Dear Doctora Sierra,

FUKUSHIMA INCIDENT

Thank you for your letter of 15 March, on behalf of your Chair Elect and a group of scientists involved in public discussions about nuclear energy and radiation that followed the Fukushima incident this time last year.

I fully agree that it is important that when communicating the risks posed by nuclear power that what is said is based on sound evidence. That is why the Government asked Dr Weightman to undertake a review of the impact of the accident at Fukushima on the UK’s nuclear industry so that we could understand what action was needed in the UK. We have published the findings of Dr. Weightman’s report and have programmes of work in place to address the issues highlighted by Dr Weightman’s report.

We have also been fully involved in the EU Stress Test initiative through the involvement of the UK’s independent Nuclear Safety Regulator. We are, quite rightly, awaiting the results of the peer review exercise before making any judgements on what action is needed at the EU level.

We obviously expect the European Commission to take full account of scientific evidence both in its policy making processes and when communicating its views when issues arise. The content and timing of Commissioner Oettinger’s comments were therefore unfortunate: they do not match any scientific evidence we are aware of. We will continue to make it clear at EU meeting that it is important that official policies and pronouncements should be evidence based.

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In this context we welcome the recent appointment of Professor Ann Glover as the Commission's first Chief Scientific Advisor and look forward to working closely with her on how best to use scientific evidence to inform the Commission's work.

Yours sincerely

David Willetts

THE RT HON DAVID WILLETTS MP