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GOVERNMENT AMENDS LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY REFORM BILL

Cabinet Office Minister Jim Murphy MP today tabled amendments to put beyond doubt that the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill will only be used to deliver the Government's better regulation agenda.

The amendments make clear that the Bill will be used to deliver reductions in unnecessary red tape by reducing or removing burdens, specifically financial costs, administrative burdens, and obstacles to efficiency, productivity and profitability.

In addition, the amendments will strengthen existing safeguards on the face of the Bill protecting the scrutiny role of Parliament by giving a statutory veto to the relevant committees in both the House of Commons and the House of Lords.

Cabinet Office Minister Jim Murphy said:

'We have now reached a turning point in this debate. This is no longer about what the Government should do next - the Government has listened and acted. This is about whether critics of the Bill in Parliament are truly going to stand in the way of a measure that promises to bring benefits to hundreds of thousands of businesses, charities and individuals across the country.'

'This Bill aims to help deliver billions of pounds in savings for the UK economy through reducing the regulatory burden imposed on businesses, and ease the burden imposed by redundant and out-of-date bureaucracy on nurses, doctors, police and charity workers. These much-sought after outcomes have been welcomed with enthusiasm by business, as well as the public and voluntary sectors.'

'Today we have tabled amendments that put beyond doubt that this Bill will deliver our better regulation agenda and nothing else. The time has come for those who claim they want to tackle bureaucracy to stand up and be counted, and let the Government of the day get on with the crucial task of cutting unnecessary red tape.'

The aims of this Bill have been supported by major business groups since its introduction, including the CBI, the Institute of Directors, the Forum for Private Business, the British Chambers of Commerce and the Federation of Small Businesses.

Welcoming the Government's amendments, Deputy Director of the CBI John Cridland said:

'It is imperative that we do not lose sight of the crucial benefits that this Bill promises to bring to UK business. The Bill is now focused explicitly on delivering better regulation, and the time has come to get on with the task of removing barriers to productivity and delivering the reductions to unnecessary red tape that business is crying out for.'

The amendments to the Bill include measures to:

- * Specify how the order-making powers in Clause 1 of the current Bill will only be used to deliver better regulatory outcomes
- * Provide a statutory veto on the face of the Bill to be exercised by relevant Committees in both Houses of Parliament
- * Extend the period Parliament has to determine which scrutiny procedure should apply to an order is extended from 21 to 30 days
- * Bring current and future regulatory activity in line with the Better Regulation

Commission's five principles of good regulation: that regulation should be proportionate, accountable, consistent, transparent and targeted.

The Legislative and Regulatory Reform Bill will not only be used to help deliver reductions in unnecessary red tape; it will also enable valuable Law Commission recommendations to be implemented.

A full text of the amendments can be found at:

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/documents/pdf/amendments.pdf>

Notes to editors:

1. A supportive letter to the Minister co-signed by all 5 major business groups at the time of Introduction of the Bill can be found at

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/documents/bill/letter.pdf>.

2. A review of the Regulatory Reform Act 2001 was conducted in 2005 following a Government commitment to review the operation of the Act and a recommendation to do so by the independent Better Regulation Task Force (BRTF) in their report, Regulation - Less is More. (On Jan 1 2006 the BRTF became the Better Regulation Commission). The review was published in July 2005 and is available on the Cabinet Office website:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/documents/pdf/br_act_review.pdf

3. Following the review of the Regulatory Reform Act 2001 a consultation was undertaken which included proposals to amend the 2001 Act. The consultation ran from 20 July to 12 October 2005 and is available on the Cabinet Office website at:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/documents/pdf/consultation_doc.pdf

4. 77 responses were received from the private, public and voluntary sectors as well as from individuals. A summary of the consultation responses was published on the Cabinet Office website on 14 December and is available at:

http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/regulation/documents/pdf/consultation_responses.pdf

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