

# EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT



MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

Mr Bala Mahendran  
Chief Executive  
Basildon District Council  
By e-mail to bala.mahendran@basildon.gov.uk

Mr Gerry Levelle  
Head of Gold Command  
Basildon District Council  
By e-mail to gerry.levelle@basildon.gov.uk

Cc: cormac.smith@basildon.gov.uk

19 October 2011

Dear Bala, dear Gerry,

## My access as Member of the European Parliament to the Media Compound at Dale Farm

I am writing following the telephone call between my office and Cormac Smith of Basildon Council's Communications Department at around 11.10am this morning, in which he said Basildon Council "would not allow" me access to the Media Compound in order to meet a commitment to a live BBC television interview from the compound, where I have been asked to arrive at 5pm this afternoon, (Wednesday 19 October). I note that my office and myself personally have subsequently spoken with Sue Cherry your Personal Assistant, to explain that any such decision would be legally unsound and asking for an urgent telephone conversation with one of yourselves in order to resolve the situation amicably.

It should be said that although I hold deep concerns about the Council's conduct in relation to Dale Farm, I have always called for full respect for the law and continue to wish that the events which started today continue without any harm to anyone involved. I would hope the Council would respect this position, and the contribution I can make to encouraging cooperation in a very difficult situation, as well of course as respecting my status as an elected Member of the European Parliament.

I am writing now to confirm my telephone calls that I believe the actions by Council officers to enable interviews by the Conservative MP for Basildon and Billericay but to explicitly block the same interview opportunity by the Labour Member of the European Parliament, represents an unacceptable politicisation by council officers and apparent misuse of public monies.

I very much hope this is all a product of a misunderstanding and that you will confirm my access by reply. I want to stress my interest is only in gaining access to the media point and I have no wish to access the site more generally or to interfere in any way with the operation.

I am sending this letter at 2.15pm and will get my office to confirm safe receipt immediately by email. I will also keep these matters private for one further hour, hoping that the question is resolved amicably in the meantime.

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If I do not receive a suitable answer in that time I reserve the right to make the matter public and take further action against the Council. I also inform you that Essex Police have assured me that I will be allowed access to the compound and that their officers on site have been informed accordingly. For the record, I expect you to do the same to Basildon Council officers there too.

I am sorry to have to write in this manner.

Yours sincerely,



Richard Howitt MEP  
Member of the European Parliament