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Our ref: PO401464/GW

26 April 2016

**From Rory Stewart OBE MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Environment and Rural Affairs

*Dear Sir Stephen,*

Thank you for your letter of 21 March on behalf of the Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham Waste Partnership (the BDR Partnership) about recycling and the way the UK recycling rate is currently measured.

I am pleased to see the importance the BDR Partnership places on the issue of waste management and ways to achieving high recycling rates through the maximum diversion from landfill and implementation of the waste hierarchy. Disposal of waste in landfill should generally be the waste management option of last resort and we should first always seek to prevent waste and then to reuse or recycle wherever possible.

We remain committed to meeting the 50 per cent recycling target for household waste by 2020. The significant progress we have made to achieving this reflects a great deal of hard work by local authorities such as yourselves and a desire by residents to recycle more. We are working with the Waste and Resources Action Programme to see what more can be done and what further measures may be needed to achieve this.

I can assure you that we continue to keep under consideration the way in which we estimate our recycling rate and to make sure that we accurately capture the full range of materials included. I understand the concerns you raise on how the recycling rate is calculated in the UK and in particular how certain materials, such as Incinerator Bottom Ash have been historically excluded from this.

You may be aware that the European Commission is currently developing proposals for the new Circular Economy package, which will include the way in which Member States approach the calculation of their recycling rates. We want to be sure that the approach we take in the UK is consistent with the EU legislative framework. Equally, we want to ensure our recycling rate accurately reflects the range of materials that can be considered as having been recycled and that, where sensible, there is consistency across the UK and with other Member States. We would of course engage fully with local authorities and industry around any proposals to make significant change to the UK's position.

*Rory Stewart*  
**RORY STEWART**