

MMO response to actions by Greenpeace in South West Deeps

We were informed by Greenpeace yesterday (Wed 7 Sept) that it intends to collect more boulders and drop them into the sea at South West Deeps in what it refers to as a peaceful protest to prevent “destructive bottom trawling”.

This would mean further boulder drops into the marine space without the required marine licences.

We are extremely disappointed that Greenpeace intends to continue with its actions. Greenpeace is aware of the work that is being undertaken by MMO to protect these sites and the process that must be followed, and Greenpeace was left in no doubt following the judicial comments in the previous court proceedings, that it is expected to comply with the marine licensing regime.

We will continue to monitor and investigate as appropriate.

Since the programme started, MMO has already delivered a range of management measures in four offshore sites, including Dogger Bank SAC which at 12,331 sq. kilometres, is the largest MPA in England protecting seabed habitat. We also recently published a call for evidence, and sought views on MMO’s draft assessments of the impacts of bottom-towed fishing gear on a further 13 marine protected areas (MPAs) in order to identify appropriate long-term site protection.

MMO will continue to undertake full evidence-based assessments in consultation with all stakeholders to establish robust legislative measures to protect our important marine habitats. These will be based on the best available scientific evidence and will be accompanied by a thorough analysis of how such measures will affect fishing activity. We are implementing this work in a phased, risk-based manner ensuring that those MPAs that are most vulnerable to damage from fishing activities are assessed and managed first. We will also engage with all users and stakeholders, including interested environmental NGOs with whom we have established a forum to engage and update on progress. This includes Greenpeace.

Therefore, as England’s marine regulator, we are very disappointed that Greenpeace has chosen to take this action to drop boulders to form a barrier as we don’t believe it is justified or will help protect our marine environment.

It is also a requirement under the Marine and Coastal Access Act that any deposit of construction below high water is required to have a Marine Licence. Greenpeace do not hold, nor have they applied for one and as such their activity is potentially illegal.

As unlicensed activity has now taken place today (Thurs 1 Sept), MMO has launched a formal investigation in accordance with its regulatory function

around marine licensing enforcement and is gathering evidence before considering its next response.

South West Deep (East) is a large offshore marine conservation zone (MCZ) covering an area of 4,676 km². It is located in the Western Channel and Celtic Sea where its closest point to land lies 190 km south-west of Cornwall. The depth of the water reaches 750m in some places and the area is home to a wide variety of important species including flatfish such as sole and plaice on the seabed surface, and species of clam, cockles and marine worms. The site also provides habitats and prey species for a range of commercial fish species, as well as marine birds and mammals.

The location is part of a third round of the MMO's work to manage fishing in our offshore MPAs, and the MMO is currently gathering and analysing evidence to inform our management decisions for this site. Any proposed management for this site will be subject to public consultation, and all necessary fisheries management measures for all English offshore MPAs will be in place by the end of 2024.

The fishing vessels that work in these waters are predominantly French and Spanish with only two UK static netters which are vessels that deploy a static wall of netting (either trammel or gill net) in a fixed position. From available records, the type of fishing undertaken is a mix of gill netting, long lining, bottom trawling, pelagic trawling and fly seining.

Therefore, it is our view that to drop boulders in this location will have minimal impact.

The MMO remains open to discussions with Greenpeace to ensure we can achieve our joint goal of marine nature recovery. In fact, MMO met with a range of MPA stakeholders, including Greenpeace, just last week to discuss our work to manage fishing in MPAs.

To assist vessels' safe navigation, MMO understands that there are 18 boulders in the following locations, based on communication from Greenpeace and observation by MMO officers.

The coordinates of each boulder provided by Greenpeace are:

- N 48-59.1284 W 008-46.7469
- N 48-58.9120 W 008-47.9099
- N 48-57.8316 W 008-47.3914
- N 48-57.6745 W 008-48.8258
- N 48-56.9305 W 008-47.9453

- N 48-56.7746 W 008-49.3467
- N 48-55.7351 W 008-48.7217
- N 48-55.8803 W 008-49.9904
- N 48-55.0817 W 008-49.1273
- N 48-54.9064 W 008-50.8714
- N 48-54.2681 W 008-49.7659
- N 48-54.0387 W 008-51.2680
- N 48-53.2421 W 008-50.4760
- N 48-53.1244 W 008-51.8232
- N 48-52.2789 W 008-51.3377
- N 48-52.1629 W 008-52.6250
- N 48-50.8866 W 008-53.5042
- N 48-51.1433 W 008-51.9922

Foreign criminals and illegal entrants to the UK removed to Albania

Yesterday (Thursday 1 September) the UK government removed a total of 32 foreign criminals and immigration offenders on a charter flight to Albania.

Five individuals who entered the UK illegally were removed on yesterday's flight, including one person who was removed in 24 days after arriving via small boat in August.

Other individuals included a person who was removed 19 days after being caught by immigration officers working in a restaurant having overstayed as a visitor, and another who arrived hidden in a lorry from May.

The 27 foreign national offenders removed had received combined prison sentences of more than 87 years and were convicted of crimes including the supply of Class A drugs, facilitating illegal entry and sexual offences.

Home Secretary Priti Patel said:

This flight sends a clear message to those who flout our laws and immigration rules that you will be swiftly removed. Anyone who comes to our country in a small boat or other dangerous, illegal means should not expect to stay in the UK for long.

We are working closely with the Albanian government to tackle illegal immigration and have this week agreed our joint operational plans to expedite the removal of Albanians who enter the UK illegally via small boats.

Alongside measures in our Nationality and Borders Act, this will help end the cycle of last-minute claims and appeals that can delay removals. We will stop at nothing to remove those with no right to be here as the public rightly expects.

Foreign offenders returned on yesterday's flight to Albania include:

- an individual sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for intent to supply Class A drugs
- an individual sentenced to over four years' imprisonment for facilitating illegal entry
- an individual sentenced to over seven years' imprisonment for intent to supply Class A drugs

Yesterday's flight is the 45th operated by the Home Office this year as the government tackles illegal migration and abuse of the asylum system.

Since signing our returns agreement with Albania in 2021, we have removed nearly 1,000 Albanian foreign national offenders, including some who crossed the Channel illegally to come to the UK.

The UK has removed 7,638 people via enforced, voluntary and other return types since January 1, including 1,995 foreign national offenders. In August 2022 alone, 220 criminals were removed from the UK on both charter and scheduled flights.

The Nationality and Borders Act will further deter illegal entry into the UK, breaking the business model of people-smuggling networks and speed up the removal of those with no right to be in the UK.

Consultation on annual return 2023 concludes

Government response

The Charity Commission's response to the conclusion of the consultation on annual return 2023



Helen Stephenson, CEO of the Charity Commission said:

I am pleased that a wide range of charities and interested parties have engaged positively with our consultation on the annual return, and would like to thank all those who made time to have their say. The annual return is a vital tool, which helps us gather the data we need to regulate effectively, and which serves to widen public understanding of charities. We are now carefully reviewing the responses, and intend to publish an analysis of the consultation, along with the new annual return questions, later this year.

Background

- The Commission received 460 responses, as of midnight 01/09/2022. 54% of respondents were acting on behalf of their charity and included both trustees and employees; 38% of respondents were trustees sharing their personal view on the consultation topics.
- The consultation ran from 9 June to 1 September 2022.
- Overall, the tone of engagement was positive. Early analysis of the feedback received indicates areas requiring further thought to help ensure the Commission gathers data in a way that is straightforward, and relevant to charities regardless of their purpose and the type of work they do.
- The Commission is now analysing responses, and will publish a consultation response towards the end of the year.

- The Annual Return is an online form that all charities with yearly incomes of £10,000 or more must complete within 10 months of the end of their financial reporting period. Further background about the annual return, and the proposed changes for 2023, can be viewed [on the Commission's website](#).

Published 2 September 2022

New programme aimed to boost diversity in boardrooms

- Government launches new programme to boost diversity in public boardrooms
- New scheme will spread opportunity across the UK as part of levelling up drive
- Aspiring board members to receive practical boardroom experience, knowledge and skills

Today, (2 September 2022) the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Greg Clark MP, has launched a UK-wide pilot Boardroom Apprentice programme to develop aspiring board members for positions across the public and voluntary sectors.

The programme aims to create a pipeline of more diverse talent to ensure public and voluntary sector boardrooms more closely reflect the communities they serve across the UK.

Candidates will undertake 12 months of board learning, development and placements, arming them with the knowledge and practical experience they need to become board members.

The Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Greg Clark MP, said:

Our boardrooms should be open to the best talent available.

I encourage aspiring board members from all backgrounds to apply for this unique opportunity to expand their skills, grow their knowledge and gain invaluable experience.

Today's announcement builds on a successful programme in Northern Ireland that has already seen over 50% of participants appointed to a board position within 12 months post completion.

Born to a Jamaican father and mother from Northern Ireland, David is a class of 2021 participant on the Boardroom Apprentice programme. David has been

disabled since birth and has sought to overcome some of the challenges experienced by persons with disabilities.

David Johnston, Boardroom Apprentice, Community Relations Council, said:

Being part of the Boardroom Apprentice programme as a privilege.

For me the Boardroom Apprentice programme has reinforced the importance of being motivated and committed to enhancing public service delivery. Diversity is in the DNA of the Boardroom Apprentice programme, so apply and be the change that you want to see.

Jo McGinley, from Derry/Londonderry in Northern Ireland, completed the NI Boardroom Apprentice programme in 2020. She applied to the programme because, her family and herself had a huge amount of support from voluntary and public sectors and she wanted to give something back to her local community.

Jo McGinley, Non-Executive Director on the Board of a local charity, said:

My impression was that you only went on to a Board when you retired or when you were senior in an organisation. Boardroom Apprentice fundamentally changed my opinion on that. The programme gives participants, regardless of their background or education; the knowledge, experience, and skills to sit on a Board.

I gained practical experience sitting on a Board, increased my understanding of the role of a Board member and developed a fantastic network of support. So, the advice that I'd give anyone who is thinking of going for the Boardroom Apprentice programme is to do it!

As a result of completing the Boardroom Apprentice programme, Jo is now a Non-Executive Director on the Board of a local charity.

The programme forms part of the government's wider mission to level up the country and strengthen the Union by spreading opportunity and improving diversity of thought, background, experience and geographic location of Board candidates.

We expect to open to apprentice applications in the autumn.

Russia's 2008 military invasion of Georgia: Joint statement to the OSCE

This statement is delivered on behalf of Bulgaria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Sweden, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America.

We reaffirm our full support for Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders.

Fourteen years since the Russian Federation's military invasion of Georgia, we remain deeply concerned over the continued occupation of parts of the territory of Georgia and underline the need for the peaceful resolution of the conflict based on full respect for international law and commitments, including the UN Charter and the Helsinki Final Act.

We condemn Russia's aggression against Georgia in 2008 and express our deep concern over Russia's military exercises and ongoing military presence in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. We also reiterate our condemnation of Russia's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine.

We welcome Georgia's compliance with the EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement. We call upon Russia to fulfill immediately its clear obligation under the ceasefire agreement to withdraw its forces to pre-conflict positions, as well as its commitments to allow unfettered access for the delivery of humanitarian assistance and not to impede creation of international security arrangements on the ground. We call upon Russia to reverse its recognition of the so-called independence of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions.

We condemn Russia's steps, which appear intended to unilaterally establish the Georgia-Russia state border on the segments of the occupied territories and incorporate a part of Aibgha village of Georgia into Krasnodar Krai. In the same vein, we express concern over Russia's attempted seizure of 180 hectares of land in Gagra district of Abkhazia, Georgia, which is another step toward attempted annexation. We urge Russia to reverse this process.

We note the January 2021 judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in the case concerning the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia in August 2008 and its consequences, including its findings that Russia has exercised effective control over Georgia's regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia following the 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, including through its military presence. The Court also ruled that Russia, in violation of the European Convention on Human Rights, tortured Georgian Prisoners of War; arbitrarily detained and killed Georgian civilians, and was responsible for their inhuman and degrading treatment; prevented the return of ethnic Georgians to their homes; and failed to conduct investigations into killings of civilians. We call on Russia to fully comply with the judgment, including

by allowing internally displaced persons (IDPs) to return to their homes in safety and dignity. We also note the decision of International Criminal Court (ICC) of 30 June, 2022 that issued arrest warrant applications for the war crimes committed during Russia's invasion in 2008. We call on Russia to cooperate with the office of prosecutor of the ICC.

We are concerned over the continuous discrimination against Georgians on the grounds of ethnicity in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and abuses, including severe restrictions on rights related to freedom of movement, education, residence and property, particularly in connection with the destruction of the houses of IDPs. We call on those in control to enable full and unhindered access by international human rights organisations to the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. We condemn the decision to replace instruction in Georgian language with Russian in schools of the ethnic-Georgian-inhabited Gali district of the Abkhazia region. We also condemn obliteration and alteration of Georgian features from the Georgian cultural heritage monuments in both regions.

We are particularly concerned over the ongoing installation of barbed wire fences and other artificial barriers along the administrative boundary lines (ABLs) of Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions. Isolation and continuous restrictions on freedom of movement have destabilized the situation on the ground and severely impacted the security, safety, well-being, and humanitarian conditions of civilians in conflict-affected areas, particularly in Akhalkalaki district, where reports suggest the local population suffers from shortages of medicine and food, and is denied access to pensions and essentials, including the free healthcare services available in Georgian Government controlled territory. This creates a risk for further depopulation of the Akhalkalaki district.

We remain deeply concerned by ongoing arbitrary detentions around the ABLs and call for the immediate and unconditional release of Irakli Bebuashvili, Kristine Takalandze and all those under arbitrary detention.

We condemn the killing of Georgian citizens Archil Tatunashvili, Giga Otkhozoria, and Davit Basharuli, and urge Russia to remove any obstacles to bringing the perpetrators to justice. In this context, we reiterate our support for Georgia's preventive steps aimed at eradicating impunity and note the Otkhozoria-Tatunashvili List adopted by the government of Georgia.

We support the effective continuation of Geneva International Discussions (GID), as of the only format with the Russian Federation to address implementation of EU-mediated 12 August 2008 ceasefire agreement, as well as the security, human rights, and humanitarian challenges stemming from the unresolved Russia – Georgia conflict. We underline the necessity of progress on the core issues of the discussions, including on the non-use of force, establishing international security arrangements in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and ensuring the safe, dignified, and voluntary return of IDPs and refugees in accordance with international law. We strongly support applying the Women, Peace and Security agenda in the GID in order to facilitate inclusive and sustainable peace and security on the ground.

We express our support for the Incident Prevention and Response Mechanisms (IPRMs) in Ergneti and Gali and emphasize the important role they can have in preventing the escalation of the conflict and in helping to protect the safety and security of people on the ground. We express our great concern over the lengthy suspension of the Gali IPRM and urge its resumption without further delay or pre-conditions, in line with the ground rules.

We reaffirm our unwavering support for the EU Monitoring Mission (EUMM) and call upon Russia to allow the EUMM to implement its mandate in full, including by enabling the EUMM's access on both sides of the ABLs.

We welcome the launch of a multi-stakeholder process for developing a comprehensive "State Strategy for de-occupation and peaceful conflict resolution" by the government of Georgia, as well as the launch of the strategic review of the reconciliation and engagement policy. We support the Georgian government's 'A Step to a Better Future' peace initiative, aimed at improving the humanitarian and socio-economic conditions of people residing in Georgia's Abkhazia and South Ossetia regions and at fostering confidence building among divided communities. We urge active work on reconciliation and engagement programs and stand ready to support.

We encourage the OSCE's engagement in the process of finding a peaceful resolution to the Russia-Georgia conflict. We regret the closure of the OSCE mission to Georgia in 2009 and encourage the OSCE participating States to decide on the reopening of the OSCE cross-dimensional mission in Georgia, including a monitoring capacity able to operate unhindered across the ABLs. The reopening of the mission would strengthen considerably the OSCE's engagement in the GID and IPRMs. Furthermore, re-establishment of a field mission would support OSCE's work in every phase of the conflict cycle.

The Group of Friends of Georgia will continue to raise awareness of the conflict and of developments on the ground, hold Russia accountable for its obligations and commitments, and advocate for the conflict's peaceful resolution.