

Dear Lord Walney

## **Government response to the Walney Report on Political Violence and Disruption**

Thank you for your role advising the government on political violence and disruption, culminating in this thorough and extensive report. Your review is compelling and timely, demonstrating clear expertise on a critical issue. The report is a call to action for government and society to remain vigilant and resilient against the groups and individuals who seek to subvert the core ideals of British society and democracy.

Your ongoing engagement and advice to the government has helped shape our policy response to a range of issues over recent years, regularly displaying a great appreciation for the complexity of contentious and controversial topics. Your support in shaping the Criminal Justice Bill has been pivotal to ensuring the Government's response, that has included the PCSC Act, the Public Order Act, and recent announcements, continues to evolve to counter what you noted is the evolving nature of political violence and disruption.

Thank you for engaging such a wide range of stakeholders across government, public bodies, international partners, academia, civil society and those personally affected by violent disruption and extremism.

The recommendations you have made are both pertinent and considered. You make compelling arguments for government to review the interaction of public order and political protests. As you say in your report, it is unacceptable that extreme activists can hijack legitimate protests to cause intimidation, disruption, and violence. In recent months in particular, we have too often seen vile displays of antisemitism on our streets and aggressive

disruption on the part of some protestors. That's why the Government will look at the thresholds for imposing conditions on protests, and how such thresholds could be applied, in line with your recommendations. This includes amending the threshold to prevent protests from going ahead where there is the threat of intimidating or abusive conduct based on previous behaviour, or on account of cumulative serious disruption. Of particular interest is your recommendation for greater responsibilities being put on the organisers of protests to manage and limit the potential for demonstrations to descend into violence or disruption, and to allow the police to account for demands on their resource in setting conditions to ensure wider public safety in their jurisdictions beyond protests. I am persuaded to give this policy further consideration over the coming weeks and work closely with you in doing so.

You identify increased societal polarisation, driven by extremist ideologies and activities. These ideologies are also increasing threats to British parliamentary and democratic principles. Extreme activists have attached themselves to legitimate mainstream issues to mask the lack of public support for their anti-democratic beliefs. This Government is deeply committed towards proactively combatting all forms of extremist activity. We will continue to work closely with you to ensure the Government's responses to countering political violence and extreme ideologies continue to be robust.

Your report offers an invaluable perspective that has already and will continue to substantially contribute to ongoing policy considerations in Government. Your layered description of the threat of political violence and other forms of extremism pose to our democracy, local communities and more broadly, the wider economy, will be at the forefront of this Government's future policy approaches.

It is essential we continue to maintain open dialogue on embedding your inputs into the Government's responses to political violence and disruption. We are also keen, where necessary, to help you identify and commit further stakeholders for discussion on the issues you raise. This will help the Government sustain and evolve its response to extreme political ideologies

and violence, because as you point out, the threat itself will continue to evolve.

I will commit in Parliament via Written Ministerial Statement to providing an update on the work of Government on the issues raised in your report in due course, and I hope you will accept an invitation to meet the Policing Minister and the Security Minister to discuss your report in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'James Cleverly', written in a cursive style.

**Rt Hon. James Cleverly MP**