



October 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the conservation of elephants.

Robust action is needed to protect one of the world's most iconic and treasured species. Ivory should never be seen as a commodity for financial gain or a status symbol.

I am therefore glad that Ivory Act 2018 will introduce one of the world's toughest bans on ivory sales. This includes a ban on the purchase or hire of items containing elephant ivory and applies to UK exports and imports. The ban will cover items of all ages and the maximum available penalty for contravention will be an unlimited fine or up to five years in prison. The ban will also include certain narrowly defined exemptions for items that do not contribute to poaching, where a ban would be unwarranted.

While I am not aware of any plans for a surrender scheme at this time, I understand that some owners may decide it is not cost-effective to register their low value items for sale. These items may instead be gifted, donated or bequeathed rather than discarded. Ministers have committed to an awareness raising campaign to explain to owner their options.

Ministers will soon be taking the next steps to implement the relevant secondary legislation, in line with the Government's recent consultation response. I understand that progress on implementation was delayed by a legal challenge which the Government successfully defended. Ministers have also consulted separately on extending the Ivory Act to afford greater protections to a range of ivory-bearing species, including hippopotamuses and walruses, and I look forward to reading the Government's official response to this once this has been published.

I am also encouraged that since 2015, Defra has provided over £4.2 million in funding for Asian elephants living in the wild through the Darwin Initiative and the Illegal Wildlife Trade Challenge Fund. This includes funding towards a project seeking to reduce the illegal ivory trade in Cambodia, and a project supporting Nepal's world-leading community anti-poaching efforts.

This ban will build on work to tackle poaching and the illegal ivory trade. I am pleased to have been elected on a manifesto which committed to banning the import of hunting trophies from endangered species and ministers intend to implement this, as well as end the advertising for sale in the UK of low welfare experiences abroad, through the upcoming Animals Abroad Bill.

I am aware of reports that the Government is considering a ban on keeping elephants in zoos in England. I understand that a 10-year-long report from the UK's Elephant Welfare Group (EWG) was commissioned to examine the conditions in which elephants are kept, to make improvements and to make recommendations as to if and how those conditions can be further improved. I know that the EWG's report will be completed this year and will be considered by the UK's Zoos Expert Committee. Ministers will then respond to the report, probably early next year. I am assured that the Government will consider the report's recommendations carefully.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**

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Banning ivory sales will reaffirm the UK's global leadership on this critical issue, demonstrating our belief that this abhorrent trade should become a thing of the past.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Chris'.

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**  
**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**