



# Craig Whittaker MP

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## **Protecting the Environment after Brexit**

Thank you for contacting me about the transfer of EU environmental law into UK law.

All EU legislation will be converted into UK law at the point of the UK's departure from the EU. This will provide continuity and certainty for communities and individuals in the UK and in the EU.

Leaving the European Union means that Parliament will be able to modify retained EU law thus enabling us to tailor our new arrangements to the needs of our country and its citizens and its precious habitats and wildlife, instead of having to follow a one size fits all approach for 28 different countries.

I want to emphasise that the Government has no intention of weakening those environmental protections and animal welfare measures put in place during our membership of the European Union which have been positive in their impact. We do, however, need to take advantage of the opportunity created by leaving the EU to look again at the effects of other measures, notably the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) and the Common Fisheries Policy (CFP).

The CAP rewards land-holding ahead of good environmental practice. Outside it, we can use public money to reward environmentally responsible land use.

Since 2010, the UK has led the efforts to reform the CFP. Despite these efforts, 40 per cent of fish stocks in the Atlantic, North Sea and Baltic Sea are still being fished unsustainably. By leaving the CFP, taking back control of our waters, granting access and allocating quotas based on sustainability, we can pursue the very highest standards in marine conservation.

The environmental principles that you mention have had an important influence on the creation of EU environmental legislation and will, therefore, continue to underpin UK law after we leave. The EU (Withdrawal) Bill will ensure that, wherever practical, the same principles apply in this country after we leave as they do now.

Although the jurisdiction of the European Court of Justice will end, the Government will ensure that strong and effective governance and regulatory arrangements are in place after the UK's exit from the EU. No decisions have yet been taken on the UK's future relationship with EU agencies such as the European Environment Agency. This is a matter for the negotiations.

## **PROPOSED ENVIRONMENT WATCHDOG**

Outside the EU, we have an opportunity to learn from both the Commission's successes and failures. We can develop new institutions which do a better job and hold us to higher standards.

It is, therefore, the UK's intention to use the freedom that independence brings to establish a new world-leading body to give the environment a voice and hold the powerful to account. It will be independent of government and able to speak its mind freely. It will be placed on a statutory footing,

ensuring that it has clear legal authority. Its remit will be to champion and uphold environmental standards, always rooted in rigorous scientific evidence, which is one reason why the Government wishes to build on the scientific expertise we already have in this country and ensure that the UK sets the gold standard for environmental science and becomes a home to centres of environmental excellence. The Government will consult widely on the precise functions, brief and powers of the new body but I am in no doubt that it must have real bite.

By early next year, a formal consultation on this new environmental body will be launched. There are significant questions to answer, such as exactly what powers the new body will have to enforce environmental laws, its exact place in the nation's policy-making structures, and what approaches Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland wish to take. The Government wants to work through these questions with as many people and organisations as possible – business, NGOs, the farming sector, civil society, the devolved administrations and others. It will be engaging widely with public opinion before bringing forward a final proposal.

Nothing can be more vital than the future of our environment and the natural world. We are their custodians and we must safeguard their future which is why the Government is determined to make its aim of a Green Brexit a reality. The Government's ambition is that a new independent, statutory body will ensure that, outside the EU, the UK becomes the world-leading curator of the most precious asset of all: our planet.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Whittaker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Craig Whittaker MP