



05 July 2018

Our reference: MIN/7778/2018

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

Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
London SW1A 2AH

Minister of State for
Europe and the Americas

Dear George,

Thank you for your email of 18 June, on behalf of a number of your constituents, about the creation of an Antarctic Ocean Sanctuary.

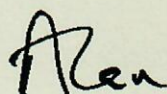
The UK is a world leader in marine protection through our ambitious Blue Belt programme to protect 4 million square kilometres of our waters, around the UK and our Overseas Territories, by 2020. We are also a committed and leading member of the Antarctic Treaty System and its objectives to protect and conserve Antarctica and the Southern Ocean.

Through the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), the UK secured agreement to the first Marine Protected Area (MPA) in the Southern Ocean, around the South Orkney Islands Southern Shelf, in 2009. We also led a successful proposal to protect marine areas newly exposed by ice shelf retreat or collapse; and the first area to benefit from such protection is a region newly exposed from a very large iceberg which broke from the Larsen Ice Shelf in the Weddell Sea last year.

The UK strongly supported the designation of the Ross Sea region Marine Protected Area in 2016 and we are an active co-proponent for the MPA proposals in East Antarctica and the Weddell Sea, as well as supporting the development of a new proposal for an MPA around the Antarctic Peninsula. Earlier this year UK scientists chaired an expert workshop to further develop the Weddell Sea proposal, which includes waters surrounding the eastern part of the British Antarctic Territory. In light of the remoteness and high ice cover of the Weddell Sea, it has hardly been fished. It is also expected to be one of the last parts of the Southern Ocean to be affected by climate warming. The fish stocks in these waters are not as high as in more northerly parts of the Southern Ocean but they are critical for Antarctic marine life. Six species of seals and twelve species of whales are known to live in the Weddell Sea and around one third of the world's Emperor penguins breed on its sea ice. Around 14,000 different animal species live at the bottom of the Weddell Sea. A Marine Protected Area in the Weddell Sea would give the best chance for this unique ecosystem to adapt largely undisturbed to the expected future changes to their habitat. The UK will continue to work with other CCAMLR Members to seek agreement to the East Antarctic and Weddell Sea Marine Protected Areas at the next meeting in October.

Please be assured the UK is actively advocating for CCAMLR to achieve its stated goal of establishing a network of marine protection across the Southern Ocean.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan', written in a cursive style.

RT HON SIR ALAN DUNCAN MP