

PETER GIBSON MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS LONDON SW1A 0AA

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Dear Constituent

Thank you for your email about the conservation of the elephant.

Robust action is needed to protect one of the world's most iconic and treasured species. Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol.

I am therefore glad that Ivory Act 2018 will introduce one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales. This includes a ban on the purchase or hire of items containing elephant ivory and applies to UK exports and imports. The ban will cover items of all ages and the maximum available penalty for contravention will be an unlimited fine or up to five years in prison. The ban will also include certain narrowly defined exemptions for items that do not contribute to poaching, where a ban would be unwarranted. While I am not aware of any plans for a surrender scheme at this time, I understand that some owners may decide it is not cost-effective to register their low value items for sale. These items may instead be gifted, donated or bequeathed rather than discarded. Ministers have committed to an awareness raising campaign to explain to owners their options.

Ministers will soon be taking the next steps to implement the relevant secondary legislation, in line with the Government's recent consultation response. I understand that progress on implementation was delayed by a legal challenge which the Government successfully defended. Ministers have also consulted separately on extending the Ivory Act to afford greater protections to a range of ivory-bearing species, including hippopotamuses and walruses, and I look forward to reading the Government's official response to this once this has been published.

I am also encouraged that since 2015, Defra has provided over £4.2 million in funding for Asian elephants living in the wild through the Darwin Initiative and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. This includes funding towards a project seeking to reduce the illegal ivory trade in Cambodia, and a project supporting Nepal's world-leading community anti-poaching efforts.

This ban will build on work to tackle poaching and the illegal ivory trade. I am pleased to have been elected on a manifesto which committed to banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species and ministers intend to implement this, as well as end the advertising for sale in the UK of low welfare experiences abroad, through the upcoming Animals Abroad Bill.

Member of Parliament for Darlington

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