



LGA consideration of the Motion for the Ocean

Purpose of report

For decision

Summary

Earlier this year the LGA Executive was asked to consider moving a Motion for LGA General Assembly, the Motion for the Ocean. Rather than consider at LGA General Assembly, the LGA Executive took the decision to pass this to the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board for consideration and decision on next steps. This paper presents the options for the LGA to respond to this request, for decision by the Board.

Recommendation/s

To consider the presented options and determine a way forward

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LGA consideration of the Motion for the Ocean

Background

1. Earlier this year the LGA Executive was asked to consider moving a Motion for LGA General Assembly, the Motion for the Ocean. Rather than consider at LGA General Assembly, the LGA Executive took the decision to pass this to the Environment, Economy, Housing and Transport Board for consideration and decision on next steps. This paper presents the options for the LGA to respond to this request, for decision by the Board.
2. The proposal came from the LGA coastal SIG, led by Cllr Ernest Gibson from South Tyneside Council. The coastal SIG proposed that:
3. “The LGA declares an urgent need for ocean recovery, recognising the essential role of local government in realising a clean, healthy and productive ocean, and all of the direct economic, health and wellbeing benefits it will bring. The LGA recognises that we need ocean recovery to meet our net zero targets, and we need net zero carbon to recover our ocean. The LGA pledges to develop an ocean recovery policy, recognising the importance of ocean literacy and marine citizenship, and to do all in its power to tackle the interconnected climate and ocean crises. The LGA commits to asking government to put the ocean in net recovery by 2030, ensuring that local government and the communities we serve are co-creators in the development of national ocean recovery policy.”
4. This is not an isolated request for the LGA. The SIG has been working with a range of coastal councils and several councils that have declared a motion, many of them basing it around a similar template, and all within the last 12 months. Background to this movement can be found on the [LGA Coastal SIG website](#), including a list of declarations from councils, and [here is an example from South Tyneside](#).
5. LGA officers have spoken with both Cllr Ernest Gibson and with the lead officer of the LGA Coastal SIG to understand more. The SIG is flexible and collaborative and welcoming of LGA support to raise the profile of this initiative.

Issue

6. There are factors to consider in deciding how the LGA responds to this request. These include but are not limited to: LGA member and officer capacity, prioritisation of issues to press on government, agreement by the LGA



Improvement Board on issues relating to improvement, partnership working in supporting the LGA Coastal SIG.

7. In considering these factors we are presenting the following broad options in responding to the request, for the LGA to:
 - a) Not to adopt a Motion for the Ocean and not progress any further work on this issue
 - b) Not to adopt a Motion for the Ocean, but commit to discussions with the LGA Coastal SIG to explore opportunities for collaboration and awareness raising
 - c) To adopt a Motion for the Ocean, drawing on the motion adopted by councils combined with some commitments to better consider ocean health in existing policy and improvement work (a draft attached in the Annex)
 - d) To adopt a Motion for the Ocean, and to meet all the requests of the LGA Coastal SIG as set out in their original proposal (paragraph 2).
8. Our recommendation is to take forward the option in paragraph 7(c), and to recommend adopting a motion like that in the Annex subject to further comment.

Implications for Wales

9. The LGA Coastal SIG includes Welsh councils, and one Welsh Council has adopted a Motion for the Ocean.

Financial Implications

10. None. Any commitments to be met within existing budgets.

Equalities implications

11. It is important that the LGA's efforts with regard marine health recognise that all communities have equal opportunity to benefit from the ocean and to take responsibility to protect it for the future.

Next steps

12. Lead members to consider the background and issues set out in paragraphs 1 – 6 and to provide a steer on next steps as proposed in paragraphs 7 - 8.
13. Officers to progress as directed.



Annex

DRAFT Local Government Association Motion for the Ocean [note, this is based on existing motions adopted by several councils]

Why is this declaration needed now?

14. 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 (CO₂) emissions generated by human activity.
15. 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.
16. 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.
17. Around the country, our local authorities and their communities are witnessing the ocean crisis first-hand. 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 storms. 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.
18. 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 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.
19. The ocean is at the heart of local communities' heritage and economy. From the maritime and marine expertise, new economies linked to renewable energy, all the commercial users of our beaches, to the millions of visitors who come 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.

20. Local authorities cannot solve the ocean crisis alone, but we have a crucial role to play.

The Local Government Association declares a need for Ocean Recovery

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

22. This LGA pledges to:

- Consider ocean recovery in relevant policy development and advocacy (such as on climate change, nature recovery and wider environment policy)
- Consider support to council action to lead ocean recovery through existing improvement programmes.
- Promote the LGA Coastal SIG in its role to provide opportunities for collaboration between councils on matters relating to ocean recovery.
- Write to the Government with a call to have ambition to put the ocean into net recovery by 2030, and to work with the LGA Coastal SIG to help this happen.