



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt Hon Boris Johnson MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
London SW1A 2AA

23 February 2021

Mineworkers Pension Scheme (MPS) – surplus sharing arrangements

You gave assurances about the MPS in November 2019, while in Mansfield, Nottinghamshire, as part of the General Election campaign so I am writing for your personal response to my concerns.

When asked by a journalist about MPS members being out of pocket by more than £4 billion, you are reported to have “made a ‘categorical’ pledge that miners will soon receive their fair share of the Mineworkers’ Pension Scheme.”

The *Mansfield Chad* (16 November) reported that you told people: “We will make sure that all their cash is fully protected and returned, I have looked into it and we will ensure that’s done.”

As I am sure you are aware, more than £4 billion – which the journalist referred to in his question – is the amount the Government as guarantor has taken from the scheme as a result of the 50-50 surplus-sharing arrangement since it was set up in 1994. Yet over this period the Government has had to make no direct payments to the scheme, demonstrating the risk is extremely low.

It is because of this that the surplus-sharing arrangement is controversial, and why I and other coalfield MPs have been calling for years for it to be changed and made more generous to the miners and their families.

Of the 130,047 MPS members in the UK, one in five – 27,051 – live in and around South Yorkshire. There are 6,710 in and around the Wentworth & Dearne constituency alone, more than in the whole of the North West region or in the four southernmost English regions combined. 24,150 live in and around Nottinghamshire.

MPS members currently get an average pension of just £84 a week. Many, who paid in before it become earnings-related in 1975, get much less.

Returning to your comments in Mansfield, I have corresponded with your Minister for Energy, Kwasi Kwarteng, and he says he believes you were referring to the Government’s commitment “to ensure all scheme members receive their full entitlement. That includes the protection of their pensions, inflation-related increases and the additional protection of their bonus pensions.”

However, work on the protection of bonuses was under way before the General Election campaign, and in fact Mr Kwarteng referred to all of these features of the scheme in a letter to me in September 2019. So it does not seem that this can be what you were referring to when you gave a



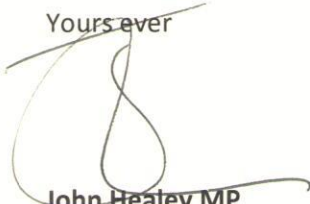
'categorical' pledge that the returning of miners' cash 'will be done', and that you would make sure no miner signed up to the MPS would be 'out of pocket'. Moreover, your answer followed a question about the Government's income from the surplus sharing arrangement.

It is certainly the case that many miners took your comments to mean that there would be changes to the surplus sharing arrangement. If, as Mr Kwarteng has written to me, the Government has no plans to change the scheme during this Parliament then you will have broken this firm promise you gave to miners and their families.

It is time for the Government to do what is right and take a reduced share of the surplus to allow more pension support for the mineworkers and their families. Many scheme members and their widows are now in their 80s or older. Urgent action is needed.

I look forward to hearing from you and receiving clarification on your plans to change the MPS to the benefit of miners in areas like South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire.

Yours ever



John Healey MP
Wentworth & Dearne

