

RISHI SUNAK MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

4 August 2019

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for getting in touch regarding the recent devastating floods in the Dales.

Firstly, my thoughts are with those who have been affected by this flooding – it is truly heart-breaking to witness the impact it is having on our community. I saw this first hand this week as I spent time in the major affected areas – Leyburn, Bellerby, Reeth, Grinton, Langthwaite and Arkengarthdale. I met with many families, farmers and business affected. I was humbled by their resilience and fortitude, and inspired by the incredible efforts shown by the community to support them.

I have been in constant contact with all the local authorities and agencies (North Yorkshire County, Richmondshire District Council, the Environment Agency, the National Farmers Union, and local emergency services) involved in the response and recovery. They are all rightly working hard on this and deserve praise. I am continuing to push them and co-ordinate as required to drive forward the things we need to see.

My own team are also all focused fully on responding to the flooding – I have personally relocated my Westminster staff to my Northallerton office so they can assist my local team in providing support to everyone who is in touch with us.

I can assure you that I will be doing all that I can to ensure our communities can get up and running again as soon as possible. Based on all my conversations with local residents and stakeholders, the key action points that I am working on this as of this weekend are as follows:

1) Reopening Bridges/Roads: It is clear we urgently need Grinton Moor Bridge and the landslip on the B6270 near Cogden and the Bridge there repaired and back up and running. These roads are vital arteries for the Dales. I have been working closely with the local Highways Agency, North Yorkshire County Council, pushing them to develop an urgent plan to do this which is now being actioned. We are working towards having temporary and safe structures up and running in weeks. I am grateful the team at North Yorkshire County Council have responded well to the challenge and are working fast to make this happen.

2) Clearing Becks: There is a need to clear becks, especially in Grinton and Arkengarthdale, which are currently full of debris causing high water levels and therefore further risk. Legally, the obligation for doing this may rest with individual riparian owners, but I am pushing the local authorities to work with the parish councils and local residents to do this pro-actively and quickly. We are also involving the Environment Agency as they likely need to advise on doing this correctly.

3) Collecting dead livestock/damaged silage: these items cannot typically be disposed of in a straightforward manner for obvious contamination reasons. I am working with the Environment Agency and local waste authorities to put in place a plan to assist in collecting and disposing of these items as soon as possible.

4) Individual Support: on an individual basis, I am assisting people with specific issues they are encountering, for example, with their insurance company or getting safe drinking water from Yorkshire Water or re-establishing their electricity supply. If you know of anybody who needs assistance along these lines then please ask them to contact me urgently. Also, at the end of this letter is a Help Guide with a set of local contact details for relevant services.

Of course, I am also speaking with Ministers in the Government to see what financial assistance we may be able to access. There are four areas of particular focus for me:

5) Roads/Bridges: I am in dialogue with the Secretary of State at the Department for Transportation to see what assistance we might be able to access for the emergency repairs to the bridges/roads. This is by far the single largest item of recovery expenditure for our local community as these repairs are estimated to cost around £3m. I am pushing hard on this given the severe nature of this flooding and the need to have things up and running quickly, especially as we are playing host to the UCI World Cycle Championships in September along these roads, which as we know, brings in much needed tourism revenue to our Dales. Similarly, the Reeth Show is taking place at the end of August.

6) Bellwin Scheme: I am in dialogue with the Secretary of State at the Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government about the Bellwin Scheme. This scheme is operated by central Government and it is intended to reimburse the cost to the local council for those actions taken in the immediate phase of an emergency. It may be activated where an emergency involving destruction of or danger to life or property occurs and, as a result, the local authority incurs expenditure on the taking of immediate action to safeguard life or property, or to prevent suffering or severe inconvenience, in their area or among its inhabitants. I am pushing to have some funding from this Scheme reimburse Richmondshire District Council for any eligible costs they incur in connection with this situation.

7) Farming Recovery Fund: I am speaking to the Farming Minister about reinstating something like this Fund. In the aftermath of the 2015 Cumbria floods the DEFRA put in place the Farming Recovery Fund to provide grants to farmers to help cover farmers' short-term uninsured recovery costs, such as restoring their land to productive use, making fields stock proof (fencing/walling), restoring grassland, repairing damaged soils, tracks and flood channels. I am also pressing DEFRA (and Natural England) to relax some of the rules around compliance for BPS payments and farm inspections given the current situation farmers are responding to.

8) Council Tax / Business Rate Relief and Local Enterprise Partnership funding: there are existing schemes which provide business rate relief and council tax relief to affected residents and businesses. I am making sure these schemes operate properly so local people benefit from these savings. I have also asked the Local Enterprise Partnership to see if they can re-prioritise some of the funds they receive from central government to provide assistance to local businesses. It is important the Dales remain "open for business". Tourism is a key part of our local economy and it is vital it continues strongly.

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Insurance

- If you have been flooded, contact your insurance company and follow their advice.
- Please refer to the Association of British Insurers if you require further advice on making insurance claims. <https://www.abi.org.uk/.../flooding/recovering-from-a-flood/>
- If you haven't got insurance, the National Flood Forum can offer help and support on 01299 403055

Preparing for more flooding

- Please keep an eye on the government's flood alert service at <https://flood-warning-information.service.gov.uk/warnings>
- Please contact Richmondshire District Council on 01748 829100 if you require sandbags.

North Yorkshire Recovery Fund

- The Two Ridings Community Foundation is offering support to households and businesses affected. The immediate priority is urgent needs such as the cost of temporary accommodation or equipment required for you to stay in your own home.
- They will also be offering further financial support when moving back home.
- To make a request for support contact the Foundation on 01904 929500 or grant@tworidingscf.org.uk