

Alok Sharma, MP for Reading West

4th February 2020

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the world's oceans.

Oceans are currently facing unprecedented challenges, including climate change and over-fishing. It is more important than ever to take action to ensure our seas are healthy, abundant and resilient.

I am encouraged that the UK is on course to protect over half of its waters and it is important for the UK and other countries to work together towards a new global commitment for a UN high seas treaty. This would pave the way to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030.

I am pleased that 41 new Marine Conservation Zones have recently been created. The UK now has 355 Marine Protected Areas of different types, spanning 220,000 square km. No new activities deemed damaging will be allowed to take place in these areas and existing harmful activities will be minimised or stopped to allow important habitats to recover. A review has now been launched into whether and how Highly Protected Marine Areas, the strongest form of marine protection, could be introduced in English seas.

I am also pleased that the UK is on track to protect 4 million square kilometres of ocean across our Overseas Territories by 2020, and is backing an Ascension Island bid to protect 100 per cent of its offshore waters.

The Government is working hard to reduce plastic pollution in the ocean and is leading global efforts to tackle the problem through support of the G7 Oceans Plastics Charter, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation's New Plastics Economy and the Commonwealth Blue Charter. In April 2018, the UK launched the Commonwealth Clean Ocean Alliance alongside Vanuatu, encouraging its 25 member countries to take steps to eliminate avoidable single-use plastics.

Finally, the forthcoming International Ocean Strategy will set out plans to work with international partners to secure a sustainable, prosperous and secure ocean future.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP

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