



Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG
Minister of State
Cabinet Office 70 Whitehall London
SW1A 2AS

Lord Alton
House of Lords
SW1A 0PW

2nd December 2022

Dear David,

PROCUREMENT BILL: PRODUCT LABELLING

Thank you for your contribution to the debate on the Procurement Bill during Report stage on Wednesday 30 November. As promised during the debate, I am writing to give you my view on your amendment to require products purchased with public funds to be labelled so as to identify them as coming from countries responsible for modern slavery or genocide, where the Secretary of State or the House of Commons considers this to be the case.

As you know, the core focus of the Procurement Bill is to regulate the conduct of public procurements by contracting authorities. The Bill rightly focuses on the process for the tendering and award of public contracts, and how contracts are managed, and does not seek to regulate *what* is being purchased, including how products should be labelled. There is of course already extensive regulation relating to the nature and quality of products and it is not for this Bill to stray into those areas or into the minutiae of labelling.

In my view, product labelling requirements must be very carefully justified. They are costly to businesses and the supply chain and, in my experience, in many markets it is politicians not the consumers who want to use labels in the way proposed. The scope of your amendment is broad and would require labels to be added to anything from construction materials to uniforms to food provided to canteens or prisons.

I fully appreciate your concerns regarding abuses of human rights in China. As I explained in the debate, the Government is already taking a range of actions to highlight these issues and hold China to account. In my view this is the best way to ensure that consumers and contracting authorities can make informed choices.

For these reasons I am grateful to you for withdrawing the amendment, but I would like to thank you for the opportunity to discuss the issues you have highlighted.

Thank you again for your engagement on this. I will deposit this letter in the House Libraries.

Warm regards

Lucy Neville-Rolfe

Baroness Neville-Rolfe DBE CMG