

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Government snubs local request for change.

Vulnerable people in the Henley constituency will still have to depend on the temperatures at RAF Brize Norton and High Wycombe to know whether they qualify for cold weather payments.

Cold Weather payments of £25 are automatically issued to those who qualify when average temperatures are recorded as or forecast to be zero degrees Celsius or below over seven consecutive days during the period from 1 November to 31 March. This information is obtained from specific Meteorological Office weather stations which are representative of local areas.

The Government has rejected local requests in the Henley constituency that the calculation should be based on weather conditions at the meteorological centre in the heart of the constituency at RAF Benson rather than stations which are up to 30-40 miles away.

Local MP, John Howell, raised the issue with Government ministers back in June but Helen Goodman, Minister at the DWP, has refused to make the change on the grounds that it would only affect a relatively small area.

The Henley area will be judged on the temperature at High Wycombe, the area around Goring and Woodcote on the temperature at South Farnborough and all the rest on the temperature at Brize Norton with two exceptions.

Two areas are being changed. Watlington and Chinnor will now be judged on the temperatures at High Wycombe rather than as previously at Brize Norton.

John Howell said:

*"This seems to me to be another case of administrative convenience taking priority over what is best for people on the ground. There are vulnerable people in my constituency who will really struggle to heat their homes this winter when faced with the soaring costs of heating.*

*"Changing Watlington and Chinnor to High Wycombe on the other side of the Chilterns seems completely perverse when RAF Benson is just down the road. To say that a change will only affect a small area borders on the callous."*

#### Notes to editors:

Further information on Cold Weather payments available at: [http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/Inretirement/DG\\_10018668](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/Inretirement/DG_10018668)

Ministerial Written Statement available at:

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm200809/cmhansrd/cm091022/wmstext/91022m0003.htm#09102219000028>