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Directorate B - Protecting the Natural Environment
ENV.B.1 - Agriculture, Forests & Soil

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Professor Keith Goulding
Professor Rob Askew
c/o British Society of Soil Science
Building 53, Cranfield University
Cranfield, Bedfordshire MK43 0AL
United Kingdom

Dear Professors Goulding and Askew,

Thank you very much for your letter of 2 July 2009 in which you express the support of the British Society of Soil Science and the Institute of Professional Soil Scientists to the European Commission for its endeavours to push through legislation on soil protection in the EU.

As you know, despite the keen effort of the Czech Presidency to broker a deal at political level on the proposal for a Soil Framework Directive at the last Environment Council meeting in Luxembourg in June, none of the Member States in the blocking minority changed its position. The Presidency could then only take note of the situation, re-instate their views in favour of framework legislation for soil protection at European level and wish more success to subsequent Presidencies to achieve a political agreement.

Indeed, in certain Member States the Directive has unfortunately become a banner for some who do not want any further European integration and has therefore met with stiff, political opposition, no matter its content and flexibility. In others, its costs of implementation have been blown out of proportion, therefore causing unjustified fears in certain sectors. This political impasse is the more regretful as in the meantime the degradation of a non-renewable resource continues in Europe.

However, our standpoint throughout these lengthy and so far inconclusive negotiations has always been, and still is, that the reality on the ground, as it were, will eventually prove that the EU will not be able to achieve its goals in cleaning up our waters, halt the loss of biodiversity, meet the challenge of climate change and protect human health and food supply without comprehensive soil protection legislation.

Thus, we continue to believe that explaining the merits and benefits of the Soil Framework Directive to public opinions and politicians at national level, as you have done with your letters to Mr Benn, is of the outmost importance to contribute to a debate based on facts and sound scientific basis and will eventually lead to a positive result.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Anna Barnett".Handwritten initials "MP" in a cursive style.

Michael HAMELL