Dear Michael,

I am writing to you to bring to your attention a letter written to me in my role as Chair of the Science and Technology Committee in the House of Commons.

The letter is from Dame Sue Ion, Chairman Nuclear Network North, and concerns matters that are better considered by Government than a Parliamentary Select Committee.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Miller
Chair
Andrew Miller MP

Chairman House of Commons Select Committee on Science and Technology

House of Commons, London, SW1A 0AA

28th June 2013

Importance of maintaining UK strategic interest in jobs, growth and technology retention in the Sale of Urenco

Dear Mr Miller

You may well remember me from my role during the 1990’s -2006 as BNFL’s Group Chief Technology Officer. I am writing to you now in my capacity as Chair of Nuclear Network North, a grouping of NW academic and industry representatives, facilitated by the secretariat of CBI NW. We were formed as the North West Regional Development Agency was wound down as a means of continuing to pursue common interests on various issues relating to the nuclear sector.

After our last meeting it was suggested that I contact you in your capacity as Chairman of the House of Commons Science and Technology Select Committee. We wished to bring to the attention of the Select Committee the importance of focussing on the UK’s long term strategic interests in the detail of the sale of the UK Government’s shares in the uranium enrichment company, Urenco.

The recently announced Nuclear Industrial Strategy emphasised the importance of the whole of the nuclear fuel cycle including enrichment and reactor systems to the UK’s long term energy policy. The implications for the UK’s Industrial Strategy for Nuclear must be assessed in the detail of the sale as it progresses and appropriate steps must be taken to mitigate any risks.

Urenco, a member of the Nuclear Cluster in the North, has developed internationally-leading capability for the enrichment of uranium for nuclear fuel, supplying enriched uranium to Springfields Fuels Ltd and internationally and receiving natural uranium hexafluoride from the Springfields site. This makes a significant contribution to the UK domestic nuclear programme and to exports—two major themes within the Government’s Strategy. It is important that the business connectivity between the two UK sites must be taken into account and assessed for downstream risks as a consequence of the sale.
It is vital that the UK’s interests in jobs and growth are protected within the execution of the sale. Urenco as a company has overseas manufacturing assets. If a sale progresses it will be important to ensure that the commitment to ongoing investment at the UK’s Urenco site is enshrined within the sale and also that there is ongoing commitment to its leadership in advanced manufacturing technology and R and D supporting enrichment.

The Government’s Nuclear Industrial Strategy indicated a desire to maintain a leading presence in the full nuclear fuel cycle for the very long term and for research to be maintained across the full technology portfolio. The detail of the sale will need to be scrutinised such that Urenco must remain a fundamental cornerstone of the UK’s leadership in international matters associated with enrichment technology and as such there must be protection for the UK with respect to access to IP as the company evolves.

Yours sincerely

Sue Ion
Chairman Nuclear Network North