



Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee

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Rebecca Pow MP
Minister for Nature Recovery and the Domestic Environment
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs

20 May 2022

Dear Rebecca

Draft Environmental Principles Policy Statement

Thank you for your letter of 11 May on the draft Environmental Principles Policy Statement. The Committee welcomes the publication of the draft statement and is keen to ensure the Environmental Principles have a meaningful effect on Government policy making. I was particularly pleased to see that the department has acted on the feedback from the Office of Environmental Protection and included reference to how the principles can be used to promote positive environmental outcomes, as well as to avoid harm.

As the Policy Statement states, it does not set out a strict formula for how the Principles are applied to policy making. However, it is how they are used in practice that will determine whether they improve the way in which the environment is considered when making policy. The Committee would therefore be grateful if you could provide further information about how policy makers will be supported in applying the Principles during policy development – including what training, support and guidance will be made available. This will be especially important in departments other than Defra, where officials may be less familiar with considering environmental issues during policy formulation. I'm particularly interested in what engagement you have had with BEIS, the Department of Transport officials working on transport infrastructure, and Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities officials leading on city and regional development, about the implementation the precautionary and polluter pays principles.

The Department has previously said that there will be an implementation period to allow government departments to prepare for the duty. Given ministers first committed to a policy statement on environmental principles in the autumn of 2018, I hope that the implementation period will not be overly long. Can you please provide the Committee with a timescale for this implementation period, which I hope can be concluded by the autumn?

The Committee would also be interested to understand what systems you will put in place to assure yourself that these Principles are being considered during policy development. Will the current system of Environmental Impact Assessments be used to provide a framework for considering the Environmental Principles, and to provide

evidence that due regard has been given to them? If not, what other systems will the Government use to demonstrate that due regard has been given to the Principles?

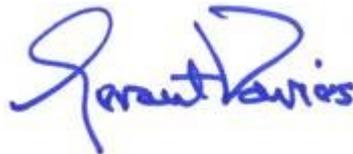
The Committee also notes that there are legal exemptions which mean that the Principles do not apply to:

- the Armed Forces, defence, or national security, or
- taxation, spending or the allocation of resources within government.

What discussions have you had with colleagues in the MoD, HM Treasury, HMRC, and other relevant policy making bodies that work in these areas about them adopting the Principles on a voluntary basis? In particular, please could you provide more information on how the Treasury will be encouraged to provide fiscal measures to support the delivery of the precautionary and the polluter pays principles.

Finally, I would be keen to meet you to discuss the draft Policy Statement. I believe our officials have already been in touch to arrange a time.

Yours,



Geraint Davies MP
Interim Chair, Environment Food and Rural Affairs Committee