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Dear Therese,

Thank you for your letter dated 31st July 2017 regarding local authority household recycling rates across the country.

Please be assured that London Borough of Lewisham is firmly committed to a clean, green and liveable borough where residents can care for and enjoy their environment. As a growing inner city borough operating within tight financial constraints, it goes without saying that we face a number of complex challenges that will be different from areas like Oxfordshire as noted in the appendage to your letter. Challenges such as the housing crisis in London remain a prominent concern for Lewisham, and we have repeatedly called on the government to fully address this in our on-going response to overcrowding and the needs of new and existing communities.

In this context we recognise the need to encourage all those with a stake in Lewisham's future to make the environmentally friendly choices that will help minimise the impact on our surroundings. We have made significant progress in recent years to encourage materials to be used less in the borough - and reused wherever possible. We send less than 1% of our rubbish to landfill, which is one of the very lowest rates in the country. Moreover, a significant proportion of our waste is turned into electricity for the National Grid – electricity that might have otherwise been generated using fossil fuel.

Our early participation in the development of the South East London Combined Heat and Power facility (SELCHP) has helped us ensure that the bulk of our waste is managed within our borough boundaries, reducing emissions from heavy goods vehicles needed to transfer this waste to facilities elsewhere. Our extraordinarily low use of landfill saves the borough around £5 million a year, money that we've been able to use to help lessen the impact of severe funding cuts from central government.

We have also been actively investigating opportunities for joint working with other SE London Boroughs. This includes examining the potential for a partnership approach to deliver environmental services or share depot facilities with a neighbouring borough.

We are nevertheless looking at increasing the amount of recycling and will be introducing food waste collections shortly.

The first of 80,000 food waste bins were delivered to Lewisham residents at the beginning of August. This is ahead of big changes to waste collection services in October, when a new weekly food waste collection service will be launched alongside collections of non-recyclable rubbish, which will go to fortnightly for most properties. Our new food waste service will make it easier for Lewisham residents to recycle more. Currently, 38% of

residual waste (by weight) in Lewisham is food waste. The new weekly recycling and food service means that only 11% of the residual waste would need to be sent to our Energy from Waste facility (SELCHP).

A comprehensive communications plan has been implemented. This is being delivered via leaflets, social media, press releases, road shows, and resident engagement. I am greatly encouraged by the support received from residents thus far, and there is clear impetus for local as well as national government to lead the way in reducing, reusing, and recycling resources.

I am somewhat surprised to learn however, that the Conservative Mayoral candidate for Lewisham is not so enthusiastic, describing the plans to recycle more as 'outrageous'.

As the borough begins the next phase of implementation, I would welcome your support of our proposed service changes that will see the continued reduction in waste and an increase in the amount that is recycled in Lewisham.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely



**Sir Steve Bullock**  
Mayor of Lewisham