



Holyoake House  
Hanover Street  
Manchester M60 0AS  
T 0161 214 1750  
F 0161 831 7684  
E [info@uk.coop](mailto:info@uk.coop)  
[www.uk.coop](http://www.uk.coop)

Dr Therese Coffey MP  
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs  
Nobel House  
17 Smith Square  
London  
SW1P 3JR

Thursday, 13 April 2017

Dear Therese,

### **Retaining environmental protections through Brexit**

I am writing to you as Secretary General of Co-operatives UK, the national network representing the UK's co-operative businesses. We request assurances that the protections our environment enjoys by virtue of our membership of the European Union (EU) will be retained through the 'Brexit' process.

In response to the UK's vote to leave the EU Co-operatives UK set out an overarching principle that co-operatives should not be put in a disproportionately worse position by the Brexit process. Now, with Article 50 triggered and policymakers' attention turning towards the Great Repeal Bill, we believe it is timely to put forward our key positions in relation to this principle.

We have been working with our member co-operatives to identify what specifically needs to be safeguarded for co-operatives during the Brexit process. In identifying our Brexit safeguards we have focused on areas of public policy that will be central to the Brexit process, namely the repatriation of EU law into UK law, and the replacement (or otherwise) of EU policy and competency with UK policy and competency. Within this we have focused on aspects where co-operatives have a distinct interest, and defined what we believe needs to be safeguarded.

The internationally-recognised Values and Principles of co-operatives require that they promote decent standards for environmental protection in the course of their business. The UK's consumer retail co-operatives and worker-owned co-operatives, among others, have long been at the forefront of progress in these areas and are overwhelmingly ethical, mission-led businesses. Meanwhile hundreds of new community co-operatives in the UK are established each year with environmental objectives.

Thus our member co-operatives have a significant interest in ensuring the protections for the environment provided by EU law are not degraded through Brexit. If these protections are degraded, co-operatives, along with other mutuals, mission-led business and social enterprises, could be put at a competitive disadvantage, as they lose out to less scrupulous firms in a damaging and irresponsible 'race to the bottom.' We require an economy after Brexit in which doing the right thing is rewarded not penalised.

**Co-operatives UK** is the network for Britain's thousands of co-operative businesses. We work together to promote, develop and unite member-owned businesses across the economy.

Our key positions are as follows:

- The Great Repeal Bill and related legislation should have the effect of retaining in full the environmental protections currently provided by EU law on Brexit day
- We oppose the use of 'delegated powers' by government after Brexit to alter current environmental protections without proper public consultation and Parliamentary scrutiny

I understand that this Government has made a broad manifesto commitment to enhance protection of the environment. This is of course very promising but as the Brexit process begins some detailed assurances are now being sought by our segment of the business community.

Our request in relation to the retention of environmental protections has also been included in a letter to Robin Walker, Parliamentary Under-Secretary State at the Department for Exiting the European Union.

I look forward to a reply and hope you can provide the assurances sought by co-operatives in the UK. I anticipate this is a very busy time, so if it is more expedient please feel free to initiate a response from the relevant officials rather than your ministerial office.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ed Mayo', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ed Mayo  
Secretary General

t: 0161 246 2903

e: ed.mayo@uk.coop