

'Motion for the Ocean'

To be proposed by: Councillor Francomb

Pre-amble

This motion builds on four previous water quality motions passed by Lewes District Council which primarily focussed on rivers and extends our focus to our local seas. It is based on a motion developed through the Local Government Association Coastal Special Interest Group¹

The health of our ocean is inextricably linked with our climate and with human health, wellbeing and prosperity. A healthy ocean is fundamental in regulating the global climate system and is an essential ally in our fight against climate change. The ocean absorbs more than 90% of the excess heat in the climate system as well as absorbing around 20% of annual carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions generated by human activity.

However, decades of irresponsible marine exploitation and pollution have led to significant levels of degradation, and this together with the detrimental impacts of our changing climate on marine ecosystems has led to national and global recognition that the world ocean is in crisis. An unhealthy ocean does not absorb or store carbon as effectively as a healthy one, further worsening the impacts of the climate crisis.

The UK government's recent Marine Strategy assessment confirms that our marine environment is not healthy. An ocean in crisis is not only bad news for our climate, but also for our local fishing and tourism industries and for the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our coastal communities.

In our district we are witnessing the ocean crisis first-hand. Fish stocks continue to collapse from permitted and illegal overfishing and poor water quality is impacting critical ecosystems, seafood and safe bathing. Our beaches are covered in litter with each tide, much of it plastic, though this is just the tip of the iceberg of the amount of litter in our oceans. Marine microplastics have been found in all marine environments and in the bodies of many species, including humans and the species of fish we regularly eat.

Our coastal residents are on the frontline of climate change. The impact of the climate crisis on the sea is profound, from rising water temperatures and changes in ocean chemistry, to sea level rise and increased frequency and ferocity of storms, including in our local waters. This is affecting fishing stocks and increasing the risk of flooding and storm damage to life, infrastructure and properties.

At the same time the ocean is at the heart of our heritage and local economy. From the maritime and marine expertise around the Newhaven Port, to the thousands of visitors who come to Seaford Bay and Peacehaven experience the sight, sound and

¹ <https://lgacoastalsig.com/motion-for-the-ocean/>

feel of the ocean. The ocean can play a vital role in building community wealth, and we must strive to develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers both ocean recovery and local prosperity.

At present, not everyone has the opportunity or means to access and enjoy the ocean, even though we are a coastal district. First-hand experience is essential if people are to be motivated to play their part in protecting it. Helping individuals develop their ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean) is an essential part of this motion, as is individual and collective marine citizenship (promoting and demanding an ocean recovery through local, national and international policy changes).

Urgent action is needed to recover the health of our ocean to enable it to deliver the full range of benefits, including climate regulation, carbon storage in coastal and marine habitats, coastal protection, a thriving local economy, clean safe recreation and happy, healthy coastal communities.

Motion:

This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery and pledges to:

1. To ensure that key strategies, including the Council's Climate and Nature Strategy, puts ocean-based and nature-based solutions at the heart of a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
2. Ensure that local planning seeks to support ocean recovery by focusing on green and blue infrastructure for nature recovery across the local plan area, working with partners including East Sussex County Council and Sussex Wildlife Trust.
3. Work with partners to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and develop a sustainable and equitable 'blue economy' that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity, including East Sussex County Council, Sussex Bay, The Living Coast, the local fishing industry, the Reimagining Newhaven Board overseeing the 'Capturing the value of the catch' project, Sussex IFCA and the Marine Management Organisation.
4. Work with Sussex College group to continue to build on its work embedding sustainable marine and maritime training at the heart of training provision as well as with technical / apprenticeship training providers where appropriate and increase understanding in the role our oceans and rivers can play in sequestering carbon.
5. Promote opportunities to grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in our district, including via our website and social media, and seek to promote sustainable and equitable access to the sea for all residents.
6. That the Leader writes to the Government asking it to seek to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by:
 - a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities have the resources they need to effectively research and monitor our growing

number of marine protected areas, and to set and enforce appropriate fishing levels that support local economies and deliver environmental sustainability.

- b) Working with coastal, estuarine and maritime communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
- c) Appointing a dedicated Minister for the Coast.
- d) Embedding 'ocean and civic literacy' into the national curriculum.
- e) Stopping plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics and set standards for microfibre-catching filters to ensure that all new domestic and commercial washing machines are fitted with a filter that captures a high percentage of microfibres produced in the wash cycle and support the solutions needed to address the threat posed by historic coastal landfill sites.
- f) Improving the water quality of our rivers, estuarine and coastal waters leading to the ocean to benefit nature and the health and wellbeing of all UK residents, including by stopping the regular pollution of our rivers and seas.
- g) Optimise the potential to gain multiple benefits from coastal ecosystems including tidal marshes and seagrass meadows, and use marine ecosystems to absorb and sequester greenhouse gases through the carbon cycle.
- h) Optimise the potential to develop off-shore wind farms and marine renewable energy (hydrokinetic energy) in harmony with the natural environment; and.
- i) By listening to marine and social scientific advice to update the Marine Policy Statement and produce a national Ocean Recovery Strategy which will:
 - i. Enable the recovery of marine ecosystems rather than managing degraded or altered habitats in their reduced state.
 - ii. Consider levelling up, marine conservation, energy, industrial growth, flood and coastal erosion risk management, climate adaptation and fisheries policy holistically rather than as competing interests.
 - iii. Develop a smarter approach to managing the health of the entire ocean that moves beyond Marine Protected Areas and enables links to be made across sectors towards sustainability.
 - iv. Establish improved processes for understanding the benefits of ocean recovery, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.

Glossary

A **Blue Economy** is one which uses ocean resources sustainably or even regeneratively whilst improving community wellbeing and social equity.

Ocean Literacy is the understanding of our individual and collective impact on the Ocean and its impact on our lives and wellbeing.

Marine citizenship is exercising the right to participate in the transformation of the human-ocean relationship for sustainability.

Net recovery is the process of halting and reversing degradation, resulting in improved ecosystem services and recovered biodiversity.

Civic Literacy is the knowledge of how to actively participate and initiate change in your community and the greater society.

[1] <https://lgacoastalsig.com/motion-for-the-ocean/>