



UK Tightens Law on International Shark Fin Trade

Shark Fins Act adopted into UK law today

Thursday 29th June, Westminster: The Shark Trust is celebrating as The Shark Fins Act passes into UK law, effectively reinforcing existing shark finning regulation through the broad application of global best practice.

“The Shark Fins Act now enshrines Fins Naturally Attached into UK law,” said Ali Hood, Director of Conservation for the Shark Trust. The Act not only applies to UK fisheries but also prohibits the import and export of detached shark fins, whether loose or in products. And whilst not an all-out ban on shark fin consumption and trade, Hood says, “this creates a more challenging environment for would-be traders, simplifying customs checks, and enabling the UK to hold other countries to the same standards to which we hold ourselves.”

Earlier this month The Shark Fins Act completed its passage through both Houses of Westminster supported unanimously by MPs and Peers from all sides. The Shark Trust has engaged in proceedings with interest, acknowledging this historic step in a 20 year journey from the first Shark Finning Regulation in 2003.

Shark finning (the removal of shark fins at sea and the discard of the carcass overboard) was banned in Europe and as a result the UK in 2003, following a campaign championed by UK Members of the European Parliament. In 2009 the UK took steps to further tighten shark finning regulation requiring sharks to be landed with their fins still *naturally* attached. The EU took a further four years to adopt equivalent legislation (2013), finally prohibiting the landing of detached fins by EU vessels.

Christina Rees MP introduced the Act to The House of Commons in 2022 as a Private Members Bill, which successfully garnered cross-party support. The Bill then passed to ‘the other House’ in January 2023, where Baroness Jones of Whitchurch led the debate in the Lords. The Peers demonstrated a clear grasp of the issues involved, and shark finning and the fin trade were discussed as a facet of overfishing, which is widely accepted as the greatest threat to sharks.

“I’m pleased to have played a small part in bringing an end to this cruel and wasteful practice,” said Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, “but the real thanks should go to the shark and marine conservation charities who did so much to highlight the need for a ban.”

Christina Rees, MP for Neath and Port Talbot added, “It has been a great privilege to take this hugely important Act through the House of Commons, and I am delighted to see it receive Royal Assent.”

Rees continued saying, “I want to put on record my thanks to campaigners in the marine conservation charities, including the Shark Trust, Shark Guardian, and Bite-Back, who have worked tirelessly to highlight the need to establish a law. My thanks also go to Baroness Jones of Whitchurch, for all her hard work in ensuring the Act’s orderly passage through the Lords.”

“This Act represents years of work and is the culmination of the leadership role taken by the UK on shark finning regulation. Banning the import and export of detached fins is a important addition to the fins naturally attached policy.” Hood went on to say, “The Shark Trust is pleased to have been able to play its part, providing briefings and expertise at many junctures. Massive thanks to all the organisations and members of the public who have so passionately campaigned for tighter finning regulation over the years.”

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Full DEFRA press release to follow