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Dear Steve,

Thank you for your letter of 16 October to Alok Sharma MP concerning unauthorised encampments, and in particular the issues associated with fly-tipping and clean-up costs. I am replying as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

We are committed to tackling fly-tipping, and have given local authorities powers to issue fixed penalty notices for small-scale fly-tipping. The new enforcement tools give alternatives to prosecutions, and will assist local authorities in taking a proportionate response.

This builds on other actions the Government is taking. We are cracking down on offenders by strengthening the Sentencing Council's Guidelines on sentencing for environmental offences. This came into force on 1 July 2014. We allow vehicles that are suspected of involvement in waste crime to be stopped, searched and seized. Furthermore, we are working with external partners through the DEFRA-chaired National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group (NFTPG). This works to prevent and tackle illegal dumping. The NFTPG includes representatives from central and local Government, enforcement authorities, the waste industry and landowners

DEFRA are working with a wide range of interested parties through the National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group to prevent and tackle illegal dumping. The National Fly-Tipping Prevention Group seeks to promote good practice in the prevention, reporting, investigation and clearance of fly-tipped waste. They have published prevention guides for householders, businesses and landowners. These documents can be viewed at www.tacklingflytipping.com.

We have announced our intention to issue a call for evidence on the effectiveness of enforcement against unauthorised developments and encampments. We welcome views on whether there is anything that would ensure existing powers can be used more effectively. I would like to assure you all proposals will be considered carefully.

We take the issue of unauthorised encampments and associated problems very seriously, and we will set out further details on the call for evidence in due course.

LORD BOURNE OF ABERYSTWYTH