

3<sup>rd</sup> December 2014

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about the International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) campaign on wildlife crime committed over the internet.

I fully support the Government's commitment to conserving the world's wildlife and to tackling and preventing wildlife crime, and I am pleased that in February 2014 William Hague, then the Foreign Secretary, chaired a major conference on this issue. In Britain the Convention on the International Trade in Endangered Species is enshrined in law, with some offences carrying a maximum sentence of seven years.

Like you, I am concerned that the internet can be used as a route for illegal trade. Fortunately the authorities already have powers to tackle it, and the laws governing the situation are the same as for any other wildlife trading offence.

Legislation covering the Control of Trade in Endangered Species is, however, being reviewed. This work involves examining trends, including the increased use of the internet, and how enforcement practices may need to evolve to combat this. I have been informed that a forthcoming public consultation will seek further information and evidence on wildlife cybercrime, and that the IFAW report will be considered alongside research by the National Wildlife Crime Unit (NWCU).

I am pleased to tell you that the Government recognises the important work the NWCU carries out and has committed £544,000 to help support it until at least March 2016. The Unit works to tackle the illegal wildlife trade in conjunction with the Metropolitan Police and the Border Force.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



**Alok Sharma MP**