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To:

Rt. Hon. Owen Paterson MP, Secretary of State for
Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
House of Commons
London
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Mr John Furey

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Dear Minister,

Surrey is the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) with third highest overall flood risk nationally. We take flood risk seriously. We were one of the first authorities to consult with the public on our draft local flood risk management strategy.

In March 2012, I urged Richard Benyon MP to work with the insurance industry to guarantee the availability and affordability of flood insurance. A potential 6,541 properties in Runnymede and Weybridge are at risk of not getting adequate insurance once the Statement of Principles lapses.

I welcome the agreement with insurers that they will abide by the current Statement of Principles until 2015. Government should publicise this widely. I also welcome the guide to help people to shop around and get the best insurance deal. However, the industry must commit to keeping costs down and to improve standards and transparency for those going through a flood insurance claim. The industry should also promote efforts by individuals to limit potential damage to their properties.

I do not believe the Environment Agency should undertake any other role than completion of the high risk properties register (and charging for this service). It should not be drawn into monitoring and providing evidence related to enforcement.

Households may never need to contact 'Flood Re'. However, they already contact their local members, and LLFA officers, to raise their concerns about flood insurance. By creating one national list of high risk properties, we will be able to prioritise our time on managing local flood risk and implementing schemes. The list should take into consideration LLFA data, which tells us that some national data is incorrect. By using all available data, and using a risk-based approach, insurers should not blight whole areas.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to more fully explain these concerns.

Yours sincerely,

John Furey
Cabinet Member for Transport, Highways and Environment