December 2020



Thank you for contacting me about the impact of unexploded war bombs on our marine life. I agree we should do all we can to protect the welfare of our marine life, especially the whale.

I recognise the significant impact underwater noise from ordnance clearance and other activities can have on vulnerable marine species. Ministers are working closely with the Marine Management Organisation, nature conservation bodies and marine industries to reduce underwater noise, but it is important that they ensure any clearance method used is both safe and effective.

I am aware that the underwater noise impact of using low order deflagration techniques for unexploded ordnance detonations is currently being researched. Two phases of a Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy funded project to characterise and contrast the acoustic fields generated by unexploded ordnance clearance using high order detonation and using low-order deflagration have been completed. A third phase has now been initiated to allow further assessment of the clearance options. A potential fourth phase of the work involving offshore field work is also being actively explored, in which comparative noise measurements would be made during actual unexploded ordnance clearance campaigns using both deflagration and high order detonations.

The outcomes from the third and fourth phases will allow an informed discussion to take place. However, it will be for the regulatory authorities and the statutory nature conservation bodies to consider the best available scientific evidence when providing advice on these matters. The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs does not expect to issue formal guidance on the use of low-order deflagration techniques until this research has been completed.



Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

**CHRIS HEATON-HARRIS MP**

**MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR DAVENTRY**