

Daniel Zeichner MP
Minister of State
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA



Friday 16th May 2025

The Rt. Hon D Zeichner, Minister of State Defra
Dear Minister,

We are writing to thank you for your positive comments during the debate on Thursday 8th May regarding the merits of government support for small abattoirs. We were heartened that across all nations and parties there was an understanding that small abattoirs deliver economic growth, provide employment opportunities, offer an outlet for marketing native breeds and promote animal welfare. Your commitment to continuing working with industry was welcomed.

Through the Small Abattoir Task and Finish Group and the Small Abattoir Working Group, progress has been made towards adopting the 5% regulatory flexibility, the application for BSE negligible risk status and the delivery of the Smaller Abattoir Fund (SAF).

The SAF was successful in giving a boost to the sector and we were pleased that 42% of smaller abattoirs applied, showing intent to stay in business and invest. Those who applied are already reporting significant benefits including increased productivity, more added value services and even higher animal welfare, as well as supporting innovation.

However, through promoting the SAF it was highlighted that because smaller operators are SMEs or micro-businesses, they have limited experience of engaging with these initiatives and need support in doing so. Furthermore, agricultural funding mostly excludes these smaller processors, despite the Agriculture Act 2020 clause 2 (b) making explicit provision for the Secretary of State to give financial assistance for ancillary activities (including selling, marketing, preparing, packaging, processing or distributing products).

As you heard during the debate, there are still major challenges facing the sector and we are at a critical stage in the survival of this vital network.

We therefore wish to reiterate the Abattoir Sector Group's strategic priorities and actions for Government, found attached with this letter, and call for a proactive approach, in particular through strengthening the SAWG and T&FG to work across Government with a clear focus on delivery.

To facilitate this, we would like to invite you to visit a small abattoir or local meat business to discuss some of these issues further, hear first-hand from experts in the industry and refocus our efforts.

We look forward to hearing from you.

Kind Regards,

John Mettrick, Chair, Abattoir Sector Group
Eleanor O'Brien, Managing Director, National Craft Butchers

Jason Aldiss, Executive Director, Association of Independent Meat Suppliers
Patrick Holden, Chief Executive, Sustainable Food Trust
Christopher Price, Chief Executive, Rare Breeds Survival Trust
Jimmy Woodrow, Chief Executive, Pasture for Life

CC.

Baroness Sue Hayman
John Powell