

Dear Ms. Marshall,

**Re: Communication to the Aarhus Convention Compliance Committee concerning compliance by the United Kingdom regarding access to justice (ACCC/C/2016/142)**

Thank-you for your letter dated September 29<sup>th</sup>, 2020 in which you asked for our views on the need for a hearing in the matter at caption. We have considered this issue and can confirm that that given the facts and legal issues in this particular communication, a hearing will not be necessary in advance of the Committee's deliberations in this matter.

We would like to note our position that while we appreciate the significant case load which is currently faced by the committee, we believe a closer emphasis on the admissibility of communications, rather than a reduction in hearings, would better serve the Committee's limited time and resources and involved parties. It is also our view that both the Communicant and the responding Party should consent to any decision not to hold a hearing on any communications before the Committee.

Finally, we would like to note the limited time with which we were given to provide our views on the need for a hearing in this matter. The two-week period which was allotted to us proved challenging, given the length of time this matter has laid dormant and the need to consult with other government departments. We would be very grateful if this was something the Committee could take into consideration in the future. We would also be grateful if you could clarify what the deadline will be for providing any final written submissions in this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Danielle Angelopoulou

**Team leader – Europe Strategy and Capabilities and Aarhus UK Focal point**

EU Strategy and Negotiations | EU & International Trade Directorate

**Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs**