

'Motion for the Ocean'

Why is this declaration needed now?

The health of the oceans 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 oceans absorb 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.

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.

Across the 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. Beaches in some parts of the world 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.

Coastal 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.

Storm overflows from our local wastewater works are not helping the situation. Here in Havant, we urge the water authority to manage their plant better, to plan for the forecast heavy downpours as well as the droughts associated with climate change.

Urgent action is needed to halt devastating pollution caused through human activity and recover the health of the 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.

The borough of Havant has pure, clean water at the heart of its heritage and economy. We value it and want the same for the sea water which surrounds us. As a coastal borough many of us have sight of the sea on a daily basis, and throughout each year visitors to the Solent region come to enjoy our coast line, beaches and the sea. We must ensure that ocean recovery is embedded in our relevant future strategies and plans, including those seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

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, that is understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean, is an essential part of this motion, as is individual and collective marine citizenship; or in other words 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.

This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.

We recognise that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero carbon targets, and we need net zero carbon to recover our oceans.

This Council pledges to:

1. Ensure that the Climate & Environment Panel receives regular updates on any actions and projects that will assist ocean recovery around the Borough, including that the Panel provides, as part of its updates to Cabinet, progress on the matter.
2. Add ocean recovery to the work the Council is doing as part of its Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan.
3. Promote closer working between the Havant Borough Council and local marine organisations and embed interventions in the Local Plan to support ocean recovery.

4. Influence the Local Nature Recovery Strategy to support ocean recovery.
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.
6. Where opportunity allows grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in the Havant borough with our schools and local colleges.
7. Write to the Government asking them to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030 by:
 - a) Ensuring Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authorities and Natural England 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) Ensuring coastal communities have a meaningful say in the development of marine policy which can deliver equitable and sustainable outcomes.
 - c) Appoint a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities.
 - d) And by listening to marine scientific advice, including marine social science, 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 about the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing.

v. Stop plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics; 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.

It is natural that we should be one of the first local authorities in the country to declare an urgent need for ocean recovery and I ask Members to vote for this pledge.

Proposed by: Councillor Lloyd

Seconded by: Councillor Fairhurst

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.

“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.

“Marine citizenship” is where an individual practices their rights and duties relating to the health of the marine environment, e.g. a resident writing to their local Councillor to ask them to take action for ocean recovery; or collective marine citizenship, e.g. promoting or making local, national or international policy changes.