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Dear Darren,

Further to our conversation this morning and your subsequent letter, I wanted to write to the Committee and reaffirm my Department's willingness to engage in the Inquiry into the Government's acquisition of OneWeb.

The decision to invest in OneWeb puts the UK at the heart of the latest advances in space technology. Given the strategic importance of this investment for the UK, I fully support the Committee's intention to undertake the necessary parliamentary scrutiny.

As we discussed this morning, the transaction has not yet closed. Dr Tim Farrar, who you invited to give evidence, has been closely involved in these discussions, as a consultant working for the Government on this commercial deal. With all commercial negotiations it is important to be mindful of the risk of prejudicing any ongoing discussions.

We fully understand the Committee's intention to hear evidence on the Government's investment in OneWeb and I understand that, in order to be constructive, my officials suggested Dr Farrar take part in a confidential briefing in the coming weeks, or in a standard hearing when the transaction has concluded.

I value the collaborative relationship that we have established since you took over as Chair of the Committee and I am committed to seeing this continue. I have asked my officials to continue to liaise with the Committee officials on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

THE RT HON ALOK SHARMA MP
Secretary of State for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy