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Dear Mr Lord,

Thank you for your email of 4 July to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs enclosing correspondence from Cllr Ian Johnson at Woking Borough Council about the mandatory display of food hygiene ratings. This was recently passed to me for reply as the Food Standards Agency (FSA) has responsibility for the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS).

As your constituent notes, businesses in Wales and Northern Ireland are already required by law to display their ratings and we are committed to extending this to England where display of rating stickers at premises is currently voluntary. At the FSA, we firmly believe that this will be better for consumers and better for those businesses that achieve good standards. It will also be an added incentive to those businesses with poorer standards to improve. We have widespread support for mandatory display from local authorities, consumers and businesses.

We have built a strong case using evidence from Wales and Northern Ireland. The number of businesses with a rating of 5 in Wales, for example, has increased by 23 percentage points since the introduction of mandatory display, compared with an increase in England of 15 percentage points over the same period (November 2013 to November 2018).

The delivery of a statutory food hygiene rating scheme for England is a key priority for us and we were delighted that, in its report on [Ensuring food safety and standards](#), the National Audit Office supported this aim. We wish to progress this at

the earliest opportunity and we are finalising the evidence case for Ministerial consideration and, ultimately, for cross-government approval. A statutory scheme will require new primary legislation so given the extraordinary demands on Parliamentary time because of the UK's exit from the EU, it is difficult to be definitive about when a statutory scheme could be in place.

Please be assured that in the interim, we will continue to work with our local authority partners to do as much as we can to improve the impact and benefit of the FHS as it currently operates. The success of the scheme to date is in no small part due to the commitment and support of local authorities such as Woking Borough Council, and we are grateful to them for their ongoing support of the scheme.

Yours sincerely  


**Mrs H.J. Hancock LVO DL**