



## Craig Whittaker MP

CALDER VALLEY

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### Marine Protected Areas

Thank you for contacting me about marine protected areas.

I am delighted that 23 new Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) have been announced, in addition to the 27 designated in the last Parliament and over 500 other marine protected areas that already existed in the UK. Together these help fulfil the ambitious pledge to create a 'Blue Belt' of protection for our diverse marine wildlife, which now covers over 20 per cent of English waters.

This brings the number of English MCZs to 50, covering an area roughly equivalent to the whole of Wales, or 13 times the size of Greater London. They will protect 45 different types of habitat, geological features and fascinating sea creatures, including stalked jellyfish and spiny lobsters.

The new Zones represent the second of three phases of MCZs, the third of which will be put out for consultation soon. They build on further work to protect the marine environment, which includes new consultations on Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) for harbour porpoise and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) to protect feeding and bathing areas used by iconic seabirds, such as spoonbills in Poole Harbour and puffins on the Northumberland coast.

I am pleased to note that a new marine protected area has also been announced to surround the Pitcairn Islands, and the Blue Belt will be extended around the UK's 14 Overseas Territories where there is local support and environmental need. It was announced most recently that the Atlantic Ocean's largest marine reserve is being created around Ascension, covering an area almost the size of the United Kingdom.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Kind regards,

Craig Whittaker MP