Thank you for your letter of 22 March to the Secretary of State outlining your views on the Government's proposals for implementing the training and certification provisions in the Directive on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides. I am replying as the Minister with specific responsibility for controls on plant protection products (pesticides used in agriculture).

As we set out in the Government response to the consultation on the implementation of the EU pesticides package, we intend to proceed on the basis of making only those changes necessary for the UK approach to be consistent with the requirements of the Directive. In line with the Coalition Government's policy on minimising regulatory burdens, we will not introduce additional regulation where the Directive does not expressly require us to do so. However, a direct transcription of the SUD is not without powers to enforce certification requirements; for example the sales restriction under Article 6 is likely to have the effect of proscribing the purchase of professional pesticides by anyone who does not hold a certificate of competence.

I agree that a mixture of regulatory (where unavoidable) and voluntary approaches are appropriate. I also recognise and value the achievements of the Pesticides Forum and the Voluntary Initiative and agree that industry initiatives have raised standards and influenced behaviour for the better, putting us in a good position with respect to meeting the requirements of the Directive. I see no reason why this should not continue to be the case; these schemes should continue to have an important part to play, particularly in supporting the implementation of the Directive, where we are obliged to seek alternatives to regulation wherever possible. The new Amenity Assurance scheme has the potential to be an excellent example of this. I would also like to explore what role industry could play in helping to support the new training and certification arrangements.
You may be reassured to know that I am meeting a number of directly affected stakeholders (many of who are represented on the Pesticides Forum) on 3 May to discuss the issue of training and certification under the Directive and to consider how we might, given current constraints, continue to promote best practice and maintain the UK’s existing high standards.

[Signature]

LORD HENLEY