



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**  
LONDON SW1A 0AA

5<sup>th</sup> February 2023

*Jean Comblanc*

**RE: FAIR FASHION**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about making fashion fairer. I have read your comments with interest.

The UK supports and wants to encourage sustainable fashion. The Government recognises the importance of buying practices which do not harm the planet.

I agree that timely payments are imperative for the smooth functioning of a modern economy. It is unacceptable that small businesses routinely spend significant time and resources chasing late payments from businesses they supply, which can lead to cash flow problems, putting their firms at risk and preventing them from growing. The majority of small businesses do not have large balance sheets and cannot accommodate long payment terms, or delays to receiving payment within their cash flow cycle.

I have spoken with ministerial colleagues, and it is my understanding that it has been made a legal requirement for the UK's largest businesses to publish information on their payment practices, including the average amount of time taken to pay their suppliers. I have conveyed your comments to these ministerial colleagues, so that they are aware of the strength of feeling on this issue. They acknowledge that late payment remains a significant problem for SMEs, and they are working to address it.

You will be reassured to know that the Business Secretary, the Rt. Hon Grant Shapps MP, has recently announced an in-depth review into tackling late payments for small businesses, while urging large companies to pay their smaller suppliers promptly. The review will scrutinise existing payment practices and the measures in place to make sure small firms are not ripped off by their larger clients – with over £23.4 billion currently owed in outstanding invoices to UK businesses.

Fashion is the third-largest manufacturing industry in the world and, by some calculations, it produces up to ten percent of the world's emissions. According to the 'Valuing Our Clothes' report analysing the contents of British wardrobes by the Waste Resources Action Programme (WRAP), we purchased 1,130,000 tonnes of new clothing last year in the UK.

Meanwhile, an estimated £30 billion worth of our clothing hangs about gathering dust because people simply don't have time to wear it all, or don't really like what they are buying.

Hence, since October 2020, a wide group of stakeholders, comprising retailers, manufacturers and non-profit organisations, have been working with the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority to address poor practice and working conditions.



The Government is clear that it expects all UK businesses, including the fashion industry, to respect human rights throughout their operations, in line with the UN Guiding Principles. Section 54 of the *Modern Slavery Act* places a requirement on businesses, with a turnover of £36 million or more, to publish an annual modern slavery statement setting out the steps they have taken to prevent modern slavery in their supply chains. The 'Work in Freedom' programme has supported 433,650 women and girls in the garment sector in South Asia, Lebanon and Jordan with training and access to services since 2018.

Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Tom Pursglove', with a horizontal line underneath.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**