

02 August 2016

Rt Hon Andrea Leadsom MP  
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Secretary of State

May we offer you our congratulations on your appointment as Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

We would like to take this opportunity to introduce the Society for the Environment, which is a confederation of 24 professional bodies representing individuals practicing in environmental and natural resources management ranging from chemists and engineers to ecologists and biologists and ranging from front delivery to the very highest levels of leadership. We have access to some 500,000 individual members. Our Royal Charter provides us with the responsibility to license the award of the status of Chartered Environmentalist, of which there are over 7,000 registered individuals working in practice.

Following the result of the EU Referendum, we would be pleased to work with DEFRA and DBEIS in helping to address the important changes which face policy decision makers with regard to the environment and natural resources. We have started already by creating an initial framework of six outline principles, which we suggest should guide 'Team Environment GB and NI' in moving forward. This will guide our actions and contributions. We set these out below.

1. The Society recognises that our Nations face a challenge in moving forward with our new future. We have made significant progress with the quality and quantity of our natural resources over the last 40 years whilst we were members of the European Union and we wish to protect that progress and indeed to maintain and enhance it in the future. This includes the threats from climate change and the ways in which we deal with mitigation and adaptation. May we use a quote made during previous debates about investment in our environment, 'don't let the gains go down the drain'.
2. The Society recognises that one of the issues which vexes both those people who voted to leave and those who voted to stay in the European Union, was the bureaucracy associated with regulation. Excessive bureaucracy can be inimical to the objectives of legislation. So we would be pleased to work with the Government in finding ways and means of transposing national legislation made in pursuit of European Union legislation into purely UK driven legislation, which sustain the objectives but which are at the same time efficient and effective. It is essential that this wisdom is applied to new legislation in future. This will add additional impetus to current efforts for better regulation and the work of the BRDO. However, we urge the Government not to deregulate essential environmental and natural resources management.

3. Threats to our natural resources do not recognise national boundaries and for the last 40 years we have shared our wisdom with Continental colleagues. We will maintain our European contacts and we urge the Governments of the UK to do the same. Because of the international nature of environmental and natural resources management, we have believed that it must be a key component of Pan European Policy. This is our description of the Policy which recognises that the UK is part of the Great European Project, but as an independent Nation and not part of the EU. The objectives shared with the EU and other components of Europe must be in pursuit of the highest principles of individual and environmental wellbeing which transcends the needs of a common trading agreement. The Society will continue to pursue our European partnerships on that basis and we would be pleased to assist the Government.
4. The relationship of the UK with the EU has been a Reserved Matter which has restricted the flexibility of developed administrations to implement appropriate national legislation. So devolution of environmental and natural resources legislation will be a key component of the way forward.
5. We recognise that the result of the EU referendum highlighted a need to re-engage with communities in decision making, in order to replenish their trust in governments and decision making bodies. The wellbeing of society is paramount to a thriving economy and, with this in mind, we would welcome an opportunity to discuss potential models for doing so, such as the Welsh Wellbeing of Future Generations Act, and how that might be adapted to strengthen community resilience across the UK as an essential part of future environmental strategy.
6. Our preferred structure for political leadership of confronting climate change is that there should be a distinct position within the Cabinet, but we can see opportunities for the new Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (DBEIS) in embedding climate change awareness and action for adaptation and mitigation at the highest levels in business. There are number of Corporate and Director codes on governance; we would like to see these revised to ensure that those in high office wherever and whatever that might be will act in the best interests of our future on sustainability, including climate change. The creation of a link between climate change and business must be beneficial and DBEIS is well placed to properly embed climate change policy within the UK 's Industrial Strategy and to help develop a sustainable circular economy. We call upon DBEIS to honour the commitments made by the former Department Energy and Climate Change.

We would be pleased to work with DEFRA and DBEIS in moving forward and look forward to hearing from you. We have sent a similar letter to your colleague, the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Yours ever



Dr Peter Matthews CBE OBE HonFSE CEnv  
Chair of Society for the Environment



Dr Emma Wilcox  
Chief Executive