Rt Hon Julian Smith MP
House of Commons

24 October 2019

Dear Julian,

I am writing to you to advise you of the outcome of the annual review of the Cold Weather Payments scheme.

As you know, the scheme is reviewed after the end of each winter season to ensure that the weather station network remains viable and representative. Expert advice is sought from the Met Office and changes made where appropriate before the start of the next winter period.

Last winter, you asked if further consideration could be given as to whether the Stonyhurst weather station was the most appropriate weather station for LA2 postcodes.

In its advice, the Met Office stated:

‘LA2 is currently linked to Stonyhurst (winter mean temperature 4.2 °C) and lies 30km south of High Bentham. This is an extensive rural postcode extending from Morecambe Bay at Hest Bank (4.5-4.7 °C), through Caton (4.3-4.4 °C), High Bentham (3.8-3.9 °C) to Clapham and Austwick in the Yorkshire Dales (3.5 °C). The closest alternative stations to LA2 are Walney Island (5.0 °C) and Bainbridge (3.2 °C), both are geographically further away than Stonyhurst and have temperatures that are less representative of the majority of the main settlements in the postcode.’

In view of the Met Office advice, the postcodes linked to the weather station at Stonyhurst will remain the same for winter 2019/20.
However, some of the postcodes in your constituency have been linked to a new weather station. We have been informed by the Met Office that Linton-on-Ouse weather station will be closing and that the most appropriate weather station or the YO7 postcode is Leeming and the most appropriate weather station for the H3 – HG5, LS17, YO51 and YO61 postcodes is that Bramham. We have accepted this recommendation.

In its advice, the Met Office stated:

'The station located at Linton-on-Ouse (winter mean temperature 4.0 oC) is likely to close before the start of the 2019/20 cold weather payment service. This station is in the centre of a relatively large collection of postcode districts across Yorkshire. We recommend replacing the site with two locations, Bramham (4.0 oC) to cover those postcodes in the southern part of the region, and re-introducing the station at Leeming (3.9 oC) to cover those in the north. The winter mean climatology is very similar at each site, but two sites are recommended to minimise the geographical distance to a reference station for the postcodes affected.'

In making its recommendations, the Met Office examined the Geographic Information System database showing postcode areas, weather stations, topography, built-up areas and 1km-gridded winter mean air temperature for 1981-2010 (i.e. the latest 30 year measurement of winter mean temperature used to calculate various weather parameters).

I have asked for a copy of this letter to be deposited in the house library. If you have any further questions, please contact my officials at SOCIALFUNDSTRATEGY.SINGLEPOINTOFCONTACT@DWP.GOV.UK

I appreciate this is not the response that you were hoping for.

Best Wishes

Will

Will Quince MP
Minister for Welfare Delivery