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Funding for additional resources for the Oxfordshire Coroner

I was about to write to you on the question of funding for the costs of the Iraq inquests when I saw a copy of your letter of 14 August to Harriet. At your meeting with her and with Adam on 24 May, she understood that you had agreed to pay up to £250k to cover the additional resources for the Oxfordshire Coroner to reduce the backlog of inquests into the deaths of servicemen in Iraq. I understand that our officials have been in touch but that your finance officials have said that they are not aware of the agreement. We now estimate that the total cost will be in the region of £350k.

I see that your letter to Harriet refers to a total of £125k. This was not the estimated figure she discussed with you, and I would be grateful to have your urgent confirmation that it is indeed the £250K funding base that you agreed at the meeting with Harriet and Adam on 24 May, and that your financial officials are aware of the position. We will look at your suggestion for a call on the reserve. However, given that the backlog is driven by the MOD's policy to repatriate Iraq fatalities to RAF Brize Norton in Oxfordshire, I do not think it is for this Department to make a call on the reserve.

We also need to discuss funding for the additional £100k which has since been identified.

I was glad that you, like us, are pleased with the positive inroads now being made into the inquest backlogs. One consequence is that we are beginning to receive invoices from Thames Valley Police and Oxfordshire County Council so I need the funding to be resolved as a matter of urgency.

LORD FALCONER OF THOROTON



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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