
NOTICE OF MOTION – MOTION FOR THE OCEAN FOR EAST SUSSEX

Motion for the Ocean for East Sussex

This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean and River Recovery.

MOTION WORDING

We recognise that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero carbon emissions targets, and we need net zero carbon emissions to recover our ocean. We also need to act as the custodians of the rivers, waterways and tributaries that run through our towns and villages on the way to the sea. We recognise that all people wherever they live, impact and are impacted by ocean and river health and that we have an essential role to play in recovering the health of our ocean.

This Council requests Cabinet to:

1. Report to full council within 6/12 months with an ocean and river recovery strategy and action plan that delivers against transparent, measurable indicators reported to the council annually (see next section for suggestion about strategic goals and action to be taken).
2. That the council writes to central government requesting that they put the oceans and rivers into net recovery by 2030. (full details of this letter and specific requests can be seen in the next section).

MOTION BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Ocean and River Recovery Strategy and Plan:

The 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.

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.

2. 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.
3. Ensure that the Local Nature Recovery Strategy strives to support ocean and river recovery, working with the many partners already involved in this work.
4. 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.

5. 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.
6. 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.
7. 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.
8. 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.

Letter to government

Write to the Government asking 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) Work with coastal communities to co-develop marine policy to ensure it delivers equitable and sustainable outcomes in local placemaking.
- c) Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities to ensure accountability.
- d) Stop 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) Listen 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.

Glossary

A “Blue Economy” is one which uses ocean resources sustainably or even regeneratively whilst improving community wellbeing and social equity. It is not simply marine or maritime economic activity or “blue growth”.

“Ocean literacy” is where a person understands the ocean’s influence on them and their influence on the ocean. For example, an understanding that the ocean stores carbon and an understanding that what they put down the drain can impact on ocean health. It can also include learning how to be an active marine citizen.

“Marine citizenship” is exercising the right to participate in the transformation of the human-ocean relationship for sustainability. This means taking individual and collective responsibility to consider one’s own and society’s impacts on the ocean; and exercising rights as a marine citizen, e.g. writing to a local Councillor to ask them to take action for ocean recovery; or promoting or making local, national or international policy changes.

Why is this declaration needed now?

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 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.

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.

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.

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).

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

Appendix I

This motion is based on a template motion drafted by the LGA Coastal Special Interest Group. Developed by leading coastal and marine experts, Dr Pamela Buchan, Emily Cunningham and Nicola Bridge, the Motion for the Ocean has been created to enable local authorities to tackle these potentially competing ambitions of economic development, community health and wellbeing, and a healthy marine environment in a more holistic way. At its core, the motion aims to help councils and the communities we serve to “think ocean” and ensure the development of the blue economy is regenerative, delivering the recovery of our ocean and reducing socio-economic inequality in our coastal communities.

The motion aims to help councils embed this new way of thinking at the highest levels of local decision-making, so it is not the responsibility of one team, but of the whole council.

Councils that have passed a Motion for the Ocean

- Plymouth City Council, 22 November 2021
- Falmouth Town Council, 10 January 2022
- South Tyneside Council, 13 January 2022
- North Norfolk District Council, 9 February 2022
- North Devon Council, 23 February 2022
- Monmouthshire County Council, 3 March 2022
- Seaton with Slingley Parish Council, 16 March 2022
- Seaham Town Council, 22 March 2022
- Portsmouth City Council, 17 May 2022
- Devon County Council, 27 May 2022

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- Torrington District Council, 6 June 2022
 - Blandford Forum Town Council, 25 July 2022
 - Teignbridge District Council, 26 July 2022
 - Blackpool Council, 5 December 2022
 - Isle of Wight, 19 July 2023
 - Canterbury City Council, 20 July 2023
 - North Somerset Council, 19 September 2023
 - Havant Borough Council, 21 September 2023
 - Newark & Sherwood District Council, 17 October 2023