



nature's voice



The Rt. Hon Stephen Hammond MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Transport  
Department for Transport  
Great Minster House  
33 Horseferry Road  
London  
SW1P 4DR

18<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Dear Minister,

We are writing to urge you to formally raise the issue of the legal discharge status of the substance polyisobutene (PIB) under the MARPOL Convention, through the International Maritime Organisation (IMO).

You will no doubt have seen the recent distressing news reports of yet more seabirds being washed up along the south west coast of England, covered in PIB. This is the same substance that two months ago killed or rendered helpless hundreds of seabirds at various locations along the south coast. The true number of birds affected offshore, but not recorded by these incidents, is likely to have been much higher. Apart from the scale of the mortality inflicted on the birds, these are hugely distressing incidents for those who witness them.

The recent incidents add to a list of at least three other documented instances of mass seabird mortality around European coasts in recent years involving, or caused by, the release of PIB.

Under the MARPOL Convention, it is legal (with conditions) to discharge PIB when ships wash out their tanks. We believe, however, that the risks from PIB are seriously underestimated and that until the environmental impacts of PIB on the marine environment are better understood and monitored, PIB should be reclassified under MARPOL to prohibit its discharge at sea.

Following the initial PIB incident, the RSPB wrote to the IMO on the 1<sup>st</sup> March to request an urgent review of PIB's hazard status. In its reply, the IMO stated that a formal submission must be made by a Member State on the issue, in accordance with the IMO's submission procedures, in order to lead to discussion on the possible reclassification of PIB. We ask you to take this initial step and take the necessary actions to allow for the discussion of this important issue at an international level, so that further needless seabird deaths can be prevented in future.

We would be happy to discuss this further with you and your department, and provide any information on the recent spills at our disposal. We are also copying in Richard Benyon to this letter, as Minister responsible for the marine environment.

Yours sincerely,



Mike Clarke  
Chief Executive,  
RSPB



Gavin Grant  
Chief Executive,  
RSPCA



Stephanie Hilborne  
Chief Executive,  
The Wildlife Trusts

cc: The Rt. Hon Richard Benyon, Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs.