

The Clerk
Environment Audit Committee
House of Commons
Westminster
London W1A 0AA

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Dear Sir, Marine Conservation Zones: Supplementary Questions to the Minister.

We write further to the meeting of the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on 2nd April 2014 when the Committee questioned the Minister, George Eustice MP, about the delivery of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs). We wish to suggest some supplementary questions which the Committee may wish to follow-up in writing with the Minister. Marinet is a community marine network.

We believe it to be essential to the answering of the Committee's questions that the Committee should establish what the Minister understands by a coherent network of MCZs. This information needs to be provided by the Minister, and not by his team.

Once it is established what the Minister understands by a coherent network, then the Minister can be asked what is the purpose of this network, and what benefits will arise from these interlinked sites.

We observe that it was not clear from questioning whether the Minister understands that the concept of MCZs came from the Marine and Coastal Access Act, 2009, and that the 2009 Act was never meant to deal with issues relating to fisheries.

The answers provided by the Minister indicated that the coherent network was to be designed to allow safe passageways for transient species, but what species had he in mind ?

If MCZs are now seen as essential for fisheries, can the Minister also answer the question about what has priority in his mind - that of the nursery and spawning grounds for fish species, or socio-economic considerations ?

If he chooses the latter, like the Dogger Bank region, why cannot the co-location principle apply ? Note: co-location is the siting of MCZs in conjunction with areas of human activity.

At the meeting on 2nd April no questions were asked of the Minister about co-location, yet it is clear that co-location would deliver more sites for the coherent network. The question is: why have MPs "lost" the concept of co-location and allowed the Minister to duck this important issue? This concept would allow a second tranche MCZ no-take sites to be delivered in 2014.

Does the Minister recognise his duty for providing fish food security for 12 months of the year, and that he is personally accountable when it comes to any legal challenge about the stewardship of handling public assets?

Would the Minister care to comment about the current ownership of the British fishing quota by European fleets and companies?

These are a few supplementary questions which your Committee may wish to address in writing to the Minister, and we would be grateful if you would make this letter available to the Committee's chair and members.

Yours faithfully,

David Levy
Marinet Chair