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The Rt Hon John Healey MP
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dear Cllr Daubney".

Thank you for your letter of 17 October to the Rt Hon Hazel Blears MP. I am responding as the Minister responsible for local government reorganisation.

In these times of challenging economic circumstances it is right that the Government keeps the whole range of its policies under review. However, the matters you refer to in your letter are currently matters for the Boundary Committee, which it has been requested by the Secretary of State to advise on by 31 December 2008. The Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007 provides that the Secretary of State cannot take any statutory decisions on whether or not to implement any unitary proposal until a period of at least six weeks has elapsed from that date.

More generally, the experience of the nine new councils currently implementing unitary local government has shown that they are on track to make the savings envisaged in the original bids, and that local government restructuring facilitates, rather than hinders, them in addressing the financial and budgetary pressures they – like councils generally – face in these challenging economic conditions.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Yours sincerely John Healey".

JOHN HEALEY MP

A handwritten flourish or signature mark in black ink.