**Written evidence submitted by Kevin Hyland OBE, Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner**

I am writing briefly to lend some insights garnered from my experience in the role of Independent Anti-Slavery Commissioner to the Committee’s consideration of the Government’s proposals for a new environmental watchdog.

I want primarily to emphasise the criticality of safeguarding the independence of any such body and of that body’s Principal. This must be done both in the founding legislation and in the structures that provide essential support to the running of the body.

More prosaic, but as essential to preserving independence, is the enshrinement in the founding legislation of financial autonomy, and full empowerment to hire the best people for the office, whether they sit within or without the civil service.

In return, the expectation must be that at all times the Principal will act impartially in their interactions with the government, and in their business with each stakeholder across public, private and non-governmental partners.

When laying out how they will engage with these stakeholders in a strategic plan, this plan must - whilst passing across the desk of the relevant Secretary of State – work to achieve the Principal’s own priorities as distinct from those of the government department.

Likewise, on production, the annual report should be presented to a committee such as yourselves, rather than a Secretary of State or Government department. Not only does this enable it to be judged in isolation of that department’s policy objectives, but also improves transparency in that the Commissioner can be publicly and personally questioned and held accountable for progress of their strategy.

Finally, I firmly believe that this committee should be consulted on appointment or reappointment of the Principal.

On the establishment of my own role the then Minister for Modern Slavery and Organised Crime, Karen Bradley stated that: “The Commissioner will have the freedom and independence to look at the law enforcement response to modern slavery without fear or favour.” I would seek nothing less than this commitment from the government when respecting the independence of the new green watchdog and wish you the very best in its establishment.

*July 2018*