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for Environment  
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Sir Charles Walker MP

25 January 2021

Dear Sir Charles,

Thank you for your letter of 20 January 2021 concerning your Amendment to clause 82 subsection (1) and for our meeting of 13 January.

I strongly agree that it is important for the Secretary of State's new powers to be as effective as possible in protecting the water environment from the broadest range of damage. To this end, the powers have been drafted in such a way that the reference to 'damage' includes damage caused by low flow levels in a river due to unsustainable abstraction.

I will be pleased to clarify this in the Explanatory Notes for the Bill and to confirm this at the Dispatch Box. Thank you for confirming that you will speak to the Amendment and notify the House of your intention not to move it at the end of the Debate.

I am very conscious that water abstraction must become sustainable both for now and into the future as our climate and water availability changes. These new powers complement our current actions to achieve sustainable abstraction and address low flow levels. Our 2017 Water Abstraction Plan encourages catchment partnerships with abstractors to achieve sustainable abstraction. Partnerships are exploring innovative ways to achieve voluntary variations of abstraction licences to protect the environment, while continuing to enable abstractors to support society and run their businesses, for example in providing water for the public water supply and to irrigate crops for food.

Thank you for your contribution to this work and for emphasising the important role of water flows in our rivers.

**REBECCA POW MP**