

Nobel House
17 Smith Square
London SW1P 3JR

Telephone 08459 335577
Email helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
Website www.defra.gov.uk



Councillor Mike Haines
Deputy Chair
Environment and Housing Programme Board
Local Government Association
Local Government House
Smith Square
London
SW1P 3HZ

5th
February 2011

From Lord Henley
Parliamentary Under Secretary

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Lord Henley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

I am writing further to our useful meeting on 26th January and the visit we both made to Dawlish on 28th January. We agreed that, as central government devolves powers and freedoms to local government, local government has an increasingly important role to play in local adaptation – by showing community leadership and embedding adaptation across service delivery and estate management. It will be important to involve local government in the development of the National Adaptation Programme required by the Climate Change Act 2008.

Central government will continue to play its part too in supporting local adaptation, guided by the 'ask' of local government on areas such as evidence, a supportive policy framework, and the provision of advice and support through our delivery bodies where requested.

We agreed that our respective officials should continue their dialogue on forging clarity on how local and central government will work together to support local adaptation action, with a view to making a public statement on this in the near future. I have asked my officials to regularly report back to me on how this is progressing.

I understand that the Roundtable event you chaired on 1st February was extremely successful in communicating the importance of local adaptation and facilitating an open and informative debate between councillors and officers on how to further strengthen local adaptation action.

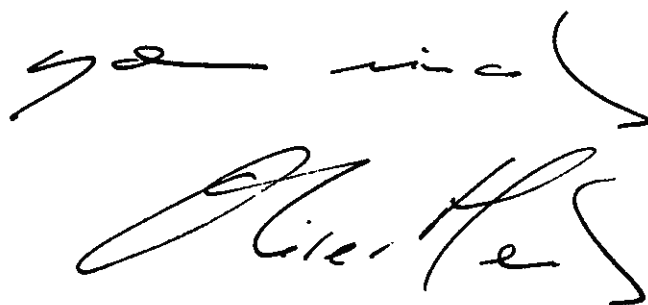
I also understand that one of the key discussion points was the importance of building and promoting a strong and credible economic case for adaptation activity – especially in the current fiscal climate. Work underway within my Department (such as the Adaptation Economic Assessment that will support the National Adaptation Programme), the Adaptation Sub Committee and elsewhere (for example, the Climate Change Partnerships) should yield useful evidence.

I took the opportunity to feed back on our discussion to Lord Krebs when I met him on 1st February. The Adaptation Sub Committee is taking a keen interest in the key role of local government in local adaptation. We discussed the importance of a strong relationship between central and local government, and the Committee is also keen in a continuing dialogue with the LGA.

I also promised to write to you about funding for Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). The provisions in the Flood and Water Management Act 2010, when commenced, will give local authorities responsibility for adopting and maintaining SuDS which have been approved and serve more than one property. In the short term, Defra will fund local authorities for the costs of maintaining adopted SuDS. Funding has been set aside as part of the spending review for this and will be provided through special grants. This will be in addition to the existing formula grant arrangement to all local authorities for flood and coastal erosion risk management and the new area based grant to Lead Local Flood Authorities for the cost of their new roles and responsibilities under the Act.

We are confident that the available funding will be sufficient to cover maintenance of SuDS. SuDS will be approved and built gradually over the first few years of implementation, and therefore we expect initial costs to be low.

Defra is also committed to finding a sustainable mechanism for the long-term funding of SuDS maintenance. There are a number of potential options, including the one preferred by the Local Government Association, which officials are exploring further. We intend to consult later this year on implementing the SuDS provisions in the Act and the potential long-term funding options will be explored further during the consultation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lord Henley", with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

LORD HENLEY