

## County Council – 6 February 2024

### Item 9 - Notice of Motion by Councillor Hilton

#### Motion for the Ocean for East Sussex

The Coastal Special Interest Group's model Motion for the Ocean states that the Notice of Motion is necessary because:

- a) 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 (CO<sub>2</sub>) 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.
- b) 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.
- c) In East Sussex like the rest of planet, we are witnessing the ocean crisis first-hand. Fish stocks continue to collapse from permitted and illegal overfishing and poor water quality is impacting 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.
- d) Our residents are on the frontline of climate change and are being disproportionately impacted relative to inland communities. The impact of the climate crisis on the ocean is profound, from rising water temperatures and changes in ocean chemistry, to sea level rise and increased storminess, including in our local waters. This is changing what seafood is caught locally, accelerating the erosion of our coastline - increasing the risk to infrastructure and properties, and increasing the risk of flooding and storm damage.
- e) Urgent action is needed to halt these devastating changes and 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. We must play our part in recovering the health of the ocean.
- f) At present, not everyone has the opportunity or means to access and enjoy the ocean. Even within East Sussex there are people of all ages who have never experienced the joy of our ocean. First-hand experience of the ocean is essential if people are to be motivated to play their part in protecting it, whether that is through disposing of their litter responsibly, recycling what they can or volunteering in ocean conservation with local organisations. 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).

- g) Local authorities cannot solve the ocean crisis alone, but we can – and must – play our part.

1.2 Appendix 1 sets out what the model Motion for the Ocean recommends should be covered in the Plan and what should be included in the letter to government. These include some points that are specific to East Sussex, which have been included by Cllr Hilton.

### **Supporting Information**

The Council has recently been appointed as the Responsible Authority (RA) to develop and publish a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) for East Sussex and Brighton & Hove. This is a new mandatory requirement arising from the Environment Act 2021, which is intended to provide a framework for coordinated and targeted delivery by a range of partnerships, organisations and individuals from the public, private and voluntary sectors. The Environment Act covers land down to mean low water. However, early engagement with key stakeholders across the East Sussex LNRS area has clearly demonstrated that there is a widespread aspiration to look beyond the coast and to include the recovery of marine natural capital. The LNRS will capture these aspirations by including existing and potential areas of importance for marine biodiversity with the LNRS Local Habitat Map and including marine with the Statement of Biodiversity Priorities. The Council has also joined a national network of coastal Responsible Authorities who will work together to share best practice as to how to incorporate marine elements into LNRSs.

The extensive engagement and consultation required, as well as the complexity in collating and analysing multiple ecological data sets, means that it's currently anticipated that the LNRS will be published in the summer of 2025.

Alongside the mandatory requirement to develop a LNRS, the Environment Act introduced a Strengthened Biodiversity Duty, which requires all public authorities in England to consider what they can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. The first requirement is for the Council to publish a report by 1 January 2024 which sets out what the Council considers it can do to conserve and enhance biodiversity. This has been published on the Council's website here: [Biodiversity duty | East Sussex County Council](#)

The requirement on the Council to produce an LNRS and comply with the Strengthened Biodiversity Duty means that some of the actions in the proposed notice of motion are already being addressed. In addition, there is a range of partnerships and organisations, identified in appendix 2, that are also delivering against many of the actions in the proposed Notice of Motion. Appendix 3 provides a summary as to which actions set out in appendix 1 are being delivered by some of these existing partnership and organisations. These appendices indicate that the aims of the NoM can largely be met through existing work by the Council to produce a LNRS and through existing partnerships and organisations in East Sussex, without impacting on the current statutory requirement to produce the LNRS.

To date, 22 councils have passed versions of the Notice of Motion for the Ocean, including town, city, borough and two county councils (Devon and Cornwall County Councils). The versions that have been adopted range from the full model pledge (e.g. Falmouth Town Council) through to parts of the model pledge (e.g. Cornwall Council and Lewes District

Council do not include a commitment to the model pledge to 'report to full Council within 12 months on the actions and projects that will begin an ocean recovery').

The NoM proposal for the Council to produce and report on an ocean and river recovery strategy and action plan, which is a more significant commitment than the model pledge, will largely duplicate work already being undertaken and require resources that the Council does not currently have. As an indication of the possible scale of the task, the production of the Local Nature Recovery Strategy that the Council is currently undertaking, and which is largely being funded by government, is anticipated to take 2 years to prepare and cost an estimated £350,000, followed by an estimated £100,000 per year for the implementation, monitoring and review of the LNRS.

**Rupert Clubb**  
**Director of Communities, Economy and Transport**

## Appendix 1

This appendix sets out what the model Motion for the Ocean recommends should be covered in the Plan and what should be included in the letter to government. These include some points that are specific to East Sussex, which have been included by Cllr Hilton.

1) The Ocean and River Recovery Plan should aim to include:

1. Embedding ocean and river recovery in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets, and procurement by the Council (particularly in planning, the new Waste and Minerals Plan, regeneration, waste processing, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, and considering ocean-based and nature-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
2. Working with the Sussex Environment Board to deliver a county wide action plan that embeds these goals. Ensure it has the relevant membership organisations to implement actions.
3. Learn from and build on the existing innovative work already being carried out in the county such as the evolving cross party supported Rights of the River charter in Lewes, The Ouse and Adur Rivers Trust and the Sussex Kelp Recovery Project.
4. Ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy strives to support ocean and river recovery, working with the many partners already involved in this work.
5. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries and develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity; including the local fishing industry and the vital work of the Sussex IFCA and the Marine Management Organisation.
6. Work with Sussex College group to continue to build on their work embedding 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. Ensure this work is shared and promoted across East Sussex.
7. Work in partnership with the borough and district councils that sit along the river catchments of the Medway, Ouse, Rother, Uck, Brede, Tillingham, Cuckmere and Combe Haven and local community groups, land owners, farmers, clubs and other organisations that have a recreational, economic or other interest in these rivers' protection and recovery. This should include supporting and including the voices of the many citizen science projects that are springing up to monitor water quality and ensuring their voices are heard in any pollution mitigation projects being planned.
8. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in East Sussex, including ensuring all pupils are given the opportunity to experience the ocean first-hand before leaving primary school - striving to include home-schooled children - and promote sustainable and equitable access to the ocean through physical and digital experiences for all residents. Work to promote existing work in this area already being carried out by Sussex Wildlife Trust, South Downs National Park and others.

9. Create an online portal of the Council website to update on ocean and river recovery progress, signpost to ocean literacy development opportunities, and marine citizenship pledges.

2) The letter to government should ask them 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 communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
- c) Appointing a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities to ensure accountability.
- d) 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.
- e) 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 action to ensure income equality, marine conservation, energy, industrial development, 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.

## Appendix 2 – List of Relevant Partnerships and Organisations

There are a host of partnerships and organisations that are already delivering against many of the actions in the proposed Notice of Motion. Below is a non-exhaustive list, with a brief summary of some of the activity that is relevant to the NoM. The Council is a member of those partnerships that are marked with an asterisk:

- Sussex Nature Partnership\* ([Sussex Local Nature Partnership \(sussexlnp.org.uk\)](https://sussexlnp.org.uk)):
  - Produced the Natural Capital Investment Strategy in 2019, which includes marine natural capital.
  - The SNP is a key stakeholder group for the LNRS, including marine sector representatives (e.g. Sussex Bay, Sussex IFCA, SWT, the latter being key supporters of the Sussex Kelp Project).
  - The SNP collated joint responses to consultation on Marine Net Gain, August 2022.
- Catchment Partnerships: these cover the Cuckmere & Pevensey Levels\* ([Cuckmere & Pevensey Levels - South East Rivers Trust](#)) and Rother & Romney\* ([River Rother - South East Rivers Trust](#)). The partnerships are developing strategies for the recovery of rivers throughout the county.
- The Sussex Marine and Coastal Forum\* ([South Coast | Coastal Partnerships Network](#)): this is a multi-sector partnership that brings together stakeholders to work together to deliver environmental, economic and social benefits for marine and coastal ecosystems and communities in Sussex.
- Sussex Bay\* ([Nature recovery and climate resilience - Adur & Worthing Councils \(adur-worthing.gov.uk\)](#)): this is led by Adur and Worthing Councils and has been established to deliver coastal and marine natural capital restoration at scale across the whole of the Sussex coastline.
- Sussex Kelp Recovery Project ([Sussex Kelp Recovery Project | Sussex Wildlife Trust](#)): to champion, study and facilitate the restoration of Sussex kelp to support a thriving and sustainable ecosystem; to understand the ecological, social and economic value of kelp, including its capacity for carbon capture and storage.
- Living Coast Biosphere\* ([Home - The Living Coast](#)) – supports and delivers projects across Sussex, spanning nature conservation, suitable socio-economic development and environmental awareness. Stretches between Newhaven and Shoreham-by-Sea.
- Sussex Heritage Coast Partnership\* ([The Sussex Heritage Coast - South Downs National Park Authority](#)) – to protect and conserve one of the best stretches of undeveloped coast in England; Heritage Coast Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2020.
- Wild Coast Sussex ([Wild Coast Sussex](#)): the partnership of the Sussex Wildlife Trust, the Marine Conservation Society, Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority and Brighton SEA LIFE works with primary schools, young people (12-25) and commercial fishermen, as well as wider community and general public, to educate and inspire them to care for and protect their local sea and coast.
- The South East Rivers Trust ([Home - South East Rivers Trust](#)): works with a range of stakeholders to restore and reconnect rivers and connects people of all ages to experience and enjoy rivers.

- The Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority\* ([Welcome To Sussex IFCA \(sussex-ifca.gov.uk\)](https://www.sussex-ifca.gov.uk)): the IFCA is one of ten statutory bodies set up to manage the sea fisheries resources and the marine environment around the coast of England in a sustainable way. Council Members sit on the board and the Council contributes to the running costs of the IFCA.
- The two water companies that operate in East Sussex have produced various plans and investment programmes that cover rivers and the ocean, including:
  - Southern Water - Clean Rivers and Seas Plan ([southernwater.co.uk/water-for-life/clean-rivers-and-seas-plan/map](https://www.southernwater.co.uk/water-for-life/clean-rivers-and-seas-plan/map)).
  - South East Water - Draft 25 Year Environment Plan ([H25 - our 25 Year Plan which puts people and planet first | South East Water](#)).
- National Government: the government and its agencies have produced a number of plans and programmes that cover the ocean and rivers, including the South Inshore and South Offshore Marine Plan ([South Marine Plan 2018.pdf \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)), River Basin Management Plans ([River basin management plans: updated 2022 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)) and the Water Industry National Environment Programme ([Water industry national environment programme \(WINEP\) methodology - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)).

### Appendix 3 - Summary as to which actions set out in appendix 1 are being delivered

Action	NoM Actions	Existing Activity
1.1	Embed ocean and river recovery in all Council decision-making	Met by the Strengthened Biodiversity Duty and through the LNRS.
1.2	Work with the East Sussex Environment Board to deliver a county wide action plan	The Sussex Nature Partnership was established to lead on protecting and enhancing natural capital, as identified in the East Sussex Environment Strategy.
1.3	Build on the existing innovative work already being carried out in the county	This will be incorporated into the LNRS through an assessment of existing plans, policies and strategies.
1.4	Ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy strives to support ocean and river recovery	To be met through the development of the LNRS.
1.5	Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in marine industries	This is a statutory duty of the Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority.
1.6	Work with the Sussex College group	Education and engagement programmes are delivered by Wild Coast Sussex and by the South East Rivers Trust.
1.7	Work in partnership with the borough and district councils and communities that sit along the river catchments	The district and borough councils are Supporting Authorities under the LNRS Regulations and are therefore involved in the development of the LNRS. A key requirement in developing the LNRS is to carry out extensive consultation with a wide range of stakeholders.
1.8	Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship	Education and engagement programmes are delivered by Wild Coast Sussex and by the South East Rivers Trust.
1.9	Create an online portal of the Council website to update on ocean and river recovery progress etc.	The Environment Agency monitors and reports on the condition of rivers, as well as other water bodies (eg. groundwaters, bathing waters and so on).
2	Write to the government to ask them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030.	Not done or currently planned.