

Conservative manifesto for conversation

Written evidence from Greenpeace UK November 2018 Marine

1. *What are the biggest immediate- and longer-term threats to marine ecosystems?*

Marine ecosystems are facing growing threats from industrial fishing, pollution and the impacts of continuing to burn fossil fuels. For example, 90% of fish stocks at fully or over exploited status; up to 12 million tonnes of plastic are entering the ocean every year; increased carbon emissions are changing the fundamental chemistry of the oceans; and warmer ocean temperatures as a result of climate change are changing the suitability of marine habitats for the species that live there.

2. *What are the key policies which the Government should introduce to better protect marine environments?*

Scientific recommendation and soaring public concern over the state of the ocean provides a clear mandate to the Government to take **ambitious action for marine protection**, including strongly protecting 30% of the ocean through a global network of marine sanctuaries, in combination with action on land to tackle the drivers of plastic pollution and climate change at source. Greenpeace welcome this commitment, and encourages the Government to continue to advocate for the international community to agree to protect 30% of the ocean by 2030 under the Convention on Biological Diversity by 2020

On **plastic pollution**, Greenpeace would welcome the following measures:

- An objective to eliminate everything but non-essential plastics, well in advance of the 2042 deadline proposed by the Government, through the establishment of year-on-year statutory reduction targets in the forthcoming Environment Bill
- A reiteration of recent comments by the Environment Secretary that UK waste should be dealt with at home, rather than exported to countries where it is at a higher risk of entering the natural environment. UK waste should not contribute to ocean plastic pollution
- A series of more immediate measures to increase capture of waste plastic and significantly reduce the amount of plastic material brought into the waste stream, including:
 - A ban on hard-to-recycle or hazardous problem plastics- which includes but is not limited to black plastic, PVC and polystyrene- implemented by the end of 2019
 - A deposit return scheme on drinks containers of all materials and sizes
 - An overhaul of the packaging recovery note (PRN) system, to be replaced with an independently administered producer responsibility organisation (PRO) who ensure that producers cover full costs of collection and sorting of plastic waste

Fishing: The current approach to domestic fishing quota allocation has undermined coastal communities and the health of the marine environment. In line with the Government's commitment to manage fish as a public asset, fishing opportunities – old and new – should be allocated according to public interest criteria. Such criteria should be identified transparently and via engaging with experts and public consultation. Priority should be given to environmental criteria to incentivise the most sustainable fishing practices and promote coastal economies. Allocation based on this criteria would:

- Increase the quota available to the small-scale fleet (<10m), which typically perform better on these terms
- Meet the expectations of UK fishers and coastal towns, which voted for Brexit, on increased access to fishing opportunities (79% of the UK fleet is small scale)

- Create more direct and indirect employment in the UK's fishing ports (smaller boats land into local ports and create far more jobs per unit of fish caught)
- Be better for the marine environment (smaller boats tend to fish more selectively, with lower environmental impacts)

Reforming the current system would not remove all quota from big boats to allocate it to the small-scale fleet. It is just small proportions of existing quota that could make a big difference to struggling local fishers. Research indicates that simply doubling the quota pool for the UK's small, low impact fleet would return them to profitability. Meanwhile, this criteria-based approach would incentivise the industrial fleet to shift to more sustainable gear and provide local jobs – which some large-scale operators are already doing.

Seabed mining: Greenpeace challenges the assumptions on the necessity of seabed mining. There is no evidence that seabed mining will secure reliable access to rare earth metals. Greenpeace believe a full investigation into the necessity of deep sea mining for rare earth metals, based on the existing availability of these materials in old and discarded products, should take place before any decision is made on whether to pursue deep sea mining. Greenpeace remain convinced that any decision on deep sea mining activities should be subject to rigorous Environmental Impact Assessments, to be established by the UN high seas (BBNJ) treaty, applying the precautionary principle and using best available science

3. *How successful has the UK's Blue Belt policy been, and how could it be improved?*

The Government should continue its support for the implementation of the Blue Belt policy, recognising the importance of fully-protected Marine Protected Areas and prioritising conservation over fishing in our UK Overseas Territories. The Government should outline measures to ensure the credible management of the Blue Belt policy, for example, a commitment to continued financial support for surveillance and enforcement of the Blue Belt MPAs beyond 2020. Funding currently expires in March 2020 and, if left to lapse, will undermine the UK's position as a global leader in ocean conservation. As part of the Great British Oceans coalition, Greenpeace would also welcome specific ideas to build on current scope of the Blue Belt policy beyond 2020, such as the maintenance of monitoring and surveillance efforts out to a 100 nautical mile High Seas 'buffer zone' around each of the existing Blue Belt sites

International

1. *What are the key policies which the Government should introduce to better protect natural environments abroad?*

Marine protected areas: The UK can mobilise international action to reduce the cumulative stressors on the ocean environment, notably through a global network of large-scale, ecologically coherent, representative, strongly protected MPAs covering at least 30% of the ocean by 2030, with the remaining 70% of the ocean under sustainable management.

Environmental leadership on the international stage should be underpinned by domestic implementation, through legislative or policy action, e.g. raising the bar on the UK's Marine Conservation Zones and ensuring the Blue Belt programme delivers strongly protected marine sanctuaries, including funding for continued management and enforcement beyond 2020.

2. *Where might there be scope for the UK to work with international partners to better protect threatened habitats and ecosystems?*

Global Ocean Treaty: The UK Government can play a leading and decisive role to build an effective global regime to protect marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ), demonstrating its commitment to restore the health of the ocean for generations to come. The existing governance regime for protecting areas in international waters (commonly known as the high seas) is not fit for purpose; less than 1% of the high seas are currently protected waters. Most importantly, there are no global rules for creating marine reserves on the high seas. To deliver on the UK's commitment to 30% MPA coverage by 2030, the Government should recognise that the new Global Ocean Treaty (or BBNJ instrument) being negotiated up to 2020 presents an historic opportunity to ensure a network of effective protection across international waters, by establishing institutional arrangements to designate a network of protected areas and adopt effective measures that will grant protection from the cumulative threats posed by different sectors and climate change. The UK should work to increase ambition within the EU and take a demonstratively stronger conservation position in these negotiations after it leaves the EU. The UK should also mobilise its diplomatic network and the highest levels of Government, including Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, to ensure agreement of a robust and ambitious Treaty by 2020.

It is also worth referencing the need for continued UK leadership to create a network of marine sanctuaries in the Antarctic through the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

The UK Government should show leadership in securing more effective conservation performance from **Regional Fisheries Management Organisations (RFMOs)**. The UK has the additional opportunity to take a demonstratively stronger conservation position at RFMOs after it leaves the EU

Greenpeace believes that the UK could ensure the G7 and G20 deliver meaningful change against ocean plastic pollution **by championing the need for plastics reduction within the G7 and G20**; to date, action has not been sufficient in these fora to meet the scale of the challenge.

The UK can influence global governance processes at the United Nations and through the Commonwealth to lead plastic reduction efforts globally and ban problem plastics that are not readily recycled.

Within global governance on climate change, it is useful to note that the 1.5C limit within the Paris Agreement has significant implications for the ocean, and that the mitigation and adaptation implications of ocean conservation measures/marine activities should be properly considered and coherent with the UK's commitments under the UNFCCC .

The UK has also played an important role at the International Whaling Commission, and the UK should commit to continue vocal opposition to any efforts to undermine the IWC's conservation aims