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7 December 2011

From Rt Hon Jim Paice MP  
Minister of State for Agriculture and Food

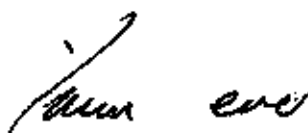
Thank you for your email of 16 November to Richard Benyon enclosing a copy of one from your constituent [REDACTED] about the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group (FWAG). I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

Pursuing the twin objectives of a competitive farming sector which plays a full part in protecting and improving the environment is a priority for this Government and the Farming and FWAG epitomised that dual purpose.

The Farming Regulation Task Force identified the importance of ensuring that the environmental messages we give to farmers and their advisors are clear and well-prioritised. In the Natural Environment White Paper we have committed to undertake a review of advice and incentives for farmers. In taking this work forward we are very conscious of the role of independent environmental and conservation advice providers, such as FWAG.

Officials from Defra and Natural England were in close contact with (FWAG) over recent weeks to establish the facts of the unfolding situation and to understand the implications.

FWAG played an important role in the delivery of advice for a number of Government initiatives, including helping farmers to participate in agri-environment schemes and the campaign for the Farmed Environment. The need for this work will continue and independent advice delivered by organisations like FWAG will continue to play a key role in supporting and developing British farming. Whilst it is very saddening to see the closure of FWAG it is heartening to see that, in a number of regions, there are already efforts afoot to create successor organisations to deliver advice.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jim Paice', written in a cursive style.A second handwritten signature in black ink, also appearing to read 'Jim Paice', written in a cursive style.

**RT HON JIM PAICE MP**