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Dear Rob,

Defra has recently received a high volume of correspondence about Defra review of bovine tuberculosis (TB), in a campaign led by your organisation. Please find our response below.

As you're aware, the government has announced the start of work on a comprehensive new TB strategy, to continue to drive down disease rates to save cattle and farmers' livelihoods and to end the badger cull by the end of this parliament.

A key part of the strategy is the ongoing development of a cattle vaccine, which is at the forefront of innovative solutions to help eradicate this disease.

To ensure our work toward a new strategy benefits from the latest evidence, I asked Defra officials to reconvene a panel of experts to consider whether there's any substantive new evidence that might affect previous conclusions. I asked Professor Sir Charles Godfray to lead this panel, having previously led the 2018 strategy review, which I recommend all interested parties read. I chose him for his expertise and esteemed standing in the scientific community. He and the other panel members bring diverse knowledge from respected academic institutions, which is reflected in the balanced account of complex issues in the previous review.

I do not share your view of the panel, nor do I believe they hold long-standing pro-badger culling positions. Indeed, members of the panel have previously spoken about the distress many people feel regarding badger culling, and they have emphasised that industry must take greater responsibility for on-farm controls, biosecurity, and safe trading practices to prevent disease spread. I am confident in their ability to objectively assess any new evidence.

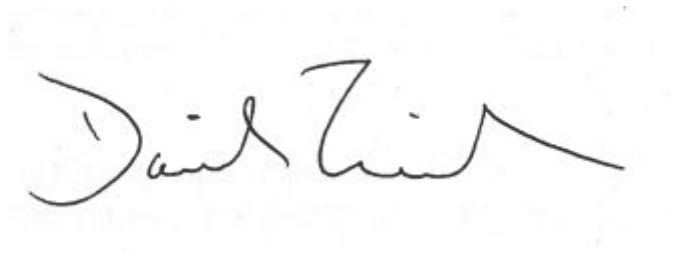
I am also confident in Defra officials' commitment to upholding the Civil Service Code and ensuring objectivity in their policymaking work.

Alongside the panel, Defra officials have adopted a stakeholder co-design structure, including a steering group that will be supported by several topic-specific working groups, allowing us to involve additional experts and stakeholders beyond the existing Bovine TB Partnership membership. We're also exploring how to supplement this co-design process with "citizen's dialogue", so we can collaboratively explore themes and solutions.

There is always more we could do to improve communication and engagement with stakeholders and sectors around bovine TB science. I know Defra officials are eager to do more in this area through the new strategy and the steps mentioned earlier.

I firmly believe the new strategy will mark a significant step-change in approach to tackling this devastating disease, charting a new direction that protects both the farming community and wildlife, and which delivers on the government's manifesto commitment.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Zeichner". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

**DANIEL ZEICHNER MP**