Dear Ms Alexander,

RE: NGOs working on chemical pollution

Thank you for your letter of 14 February and for coming to meet with me on 25 January. I found our discussions valuable and fruitful.

You highlighted the risks posed by Per- and Polyfluorinated Substances (PFAS) and the need for effective regulation. I recognise the importance of this challenge. There is a need to understand the benefits PFAS can provide, whilst also recognising the need for further action to manage the risks from PFAS. As set out in the Environmental Improvement Plan, through our new Chemicals Strategy we will set out our approach to managing priority and emerging chemicals of concern, including PFAS. Given how complex and diverse PFAS are, different actions may be required to address risks posed by different groups of PFAS. Actions may include restrictions under UK REACH and other routes to mitigate risks.

More broadly, thank you for sharing your annex on key issues relating to reducing harmful chemicals entering the environment, including the challenge of addressing risks from unintentional chemical mixtures. I agree that it is important to consider chemicals through their lifecycle.

I encourage your continued engagement with DEFRA as we develop our Chemicals Strategy – we are aiming to publish this in 2023, to set out an overall direction of travel and framework for our chemicals policy development. I also want to confirm our commitment to an effective regulatory system for chemicals, including exploring alternative arrangements for UK REACH transitional registrations that uphold our high public health and environmental standards.

Yours sincerely,

REBECCA POW MP