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Cllr Barry Wood
Leader Cherwell District Council
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Dear Barry,

I apologise I am unable to attend today's Executive Plenary, unfortunately I was asked to deputise for MHCLG's Permanent Secretary on short notice. I have asked my office to prioritise my attendance at the next Plenary on the 8th October and hope to be able to speak to you all directly then.

Can I start by thanking you all for your continued collaboration, patience and hard work to support the Arc project. I know many of you are involved in this work on a day-to-day basis and understand the ambition, but I wanted to take a moment to underline the continued importance of the Arc.

The Arc is a unique place, home to cutting-edge research, globally renowned science and technology clusters, and some of the most productive towns and cities in the country. It contains a vibrant natural environment, world-leading universities, and a rich cultural heritage. The Arc, with all of us working together, will be vital to delivering Government's priorities around transitioning to Net Zero, advancing Global Britain and ensuring we build back better from the pandemic.

MHCLG's Secretary of State considers the Arc a priority for the department, and we have secured the Prime Minister's endorsement for this work. The Prime Minister has also relayed that expectation to his Cabinet colleagues and reconfirmed that this is an economic priority for Government.

I am acting SRO of a cross government portfolio which MHCLG coordinates and includes steering from departments across the full breadth of government. Cathy Francis is my lead director on the project, and she is supported by both Saba Tahzib who leads the Portfolio Management, Strategy development and SR preparations and Lucy Wilkins who leads the Spatial Framework and New Settlement team.

Today's first agenda item is the Arc "Growth Body" which Government committed to bring forward proposals for in February this year. We want this "Growth Body" to help unleash the area's potential as a global innovation powerhouse while delivering benefits for Arc

residents right now and helping to protect the region's environment. My officials have developed policy in collaboration with many of you and your officers over the summer. Can I thank those of you who have engaged with them in all channels to help co-develop this work, to ensure it is built with local considerations front and centre. We have now prepared a multi-year spending review bid for this work and subject to the conclusion of that process in October we want to drive forward with putting those proposals into action rapidly to deliver benefits for locals as soon as possible.

However, as I am sure you all appreciate given the fiscal context as we emerge from the pandemic, this will be an extremely challenging comprehensive spending review for all government departments. Despite this the OxCam Unit and I will continue to advocate for the priorities across the Arc and we will need your support in that.

Finally, can I underline our commitment to doing this in collaboration. We know that the Arc is a unique opportunity for the Government to deliver a transformational economic legacy, with a focus on quality, connected and sustainable placemaking. But without your engagement, commitment and challenge it won't be possible. So, thank you for your attendance today and continued commitment to this exciting project.

Yours sincerely,



Emran Mian
Director General for Stronger Places