



Department
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Food & Rural Affairs

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Meg Hillier MP
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Dear Meg,

Thank you for your email of 12 August to the Secretary of State on behalf of a number of your constituents, about supertrawlers. I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

The UK is a global leader in the fight to protect our seas, with our 'Blue Belt' of protected waters nearly twice the size of England. The Government is currently considering the recommendations of the Benyon Review into Highly Protected Marine Areas (areas of the sea that allow the protection and recovery of marine ecosystems).

The Common Fisheries Policy (CFP) has restricted our ability to implement fisheries management measures within offshore Marine Protected Areas. The Fisheries Bill proposes a new power to allow the introduction of measures for conservation purposes.

We will automatically take back control of our waters, ending the right of other countries to fish in them, at the end of 2020 when the transition period ends and the UK formally leaves the CFP. For the first time in 40 years, we will be free to decide who can access our waters to fish and on what terms. Any access by non-UK vessels to fish in UK waters will be through a UK issued license.

Leaving the CFP gives us the opportunity to introduce a sustainable, responsive and resilient new fisheries policy. This means we will consider the sustainability of our stocks and our precious marine environment, and take the steps necessary to allow them, and our fishing industry, to flourish. As set out in the EU Withdrawal Agreement, during the Transition Period, we have agreed that we will continue to apply current fisheries rules and shared access to waters until the end of 2020.

The Marine Management Organisation (MMO) continues to work hard to monitor fishing activity in English waters – with dedicated enforcement and surveillance work to protect fisheries, including offshore patrol vessels for at-sea surveillance. Not all fishing activities in marine protected areas require management – just those that are likely to damage the features of a site, typically such as trawling on the seabed.

The Fisheries Bill currently going through Parliament will help to protect our marine resources and develop plans to restore our fish stock back to more sustainable levels. This builds on a manifesto commitment which promised to introduce a legal commitment to fish sustainably as we become an independent coastal state once again.

The Bill strengthens the MMO's powers in a variety of areas, including ensuring that they can restore and enhance, as well as conserve, the marine environment in the offshore zone, and to continue to support the delivery of the Government's Blue Belt Programme.

The Fisheries Bill prohibits any commercial fishing vessel, including foreign-registered vessels, from operating in UK waters without a licence once the transition period ends. It also provides powers to attach conditions, such as the areas that can be fished, species that can be caught and the type of fishing gear that can be used to fishing vessel licences. Foreign vessels operating in UK waters will have to follow UK rules, including the conditions that are attached to their commercial fishing licence. Where vessels do not comply with the conditions of their licences, action can be taken to restrict or prohibit their activities in future.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,



VICTORIA PRENTIS MP