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Food & Rural Affairs

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Baroness Byford
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22nd October 2018

Dear Hazel,

Thank you for your contribution to the debate during Committee Stages of the Ivory Bill. I undertook to write to you in reply to your question on the proportion of exported ivory items that would be considered items of outstandingly high artistic, cultural or historical value.

The exemption set out in clause 2, which provides for 'pre-1918 items of outstanding artistic, cultural or historical value', recognises that there is a strata of items, made of or with ivory, which are traded for their artistic, cultural or historical value rather than their ivory content. This exemption is specifically intended to be narrow, applicable only to items that are rare and important items of their type.

As the result of a government amendment to Clause 2, the Secretary of State will lay regulations which will define any additional matters by which items will be assessed. These regulations will set out the criteria for this exemption and will be developed in consultation with experts from the museums sector, the arts, antiques and musicians sectors and conservation NGOs. We will draw upon existing criteria used by governance to assess pre-eminence and national importance, and items to be considered under this exemption will be assessed with the advice of leading experts from accredited and national museums.

As we are yet to fully define these criteria, it is not yet possible to indicate the number of items that will fall under this exemption, though given the nature of the exemption we do not intend that the criteria should be applicable to many items.

Once the ban is brought into force, we will publish data on the number of items exempted under clause 2 each year.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the Libraries of both Houses.

Yours ever,
John