects of the flooding crisis locally and I commend the excellent work that the Fire and Rescue Authorities (FRA) have been doing across the South West to respond to flooding incidents. Their perseverance and hard work on behalf of our local communities has been outstanding.

Last week the Government allocated £130 million in emergency relief after weeks of storms and flooding. More than £2 billion in funding over the current 4-year spending period has been designated to improve forecasting and early warning systems, make sure existing flood defences are in working order and improve flood protection for 165,000 households. In the Autumn Statement, we also allocated an extra £120 million for flood defences in England during this spending period. The extra funds will speed up the construction of around 50 schemes protecting up to 60,000 households. Finally, emergency work to prevent flooding also continues, including the distribution of tens of thousands more sandbags by the Royal Marines.

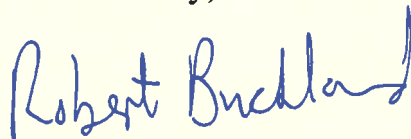
On the wider question of funding for FRA, the Knight Review 'Facing the Future', found huge variations in the way FRA operated and concluded that there were significant opportunities for savings. I believe it is only right that every part of the public sector does its part to reduce the deficit we inherited from the previous Government. To help Fire Authorities make the changes

necessary, the Government is making available a £75 million transformation fund for FRA in 2015/16.

I recall that we last discussed the matter of a statutory duty in December 2012 and that I wrote to the Fire Services Minister, Brandon Lewis MP, to press him on the idea at the time. Nonetheless, I would be happy to write to him again about formalising the FRA role with a statutory duty and as soon as I receive a response I will be in touch.

Thank you once again for contacting me.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Robert Buckland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Robert Buckland MP