



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

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From the Secretary of State

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The Rt Hon Fiona Mactaggart MP
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Dear Fiona,

Thank you for your email of 19 August enclosing correspondence from a number of your constituents about the protection of our marine environment following the recent decision to leave the European Union. I am sorry for the delay in replying. Following the referendum outcome, there will be no immediate changes – until we leave the EU, current arrangements for our environment will remain in place. We are now preparing to negotiate our exit from the EU and Defra officials will be working with a dedicated unit in Government to look at our future policies for the environment.

The Government remains committed to our ambition to make this the first generation to leave our natural environment, including our marine environment, better than we found it. That is why protecting our environment and ensuring a sustainable future for our fisheries will form an important part of our EU exit negotiations. As we leave the EU, the 25 Year Plan for the Environment that we said we would produce in our manifesto last year will set out a new, game-changing approach to managing the environment in the future. We intend to give everyone the chance to contribute to the Plan, starting later this year.

With regard to the marine environment in particular, the Government is as committed as ever to ensuring sustainable fisheries and to banning the wasteful discard of perfectly good fish. We are also dedicated to making sure that our marine wildlife are properly protected and to putting in place a Blue Belt of Marine Protected Areas around our overseas territories. We took an important step towards implementing this last commitment on 15 September, when we announced our plans to double the area of ocean under protection to around four million square kilometres – greater than the landmass of India.

We reaffirmed our commitment to cleaner seas and oceans on 3 September, when the Government announced plans to ban the sale and manufacture of cosmetics and personal care products containing microbeads. We will be consulting formally later this year, with a view to having the ban in place as soon as possible. We will continue to take action on litter in our seas, including by working with other countries in the Oslo and Paris Convention for the Protection of the Marine Environment of the North East Atlantic (OSPAR).

Following our decision to leave the EU, we now have a unique opportunity to develop a set of policies tailored to the needs of the UK, our species and our habitats. I am determined that we should use this opportunity to make the UK a global leader on environmental issues, including those affecting our seas and oceans. I hope I can count on your help and involvement so that we can protect and improve our environment for generations to come.

I hope that this reply is helpful

Best wishes,

Andrea Leadsom

Andrea Leadsom MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs