



What does Ocean Recovery mean for your Constituency?

16th September 2020
Virtual Meeting: Zoom
10am – 11am

ATTENDEES

Steve Double MP (Chair) (SD)	Oliver Kerr Communications & Engagement Manager to Selaine Saxby MP (OK)	Hugo Tagholm, CEO Surfers Against Sewage (HT)
Kerry McCarthy MP (Vice Chair) (KM)	Sam Browse Senior Parliamentary Assistant to Olivia Blake MP (SB)	Chris Tuckett, Chair of Marine Group at the Wildlife and Countryside Link (CT)
Cherilyn Mackrory MP (Vice Chair) (CM)	Elinor Cope Parliamentary Assistant to Caroline Dinenage MP (EC)	Alec Taylor, Head of Ocean Policy WWF UK (AT)
Scott Mann MP (Treasurer) (SM)	Nicole Zandi Senior Parliamentary Assistant to Geraint Davies MP (NZ)	Ruth Williams, Marine Conservation Manager, Cornwall Wildlife Trust (RW)
Sir Peter Bottomley MP (PB)	Huw David for Cherilyn Mackrory MP (HD)	Alice Tebb, Agents for Change Coordinator, Marine Conservation Society (AT)
Martyn Day MP (MD)	Samuel Yung Senior Parliamentary Assistant to Steve Double MP (SY)	Henry Swithinbank, Surfers Against Sewage (HS)
Liz Twist MP (LT)	Chad Male Parliamentary Assistant to Liz Twist MP (CM)	Amy Slack, Surfers Against Sewage (AS)
Stephen Crabb MP (SC)	Natasha Iknors Senior Parliamentary Assistant to Duncan Baker MP (NI)	Alice Field, Surfers Against Sewage (AF)
Duncan Baker MP (DB)	Richard Watt Parliamentary Assistant to Stephen Crabb MP (RW)	Matt Browne, Wildlife and Countryside Link (MB)
		Megan Randles, WWF UK (MR)
		Tamara Abidi – WWF UK (TA)



MINUTES

Welcome and Opening Remarks

Steve Double MP, Chair of the APPG welcomed the attendees to the first ever digital Ocean Conservation APPG and set out the role of the group as the voice of the ocean in parliament. The chair highlighted the interlinkages between the health of the ocean and the health of the UK's communities and set out that this event would give politicians and NGOs the chance to discuss opportunities for delivering ocean recovery that works for people and the planet.

Hugo Tagholm, CEO of Surfers Against Sewage welcomed the attendees and provided a summary of the agenda.

Expert Panel Session

Hugo Tagholm, set out the challenges facing the ocean including, climate change, pollution, overfishing and poor ocean management. He highlighted the capacity of the ocean to recover given the right conditions and stressed the need for urgent and radical action to protect and restore the ocean to a healthy state. Hugo emphasised the opportunity presented by the Environment and Fisheries Bills and the Comprehensive Spending Review in the run up to COP26 to adopt policies and legislation that delivers ocean recovery.

Alec Taylor, Head of Ocean Policy at WWF UK, explained the role of the ocean in regulating the planets temperature and the role that marine ecosystems such as kelp beds and seagrasses can play in storing 'blue carbon' and helping to mitigate change. He also highlighted the co-benefits the restoration of these habitats can have for communities including acting as flood defence, increasing biodiversity and the amount of fish in the sea. Alec urged MPs to support blue carbon projects in their constituencies and increased funding from government for ocean recovery

Ruth Williams, Marine Conservation Manager, Cornwall Wildlife Trust, set out the wealth of marine species in the UK, but emphasised the threats facing these species including bycatch by fishing vessels. Ruth highlighted successful projects between the Cornwall Wildlife Trust and the fishing industry which were helping to reduce bycatch and thus providing benefits to both industry and the environment. Ruth explained that the Fisheries Bill provides an opportunity to deliver ocean recovery if it is focussed on sustainability

Alice Tebb, Agents for Change Coordinator, Marine Conservation Society, gave a presentation on the importance of community engagement in ocean recovery. Alice highlighted the need for politicians, NGOs, communities and industry to work together to deliver a sustainable and equitable ocean recovery

A number of attendees gave their apologies and left after this section to attend further meetings

Break Out Discussion

Attendees under the guidance of panellists took part in breakout sessions and discussed:

As we recover from the health crisis and leave the European Union, what opportunities are there to deliver world leading environmental protection and ocean recovery policies that will also support the social and economic revival of communities?

The groups focussed on three specific questions:

1) What opportunities are there in your constituency to deliver ocean recovery?

Group A

[AT, SD, MR, HS, TA]

- SD highlighted the importance of ocean tourism in his constituency and suggested the governments levelling up agenda provides an opportunity to better integrate investment in the regions and coastal communities with investment into ocean conservation

Group B

[HT, SM, OK, CM, AF]

- The group highlighted that Combined Sewage Overflows (CSOs) were discharging raw sewage onto beaches and into rivers in their constituencies and the need for further action to be taken by water companies and the Environment Agency to tackle this problem. SM pointed to the Sewage Inland Waters Bill as a way for government to expediate this action
- SM highlighted opportunities to introduce Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to improve biodiversity and mitigate climate change. SM advised these are tangible projects MPs could engage with. CM highlighted the need for MPAs to be properly enforced
- OK highlighted a potential project in the South West to introduce blue fin tuna, this could have the tourism and economic benefits for communities including encouraging sports fishing

Group C [RW, LT, HD, SB, AS]

- The group highlighted the need to link inland and coastal communities in order to deliver wholesale ocean recovery. Climate emergency declarations offer opportunities to engage communities in the need for ocean recovery as do practical on the ground projects which communities can take part in
- The group highlighted the need to better communicate the positive benefits of ocean recovery to coastal industries long term as appose to allowing the focus to fall on the short-term challenges presented by MPA designations. There is an opportunity for NGOs to develop case studies to provide a guide on best practice

Group D [AT, DB, NI, NZ, CT]

- The current 'green revolution' presents opportunities, such as using more sustainable materials for building and increasing local jobs as a result (e.g. use of sheep's wool for insulation could boost jobs in local agricultural communities). Similar examples should be considered for the marine environment and coastal communities as well
- The link between local development and jobs for local communities is important. For example, North Norfolk has a high density of windfarms. Local coastal communities are dealing with issues due to this development (e.g. cables to the windfarms), but they do not benefit economically. Future developments such as these need to be linked to and provide benefits to the communities which host them

2) What can MPs and NGOs do?

Group A

- SD suggested there needed to be a dedicated Minister for Coastal Communities with a cross cutting remit to help restore both communities and the Ocean. The group also highlighted the need for tangible projects to engage both constituents and politicians

Group B

- The Environment Bill provides opportunities to build in ocean recovery and this will begin with the explicit inclusion of the marine environment into the bill

Group C

- MPs have an opportunity to raise awareness and ambition in parliament through parliamentary questions and Westminster Hall debates. NGOs can support ocean recovery by providing the opportunities for individuals to take personal action

Group D

- The group highlighted that MPs need clear, succinct briefing that they can use in their roles, both for engagement with communities/constituencies and for legislative work. NGOs should reflect this in their briefs to MPs

3) How do we raise ambition?

Group A

- It is vital to engage a varied audience with ocean recovery including business and schools. Plastic pollution provides an engaging issue to start people's journey with ocean recovery

Group B

- OK highlighted that after the transition period the UK will have the opportunity to take further action than EU counterparts on ocean recovery and this needed to be communicated

Group C

- The group agreed that the Environment and Fisheries Bill both provide opportunities to raise aspirations by setting ambitious targets

Group D

- The group raised the concern that the Environment Bill does not include clear targets and this needs to be addressed

Opportunities for Ocean Recovery this Autumn

Chris Tuckett, Chair of Marine Group at the Wildlife and Countryside Link, concluded the event by highlighting how MPs can help to ensure ocean recovery in the coming months. CT called on the attendees to support;

1. the explicit inclusion of the Marine Environment within the Environment Bill
2. a sustainability objective within the Fisheries Bill
3. and an increased budget for the marine environment and ocean recovery through the upcoming comprehensive Spending Review

Closing Remarks

Steve Double thanked the panellists for their presentations and the attendees for their time. SD highlighted the numerous opportunities there are to deliver ocean recovery that works for people and the planet and invited MPs to continue to have positive conversations on this issue. SD closed the event by inviting attendees to the next meeting of the APPG on 18 November.

Meeting closed 11:00