Dear Lord Selborne,

PUBLICATION OF A GOVERNMENT REPORT ‘BUILDING A HIGH VALUE BIOECONOMY: OPPORTUNITIES FROM WASTE’

We are writing to draw your attention to a report we published today, 5 March 2015, ‘Building a High Value Bioeconomy: Opportunities from Waste’. We have enclosed copies of the report for each Committee Member.

The Committee’s report ‘Waste or Resource? Stimulating a bioeconomy’ highlighted the potential opportunity for growing the bioeconomy using a range of feedstocks, including waste. The Government response accepted the majority of the recommendations made, including the development of a long term plan (with a fifteen year horizon) for delivering and supporting a growing bioeconomy, with an initial focus on waste, by early 2015.

We, as Minister of State for Business, Enterprise and Energy, and Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Water, Forestry, Rural Affairs and Resource Management, took on the joint-Ministerial championship of the bioeconomy agenda, focusing on the opportunities available from waste, to support a joined up approach to this agenda. A cross-Government steering group, which included the Department of Communities and Local Government, Department for Transport, and key public sector stakeholders was established to coordinate the development of this report.
Our report, ‘Building a High Value Bioeconomy: Opportunities from Waste’, reiterates the potential scale of economic opportunity this sector offers. It identifies the range of actions Government and the public sector is already taking to support the sector. This includes investment to support the commercialisation and scale-up of new innovation and to increase the level and accessibility of publicly available data on the UK feedstock supply chain.

The report also highlights the economic analysis of the impact of industrial biotechnology in the UK that is underway. Industrial biotechnology represents a subset of the wider bioeconomy and so this economic study will provide a partial view of, or first step to, uncovering the full economic potential of waste as a feedstock for the bioeconomy.

The Committee’s March 2014 report highlighted that in developing a high value bioeconomy, there may be valuable experience we can learn from other countries currently ahead of the UK in terms of extracting value from waste for use in the bioeconomy. Our report highlights an international benchmarking study that is underway with this aim.

When both of these studies conclude in the Summer, they will provide the necessary evidence base to help Government and industry together identify and develop the further actions needed to support the sector and deliver against our ambitions for a growing, high value bioeconomy.

This report is a key first step that sets out our ambition and support for the sector and demonstrates joined-up Government coordination. Further work will be undertaken building on the outputs of the economic and international benchmarking studies.

THE RT HON MATTHEW HANCOCK MP

DAN ROGERSON MP