



Parliamentary briefing: Ocean Literacy

Tuesday 14th March 2023 – 11:00-12:00

Coastal
Communities

Online



Chair: Sally-Ann Hart MP

Speakers:

Dr Mark Atkinson - Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
Claire Speedie & Dr Kay Barclay – Marine Scotland, Scottish Government
Dr Kathryn Hughes - Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales
Dr Emma McKinley – Cardiff University

HEADLINES & ACTIONS

- For information on all of the reports please see [Understanding Ocean Literacy and ocean climate-related behaviour change in the UK](#)
- There is a clear need for ocean literacy to be considered within wider educational remits alongside campaigns to connect people and the marine environment, and this must be delivered through a collaborative approach.

BACKGROUND

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra), Marine Scotland and Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru/Natural Resources Wales have published the results of the 2022 Ocean Literacy Survey. Ocean literacy is an understanding of the ocean's (seas/coast) influence on a person and their influence on it.

The survey provides an insight into public awareness, knowledge and attitudes surrounding the marine environment.

IN ATTENDANCE

Sally-Ann Hart MP (Chair)
Dr Mark Atkinson
Claire Speedie
Kay Barclay
Dr Kath Hughes
Dr Emma McKinley
Baroness Jones of Moulsecoomb
Mel Nichols
Robin Williams MP
Christine Jardine MP

Sir Peter Bottomly

Researchers obo Douglas Chapman MP, Huw Merriman MP, Selaine Saxby MP, Brandon Lewis MP

SECRETARIAT

Beccy MacDonald-Lofts
Nicola Radford
Bethany Handson
Alice Kloker
Sarah Taylor

APOLOGIES

Apologies sent were noted

OCEAN LITERACY: AN EVOLVING CONCEPT – Dr Emma McKinley - Cardiff University

- Ocean literacy is a key mechanism for change within this UN Ocean decade.
- Ocean Literacy is about having understanding of oceans' influence on you and your influence on ocean – this includes seas/estuaries.
- This has evolved from the understanding from if we give people knowledge we will change behaviour to something that involves a deeper emotional connection.
- Research has developed a model for ocean literacy which is being applied to develop the concept and understanding.
- The core components of the model are knowledge, behaviour and communications.
- Words such as interconnectedness, emotions, understanding and engagement are used as ocean literacy is more about connections.
- Work has been underway to review the concepts of Ocean Literacy where existing models and marine citizenships, pro environmental behaviour change etc have all been considered.

OCEAN LITERACY IN ENGLAND, WALES AND SCOTLAND: HEADLINE FINDINGS FROM THE OCEAN LITERACY SURVEY – Dr Mark Atkinson - Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)

- Work has included large scale monitoring programme for Ocean Literacy.
- The Surveys will provide a monitoring programme to feed into the UK Marine Strategy and Environment Improvement Plan.
- This is a commitment to take into account social aspects and will help in monitoring public opinion on these policy areas.
- The survey has been running for 2 years starting in 2021 and the further survey in 2022 expanding to involve marine Scotland.
- The same questionnaire is repeated across England and Wales, and from 2022 to include Scotland.
- It has been developed through a collaboration with academic community, close collaboration with Dr Emma McKinley and the Ocean Conservation Trust.
- The survey was undertaken online by people who regular take part in survey research. It was composed of ~40 questions and the Ocean Literacy Survey received ~12,000.
- Participants were asked what they felt were the 3 greatest threats to the marine environment. Most responses included marine litter, plastic pollution and chemical pollution as the greatest concerns.
- Over 80% of respondents supported the creation of MPAs across the three countries.
- Over 80% said that protecting the marine environment is very important to them, with higher proportions in coastal populations (than non-coastal).
- When asked about most recent visit to marine environment, 70% stated that it was related to mental/physical health.

DEVELOPING A STRATEGY FOR DELIVERING OCEAN LITERACY IN WALES – Dr Kathryn Hughes - Cyfoeth Naturiol Cymru / Natural Resources Wales

- The key highlights from the Wales Ocean Literacy survey, repeat key messages from the English survey results.
- 80% people in Wales believe that there is a mental/physical health benefit from the sea and coast.
- 70% think marine litter is the biggest threat to the marine environment.
- Looking to use hooks exist in the curriculum.
- Almost half the people who responded to the Wales survey think that their lifestyles have no impact on marine/coast.
- 60% of the Welsh population live on or near coast and therefore there is a need for better understanding around better lifestyle/behaviour
- choices/recycling/food etc.
- In Wales, there is a national stakeholder group – Coast and Sea Partnership Cymru, who are looking into Ocean Literacy with the additional themes of Sustainable Finance and Coastal Capacity.
- Through workshops, the Ocean Literacy Working Group has been set up and as key messages emerge there will be a strategy and implementation plan for Ocean Literacy in Wales and where ocean literacy is already being implemented, there is a need to support and evaluate it.
- Big part of evaluation is the Ocean Literacy Survey.

OCEAN LITERACY AND THE BLUE ECONOMY VISION IN SCOTLAND – Claire Speedie & Dr Kay Barclay - Marine Scotland, Scottish Government

- Through the Ocean Literacy in Scotland it was clear of the value people place on the marine environment with 80% visits being good for mental/physical health.
- Through considerations of any 'inequalities of access to blue space' there is a process of trying to identify what these are and how to engage/combat.
- There is a very strong emotional connection between people and the ocean, and the sea is very important for Scotland.
- 51% respondents feel concerned about sea/marine environment and feel awe and wonder too.
- The sea is a large source of food for Scotland with 43% of respondents identifying food as top benefit. Offshore renewable energy also mentioned as being important.
- The respondents showed that there is awareness that our behaviour has impact, just over half saying we do have an impact.
- Respondents showed that political action, speaking to MPs/petitions are high on the agenda. lasting approach is occurring. This means that future surveys are very important.
- The respondents showed a willingness to make changes, with 8 of 10 people showing
- In March 2022, Scotland Government published the Blue Economy Vision – by 2025 Scotland's shared stewardship of our marine environment supports ecosystem health, improved livelihoods, economic prosperity, social inclusion and wellbeing.
- The findings from ocean literacy survey are important and feature heavily in developing policy.
- Vision provides framework for management marine environment in Scotland, aiding in tackling biodiversity loss and climate change but if going to drive transformative behaviour change then need ocean literacy.
- Being an ocean literate/aware nation is one of 6 outcomes as set out in vision.
- There are 3 ways in which the ocean literacy is supporting development: assessment of our current position; understanding where we need develop ocean literacy (50 per cent respondents hadn't heard of key terms); and the survey will form suite of metrics in monitoring and evaluation as well as tracking progress as it is important to determine if the needed.

changes around
plastics/food/environment/transport etc
with activism coming out as another key
point.

DISCUSSION – Main points

The key points raised through the presentations do not include all the detail that was gleaned through the surveys as other concerns around destructive fishing practices and offshore wind as further examples. This means that the results are of importance across Defra teams including fisheries. Some topics of concern to the public such as sewage discharge were not included however the surveys did receive a considerable number of open question answers that are currently being analysed to extract further understanding.

Plastic pollution came out strongly as a main concern and this reflects the large number of campaigns around this subject, raising the question of further campaigns on other issues that need to be addressed.

The idea of the connections between the ocean, coast and rivers is increasingly being discussed in the ocean literacy research world. There is currently a project – Diverse Values – looking at we are all the connected issues of water quality and river and how related to catchment within an untraditional coastal environment of Chepstow, Monmouthshire which is estuarine. This is helping to further the understanding of how everywhere is connected to the coast.

It is important to get communities involved in active conservation and restoration work to build those connections.

The interconnectedness of our communities and environments means that it is hard to divide subjects up and whether they should be including sewage issues occurring regardless of heavy rain/storm damage, the damage that this is causing to coastal wildlife and the damage already being see across estuarine ecologies. Important to work in a collaborative way including with water companies, agricultural sector, Defra group, householders, highways and not draw a line between what is estuarine vs coastal as it is all interlinked.

The commitment through the Scottish Blue Economy has committed to mainstream an interconnected approach, to get people to think and look through a blue economy lens when considering policy and how our development could impact on the marine environment and coastal communities – a whole system approach.

The concerns around access to blue space is common across coastal communities as despite being in such proximity, some of most deprived people do not go and enjoy benefits of their coast and we need to consider how we change that and how we engage these communities.

A status review was completed in Scotland to look at metrics in order to get an understanding of the current status (shared after session - [Scotland's Blue Economy: current status review - gov.scot](#) (www.gov.scot) The publication describes our starting position in the transition to adopting a Blue Economy approach for our marine sectors, communities and the environment – and provides us with a foundation to consider how we can track our progress to make sure change is occurring. Section 4, includes an overview of data sources used for the publication and sets out a selection of data sources used for each of our 6 outcomes.)

The Ocean Literacy Survey will run biannual to track change alongside a household survey in Scotland as need more data about the public and communities, and the way that they are responding to policies. Current data suggests that those in urban areas or younger people are less likely to use blue spaces and part of the reason is around accessibility to transport and concerns over overcrowding at busier beaches – greater impact is felt when they visit more remote locations as they have a better experience.

There is a clear need for education and it's clear that campaigns such as plastic campaigns are successful therefore a joined-up approach across sectors is the most effective way forward as we need all to benefit and understand how important the marine environment is for our health and wellbeing.