Dear

I am writing to you today with a sense of urgency regarding the consultation on Section 24 of the Animal (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986.

It is my understanding that in 2014 the Coalition Government published a Delivery Plan outlining the commitment to “Working to reduce the use of animals in scientific research” The plan sought to rebuild on the UK’s position in the adoption of the 3R’s.

Replacement of animals with non-animal methods as appropriate.

Reduction of the numbers of animals used and the

Refinement of procedures to minimise harm to the animals involved.

Within the Delivery Plan was a duty to promote understanding and awareness of the use of animals where no alternative exists, this being part of openness and transparency. In the Plan the Coalition Government committed to a public consultation for the review of Section 24 of the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986. Section 24 (known as the secrecy clause) prevents openness on information held in connection with regulatory activities under the Act. Under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 all information may be disclosed provided it is not exempted from release. The duration of the consultation was for 6 weeks from 1st May 2014.  The consultation proposed 3 options revoke, revise or retain.  Following on from the consultation, the responses would be analysed, published, and to propose a final option for which to proceed.

The public offers conditional support for the use of animals in research. Any harm to animals must be balanced by the benefit to humans, animals, or the environment. At the time of the consultation the Coalition Government believed the existing Section 24 should be replaced. The Academy of Medical Sciences were supportive of the Home Office’s consultation on Section 24 and stated “We do not feel that Section 24 of the ASPA is currently in accordance with the aims” of transparency and openness.

If the section 24 is repealed this would allow scrutiny by external scientific bodies and would lead to reduction in animals being used and a push for non-animal methods.

My purpose of writing is twofold: -

Firstly, to obtain details regarding the outcome of the 2014 consultation and the changes made (if any) to Section 24.

Secondly, to enquire whether there is any intention to have another consultation on Section 24 to allow the opportunity to request access to project licence application under the Freedom of Information Act

I am hoping this email raises awareness. I ask that you please take the opportunity to discuss this issue with your fellow Ministers. With an election looming this could be a feature in your next manifesto.

On a concluding note, I would like to express my personal desire to see that both Government and the Opposition party look to reform archaic practices in science which are hampering the development of medical cures. With technological advancements the public need to see the alternatives to animal testing being applied. The public call for transparency and openness with no more stalling.

I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Yours sincerely,