

Ocean Recovery Declaration

Renowned globally as the UK's maritime gateway to the world, in Falmouth the ocean is at the heart of our economy and the health and wellbeing of our community. There is great opportunity in the development of a sustainable, equitable and vibrant blue economy that delivers both ocean recovery and local prosperity. We want to attract new investment and innovative, clean technologies to Falmouth.

Falmouth Town Council is leading the way in connecting people to the ocean through the development of a Beach management group, running community engagement programmes and supporting partners in protecting our waters. We are champions of a sustainable Falmouth Harbour and local fishing industry. We are advocates for good marine management and put these principles into practice through our local partnership projects: the SSI, Climate working group, Green corridor forum and the Fal & Helford Special Area of Conservation Management Forum, as well as many others.

We believe local government at all levels has a responsibility to play its part in delivering ocean recovery.

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 ocean.

This Council pledges to:

1. Report to Full Council within 6 months on the actions and projects that will begin an ocean recovery in Falmouth.
2. Embed ocean recovery in all strategic decisions, budgets, plans and approaches to decisions by the Council (particularly relating to planning, regeneration, skills and local economy), aligning with climate emergency plans and considering ocean-based climate solutions in our journey to carbon neutrality.
- 3.. Work with partners locally and nationally to deliver increased sustainability in local marine industries and develop a sustainable, equitable and vibrant blue economy that delivers ocean recovery and local prosperity.
4. Grow ocean literacy and marine citizenship in the town, including ensuring all pupils have a firsthand experience of the ocean before leaving primary school, including home-schooled children, and promote sustainable and equitable access to the ocean through physical and digital experiences.
5. Create an online portal on the Town Council website as part of our Green and Blue space information to update on ocean recovery progress, signpost to ocean literacy development opportunities, and marine citizenship pledges.
6. Call on the Government 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 so that it delivers 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, economic 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 from ocean management, leaving no doubt the links between this and human lives, livelihoods, and wellbeing

v. Stop plastic pollution at source by strengthening the regulations around single-use plastics, polystyrene food and drink containers, and wet wipes, and by setting standards 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.

Background

In 2017 we began our relationship with Plastic Free Falmouth, to do our bit and encourage others to do theirs in reducing marine plastic pollution and our dependency on plastics, made from polluting oil. This has involved making varied changes to the way we run events and consider our outputs as a council. In 2019 we unanimously declared a climate emergency and this year we have declared an Ecological emergency, completed our first annual carbon audit and supported a motion to train tree wardens for Falmouth. We have just employed a new officer to spend a dedicated 20 hours a week implementing the actions of the carbon audit, driving our journey towards carbon neutrality in 2030. Given the role of the ocean in climate regulation and our connections with the ocean, it is natural that Falmouth would be the first UK town council to declare an urgent need for Ocean Recovery.

International and national context

2021 is the first year of the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development. It is the year the UK hosted COP26 in Glasgow and the year the G7 came to Cornwall. The UK Government has publicly declared its ambition to be a global leader in marine conservation. All eyes are on the ocean. There is national and global recognition that the world ocean is in crisis. The impact of the climate crisis on the ocean is profound, including in our local waters. Raised atmospheric carbon dissolves in the seawater and causes ocean acidification, dissolving the shells, reefs and other hard parts of marine animals. The heating of the climate causes ocean heating too which makes some parts of the ocean intolerable for life and is changing what lives and is caught locally. It also increases the volume of the ocean which causes sea level rise, added to by ice melt at the poles. Thanks to a more turbulent climate, increased storminess and sea level rise is a serious threat to all coastal communities, economies and infrastructure in the world, including in Falmouth.

Marine microplastics have been found in all marine environments and in the bodies of many species, including humans. Fish stocks collapse from permitted and illegal overfishing. Poor water quality is impacting seafood and preventing safe bathing. And yet the ocean is a place of incredible importance for people, providing food, energy, connections from one nation to another, and regulating the climate system which is so threatened by human activity. We must play our part in securing the sustainability and health of the ocean.

Urgent action is needed to recover the health of our ocean to enable it to deliver the full range of benefits, including capturing and storing carbon through coastal salt marshes and seagrass and maerl beds, regulating our climate, supporting a sustainable, equitable and vibrant blue economy, with equitable access to clean, safe recreation and nature experience for happy, healthy communities.

Action is needed at all levels, from individuals developing their ocean literacy (understanding of the relationship between people and the ocean) to individual and collective marine citizenship (promoting and demanding an ocean recovery through local, national and international policy changes).

Notes

A “Blue Economy” is one which uses ocean resources sustainably or even regeneratively whilst improving community wellbeing and social equity. It is in line with Falmouth Town Council’s “Vision for Falmouth” as set out in the Strategic Plan 2019-2023: “Falmouth will be a distinctive, vibrant, resilient, inclusive and well-balanced, attractive sea-port town, as well as the Falmouth 2030 Economic Plan.