

Sustainable Blue Economy

November 2025

The Marine Conservation Society is calling on the Welsh Government and political parties to:

- ✓ Use financial instruments, including the MARINE Fund Cymru, to address funding gaps in nature-based solutions and marine recovery
- ✓ Ensure Welsh Government funding supports marine recovery by using the Sustainable Investment Principles and work with the Marine Conservation Society and Crown Estate regarding 'nature leasing' areas of the seabed
- ✓ Engage with eNGOs to establish the best investment opportunities to support marine regeneration

What is a sustainable blue economy?

A sustainable blue economy is an economy that supports marine regenerative practices that maintain the health and productivity of marine ecosystems whilst balancing economic growth.

What are the benefits of a sustainable blue economy?

Job opportunities

The Marine Conservation Society found that around 15–30 jobs are created for every \$1 million USD spent on restoration programmes. This is six times more than the equivalent investment into oil and gas.

Thriving seas, thriving economy

A healthy ocean is integral to a healthy economy. **The Office of National Statistics has valued the UK's marine natural capital assets at £272 billion to the UK economy.** This value is provided through services like carbon storage through nature-based solutions to climate change like seagrass meadows, oysters, and kelp forests, food provision, coastal defence and space for renewable energy. A leading study by WWF revealed that globally \$8.4 trillion USD of assets and revenues are at risk if we do not protect our oceans.

An investment in people

A sustainable blue economy generates societal benefits. By maintaining healthy marine ecosystems and providing funding to address key issues such as ocean pollution and climate change, we could see improvements in water quality, food security and give a boost to local people's mental and physical health.

How can the Welsh Government support the sustainable blue economy?

1. Use financial instruments, including the MARINE Fund Cymru, to address funding gaps in nature-based solutions and marine recovery

The Marine Resilience and Improvement of Natural Ecosystems (MARINE) Fund Cymru is a long-term, voluntary fund being developed with the Wales Council for Voluntary Action and the Coast and Seas Partnership (CaSP) Blue Investment Working Group to attract private investment for restoring, protecting, and enhancing Welsh marine ecosystems.

The fund is being designed to complement government funding and close private investment gaps in marine restoration. By working with the private sector to mobilise private finance for the sustainable blue economy, it also has the potential to address some of the key barriers to private finance. The Marine Conservation Society have identified 8 barriers, including limited ocean literacy in the finance sector, concerns about greenwashing, and perceived low return on investment.

With SDG 14 (Life Below Water) being the most underfunded Sustainable Development Goal, the MARINE Fund Cymru represents a crucial mechanism for driving meaningful, long-term investment in Wales's marine ecosystems. The Marine Conservation Society supports its continued development alongside other complementary financial tools to address systemic funding gaps in marine regeneration.

2. The Sustainable Investment Principles

The Sustainable Investment Principles for Wales aim to increase and diversify available funding for tackling the nature emergency and pressures driving biodiversity loss. They promote integrated land use, equitable benefit-sharing, public and cultural wellbeing, collaboration, and values-led integrity.

Embedding these principles into all future financial and policy decisions will help ensure Welsh investments drive genuine improvements in environmental health and societal wellbeing. This will support community engagement, ensure that local knowledge informs funding decisions, and projects deliver long-term benefits for people and ecosystems, with transparency to prevent greenwashing.

3. Work with the Crown Estate on 'nature leasing' areas of the seabed

The Welsh Government can harness the Crown Estate's power to lease areas of the seabed for nature. These will work as Other Effective Conservation Measures (OECMs). These offer us a chance to protect ecologically vital areas that fall outside the criteria of Marine Protected Areas. These include blue carbon hotspots like seagrass meadows, oyster beds, and fish spawning grounds- the living engines of our ocean.

As an MS, how can you help?

- Adopt our key policy recommendations in your parties' 2026 Senedd Manifesto
- Urge the Welsh Government to embed the Sustainable Investment Principles throughout their funding pathways, and engage with eNGOs to establish the best investment opportunities
- Table parliamentary questions, using information from this briefing, to understand current Welsh Government plans for a sustainable blue economy in Wales

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