



**HOUSE OF COMMONS**

**LONDON SW1A 0AA**

15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

*Dear Constance,*

**RE: DEEP SEA MINING, OCEAN PROTECTION & OIL AND GAS LICENSES**

Thank you for your recent correspondence in respect of your concerns about deep sea mining, ocean protection, and oil and gas licences. I have read your comments with interest.

As you are aware, the Government has announced its support for a moratorium on the granting of exploitation licences for deep sea mining projects. My ministerial colleagues and I are concerned about the growing pressure to extract deep-sea resources and its potential impacts. The UK Government will not, therefore, sponsor or support the issuing of any such licences for deep sea mining by the International Seabed Authority, until there is sufficient scientific evidence about the potential impact on deep sea ecosystems.

The Government is committed to protecting at least 30 percent of the global ocean by 2030 through Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and Other Effective Area-based Conservation Measures (OECAMs) and has driven this forward through the UK-chaired Global Ocean Alliance. In addition, Ministers have supported developing countries to protect the marine environment through projects to protect and restore habitats, such as mangroves, coral reefs, and seagrasses through the £500 million Blue Planet Fund.

Domestically, the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) has created 178 MPAs across 35,000 square miles of English waters, with a commitment for 70 percent of designated features to be in a favourable condition by 2042. The first three Highly Protected Marine areas in English waters have been designated, enabling nature to fully recover by removing all harmful activities, including fishing, construction and dredging; increasing marine biodiversity; and supporting climate-resilient ecosystems.

Regarding oil and gas licences, analysis shows that domestic gas production is on average almost four times cleaner than the process of producing and importing gas in liquified natural gas form. New licences slow the decline in UK oil and gas production and also boost the UK's energy security. I am assured by my ministerial colleagues that the UK remains on track to meet net-zero by 2050. The environmental impact of all proposed offshore oil and gas developments are considered by the relevant regulator throughout the approval process. More widely, DEFRA and the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero work closely together to achieve net-zero and protect the marine environment.



Once again, thank you for having taken the time to contact me and if I can ever be of any further assistance to you then please do not hesitate to contact me again.

*With best wishes,*

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Tom Pursglove', with a horizontal line underneath.

**TOM PURSGLOVE MP  
MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT  
CORBY & EAST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE**