

March 2025

## Motion for the Ocean (Inland Council, England)

### *The Local Government Ocean Recovery Declaration*

*A model motion to help local authorities play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring*



### **What is the Motion for the Ocean?**

The Motion for the Ocean has been created to enable local authorities to play their part in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring. The #Motion4TheOcean is a blueprint for local action, developed by leading ocean experts Dr Pamela Buchan, Emily Cunningham MBE and Nicola Bridge together with inland councillors and council officers. It is non-partisan.

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 of all tiers in England and Wales, along with the Local Government Association, have declared an urgent need for ocean recovery using a locally adapted Motion for the Ocean as can be seen on the dedicated webpage: [Motion for the Ocean](#) and in Appendix I. The majority of these are coastal councils; however, the responsibility for ocean action lies equally with inland councils.

### **Why is it important for an inland council to pass a Motion for the Ocean?**

No matter where we live in the UK, we are never more than 70 miles from the ocean. We all benefit from our ocean through the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the way our ocean regulates the climate. We all impact our ocean not only if we visit the coast but every day through our consumer choices, what we put down the drain, the litter and pollution that flows into our rivers, and the carbon emissions we produce. Our local stream or river is our direct link to the ocean.

The evidence is clear that our ocean is in a state of emergency and that this impacts us all, no matter where we live. The burden of taking care of our ocean falls to communities at the coast; but they are at the end of the line, receiving pollution and problems from inland communities. Inland councils have an essential role to play in recovering the health of our ocean through increasing awareness of how local actions can affect the ocean and by acting as responsible custodians of the rivers, streams and waterways that run through their area on their way to the sea.

### **A Model Motion for the Ocean for Inland Councils**

We have developed a Model Motion for the Ocean for inland councils which should be considered as a template to be adapted to local circumstances. We encourage local councils to adapt the pledges and wording, with the caveat that the ambition must not be reduced. **We are happy to support in this process.**

For any support, please contact: [Pamela](#)<sup>1</sup> | [Emily](#)<sup>2</sup> | [Nicola](#)<sup>3</sup> | [Beccy](#)<sup>4</sup> | [Grace](#)<sup>5</sup>

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# Model 'Motion for the Ocean' for Inland Local Authorities

## **This Council declares an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.**

The people of [AREA] benefit from our ocean through the air we breathe, the food we eat, and the way our ocean regulates the climate. We all impact our ocean not only if we visit the coast, but every day through what we put down the drain, the litter and pollution that flows into our rivers, through our seafood and consumer choices, and with the carbon emissions we produce. The River [NAME] is a key feature of our area and is our direct link to the ocean.

The burden of taking care of our ocean often falls to communities at the coast; but they are at the end of the line, receiving pollution and problems from inland communities like ours, and are on the frontline of the impacts of climate change. We know that many of our citizens are concerned about the future of our ocean.

[NAME] Council recognises that we have an essential role to play in recovering the health of our ocean through increasing awareness of how local actions can affect the ocean and by acting as responsible custodians of the rivers, streams and waterways that run through our area on their way to the sea.

This Council pledges to:

1. Report to Full Council within [12] months on the actions and projects that will contribute to the recovery of the River [main local river] and its tributaries and the nature and wildlife that they support within the [authority area]. Tributaries are included in subsequent pledges even if not directly stated.
2. Embed protection and recovery of the River [main local river] in all strategic decisions, plans, budgets, procurement and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly in planning, regeneration, waste, skills and economic policy), aligning with climate change mitigation and adaptation requirements, and considering nature-based solutions in our journey towards a carbon neutral and climate resilient future.
3. Ensure that local planning supports ocean recovery by embedding the protection and recovery of the River [main local river] in the Local/Neighbourhood Plan at the earliest opportunity.
4. Ensure that our nature, biodiversity and climate strategies, such as the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, recognise how land and rivers connect to and impact the ocean and strive to support ocean recovery through a source-to-sea approach.
5. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver improved water quality and increased sustainability, including other [other tier] Councils, local community groups, clubs and other organisations that have a recreational, economic or other interest in its protection and recovery.

6. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in [COUNCIL AREA], including:
  - a. Ensuring all primary school aged children in [authority area] have a first-hand experience of the ocean or River [main local river] - striving to include home-schooled children;
  - b. Promote sustainable and equitable access to the ocean or River [main local river] through physical and digital experiences for all residents; and
  - c. Through these actions, embed understanding of the 'source to sea' approach and how all people, wherever they live, impact and are impacted by ocean health.
7. Use the Council website and other communication channels to update on the River [main local river] recovery progress, and signpost to opportunities and guidance that enable residents to become more ocean literate and to get involved with river and marine citizenship activities.
8. Recognising that wherever we live we share responsibility for good marine management, we will 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) 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 who can provide the strategic oversight needed to integrate cross-departmental working to support holistic change for communities and nature.
  - d) Embedding ocean and civic literacy into the national curriculum and its local delivery.
  - 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) And 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 prosperity, marine conservation, energy, marine industries, 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.

## Example context

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.

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 [COUNCIL AREA], 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 estuarine, coastal and marine habitats, coastal protection, a thriving local economy, clean safe recreation and happy, healthy coastal, estuarine and maritime communities. We must play our part in recovering the health of the ocean.

In [COUNCIL AREA], the ocean is at the heart of our heritage and economy. From the maritime and marine expertise around the [Name of] Port, to the millions of visitors who come to the [COUNCIL AREA] to experience the sight, sound and feel of the ocean. The ocean can play a vital role in our economic recovery and we must strive to develop a sustainable and equitable blue economy that delivers both ocean recovery and local prosperity. We must ensure that ocean recovery is embedded in our relevant strategic decision-making, policymaking and budget-setting; as well as being considered in future strategies and plans, including those seeking to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents.

At present, not everyone has the opportunity or means to access and enjoy the ocean. Even within [COUNCIL AREA], 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

Councils that have passed a Motion for the Ocean as at March 2025 with links to their Motion wording (where available).

1. [Plymouth City Council](#), 22 November 2021
2. [Falmouth Town Council](#), 10 January 2022
3. [South Tyneside Council](#), 13 January 2022
4. [North Norfolk District Council](#), 9 February 2022
5. [North Devon Council](#), 23 February 2022
6. [Monmouthshire County Council](#), 3 March 2022
7. [Seaton with Slingley Parish Council](#), 16 March 2022
8. [Seaham Town Council](#), 22 March 2022
9. [Torridge District Council](#), 11 April 2022
10. [Portsmouth City Council](#), 17 May 2022
11. [Devon County Council](#), 27 May 2022
12. [Blandford Forum Town Council](#), 25 July 2022
13. [Teignbridge District Council](#), 26 July 2022
14. [Blackpool Council](#), 20 November 2022
15. [Isle of Wight Council](#), 19 July 2023
16. [Canterbury City Council](#), 20 July 2023
17. [North Somerset Council](#), 19 September 2023
18. [Havant Borough Council](#), 20 September 2023
19. [Norwich City Council](#), 26 September 2023
20. [Newark & Sherwood District Council](#), 17 October 2023
21. [Lewes District Council](#), 20 November 2023
22. [Cornwall Council](#), 28 November 2023
23. Nottingham City Council, 15 January 2024
24. [Colwick Parish Council](#), 16 January 2024
25. [Worthing Borough Council](#), 6 February 2024
26. Walmer Town Council, 7 February 2024
27. Stafford Borough Council, 27 February 2024
28. [Brandon and Byshottles Parish Council](#), 15 March 2024
29. Forest of Dean District Council, 30 May 2024
30. [Swanage Town Council](#), 22 July 2024
31. Gosport Borough Council, 16 October 2024
32. East Lindsey District Council, 18 November 2024
33. Boston Borough Council, 18 November 2024
34. South Holland District Council, 18 November 2024

In addition to local Councils,, the [Local Government Association](#) declared a Motion for the Ocean on 29 September 2022.

The Motion for the Ocean is supported in kind by the University of Exeter, the LGA Coastal SIG, and the Ocean Conservation Trust.



University  
of Exeter



LGA COASTAL SIG

