

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

June 2021

Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about sustainable fishing.

I agree that our waters are a precious natural resource and they must be managed carefully. I am therefore pleased that the Government is putting sustainable fishing and protection of our seas at the heart of its future fishing strategy.

As you may know, Ministers have already set up a 'Blue Belt' of Marine Protected Areas extending across 38 per cent of UK waters, and the Fisheries Act includes new powers to better manage and control these Areas. Further, under UK leadership, 80 countries have now signed up to an international target to protect at least 30 per cent of the world's ocean by 2030 and, alongside this, plans to increase protections for England's waters through a pilot to designate marine sites as Highly Protected Marine Areas have now been launched. I understand that the selected sites would see a ban on all activities that could have a damaging effect on wildlife or marine habitats. I know that the sites to be piloted will be identified by Natural England and the Joint Nature Conservation Committee with input from the results of a formal consultation set to launch next year.

The Marine Management Organisation has now consulted on proposals to manage activity in four of England's offshore Marine Protected Areas: Dogger Bank Special Area of Conservation, Inner Dowsing, Race Bank and North Ridge Special Area of Conservation. I am aware that the byelaws being proposed aim to prohibit fishing activities where there is evidence that they harm wildlife or damage habitats, and will seek to prohibit the use of bottom towed fishing gear in all four sites and additional restrictions for static gears over sensitive features in two of the sites. I understand that these first four Marine Protected Areas were chosen as a priority to help protect their vibrant and productive undersea environments. I know the information received from this consultation is now being reviewed and I look forward to the Marine Management Organisation's response.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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The EU's Common Fisheries Policy has restricted our ability to impose more stringent protections on our seas. Now that the UK has left the EU, the UK Government has powers to implement evidenced based marine management that will help ensure our seas are managed sustainably, protecting both the long-term future of the fishing industry and our precious wildlife and habitats. The Fisheries Act will help to protect our marine resources and develop plans to restore our fish stock back to more sustainable levels.

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*

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