

Government scales up support to protect the world's ocean with multimillion boost for marine recovery

Projects to tackle climate change and protect the world's ocean have been given a major boost with the first £16.2 million of funding from the UK's £500 million Blue Planet Fund announced today.

The programmes, financed from the UK's overseas aid budget, will increase marine protection, tackle plastic pollution and the decline of global coral reefs, as well as using the UK's world-leading expertise to help respond to marine pollution disasters such as the Xpress Pearl in Sri Lanka.

The ocean is a critical carbon sink which every year absorbs almost a third of global CO₂ emissions. Around the globe, the ocean supports the livelihoods of one in every ten people, including some of the poorest and most vulnerable.

In the run up to the UK hosting the COP26 climate talks in November, the government is working with developing countries to take action to protect and restore our oceans.

The projects receiving funding include the launch of a new UK-led programme which will help developing countries partner with the UK's world-leading scientists to better manage marine protected areas, and improve our understanding of the impacts of climate change and contaminants in the ocean.

The Ocean Country Partnership Programme (OCP) already has work underway with UK scientists at the Centre for Environment, Fisheries and Aquaculture Science (Cefas) providing analysis of water samples from Sri Lanka to contribute to the ongoing response to the Xpress Pearl environmental disaster in June.

Environment Secretary, George Eustice, said:

The UK is a global leader in marine protection and will continue to advocate for ambitious climate and ocean action at COP26 this year.

Our shared ocean is a vital resource and provides habitat to precious marine life, as well as supporting the livelihoods of one in every ten people worldwide.

The Blue Planet Fund will support many developing countries on the front line of climate change to reduce poverty and improve the health of their seas.

Coral reefs support 25% of marine life and provide benefits to thousands of

species – qualities that make them one of the world’s most valuable ecosystems. However, they are also extremely vulnerable to climate change and pollution. Today’s investment will support work by the [Global Fund for Coral Reefs \(GFCR\)](#) in the Caribbean, Indian Ocean, Pacific and Southeast Asia by exploring techniques such as sewage treatment and the management of marine protected areas to help save these suffering ecosystems.

Marine pollution, including plastic pollution, is a significant pressure on the marine environment – not only does it threaten key species and ecosystems in the world’s ocean, it also affects the health and livelihoods of those living in coastal regions. A share of the £16.2m will also go towards the expansion of the [Global Plastic Action Partnership \(GPAP\)](#)’s pioneering work in developing countries and facilitate a united effort against plastic waste globally. Since its launch in 2018, GPAP secured a commitment by Indonesia to reduce 70% of mismanaged waste by 2025 and a commitment by Viet Nam to reduce marine plastic waste by 75% by 2030, among others.

The UK is also leading calls for a new global ‘30by30’ target to protect at least 30% of the land and at least 30% of the ocean by 2030. Over eighty countries now support the marine protection target, and the Blue Planet Fund will help make sure that 30by30 becomes a reality.