



**ocean  
conservation**  
all-party parliamentary group

## **The Ocean and Climate Crisis**

**18<sup>th</sup> January 2021**  
Virtual Meeting: Zoom  
12:00 – 13:00

### **ATTENDEES**

**Expert Panel Chaired by Geraint Davies MP, Vice Chair of the Ocean Conservation APPG**

**Hugo Tagholm**, CEO of Surfers Against Sewage

**Dr Heather Koldewey**, Senior Technical Advisor Zoological Society of London and Honorary Associate Professor at the University of Exeter

**Angela Thomas**, Clerk, Arthog Community Council

**Mark Parry**, Development Officer, Ocean Conservation Trust

**Clara Goldsmith**, Campaigns Director, The Climate Coalition

### **MPs**

Liz Saville Roberts MP

Scott Mann MP

Cherilyn Mackrory MP

Sally-Ann Hart MP



Kerry McCarthy MP

Tony Lloyd MP

Theresa Villiers MP

Ruth Jones MP

Selaine Saxby MP

John McNally MP

Stephen Crabb MP (Representative)

Stephen Doughty MP (Representative)

Douglas Chapman MP (Representative)

Liz Twist MP (Representative)

## **MINUTES**

### **Welcome and Opening Remarks**

**Geraint Davies MP** welcomed attendees to the first Ocean Conservation APPG meeting of the year on the ocean and climate crisis. The Vice Chair highlighted the great impact climate change is having on the ocean and the wide range of issues affecting it such as overfishing, sea bed excavation, untreated pollution, the destruction of coral reefs, sea level rise and coastal retreat.

### **Expert Panel Session**

**Hugo Tagholm** highlighted that as we enter the UN ocean decade, there is an opportunity to reverse the damage humans have inflicted on the environment. He highlighted the importance of the ocean in regulating the earth's climate, hosting diverse marine life as well as its significance to recreation. He announced SAS's Ocean and Climate Emergency, presented the Ocean and Climate Report and provided insight gained from The Ocean and Climate Survey which showed an awareness of climate change and its impacts amongst the public and the overwhelming opinion that not enough is being done.

**Dr Heather Koldewey** provided an insight into how global warming will impact marine habitats and species. She demonstrated the importance of the ocean to the climate system, and highlighted the damaging effects climate change is having on marine species and habitats such as skewed sex ratios in turtle populations and coral reef bleaching, before detailing scientific developments which may provide potential solutions to climate change.

**Angela Thomas** provided first-hand experience of what it is like to live with sea level rise as a representative of the Fairbourne Community. Whilst she acknowledged the fact Natural Resources Wales have invested in flood defences since 2012, she spoke of the concerns and anxiety the local community is experiencing living in such uncertainty. She also detailed the impact a BBC Wales report made in 2014 which described Fairbourne as 'the village of the damned' even though it has not experienced flooding yet, with an overnight decrease in house prices and difficulty of securing mortgages.

**Mark Parry** discussed the role of blue carbon habitats in mitigating climate change by absorbing CO<sub>2</sub>. He highlighted the fact we don't need technology to sequester carbon as plants already do this naturally. He spoke of the unreliability of terrestrial carbon sinks in that when they die or catch fire they release CO<sub>2</sub> compared marine habitats such as salt marsh, mangroves and seagrass which can sequester and bury carbon for a millennia. He also introduced the LIFE recreation reMEDIES project led by Natural England aiming to restore seagrass beds in the south west of England. He concluded by stating the need for more funding streams for ocean habitat restoration.

**Clara Goldsmith** set out why 2021 is a crucial year on climate action. She said this was because there are a series of high-profile moments where the climate will play a prominent role such as the G7 taking place in Carbis Bay, Cornwall, COP26 which will be bringing countries together to deliver on the Paris agreement, the UN conference on biological diversity and The Global Oceans Treaty where decisions will be made which will determine our trajectory for years to come. She also discussed The Climate Coalition's priorities to deliver an adequate reduction of emissions.

### **Panellist Discussion**

Geraint Davies MP chaired a panellist discussion around the question:

*What is the ocean's importance in tackling climate change and what should we be doing?*

**Hugo** spoke about the clear need for rewilding and ocean protection. He also emphasised the need to inform the public and policy makers as about the importance of Highly Protected Marine Area's.

**Heather** spoke about the importance of integrating schemes to recover the ocean with greater protection. She argued that that the ocean is not too big to fail, nor too big to fix, but it is too big to ignore.

She also highlighted it was important when seeking to reduce emissions, we not to move from one damaging industry to another.

**Angela** said that we should, where possible, harness the ocean in a sustainable way to address climate change such as wave action or wind turbines. She highlighted the UK also doesn't appear to be looking at ways to save land or communities in Wales or the wider UK from sea level rise.

**Mark** suggested that companies looking to offset their carbon need to look at investing in blue carbon habitats. He also argued there needed to be much better recognition amongst policy makers and the public about the potential of blue carbon habitats.

**Clara** stated the UK had made progress to tackle climate change but that major shifts were still needed including the way we source our food and the way we travel. She called for significant investment to ensure solutions are possible at scale.

**Geraint** questioned whether we needed to also start look at taxing consumption of CO2 by individuals as well as by producers of goods.

### **Audience Q and A**

**Liz Saville Roberts MP** made the point that in the past, war was the biggest challenge facing society, now it is climate change and that we need to make reparations for this. She proposed the question to the panellists: *How do we bring together the environmental and community messages?*

**Hugo Tagholm** said there needs to be community consultation where fishermen and the wider community are brought together as early as possible to discuss what is best for everyone

### **Closing Remarks**

**Geraint Davies** closed the event by asking for support to an amendment to the Environment Bill which will ensure air quality falls within the limits of WHO guidelines by 2030 which would also help reduce carbon emissions. He also urged people to maintain their ambitions and write to their MP asking them to think about the future of the ocean and ways forward, whether that is blue carbon, The Climate Coalition's 10-point plan or renewable energy.

**Meeting closed 13:03**