



18 May 2018

Richard Harrington MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Business and  
Industry  
Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy  
1 Victoria Street  
London, SW1H 0ET

Dear Richard,

### **Post-Brexit Nuclear Safeguards**

In our *Brexit: energy security* report, published on 29 January 2018, we raised concerns about the consequences for energy security if the UK fails to establish a domestic safeguarding regime that satisfies International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) requirements by the time it leaves Euratom.<sup>1</sup> In the Government's response to the report, sent on 29 March 2018, your colleague the Rt Hon Claire Perry MP assured us that "Good progress has been made in preparing the UK to assume legal responsibility for its own nuclear safeguards regime".<sup>2</sup>

We acknowledge and welcome the developments that have taken place, such as the continued progress of the Nuclear Safeguards Bill through Parliament. However, in light of recent media reporting based on an internal risk register produced by the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR),<sup>3</sup> we have concerns about whether progress can indeed be described as "good". Given the potentially severe consequences of a lack of progress in this area, we ask that you address the issues we raise below and look forward to your urgent reply.

We understand that the risk register in question identified a number of areas as "high-level risks" – categorised as "red" on a red, amber, green scale – including:

1. a new IT system to track nuclear material being behind schedule,
2. slow progress recruiting safeguards inspectors,
3. a lack of training for inspectors,
4. concerns about long-term funding for the ONR, and
5. failure to arrange the handover of equipment from Euratom to the UK.

Several of these areas relate to concerns we raised in our report, and yet none of these risks were mentioned in the Government's response. We therefore ask that you provide an

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<sup>1</sup> <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld201719/ldselect/ldeucom/63/63.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.parliament.uk/documents/lords-committees/eu-energy-environment-subcommittee/Brexit%20energy%20security/Gov-response-Brexit-energy-security-29-March-2018.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> <https://news.sky.com/story/red-warnings-for-uks-post-brexit-nuclear-safeguards-11374097>

update on the current state of play in each of the five areas outlined above, what actions the Government and the ONR are taking to mitigate any risks, and your assessment in each case of whether the current rate of progress will allow the UK to assume legal responsibility for its own nuclear safeguards regime from 30 March 2019 if necessary.

In addition, your response to our report states that “we are confident that ONR will be in a position to deliver to international standards – as set out in our future safeguards agreements with the IAEA on withdrawal from Euratom if required.” However, according to the same media reports, a further “red” risk identified was a failure to “recruit enough people with the right skills to deliver a UK State System of Accountancy for control of nuclear material to meet international obligations by 2019”. Do you stand by your statement that the UK will be able to meet its international nuclear safeguarding obligations by the time it withdraws from Euratom?

We also note that the IAEA is expected to discuss the approval of the UK’s domestic safeguarding arrangements when it meets in June. Please update us on whether approval has been granted after that meeting has taken place. This should not delay a response on the issues raised above.

We look forward to your reply.

Lord Teverson  
Chair of the European Union Energy and Environment Sub-Committee