



**Environment, Food
and Rural Affairs
Committee**

12 August 2026

**Paul Kissack
Permanent Secretary
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**

**cc Rt Hon Dame Angela Eagle DBE MP, Secretary of State for Environment,
Food and Rural Affairs**

[by email]

**Subject: Possible unauthorised disclosure of confidential correspondence to
the EFRA committee**

Dear Mr Kissack,

I am writing about the letter sent to me by Sir Adrian Montague, Chair of Thames Water, on 4 August 2026 concerning the company's Management Retention Plan.

The letter was prominently marked "Highly Confidential". It was addressed to me as Chair of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee and copied to David Hallam, Defra's Director of Floods and Water, as well as three named recipients at Ofwat.

At 6.48 am on 10 August, before the Committee had published the letter or authorised any disclosure of its contents, Sky News reported detailed information contained in it. The report attributed information about the letter to a "Whitehall source". The Committee subsequently published the correspondence later that day.

The report does not establish that Defra, or any individual within it, was the source, nor that the full letter was supplied to the journalist. Nevertheless, the attribution and level of detail reported raise a serious concern that confidential correspondence to a parliamentary committee, or information taken from it, may have been disclosed without authorisation. This may be considered a prima facie contempt of Parliament.

Given the importance of establishing the facts, I am writing to ask Defra to urgently investigate the matter. The investigation should examine the Department's receipt and

handling of the letter and whether the document, or information contained in it, was disclosed without authorisation.

In particular, the investigation should establish whether any Minister, special adviser, civil servant, or person acting on the Department's behalf communicated about the letter or its contents with Sky News, the author of the article, any other media organisation or any external organisation before the Committee published it.

Once the investigation is complete, please provide the Committee with its outcome, including whether any unauthorised disclosure was identified and what remedial or other action Defra intends to take in response. I would be grateful for your response by Wednesday 19 August 2026.

The Committee must be able to share and receive sensitive information on the understanding that its confidentiality will be respected until the Committee determines otherwise. Any unauthorised disclosure risks damaging that confidence and impeding effective parliamentary scrutiny.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Alistair Carmichael." The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style. The first name "Alistair" is written in a larger, more prominent script, and "Carmichael." follows it in a similar but slightly smaller script. There is a small horizontal line under the end of the last name.

Alistair Carmichael MP
Chair, Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee