



August 2021

Dear Constituent,

Thank you for contacting me about the impact of unexploded war bombs on our marine life.

We should do all we can to protect the welfare of our marine life, especially the whale and from my conversations with Ministerial colleagues I know they feel the same.

There are estimated to be between 300,000 and 500,000 pieces of unexploded ordnance left over from World War I and II in UK waters. Many of these unexploded bombs lie in areas which are heavily used by marine industries, including offshore wind and the bombs must be removed to allow safe working conditions. However, clearance of these munitions using traditional high order detonation causes significant underwater noise which has the potential to disturb and injure marine mammals.

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. They are investigating the nature and intensity of the underwater noise resulting from the detonation of unexploded ordnance alongside alternative methods of clearance such as low-order deflagration.

Controlled inland quarry trials of deflagration, funded through the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Strategic Environmental Assessment research programme, have indicated a positive reduction in noise. I understand that further research is planned to determine if these initial findings are transferable to the offshore marine environment where environmental variables and conditions can make bomb removal more challenging when compared to a controlled quarry environment.

At-sea trials are planned to begin this summer to characterise, for the first time, the resulting noise and chemical contaminant releases in the marine environment, and to determine whether the technology is safe and effective on historic ordnance that have been left in the marine environment for many years.

I know that with an improved evidence base, and with continuing support and advice from the Statutory Nature Conservation Bodies, the Marine Management Organisation will be able to make better informed licensing decisions around the use of such techniques in English waters. Improving the evidence will mean licence conditions will become better defined, measurable and enforceable.



**Chris Heaton-Harris**  
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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**