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To H.R.H. The Duke of Cambridge  
Clarence House  
London SW1A 1BA  
United Kingdom

Christchurch, 2 March 2014

Dear Prince William,

People were very touched by the kindness of your letter to the citizens of Christchurch which was read out at the official Civic Memorial Service last week, and we thank you most sincerely for your thoughtful words.

Your thoughtfulness has prompted us to make a request on behalf of citizens who are *still* living in devastated areas. These are people who are still waiting (three years after the event) to learn whether their earthquake-damaged homes will be demolished or repaired, as well as people who don't know what their future holds because their land has subsided as a consequence of the 'quakes.

Your letter stated that you are "looking forward to returning to Christchurch to see some of the progress and to witness again the unquenchable spirit of this place". Indeed, when you visit Christchurch again, our government and civic leaders will be very keen to show you the "rebuild" progress. They might even tell you that, of the 86,887 total claims, 54 per cent (these being the least damaged homes) have been settled and completed.<sup>1</sup>

But those same leaders would be less keen for you to see that, in reality, the "rebuild" progress has barely touched the residential homes in the more badly damaged suburbs. This is because, of the 21,996 Christchurch homes confirmed as a *major* repair or rebuild, less than half have been completed and settled. About 44 per cent are still scheduled for repair/rebuild, are in the design stage, under way or pending cash settlement. However, claims have yet to be finalised for 5,722 homes, which include a number of duplex dwellings or similar types of homes. In these areas, the "unquenchable spirit" of residents has almost been extinguished as they continue to struggle with the bureaucracy of insurance companies and government agencies. (We anticipate that the victims of the recent flooding

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.stuff.co.nz/the-press/news/christchurch-earthquake-2011/9731441/Insurance-progress-a-race-against-time>

and storm damage in England and Wales are likely to experience very similar problems in due course).

Back in the early 1940s, when the people of Britain suffered through the Blitz, we know that your great-grandparents, H.M. King George VI and H.M. Queen Elizabeth, brought great comfort to the victims of bombing raids. The compassion that they showed in visiting communities amidst the ruins of their shattered homes and workplaces has gone down in history. The photographs and Pathe footage show the facts.<sup>2</sup> Their presence lifted the spirits of ordinary people and gave them hope and strength to carry on.

We know too, that you and the Duchess of Cambridge have already demonstrated your own philanthropic interests through the "The Royal Foundation of The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge and Prince Harry" and "The Prince's Charities Forum". Moreover, in February this year, we saw that you were prepared to take a "hands-on approach", coming to the rescue of residents in the flood-hit village of Datchet.<sup>3</sup> Just as your great-grandparents did so many years ago, you could make an important difference. If you were to request that you and the Duchess of Cambridge make a visit to meet some quake victims with damaged homes on the low-lying seaward side of the city, much could be achieved. By making such a humanitarian gesture, you would be doing so much to uplift the spirits of people who feel that their plight has been trivialised by the authorities in favour of prestigious big-budget projects.

We urge that you give this request your royal support,

We remain yours sincerely.

Empowered Christchurch



Hugo Kristinsson

*on behalf of Empowered Christchurch.*

*Empowered Christchurch is an apolitical community group set up to support victims of the Canterbury earthquakes, to find answers to their questions and to help achieve fair settlements for homeowners.*

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.britishpathe.com/video/royal-tour-of-bombed-areas>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.itv.com/news/story/2014-02-14/william-harry-sandbags-datchet/>