

To: Jo Churchill MP, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State at the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs

29th October 2021

Dear Minister,

Congratulations on your appointment as Defra Minister. We wish you every success in your new role.

We were very pleased to hear of your responsibility for chemicals and waste and resources, given your previous work as Public Health minister, a cancer campaigner and your interest in environmental and biodiversity issues.

We are environmental and public health NGOs with expertise in chemicals policy and regulation, including those issues that crossover with waste and resources policy. We are writing to ask if you would be interested/able to meet with us to discuss chemicals policy, our ambitions for the UK Chemicals Strategy and for the reform of UK REACH.

The UK has a serious problem with chemical pollution, one of five direct drivers of the biodiversity crisis. All English water bodies are polluted with chemical contaminants that exceed environmental standards, making our wildlife less resilient to pressures from climate change and habitat loss.

The use of harmful chemicals in products is also hindering the development of a safe, circular economy. For example, [IKEA and H&M](#) have highlighted the risk of harmful chemicals in recycled fabric which could hamper their goals to use only renewable and recycled materials by 2030.

In addition, public exposure to harmful chemicals is [contributing](#) to a significant rise in the incidence rates of a wide range of public health conditions, from hormone-related cancers such as breast cancer and prostate cancer to obesity and diabetes. It is reassuring that your previous role involved cross-departmental work with Defra on the development of the Chemicals Strategy in relation to chemicals identified as risk factors for serious health concerns. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss proposals that would help to address the environmental and occupational drivers of disease and protect the nation's health.

We would really value the opportunity to highlight our collective concerns, our ambitions for the UK Chemicals Strategy and the future reform of UK REACH, that we understand will be taken forward via secondary legislation under new powers in the Environment Bill.

We look forward to working with you to protect public health and the environment from the risks posed by harmful chemicals.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Anna Watson, CHEM Trust
Catherine Gunby, Director, Fidra
Roz Bulleid, Deputy Policy Director, Green Alliance
Thalie Martini, CEO, Breast Cancer UK
Helen Lynn, Facilitator, Alliance for Cancer Prevention
Kate Metcalf, Director, Women's Environmental Network