



Department
of Energy &
Climate Change

The Rt Hon Gregory Barker MP
Minister of State

Department of Energy & Climate Change
3 Whitehall Place
London
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Steve Brine MP
House of Commons
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www.gov.uk

25 June 2014

Dear Steve,

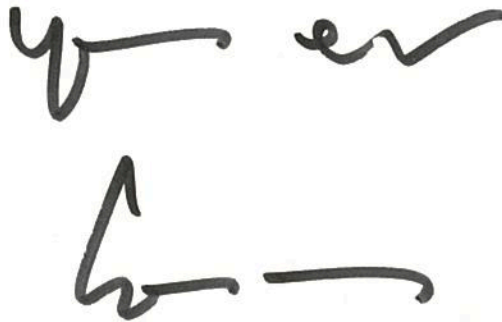
Thank you very much indeed for meeting me on 11 June to discuss flood recovery in Winchester. I am grateful for your bringing to my attention the concerns of Winchester's residents about their eligibility for Defra's Repair and Renewal Grant (RRG).

I fully appreciate these concerns including that many residents had paid to increase the resilience of their properties, but did not get recompensed for the work that they did. In my visit to Winchester on 29 April, I noted that groundwater flooding had sometimes been so bad that raw sewage would flood outside many properties. However, I was very impressed with the ways in which residents put in substantial efforts to combat the flooding. I understand residents worked tirelessly: pulling up patios, cutting ditches to allow water to run away and installing pumps to divert flows.

As you will be aware, recent guidelines defined the RRG to only be used 'if habitable internal areas of the premises have been damaged by flooding'. However, Ministers in Defra have noted the high impact on daily lives where people were unable to continue living in their own home. Therefore on June 24, Ministers decided to extend the RRG beyond the use in habitable internal areas. The new amendment to the RRG means that the grant can now be paid to those people whose septic tanks have been flooded. This is due to the fact that people cannot reasonably be expected to live in a property that is not flooded but has no functioning sewerage system.

Under the new guidelines, I hope you will welcome the fact that residents can now claim external habitable areas as well. However, it still seems to be the case that preventative work carried out during the winter floods to stop flooding and sewage getting into residents' homes would not be retrospectively eligible for the grant. I share your concern about this fact and will raise this matter with my colleagues in Defra as a matter of course.

As you are aware, a report of all of the issues raised with Ministerial flooding representatives is being prepared for the Prime Minister, and I can assure you that these matters are included.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gregory Barker', written in a cursive style. The signature is positioned above the printed name.

GREGORY BARKER