

4th August 2015

Dear Constituents,

Thank you for contacting me about seal culling.

This issue has attracted considerable attention recently, so I can appreciate your concern. Seal conservation is a devolved issue so I can only respond with respect to England. Approximately 85 per cent of the UK seal population is in Scotland where there is separate legislation for seal protection.

As you know, it is lawful to kill a seal if it is deemed to pose a threat to fishing operations, in accordance with the Conservation of Seals Act 1970. Measures must be to prevent damage occurring and the seal must be in the vicinity of the equipment. Legislation therefore only allows limited local action to be taken against individual problem seals.

I believe this strikes the right balance between the conservation and welfare of seals, and the needs of the fishing industry. Common and grey seal populations in England have increased over the last ten years and there is no evidence to suggest that limited local control is having any adverse effect on the conservation status of the UK seal population as a whole.

I was especially pleased to see news in January that the seal colony on Blakeney Point in Norfolk has seen record growth in recent years and is thriving. Apparently there was some concern that the population growth there might lead to calls for a cull, but the National Trust, which controls the property, has confirmed that there would be no need for this to be considered.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely,



Alok Sharma MP