



Emma Hardy MP
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State (Minister for Water and Flooding)
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Seacole Building
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Re: British Sugar Neonicotinoid Derogation Application

I am writing to ask you to uphold the commitment made by the Labour Party to end the use of bee-killing pesticides in the British countryside and reject the application for an emergency authorisation to use the product Cruiser SB on sugar beet crops in 2025.

The use of neonicotinoid pesticides in agriculture was rightly banned in 2018 due to the considerable risk they pose to wildlife, particularly pollinators which provide an estimated £500 million to the UK economy each year. Since 2018, the weight of evidence for the environmental harms of neonicotinoids has only grown. There is simply no place for these toxic chemicals in modern sustainable agriculture practices.

However, we are aware that, for the fifth year in a row, an emergency application has been submitted by British Sugar for use of Cruiser SB which contains the banned neonicotinoid Thiamethoxam. We believe this is an abuse of the authorisation process which is designed to respond to emergency situations. What the industry is effectively seeking is a return to the routine and regular use of harmful chemicals, despite commitments from British Sugar that alternatives would be found by 2023.

Furthermore, this application fails to support farmers. No farmer wants to use bee-killing chemicals in their fields, yet many feel compelled to use Cruiser SB due to the pricing contracts of British Sugar and its monopoly on sugar beet processing in the UK. It is clearly possible to grow sugar beet without these chemicals: a third of sugar beet farmers chose to grow without Cruiser SB in 2022, rising to 40% of sugar beet farmers in 2023. Yet these farmers receive no further support from British Sugar and often take huge personal risks to adopt more sustainable practices.

Repeat awareness raising by The Wildlife Trusts have shown huge public backing for farmers to receive greater support in order to build resilient and sustainable farming practices which do not rely on harmful pesticides. Over 200,000 people have signed petitions and written to MPs about this issue, and over 30,000 people have supported our call on British Sugar to do more for farmers who are choosing to grow sugar without banned chemicals and live up to its promise to move to alternatives.

In each year the emergency application has been approved since 2020, the previous Government not only disregarded the scientific advice of the independent Expert Committee on Pesticides and the Health & Safety Executive, but also ignored the growing numbers of farmers who choose not to use this toxic chemical. We commend the clear commitment in the Labour election manifesto to "champion British farming whilst protecting the environment", as well as the commitment during the election campaign to "end the temporary exemption permits on thiamethoxam (Cruiser SB) that kill bees and threaten insect and animal life", and we trust the Government to uphold this commitment.

With the UK looking to reaffirm its target to halve the environmental risks of pesticides by 2030 at the international conference for nature later this month, any approval of this banned substance for yet another year would be unconscionable.

We also have specific concerns regarding the forecasting model which the emergency application is based on - with the model predicting significantly higher aphid numbers than actually witnessed in each of the past 5 years - and would welcome the opportunity to discuss these with you ahead of the expected decision in January.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Bennett

Chief Executive, The Wildlife Trusts