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HM Treasury

HM Treasury
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Mark Swards MP
House of Commons

15 October 2025

Dear Mark,

I am writing to you to advise that as a result of the annual review of the Cold Weather Payments scheme 2024-25, some of the postcodes in your constituency have been linked to a new weather station.

Cold Weather Payments (CWP) help people to meet their additional heating costs during periods of exceptionally cold weather. Payments are targeted at those most vulnerable to the cold including older people in receipt of Pension Credit, disabled adults and children, and families with children under five who receive an income-related benefit.

Every postcode district is linked to one of the 71 weather stations used in the scheme. When the recorded or forecast average temperature at one of the weather stations meets the Cold Weather Payment criterion, a payment is issued automatically to all eligible claimants living in the linked postcode districts. Temperatures are monitored daily by the Met Office during the cold weather season which runs from 1 November to 31 March.

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 are made where appropriate before the start of the next winter period. As part of this, we consider representations made during the previous winter about the suitability of individual weather stations and the links with postcode districts.

In this year's review, the Met Office has recommended that Bramham is a more appropriate weather station than Sheffield for postcode districts WF1 – WF3, WF12 and WF17 within your constituency.

In its advice, the Met Office stated:

The Spen Valley, located south of Bradford and north of the River Calder in West Yorkshire, includes Cleckheaton, Heckmondwike, Gomersal, and Liversedge. The broader Spen Valley parliamentary constituency extends south of the Calder to include Kirkheaton and is the primary focus of this response.

For the 2024–2025 Cold Weather Payments scheme, the constituency was served by two weather stations:

- *Bingley covers the northern third (BD4, BD11–12, BD19) apart from Birstall in the northeast corner (WF14).*
- *Sheffield covers the remainder (WF14–17, HD5).*

Four weather stations—Bingley, Bramham, Rochdale, and Sheffield—could potentially serve the Spen Valley constituency. Liversedge and Heckmondwike, near the constituency's centre, are used as reference points:

- *Bingley: 17 km NW, winter mean temperature 3.6°C*
- *Bramham: 29 km NE, 4.3°C*
- *Rochdale: 34 km WSW, 4.4°C*
- *Sheffield: 38 km SSE, 4.8°C*

As Rochdale lies west of the Pennines and the Spen Valley lies to the east, Rochdale is excluded due to differing climatic conditions on opposing sites of the Pennines.

Postcode districts are typically linked to the weather station that best reflects their winter mean temperature, and not necessarily the closest. Bingley is geographically closest to all districts in the constituency, yet only some (BD4, BD11–12, BD19) are currently assigned to Bingley. The winter mean temperature these postcode districts are now considered. A range of temperatures is quoted that cover the main built-up areas within each:

- *BD4 (3.8–4.6°C)*
- *BD11 (3.8–4.2°C)*
- *BD12 (4.0–4.4°C)*
- *BD19 (4.1–4.6°C)*

Whilst all these postcodes are geographically closest to Bingley their winter mean temperatures are generally more closely represented by Bramham which is the second geographically closest weather station in all cases.

The main urban areas of all but BD19 have lower winter mean temperatures than Bramham and are typically 4.0-4.2°C. It is therefore recommended that BD19 moves from Bingley to Bramham and BD4, BD11 and BD12 remain assigned to Bingley.

We now consider the winter mean temperatures of each postcode district within or partly within the Spen Valley constituency that are currently assigned to Sheffield weather station. A range of temperatures is again quoted that cover the main built-up areas within each:

- WF14 (4.3-5.0°C)
- WF15 (4.3-4.7°C)
- WF16 (4.3-4.7°C)
- WF17 (4.0-4.8°C)
- HD5 (4.1-4.9°C)

Whilst these postcodes are geographically closest to Bingley but are currently assigned to Sheffield, their winter mean temperatures are again most closely represented by Bramham bar the southernmost two districts, namely WF14 and HD5, which are marginally better represented by Sheffield although significant portions of these postcodes do more closely match Bramham. It is therefore recommended that WF14-WF17 and HD5 are moved from Sheffield to Bramham.

The above recommendation then leaves remaining Huddersfield postcodes assigned to Sheffield:

- HD1 (4.2-4.9°C),
- HD2 (3.9-5.0°C),
- HD4 (3.7-4.7°C)
- HD6 (4.1-4.8°C))

These are geographically separated from the main block of Sheffield assigned districts and these have temperatures that are best represented by Bramham. It is recommended that HD1, HD2, HD4 and HD6 are also moved from Sheffield to Bramham.

The remaining Wakefield postcode districts (WF1–WF13), located directly east of the Spen Valley constituency, are generally closer to Bramham than Sheffield, except for WF9 and WF4, which are roughly equidistant, although the main urban area of WF4 lies nearer to Bramham. Most of these districts have winter mean temperatures between 4.3°C and 5.1°C, although parts of WF4, particularly around Grange Moor, are as low as 3.9°C. Deciding whether to assign these postcodes to Bramham (geographically closer) or Sheffield (more climatically representative in many cases) is finely balanced. However, two main factors support assigning them to Bramham:

- *WF1–WF5 and WF12–WF17 form a contiguous urban area spanning Wakefield and Dewsbury and in the Cold Weather Payments scheme we seek, where possible, to avoid splitting such conurbations between weather stations.*
- *WF14–WF17 are already proposed to be reassigned to Bramham in the earlier discussion.*

Given these considerations, along with the proximity of surrounding Wakefield districts (WF6-11) to Bramham, it is reasonable to conclude that Bramham is the most appropriate weather station for all (WF1–WF17) Wakefield postcode districts. It is therefore recommended that WF1-WF13 are also moved from Sheffield to Bramham.

To sum up all proposed changes in the Spen Valley, it is recommended that HD1, HD2 and HD4-HD6 along with WF1-WF17 are moved from Sheffield to Bramham. It is also recommended that BD19 moves from Bingley to Bramham.

As a result, the Met Office has recommended that the current HD1, HD2, HD4-HD6 and WF1-WF17 postcode districts' links to the weather station at Sheffield are moved to Bramham weather station for winter 2025/26, and the BD19 postcode district link to Bingley weather station is moved to Bramham.

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 1991-2020. (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.

Please do not hesitate to contact my officials via the following email address should you have any questions:

SOCIALFUNDSTRATEGY.SINGLEPOINTOFCONTACT@DWP.GOV.UK

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Torsten Bell', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Torsten Bell MP

Minister for Pensions