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Paul Nowak General Secretary
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Blair McDougall MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Small Business and Economic Transformation
Department for Business and Trade

CC: Baroness Hayter of Kentish Town
Chair, Industry and Regulators Committee
House of Lords

9th March 2026

Dear Minister McDougall and Baroness Hayter,

Re: Evidence to the Industry and Regulators Committee – Engagement with Trade Unions on Health and Safety

I am writing in relation to the evidence session of the Industry and Regulators Committee held on Tuesday 24 February 2026 as part of the committee's inquiry into regulators and growth.

During the session, the Minister referred to the Government "working with trade unions" as part of a series of "deep dives", including one looking at the complexity of health and safety guidance.

Given that this exchange took place in the context of discussion about reducing regulatory burdens, it may be helpful to clarify the position of the Trades Union Congress and our affiliated unions.

The Department for Business and Trade invited the TUC to participate in a proposed health and safety regulation taskforce, including an invitation for the TUC Assistant General Secretary to act as Vice-Chair. We gave this proposal careful consideration and consulted with affiliated unions. However, we ultimately concluded that we could not participate based on the Terms of Reference that were presented.

Our concerns arise from the wider deregulatory framework within which the taskforce was proposed, including the Government's stated ambition to reduce the regulatory "burden" on business and the target of achieving a 25 per cent reduction in such burdens. In our view, it is not

possible to credibly pursue the protection and improvement of occupational safety and health while operating within a framework whose stated objective is deregulatory.

Effective protection for workers depends on clear, enforceable health and safety regulation, supported by strong guidance and a properly resourced and independent regulator. While we agree that guidance should be clear and accessible, any process framed primarily around reducing regulatory “burdens” risks undermining these protections.

For these reasons, the TUC and our unions took the decision not to participate in the proposed taskforce. We enclose the relevant correspondence for your information.

We remain committed to constructive engagement with government on improving health and safety at work. We believe there is significant scope for a progressive agenda to modernise health and safety regulation and guidance and ensuring that protections reflect the diversity of today’s workforce.

Should the Government wish to pursue work in these areas on a basis that prioritises improving protections for workers, we would welcome the opportunity to contribute.

I hope this clarification is helpful to the Committee and to the Minister.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Nowak', with a stylized, cursive script.

Paul Nowak
General Secretary