



PACAC (Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee)

House of Commons · London SW1A 0AA

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Sir James Bevan
Chief Executive
Environment Agency
By email

19 July 2022

Dear Sir James,

Implementation of Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman Recommendations

I'm writing regarding the procedure for implementing recommendations made by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), in light of a recent case involving the Environment Agency.

By way of background, the House of Commons Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee, which I chair, is responsible for scrutinising the overall work of the PHSO. The Committee generally discharges this function through annual scrutiny sessions, following which we publish reports detailing conclusions and recommendations on the PHSO's overall performance. We do not have any jurisdiction over individual cases, nor do we seek to get involved in them.

Nevertheless, on 31st March 2022, the PHSO took the unusual step of laying a report before Parliament regarding the Environment Agency's failure to comply with the entirety of the PHSO's recommendations in the "The Earl Report." Whilst the Committee does not have a view on the specifics of this case, there is clearly lacuna where the PHSO recommends remedies to injustice and the public body in question does not comply with those recommendations, making it right for us to act. In such instances, public bodies should be answerable to Parliament for non-compliance.

On that basis, I would request that you take steps to lay a statement before Parliament by, at the latest, Monday 12th September, setting out the reasons why the PHSO's recommendations have not been complied with in full.

This letter is being copied to the Secretary of State for the Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs, Rt Hon. George Eustice MP, the Chair of the House of Commons Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs Committee, Sir Robert Goodwill, and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, Rob Behrens CBE. A copy of this letter, and your response, will be placed in the public domain.

William Wragg MP

Chair, Public Administration and Constitutional Affairs Committee