

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

December 2020

Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about the impact of unexploded war bombs on our marine life.

I agree we should do all we can to protect the welfare of our marine life, especially the whale, and from my conversations with Ministerial colleagues I know they feel the same. I recognise the significant impact underwater noise from ordnance clearance and other activities can have on vulnerable marine species. I am therefore pleased that Ministers are working closely with the Marine Management Organisation, nature conservation bodies and marine industries to reduce underwater noise, but it is important that they ensure any clearance method used is both safe and effective.

I am aware that the underwater noise impact of using low order deflagration techniques for unexploded ordnance detonations is currently being researched. Two phases of a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy funded project to characterise and contrast the acoustic fields generated by unexploded ordnance clearance using high order detonation and using low-order deflagration have been completed. I understand that a third phase has now been initiated to allow further assessment of the clearance options. A potential fourth phase of the work involving offshore field work is also being actively explored in which comparative noise measurements would be made during actual unexploded ordnance clearance campaigns using both deflagration and high order detonations.

The outcomes from the third and fourth phases will allow an informed discussion to take place, however it will be for the regulatory authorities and the statutory nature conservation bodies to consider the best available scientific evidence when providing advice on these matters. I must inform you, however, that the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs does not expect to issue formal guidance on the use of low-order deflagration techniques until this research has been completed.

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

*Yours sincerely
Peter Gibson*

PETER GIBSON MP

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