Thank you for your letter of 8 April.

The Government is proud and supportive of the UK’s plastics industry. Plastics have an impressive heritage in the UK and have formed a fundamental part of our modern life: from the acrylic canopies used on the iconic Spitfires of the Second World War, to forming state of the art wind turbine rotor blades which will continue to be at the heart of the UK’s low carbon economy. The industry, as you rightly point out, employs large numbers of people, and I hope it continues to innovate and flourish.

As you recognise in your letter, my comments were merely illustrative and were not meant to denigrate the reputation of this impressive industry in any way. I am sure you would agree that some plastics – those which are malleable, light-weight, and ‘non-stick’ – are not the sorts of qualities one would wish for in a national leader! However, I take your point about the great versatility and diversity of plastics. Perhaps, along with granite, it would be equally appropriate to refer to the Prime Minister as a polycarbonate – clear, durable, tough and indestructible!

PETER MANDELSION