

[Shark fins: Call for evidence on protecting endangered shark species launches](#)

Greater protections for species of sharks will be considered through a new [call for evidence](#) to better understand the scale of the shark fin trade in the UK, as a way to help reduce the import and export of shark fins and protect the world's sharks.

The UK has a strong track record in marine conservation and has been pressing for stronger international action to protect sharks against unsustainable fishing practices and shark finning, which is the practice of removing a shark's fins at sea and discarding the finless body back into the water.

The government is now seeking additional evidence to ensure that appropriate protection is in place for all shark species and to inform future policy on protecting marine wildlife.

The call for evidence will help the government better understand the scale of the shark fin trade in the UK and the conservation, economic, social and cultural impacts of potential further restrictions such as banning the import and export of detached shark fins.

The greatest threat to sharks is overfishing, driven by demand for shark products. Wild populations of shark, skates and ray species have declined rapidly and species such as the scalloped hammerhead and angelshark are now considered critically endangered.

The call for evidence will provide insight into the role of the shark fin trade and what action can be taken to better protect sharks.

International Environment Minister Lord Goldsmith said:

Shark finning involves slicing the fins off living sharks that are then tossed back into the sea to die painful deaths. It is an extraordinarily barbaric practice, and has been banned in the UK for nearly 20 years. But the UK still imports shark fin products and therefore may still be inadvertently contributing to the practice.

At the end of the Transition Period and as a fully independent nation, we will have far more freedom to introduce measures to protect endangered species – on land and in the ocean. So we have launched this call for evidence to identify the best options to protect these incredible animals and to continue leading the way on shark conservation.

Samuel Stone, Head of Fisheries and Aquaculture at the Marine Conservation Society said:

We welcome the government's desire to increase protections for endangered shark species and this call for evidence to better understand the impact of the shark fin trade in the UK. Despite the abhorrent practice being banned by most fishing nations, including the UK and EU, illegal shark finning remains a significant problem in several fisheries around the world. This undermines attempts to improve the management and recovery of shark species and it's important that the government explores all avenues available to them to help stamp out the practice.

It will be important to explore how efforts can best distinguish between trade linked to illegal shark finning versus the legitimate trade of shark products from potentially well managed fisheries. Whilst the UK trade of shark fins may be relatively small on the global stage, efforts made here may have the potential to make a significant impact. We look forward to seeing the additional evidence and recommendations produced by this review.'

Strict trade controls are already in place for certain species of sharks under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), which prohibits or requires trade to be carefully regulated. The UK also played a leading role in successfully listing an additional 18 shark species under CITES in August 2019.

The UK is leading in marine conservation efforts to protect the world's ocean and has already set up a ['Blue Belt'](#) of protected waters nearly twice the size of England including 41 Marine Conservation Zones.

In September 2019 the UK government also launched a [Global Ocean Alliance](#) of countries that work will together to protect at least 30% of the global ocean by 2030 (30by30).

The call for evidence marks the start of renewed efforts from government to raise standards on animal welfare even further now we are outside the EU, including taking steps to ban primates as pets, end live exports of animals for fattening and slaughter, and crack down on the illegal smuggling of dogs and puppies, with further proposals to improve standards and eradicate cruel practices expected to be set out in the coming months.

For more information on how to engage with this Call For Evidence please click [here](#).

500 hectare planting boost for England's Community Forests

Over 500 hectares will be planted with trees across England's ten Community Forests, from Yorkshire to Somerset, backed by £12.1 million of investment, the government announced today (6 December). This will also build the pipeline of projects for community planting in future years.

The new programme – Trees for Climate – will see trees planted in community forests across the country over the next five months. When mature, the trees will eventually store over 100,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide, playing an important role in the meeting the government's net zero emissions by 2050 target. The project will also reduce flood risk, increase sustainable UK grown timber, provide more places for nature and biodiversity to thrive, and increase people's access to and enjoyment of woodland. The funding will also create new jobs and secure existing ones within the forestry and environmental sector, helping to boost local economies as part of a green recovery.

Forestry Minister, Lord Goldsmith, said:

Through this exciting new programme we will build back greener, as more communities – particularly those in urban environments – will have access to nature, with real benefits for health and wellbeing.

Trees are the backbone of our urban and rural environments and essential in tackling the climate emergency. This vital programme will plant trees where they are most needed to stem flooding and provide more places for nature to thrive.

Paul Nolan, Director of The Mersey Forest and the Chair of England's Community Forests, said:

Our Trees for Climate programme will plant millions more trees around England's town and cities, targeted at areas where they can make the greatest difference, in particular to local quality of life and levels of health and wellbeing.

The national network of Community Forests has been working for over 25 years to bring nature closer to people and local communities and is perfectly placed to deliver real change, on the ground.

Chair of the Forestry Commission, Sir William Worsley, said:

This exciting new programme will benefit local communities all

across England – helping to increase access to nature, creating much needed jobs in the environmental sector and bringing invaluable benefits to people’s health and wellbeing.

The £12.1 million boost will be a huge help both for getting trees in the ground, but also enabling each of the Community Forests to ensure they are well-managed in the long term, making sure these new woods can thrive to the fullest extent.

Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, Kemi Badenoch, said:

This investment will support growth right across England by creating new local jobs. It will also reduce flood risk, improve air quality and help make areas more attractive places to live. We are committed to supporting Britain to build back better and greener – and projects like this play a key role in doing so.

The programme is being delivered by a collaboration of ten Community Forest organisations, supported by the national charity The Community Forest Trust. The following Community Forests will carry out the planting:

- The Forest of Marston Vale, Bedfordshire
- Great Western Community Forest, covering the North Wessex Downs to the River Thames
- The Greenwood Community Forest, west Nottinghamshire
- The Mersey Forest, which covers Merseyside and North Cheshire
- City of Trees, Greater Manchester
- Forest of Avon Trust, which covers Bristol and Avon
- HEYwoods, which covers Kingston upon Hull and the East Riding of Yorkshire
- Thames Chase Trust, which covers East London and South West Essex
- White Rose Forest, which covers Leeds city region and North and West Yorkshire
- Forest of Mercia, which covers Staffordshire and the West Midlands

Trees for Climate will help deliver against goals in the government’s [25 Year Environment Plan](#) and support Nature Recovery Networks across England.

The government recently consulted on a new England Tree Strategy to accelerate tree planting and improve the management of our existing trees and woodlands. The new Strategy will help shape policies to plant and look after more trees for the climate, nature, people and the economy.

The £640 million Nature for Climate fund will help us deliver the English portion of the government’s manifesto commitment to increase tree planting to 30,000 hectares per year across the UK by 2025, alongside peatland restoration and nature recovery.

The Prime Minister also recently announced a further [£40 million additional investment into the government’s Green Recovery Challenge Fund](#) – this will go

towards creating and retaining thousands of jobs in the environmental sector, such as ecologists, project managers, tree planters and teams to carry out nature restoration.

[Press release: 500 hectare planting boost for England's Community Forests](#)

New £12.1 million fund to plant over 500 hectares of trees in ten Community Forests over the next five months.

[News story: Avian influenza \(bird flu\): Latest situation](#)

New housing measures will come into force in England, Scotland and Wales on 14 December.

[Joint Statement from European Commission President von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson](#)

Press release

A joint statement from European Commission President von der Leyen and UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson.



In a phone call today on the on-going negotiations between the European Union and the United Kingdom, we welcomed the fact that progress has been achieved in many areas. Nevertheless, significant differences remain on three critical issues: level playing field, governance and fisheries. Both sides underlined that no agreement is feasible if these issues are not resolved.

Whilst recognising the seriousness of these differences, we agreed that a further effort should be undertaken by our negotiating teams to assess whether they can be resolved.

We are therefore instructing our chief negotiators to reconvene tomorrow in Brussels.

We will speak again on Monday evening.

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