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KENT FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE

22 SEP 2010

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### **FIRE SUPPRESSION SYSTEMS**

Thank you for your letter of 23 July about sprinkler policy, and your invitation to attend a future South East RMB meeting.

Turning first to the Government's policy for sprinkler systems. I am aware of calls for the Building Regulations to be amended further to require sprinklers in new dwellings, and other types of new buildings. It would perhaps be helpful for me to set out the Government's position on this matter.

During my speech to the Fire 2010 Conference at Harrogate on 29 June, I made it very clear that, as set out in the Coalition Agreement, the Government has no plans to increase the burden of regulation. Indeed, it is our policy to cut, where appropriate, and where justified, regulatory burdens on businesses, industry and others.

I understand that this is an issue which many feel strongly about. However, I am unaware of any new evidence to support a case for further regulation for sprinklers for life safety grounds. Nor do I consider that it is the Government's place to tell the business sector how to manage its own risks. If you or your colleagues consider that more fire protection would be good for UK businesses you should be making your case direct to industry and commerce, not to Government. My view is that the fire safety sector needs to move away from the position that the only way to promote its views is through regulation.

Secondly, thank you for your standing invitation to attend a future South East RMB meeting. As you will by now be aware, on 28 July I announced that I shall no longer expect to enforce the National Framework requirement that Fire and Rescue Authorities should work through RMBs to achieve efficiencies. The continuation of RMBs, and FRAs' participation in them, is therefore now a voluntary matter to be determined locally. I shall be interested to learn whether you decide to continue in your current or a similar format, or to work together collaboratively under alternative arrangements.

**BOB NEILL MP**