Dear Minister,

The Science and Technology Select Committee

I am writing to you, in my capacity as Chairman of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee, to welcome you to your new post and draw your attention to the Committee’s ongoing interest in nuclear research and development.

In November 2011, after a lengthy and detailed inquiry, the Committee published a report entitled Nuclear Research and Development Capabilities (HL 221) in which we raised serious concerns about the nuclear R&D landscape. To our satisfaction, many of the recommendations that we made were taken up by the Government and a wide variety of activities followed – all of which are to be warmly welcomed. We have since maintained a watching brief in this area and earlier this month, for instance, we questioned the Chair of the recently created Nuclear Innovation and Research Advisory Board (NIRAB), Dame Sue Ion, to check on progress. In our view, the creation of NIRAB, tasked as it is with providing recommendations and evidence on priority areas for UK nuclear R&D, is a fundamental development and we wish it well. Moreover, we sincerely hope that as you begin to engage with your wide range of responsibilities, you will note the importance of nuclear R&D and make every effort to ensure that it is adequately nurtured and supported. It is of vital importance in ensuring that nuclear energy is a viable option for the future and that the UK is a serious player in the international field.

Should you like to discuss this letter with me, please do not hesitate to get in touch. This letter will be posted on the Committee’s website in the normal way.

Yours sincerely,

LORD SELBORNE

Chairman of the House of Lords Science and Technology Select Committee

The Rt Hon Matthew Hancock MP
Minister for Portsmouth, Minister of State for Business and Enterprise and Minister of State for Energy