



Craig Whittaker MP

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Brexit, the Environment and Animal Welfare

Thank you for contacting me about the implications of Brexit for environmental protection and animal welfare.

EU environmental regulation will remain in place until the UK formally leaves the EU. After we leave, the Government will work with our EU neighbours, environmental organisations, those concerned with animal welfare and wildlife protection and the public to develop new arrangements. The Repeal Bill will ensure that EU laws are transposed into UK law so environmental laws will not change overnight and, in any case, it will be Parliament that keeps, amends and repeals laws as it sees fit after we have left the EU.

The temporary powers given to ministers under the Repeal Bill cannot be used to change environmental policy. They can only be used to correct legal deficiencies in the law. There may be some laws which no longer operate as intended and the Repeal Bill will provide the power for corrections to be made so that the UK legal system can continue to operate.

Strong enforcement regimes will be maintained. The UK will continue to have powerful regulators and the UK courts will enforce environmental regulations after it leaves the EU.

The decision to leave the European Union has created an historic opportunity to review our policies on agriculture, on land use, on biodiversity, on woodlands, marine conservation, fisheries, pesticide licensing, chemical regulation, animal welfare, habitat management, waste, water purity, air quality and so much more. Leaving the EU means we can tailor our new arrangements to the needs of our farmers, fishermen, precious habitats and wildlife, instead of following a one size fits all approach for 28 different countries.

I can assure you that 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.

I am proud that Britain has the highest standards of animal welfare in the world, and there have been no proposals to change the legislation that upholds them. I know that Ministers want to draw more closely on the expertise of the farming industry, to ensure our farm animal welfare codes reflect the very latest scientific and veterinary developments.

Outside the EU we can develop global gold standard environmental policies, taking smarter, more targeted approaches to the improvements we want to see. Defra's 25-year environment plan will set out the Government's future plans for environmental protection. We will be able to focus very specifically on this country's needs while also working closely with our European neighbours and friends around the world on policies to safeguard the environment for the future. We have an opportunity not just to halt or slow environmental deterioration, but to raise our ambitions, restoring nature and reversing decline. We can, and I believe we will, be the first generation to leave the environment in a better state than we inherited it.

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.

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