

# Animal welfare newsletter

Autumn 2008

## Angela Smith MP

### Angela backs new Marine Bill

The new Marine Bill will be a major step forward for wildlife protection in our coastal waters. In the UK we have some of the best beaches, cleanest seas and most beautiful coastline in Europe.

Living in Essex means that none of us are very far away from the sea and the fun that visiting the coast brings. Sadly though, currently around 30% of Britain's coastline is off limits to the public, whilst in the remaining 70% access is often poor, with no paths or those being in a bad state.



The new Marine Bill will open our coastline to everyone, not just the lucky few who own land close by. I fully support the Government's objective to allow all families to have safe access to walk, paddle and play along our coast, and at the same time to protect marine life.

The bill provides for a long distance route around the English coast - planned by English Nature after consultation of landowners, local authorities, access forums (involving local people) and wildlife groups.

Part of the Marine Bill will also make provision for a network of designated Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in British waters, a form of Marine Protected Area (MPA). These zones could form up to 20% of our seas, and are to protect some of our most nationally important species. It will conserve for example, the rare Fan Shell, the Ocean Quahog clam, as well as Seagrass and Maerl beds. This will help to maintain, and in some cases restore, ecosystems which may have been damaged in the past.



Short Snouted Seahorse - found off the coast of Essex

The Marine Bill is designed to balance the desires of people to visit the coast, and the needs of the environment. But it does more than that as the knock on effect will be beneficial to the ecosystems and sea life.

Angela said, *"It is really good news that this landmark bill is going to help protect the rich and diverse ecosystems around the coast. So much of Britain's wildlife relies on the sea, and this bill will ensure it is adequately protected."*

The short snouted seahorse (pictured) is one of the rarer examples of River Thames wildlife that will receive added protection under this Bill.



This new edition of my Animal Welfare Newsletter is in response to the many enquiries and letters I have on this issue. It's my way of updating you on my actions, what progress has been made - and where more needs to be done.

Thank you for your interest - and your campaigning.

Angela Smith MP

**Angela Smith MP working hard for Basildon & East Thurrock**

Basildon: Fryerns, Kingswood, Lee Chapel, Laindon (part), Langdon Hills, Vange.

East Thurrock: Corringham, Fobbing, Bulphan, Horndon on the Hill, Orsett, Stanford le Hope

## Angela joins MPs in calling for Seal hunt ban

Angela again joined anti-fur campaigners in Parliament to call for the banning of the Canadian seal hunt. Angela, who has been to see the Grey Seals in their natural environment, watched horrific footage of this year's hunt collected by the charity and animal campaign group 'Respect for Animals'.

Angela said, *"Before I became an MP, I visited Canada and went out onto the ice to see the seals in their natural habitat. The seal hunters were in another area, so 'our' seals were safe and I have never forgotten the beauty and tranquillity of those days. But the Canadian seal hunt is the largest slaughter of marine animals anywhere on the planet, and the footage revealed the killing is brutal and clearly not quick or humane. I have taken the matter up with the UK Trade Minister, who is lobbying our EU counterparts to attempt to bring in a Europe-wide ban on seal products. The Canadian Government should be encouraging eco-tourism for people to visit these magnificent animals in their natural habitat, rather than supporting this cull."*

Thanking Angela for her support, Respect's Mark Glover said, *"it is still legal to import the products of this cruel slaughter into the UK, and this must end now. Angela has been an active supporter for many years and with her help and that of other MPs, I know we can win this extra protection"*.

**STOP PRESS:** A few days before the newsletter went to print, the European Commission proposed a law to ban the import and trade of seal products within the EU. Angela said, *"This development is fantastic, I will be urging British MEPs to do all they can so this becomes law as soon as possible."*



Angela with actress Alison Steadman at the Parliamentary briefing by Respect for Animals.

## Government calls off badger cull

Angela backed Hilary Benn (Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) in his announcement that the proposed cull of thousands of badgers will now not go ahead. The move was designed to prevent the spread of Bovine TB from one cattle herd to another. Angela had made a strong submission to the Secretary of State during the review opposing the cull.



In their final report, the Independent Scientific Group found that reactive culling- killing badgers in areas where there had been local TB outbreaks, made the problem worse; whilst proactive killing could only produce marginal results.

Hilary Benn said, *"Having listened carefully to a wide range of views from scientists, farming, veterinary and wildlife organisations...and having listened to all the evidence I have decided that whilst a cull might work, it also might not work. It could make the disease much worse...I do not think it would be right to take the risk."*

Professor John Krebs (a leading zoologist) said, *"The scientific group concluded that if you culled badgers on a very large scale over a very long time you would have some effect on TB in cattle...but it would not be practical to do it, because of the scale of the cull...it would involve killing 170,000 badgers to get a modest reduction in TB in cattle"*.

The RSPCA has written to Angela to say *"Thank-you on behalf of the RSPCA as a whole and its many thousands of supporters for all your efforts."*

## Whaling update

Earlier this year Jonathan Shaw (Minister for Marine, Landscape and Rural Affairs) wrote to Angela updating her on the situation regarding Japan's Antarctic Whale slaughter.

Whilst welcoming the decision of the Government of Japan not to target Humpback whales this season, Mr Shaw said, *"I expressed concern that Japan continues to hunt fin whales which are listed as 'endangered'...I made it clear that the UK considers Japan's lethal research wholly unnecessary and that there is absolutely no justification for her continued whaling operations."*

Angela has thanked the minister for his strong support on this issue.



## EU dog and cat fur ban update

The European Parliament and Council of Ministers have now published legislation which formally recognises the ban on the import of cat and dog fur into the EU. This comes following the go ahead given by agriculture ministers at the end of last year.

The ban will come into force on 31<sup>st</sup> December 2008 and will ban the sale, import and export of cat and dog fur. Crucially the ban includes products that contain both cat and dog fur, preventing garments made of cat and dog fur from reaching the EU and the UK.

Angela said, *"It is unbelievable that cats and dogs could be killed just to provide a fur trim on gloves or a coat. I welcome and support the EU action - it sends a message across the world that cat and dog fur is not acceptable in the EU"*



## Protecting 'Ratty'

The water vole is to be added to the species protected under the Wildlife & Countryside Act.

Due to falling numbers, the Government has stepped in to try to halt the decline, which will include protections for the vole's riverbank habitats.

## Animals in circuses

Angela is continuing to press Government ministers to implement a ban on the use of wild animals in circuses. As patron of the Captive Animals Protection Society (CAPS), Angela has a longstanding commitment to ending cruelty to animals used for entertainment.

It is hoped to bring measures in under the new Animal Welfare Act, and Angela's representation pointed out the inherent cruelty that training wild animals to perform in circuses and transport them around the country.

*"With the best will in the world you really can't train and exercise an elephant or a tiger in Basildon or Thurrock. I was delighted that the most recent circus to visit the area was human acts only - and their feats of skill were very popular!"*



# Basildon Council focuses on good animal welfare

Basildon Council is currently revising its Animal Welfare charter. Angela has provided information to this review, encouraging the best possible practice. The new charter should be published in the autumn.

Councils can take action on such issues as banning circuses from council land and ensuring that pet shops are properly licensed, the staff are properly trained and that premises are adequate and suitable for animals. The charter is very important as it provides Basildon Council with a code of ethics on how best to deal with animals when they come into contact with the council.

Good Councils respect and support the RSPCA's five freedoms. The RSPCA argues that animals should have freedom from, distress or fear, hunger and thirst, pain, disease and injury, unnecessary constraint (i.e. restrictive cages) and physical discomfort.

Thurrock Council also has a welfare charter which was reviewed in January 2007.

Residents can write to their relevant council for copies of the charter.



## Find out more about the organisations featured in this newsletter:

### Angela's website

[www.mpangelasmith.org](http://www.mpangelasmith.org)



### Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)

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### Captive Animals Protection Society

PO Box 4186,

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M60 3ZA

[www.captiveanimals.org](http://www.captiveanimals.org)



### Basildon District Council

The Basildon Centre

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<http://www.basildon.gov.uk/80256b7a003be9ee/vweb/wpafen6bmkdy>



### Thurrock Borough Council

Civic Offices

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<http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/tradingstandards/>



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## Angela's website can be viewed at [www.mpangelasmith.org](http://www.mpangelasmith.org)

This site includes details of local activities around and about Basildon and East Thurrock.

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