



Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs

The Rt. Hon. Mark Spencer, M.P.
Minister of State for Food

2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

T: +44 (0) 3459 335577
E: correspondence.section@defra.gov.uk
W: gov.uk/defra

Our reference: MC2022/19028/BK

1st November 2022

Dear Sir George,

Thank you for your email of 22nd September to the Rt Hon. Ranil Jayawardena MP, on behalf of your constituents, about Marine Protected Areas (MPAs). I am replying as the Minister responsible for this policy area.

By law, the deposition of material at sea requires a marine licence, and everyone should act within the law. The licensing regulations are set out to protect our marine environment and ensure the safety of those using our seas. Actions taken by Greenpeace in the South West Deeps (East) MPA are subject to a live investigation by the independent regulator, the Marine Management Organisation, and Defra is therefore unable to comment further on Greenpeace's activities.

The United Kingdom is at the forefront of marine protection. We have built a comprehensive network of MPAs, now covering 40% of English waters, and are focusing on making sure they are protected properly.

All sites are protected through the planning consents and licensing regimes that cover activities such as dredging for aggregates and constructing offshore wind farms. In addition, 98 MPAs in English inshore waters already have byelaws in place to protect sensitive features from damaging bottom towed gear.

Using new powers provided by the Fisheries Act 2020, we are now able to properly manage fishing in England's 40 offshore MPAs, where necessary. In June 2022, the use of damaging fishing gear was prohibited in the first four offshore MPAs and a call for evidence has been completed for a further 13 MPAs ahead of public consultation on draft byelaws for those sites. We have an ambitious programme in place to protect all English offshore sites from damaging fishing activity by the end of 2024.

Not all fishing activity needs to be managed in MPAs, just those activities that would damage the protected habitats and species for which MPAs have been designated.

All licences issued for vessels to fish in British waters have conditions attached specifying what they can fish for and where and have various restrictions attached.

Rt Hon Sir George Howarth MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

george.howarth.mp@parliament.uk



Please do not hesitate to get in touch if you need further information.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M Spencer". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a period at the end.

Rt. Hon. Mark Spencer MP