

The Rt Hon. the Lord Strathclyde CH
Chair, Constitution Committee
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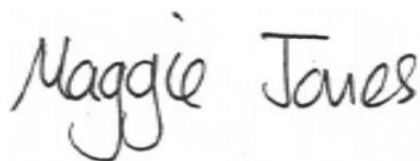
Dear Lord Strathclyde,

I would like to thank the Select Committee on the Constitution for their report “Fast-Track Legislation and the Steel Industry (Special Measures) Act 2025” and the Committee’s recommendations on fast-track legislation. The Select Committee’s role in scrutinising the affairs of the Department is of immense value, and particularly so in cases of emergency legislation such as this, which by necessity did not allow for the usual scrutiny. I am pleased to address the points you raise on this important matter, and I am committed to working closely with the Select Committee during the duration of special measures under the Act.

Through emergency legislation, the Prime Minister took decisive action to secure steelmaking in Scunthorpe and ensure the continued safe use of the blast furnaces, which were at risk of being shut down prematurely. The Business Secretary and his Permanent Secretary agreed that this action was in the public interest. Ministerial Directions were issued because of the speed at which we were required to act, and the uncertainty of the situation at the Scunthorpe site. However, we recognise the speed at which this legislation was passed, meant that the usual level of legislative scrutiny was not possible, and we are grateful to the Committee for their continued attention to these matters.

I hope this information is useful and addresses the concerns and recommendations outlined in your report. I look forward to working closely with the Committee for the duration of the period of special measures under the Act and continuing to work with colleagues across the House in the interests of the UK steel industry.

Best wishes,



BARONESS JONES OF WHITCHURCH
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Legislation)
Department for Business and Trade

**GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON THE
CONSTITUTION'S 9TH REPORT OF SESSION 2024-25: FAST TRACK LEGISLATION
AND THE STEEL INDUSTRY (SPECIAL MEASURES) ACT 2025**

Recommendation 1: The Government should set out why it did not consider a renewal procedure for the powers to be appropriate. We also recommend that a renewal procedure be included in future fast-track legislation where a sunset clause is considered inappropriate due to ongoing uncertainty.

The urgency of the circumstances at the Scunthorpe site warranted decisive Government intervention to stabilise the situation. Had there been a time-bound mechanism in the Steel industry (Special Measures) Act 2025, the Government's ability to provide this ongoing stabilisation for the time required would have been undermined. Any uncertainty over the Government's ability to address the evolving situation with British Steel Limited would, in turn, also have increased the risk faced by Government in managing the situation with the owners of the company and site. Nonetheless, it is the Government's view that the powers of the Steel industry (Special Measures) Act 2025 are inherently temporary in nature, allowing the Government to ensure the safe and continued operation of the blast furnaces whilst we engage with British Steel Limited on the future of the site.

The Government is resolute in its support of the critical role both Houses play in holding the Government of the day to account, and the importance of Parliament having the opportunity to scrutinise legislation. We note the Committee's recommendation of including a review procedure in any fast-track legislation tabled by the Department. The Bill is clear that the Government can revoke directions at any time in relation to a particular steel company once the need for intervention has passed. During the Bill's passage, Ministers committed to engaging with the Business and Trade Select Committee and House of Lords committees, and providing Parliament with updates on the Act every 28 days. The Government will continue to utilise these channels to update Parliament on developments in relation to the Act, British Steel Limited, and the situation at the site.

Recommendation 2: Furthermore, given the Government's intention for the provisions in this Act to be temporary, it should set out the circumstances in which the powers in the Act will be reviewed or repealed, and the process it intends to put in place for this. At future debates on the operation of the Act, the House may wish to satisfy itself that these proposals are appropriate.

The directions issued by the Secretary of State following Royal Assent are still in place to secure the continued safe use of the blast furnaces at the Scunthorpe site. We are continuing discussions with British Steel's owners to explore the potential for a mutually agreeable way forward. This process must progress before decisions can be taken on the timing of any review or repeal of the measures in the Steel industry (Special Measures) Act 2025.

Recommendation 3: The Government should ensure that any relevant information shared with parliamentary committees is also made available to the House as a whole in a timely manner.

The Government has committed to updating parliament every four weeks. The Government provided a verbal update to the House of Commons and House of Lords on 22 April and 24 April respectively, and via a Written Ministerial Statement on 20 May. Please note some briefings may need to be given to committees privately, and not be made available to the House as a whole, should details be highly confidential.

In addition, all financial impacts will be reported in the department's 2025/26 annual report and accounts. This is typically in the summer (2026) but is subject to the National Audit Office undertaking their audit, so the timing is beyond the control of the Department and is approximate.