



HOUSE OF COMMONS

27<sup>th</sup> February 2020

Dear local resident,

Thank you to those who have contacted me about the world's oceans.

I recognise that oceans are currently facing unprecedented challenges, including from climate change and over-fishing. It is, therefore, more important than ever to take action to ensure our oceans are healthy, abundant and resilient.

To this end, the Government is committed to concluding negotiations on a new legally binding UN agreement on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs is playing a key role in the negotiation team and will be sending four officials from marine policy, in addition to officials from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, to attend the fourth intergovernmental conference.

I am also encouraged that the UK is on course to protect over half of its waters and I am supportive of the calls 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.

In addition, 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 been launched into whether and how Highly Protected Marine Areas, the strongest form of marine protection, could be introduced in English seas.

The Government is also 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, I understand that the forthcoming International Ocean Strategy will set out plans to work with international partners to secure a sustainable, prosperous and secure ocean future.



I hope that this information is reassuring. If you have any further concerns about this, or anything else, please do let me know.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jane Hunt', written over the printed name.

Jane Hunt MP