



# Ivory Bill

## Factsheet – Illegal ivory seizures

29 June 2018

### Legislative powers for ivory seizures

International trade in ivory was banned in 1990 by the Convention of international Trade in Endangered Species (CITES)<sup>1</sup>. The EU implemented CITES through a collection of Regulations known as the EU Wildlife Trade Regulations<sup>2</sup> which are directly applicable in UK legislation. The UK's enforcement provisions for the EU Wildlife Regulations are the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement) Regulations 1997 (as amended) (COTES). This enables the enforcement authorities, both the Police and UK Border Force, to take action in relation to COTES offences. In addition, UK Border Force can use its powers under the Customs and Excise Management Act 1979 in respect of provisions within COTES.

### UK ivory seizures

The UK Border Force compiles data on the seizures of items listed under CITES, including both raw and worked ivory. Between 2013 and 2017, 602 items of ivory or containing ivory have been seized by the UK Border Force. Over the five year period this equates to 466kgs of ivory and items containing ivory being seized. In total, over this time period the UK Border Force conducted 3,734 seizures of items listed under the appendices of CITES items containing ivory were the 4<sup>th</sup> most seized item.

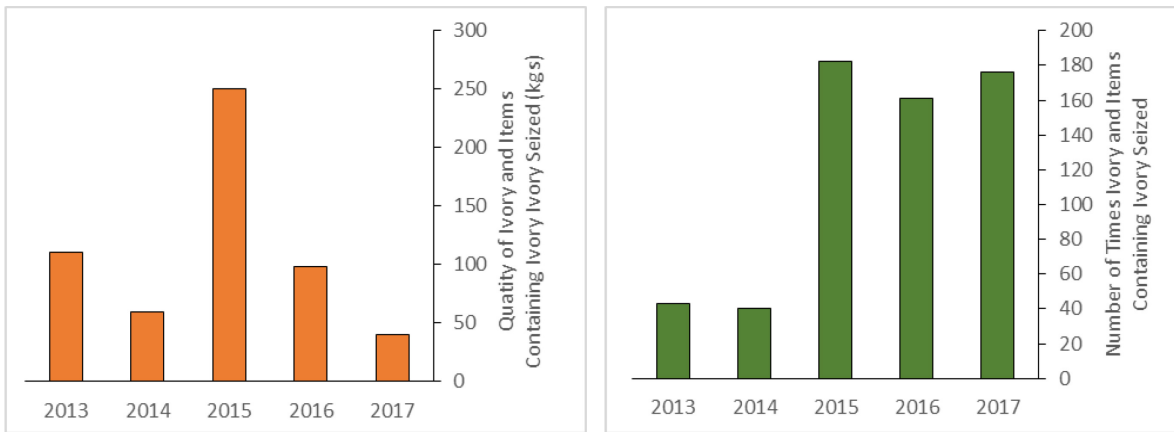
Building upon this, countries that are party to CITES, including the UK, report on seizures of ivory to the Elephant Trade Information System (ETIS). Between 2010 and 2014, 154 seizures of illegal ivory were reported by the UK to the ETIS, this was a significant increase in the previous five-year period when 75 seizures were reported<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Trade in Asian elephant ivory had been banned under CITES since 1975. African elephant ivory was added to Appendix 1 of CITES in 1990, meaning a total ban on ivory sales has thus been in force since 1990.

<sup>2</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97, Commission Regulation (EC) No 865/2006, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) No 792/2012, Commission Implementing Regulation (EU) 2015/736 and Commission Regulation (EU) 2016/2029 amending Council Regulation (EC) No 338/97.

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.trafficj.org/publication/16\\_A\\_Rapid\\_Survey\\_of\\_UK\\_Ivory\\_Markets.pdf](http://www.trafficj.org/publication/16_A_Rapid_Survey_of_UK_Ivory_Markets.pdf)



**Figure 1:** Data from UK Border Force on seizures of ivory and items containing ivory. Data source: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications>)

Data over this timeframe indicates a large increase in the number of times items seized between 2014 and 2015. This is likely the result of a targeted inspections and searches by the UK Border Force for ivory carvings in postal parcels en route to China where over 150 seizures were recorded in this operation<sup>4</sup> as well as single seizure of 110kg of ivory at Heathrow Airport<sup>5</sup>. The weight of items containing ivory varies year on year, however a significantly higher seizure volume was report in 2015. This is the result of a single large seizure of 110kg of ivory, including tusks, carved bangles and beads, at Heathrow in transit from Angola. This single seizure of ivory was larger in volume than that of the annual seizures in the previous 10 years.

The UK market for ivory items, albeit for antique ivory, is in global terms surprisingly large. This is primarily a factor of the success and international renown of the UK arts and antiques sector. A survey conducted in 2004 found that the UK has the greatest number of outlets openly selling ivory products in the world, and ranked ninth in terms of the number items available<sup>6</sup>.

It is extremely difficult to differentiate illegal ivory and legal ivory, with the UK Border Force having seized numerous ivory items which have been subject to artificial stains or aging



**Figure 2:** Images of an ivory ornament seized by UK Border Force. X-rays of the seized items indicate whether they contain non-organic materials, which includes ivory among others, and are shown by the areas of green.

<sup>4</sup> Trade in Asian elephant ivory had been banned under CITES since 1975. African elephant ivory was added to Appendix 1 of CITES in 1990, meaning a total ban on ivory sales has thus been in force since 1990.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-34905000>

<sup>6</sup> Martin, E. and Stiles, D. (2005). *The Ivory Markets of Europe*. Care for the Wild International: West Sussex; Save the Elephants: London.

techniques. Furthermore, studies have shown where outlets offering legal and illegal ivory side-by-side, revenue and projects become intermingled and difficult to separate. The legal market therefore presents an opportunity for criminals to launder recently poached ivory as old ivory products. The Bill will remove this opportunity.

## International perspective

Between 1989 and January 2016, 24,636 elephant product seizures across 98 countries and territories had been reported to ETIS. According to ETIS data, seizures in 2014-2017 were the largest quantities of ivory since 1989. Between 2010 and 2014, 154 seizures were reported by the UK. Over the same time period in Germany and France, respectively 236 and 268 seizures were reported to the ETIS.

Year	Number of ivory seizure cases	Raw ivory weight (kg)	Worked ivory weight - RIE (kg)	Total (kg)
2007	588	8,549	1,604	10,153
2008	531	5,549	1,426	6,975
2009	1,349	27,410	5,273	32,683
2010	1,331	22,935	3,409	26,344
2011	1,875	45,285	6,168	51,453
2012	1,350	36,130	5,168	41,298
2013	1,598	58,067	7,104	65,171
2014	1,277	31,656	7,814	39,470
<b>Total</b>	<b>9,899</b>	<b>235,581</b>	<b>37,966</b>	<b>273,547</b>

**Figure 3:** Estimated weight of ivory in raw ivory equivalent (RIE) terms represented by unadjusted ETIS seizure data, 2007, 2014. Data source – ETIS<sup>7</sup>

Seizure data from ETIS indicates that the UK for illegal ivory trade is an import, re-export and/or transit country. As stated before 154 seizures of illegal ivory in the UK were reported to ETIS between 2010 and 2014, over this timeframe 151 seizures were reported by other countries that have involvement of the UK in the items trade. The Bill aims to prevent products from the UK contributing to markets which create demand for ivory, thus driving poaching and illegal trade in ivory. The Bill will demonstrate the UK does not consider the trade in ivory acceptable, sending a strong message that similar actions should be taken globally.

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<sup>7</sup> Conference of the Parties 17: CITES ETIS report - [link](#)



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