

Press release: PM announces new UK-China action to end the illegal wildlife trade

Proposals to outlaw the sale of ivory have attracted more than 70,000 replies – one of the largest responses in the history of Defra.

Officials are still analysing the replies but said it was clear that the ‘overwhelming majority’ support a ban. The government will set out its detailed response shortly.

As part of a global government effort to crack down on the wildlife trade, Prime Minister Theresa May has announced a joint UK-China effort to strengthen international cooperation.

Ahead of the London 2018 Illegal Wildlife Trade Conference, the two countries will pledge to share our expertise in this area with countries in the southern African region.

Border Force officers will share their expertise in identifying smuggled ivory with counterparts worldwide to stop wildlife trafficking.

The UK military also trains an elite force of anti-poachers in African countries.

This week, an enforcement workshop facilitated by UK and Chinese experts is being held in Johannesburg to share best practice on tackling the international illegal wildlife trade.

In October 2017, the Environment Secretary launched a public consultation on proposals to ban sales of ivory in the UK.

The proposals would help protect elephants and help combat poaching by removing opportunities for criminals to trade illegally-poached ivory.

The environment and working together to tackle the wildlife trade are being discussed by the UK and China during a three-day visit by Mrs May.

Yesterday, the Prime Minister visited the Yangtze River in Wuhan, where she was briefed by local experts on Wuhan’s efforts to reduce pollution in the river and in the city’s lakes, including from micro plastic pollution.

The Prime Minister heard how improvements in water quality are helping to protect and restore the population of Yangtze River finless porpoises, including through a project led by the Zoological Society of London working in conjunction with local marine biologists.

Speaking in China, the Prime Minister said:

My visit to China is about our two countries working together on some of the most significant challenges of our time. And during my visit I have seen first-hand the way UK expertise is supporting Chinese efforts to protect wildlife and improve the quality of life of its citizens.

I am proud of the agreement that the UK and China have made to boost our co-operation in the fight against the illegal ivory trade.

We have committed to using all the levers at our disposal to lobby for other countries to implement domestic bans and stamp out this abhorrent practice.

The government will work both at home and overseas to tackle poaching and the illegal ivory trade.

In October 2018, the UK will host a fourth international conference on the illegal wildlife, bringing global leaders to London to tackle the strategic challenges of the trade.

This follows the groundbreaking London 2014 conference on the illegal wildlife trade, and subsequent conferences in Botswana and Vietnam.