



Joint Committee on Human Rights

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From the Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights

Michael Shanks MP

[Delivered by Email]

Minister for Energy

08 April 2025

Dear Michael Shanks,

Thank you for your letter dated 21 March 2025 regarding Great British Energy's (GBE) first projects, namely the installation of solar panels on schools and hospitals and work with devolved governments to build clean local power.

I am grateful to you for confirming that GBE will seek to identify and tackle human rights abuses in its supply chains, aligning with the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines on Multinational Enterprises. The Committee welcomes the Government's commitment to identify effective solutions and protect the UK market from goods tainted by forced labour.

In this vein, **can you confirm that the processes and information about supply chains used to select suppliers will be transparent, and made available to the public?** As organisations are developing their own processes and policies around forced labour in supply chains, it will likely be informative and perhaps instructive to have sight of how a government body is approaching this challenge.

I was encouraged by your contributions to the debate on 27 March 2025, particularly the commitments you made to the appointment of a senior individual to lead on ethical supply chains and modern slavery at GBE; and to ensure all FTSE 100 companies receive notification of the Government's expectations that responsible businesses will identify and address forced labour in their supply chains. It is clear that both the public and the private sector have a role in addressing forced labour in supply chains.

What is the proposed timeline for each of these actions? How is the issue of forced labour in supply chains currently being addressed in GBE's procurement processes pending the appointment of that senior individual?

As you will be aware, the Joint Committee on Human Rights launched an inquiry into forced labour in the UK's supply chains in January this year. Over the course of our inquiry, the Committee has heard excellent evidence from witnesses in the legal, business, procurement, energy, and standards industries; in addition to those bringing these issues to public attention in the media and the courts. In particular, we have heard oral evidence concerning the potential impacts of the newly in force Procurement Act 2023. The Committee has received evidence suggesting that it may be challenging for public authority decision makers to apply the mandatory and



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discretionary grounds for exclusion under Schedules 6 and 7 of the Act. In particular, in the case of the discretionary grounds, their use may be limited at local authority level.

How will you ensure that there is sufficient understanding among all public authority decision makers of the discretionary grounds, so they feel confident using them to exclude unethical suppliers from contracts?

Are there any plans to monitor use of the discretionary power? What review processes are in place to ensure it is being applied consistently?

Finally, I note your comments in relation to the Modern Slavery Assessment Tool (MSAT) in the debate last week. **Could you clarify whether all those contracting with GBE will be required to complete the MSAT? And if so, will suppliers be required to reach a specific threshold under the MSAT in order to proceed? Will suppliers be required to undertake any other assessments or provide any additional evidence in relation to supply chains in order to contract with GBE?**

With kind regards,

Lord Alton of Liverpool

Chair, Joint Committee on Human Rights