Our seas and our future health, wealth and wellbeing are inextricably linked.

Clean seas and beaches, healthy fish stocks and proper marine protection supports tourism, livelihoods, habitats and wildlife.

Protecting the amazing marine life around our shores from litter, indiscriminate fishing methods or poorly planned development is the responsibility of our generation.

Creating a network of marine protected areas, promoting selective fishing practices and responsible fish farming and taking action to reduce marine litter are just some of the steps urgently needed if our seas are to recover to a healthy state.

Our seas our future sets out the Marine Conservation Society’s five year plan to ensure our seas are fit for life – for marine life, for livelihoods and for future lifetimes.

Sam Fanshawe, CEO of Marine Conservation Society
Our seas our future

The seas around the UK are vital to all of us. An historical seafaring nation with a diverse fishing industry and coastal tourism at the economic heart of many communities – connections with the sea are all around us.

Our seas under pressure

Decades of pollution, damaging fishing activities, rapid and extensive development, and climate change have resulted in seas that are far less healthy than they should be – too many fish are being taken from the sea, too much waste is going in and too little is being done to protect marine wildlife and habitats.

If these issues aren’t addressed our marine habitats and wildlife, along with our own future health, wealth and wellbeing, will suffer.

The Marine Conservation Society exists to ensure the long term future of UK seas – but time is short. The next five years will be crucial if we are to ensure a healthier outlook.

Over 15,000 marine species are found in UK seas

40% of North East Atlantic stocks including those around the UK are overfished

UK seas provide us with resources from fish to renewable marine energy

On UK beaches levels of litter have doubled in the past 20 years

UK seas and shores are a place for leisure, sport, and a holiday destination for millions annually

Farmed marine fin fish production in Scotland is set to increase by 30% between 2014-2020
our vision
Seas Fit for Life – clean seas and coasts that support abundant marine wildlife, sustainable livelihoods and enjoyment for all.

our mission
To drive change in government policy, industry practice and individual behaviour that results in measurable improvements in the state of our seas – improved biodiversity, healthier fish stocks and less pollution on beaches and in the sea.

our approach
Throughout our work we aim to inspire, inform, involve and influence everyone who can take action to safeguard our seas now and for future generations.

We will:

inspire people to value the marine environment and to enjoy all that the coast and seas provide, through awareness and education.

inform and engage the public, governments and industry through effective communications and events.

involve people in our work through practical volunteer projects, campaigns, partnerships and promotion of sustainable behaviour.

influence governments and industries to turn their commitments and policies into action and pursue solutions that improve the health of our seas, shores and wildlife.

our seas, our future sets out the key threats and issues currently affecting UK seas and where we will target our efforts over the next five years to find lasting solutions. It recognises the progress we have already made in many areas and looks at how we will continue to achieve our vision of ‘Seas Fit for Life’, how we will secure support, and the ways we will engage people to help deliver those aims for the benefit of all – above and below the waves.

our aims
MCS will focus its work over the period 2015-2020 on the following priorities, to progress towards our vision of Seas Fit for Life:

Protecting marine life
Establish an ecologically coherent UK network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs).

Sustainable fisheries
Recovery of fish stocks and reduced impact of fishing and fish farms on habitats, non-target species and marine ecosystems; and increase availability of sustainably wild caught and responsibly farmed seafood.

Clean seas and beaches
Reduce litter and bathing water pollution at UK beaches.

Working seas
Ecologically sustainable planning and management of major marine industries and our wider seas.

Engaging our audiences
Increase public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of UK seas and active involvement in marine conservation.

Delivery of these conservation aims will be underpinned by organisational priorities including establishing sustainable income streams, increasing the MCS profile, brand and supporter base, influencing political audiences and supporting a high-performing, motivated team of staff.

credible • passionate • evidence based • solutions • focussed • engaging • proactive • campaigning • collaborative
Over 50 native UK marine species are now listed on the IUCN’s Red List of Threatened Species, including the Endangered undulate ray, Atlantic halibut and sei whale, and the Critically Endangered common skate, angel shark and European eel.

Commercial fishing, especially bottom trawling and dredging, is known to have the most widespread impacts on seafloor habitats, but added to these impacts are the collective and cumulative effects of the wide range of activities that take place in our coastal and offshore waters.

In addition, our understanding of the stresses suffered by our marine ecosystems through ocean acidification, sea temperature rise and other consequences of climate change is becoming clearer.

To ensure we offer our seas, their wildlife and habitats the best possible future, MCS is working to change the way our seas are managed by championing the development of a network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) that can support the recovery of our amazing marine heritage.

We must not hand empty seas to the next generation.

Our oceans are losing their biodiversity at an alarming rate – over the last century we’ve lost 90% of the biggest fish, sharks and whales. There are over seven times more vertebrate species threatened with extinction in the seas around the UK than there are on land, and there are many species which we know so little about that we cannot even begin to assess their vulnerability.

Our seas and their precious marine species and habitats must be properly protected and managed now to ensure they are resilient in the face of man-made and climatic changes that are threatening this often unseen environment and its ecosystems.

The last fallen mahogany would lie perceptibly on the landscape, and the last black rhino would be obvious in its loneliness, but a marine species may disappear beneath the waves unobserved and the sea would seem to roll on the same as always. G. Carleton Ray

We’re working to ensure that 30% of our seas are protected from damaging activities.

By 2020 we want 30% of our seas protected from damaging activities.
Protecting marine life

Our 2015-2020 focus is to achieve an ecologically coherent UK network of well-managed Marine Protected Areas.

Here’s how we’ll do it...

High level engagement
Management measures must protect habitats and species from damaging activities. We’ll keep the pressure on governments and marine and fisheries management bodies to ensure they do.

Top level pressure
A full network of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) in UK seas is still some way off. We’ll lobby UK and national governments to designate the MPA network and fulfill their international commitments.

Citizen science
Through development and expansion of our Seasearch volunteer diver programme and our marine recording schemes, we’ll encourage the public to contribute to UK data on marine habitats and species.

Involvement
We’ll work with communities to ensure designation, management and ongoing effectiveness of marine protected areas.

Awareness
Through campaigns, media coverage, social media engagement and online communications we’ll highlight the need for marine protected areas to the widest audience possible.

Strategy 2015-2020

Changing the game
With designation of MPAs comes the responsibility of managing them, and that needs the support of local communities and buy-in from people who have traditionally used them. We pioneered the Community Voice Method (CVM) in the UK. It uses film to reach into communities, gather a wide range of views and opinions from people to whom these areas are vitally important.

In 2013, working with Sussex Inshore Fisheries and Conservation Authority (IFCA), MCS used CVM to gather sea-user’s views on the management of two new multi-use MPAs in local inshore waters. This resulted in new management measures for both sites that were discussed and consulted on locally – they balance the needs of species and habitats with the needs of the people who depend on the sites for a living.

Over 300,000 records on undersea habitats and species have been collected by volunteer Seasearch divers providing significant evidence for inshore MPAs.

Over half a million people have voiced their support for MPA designation in the UK through our campaigns.

Over 3,000km² of our seabed is now protected from bottom-towed gear.

Working together for Scottish seas
In coalition with other organisations, MCS has led the Save Scottish Seas campaign securing 30 new MPAs in 2014 (shown in orange), including the largest in Europe. Together we ran the #DontTakeTheP out of MPAs campaign, generating almost 3,000 responses to a government consultation calling for scallop dredging and Nephrops trawling to be largely prohibited in the most vulnerable inshore sites.

Subsequently the Scottish Environment Secretary announced welcome and progressive proposals to protect sites from these fisheries.

To the shelf limits, Scotland has 61% of UK waters, of which 23% are now in existing or new MPAs.

Strategy 2015-2020

Over 30% of representative marine habitats protected from damaging activities by 2020.

UK network of MPAs designated by 2018.

250,000 additional Seasearch records by 2020.

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Unsustainable fishing practices are causing profound and, in some cases, permanent changes to our seas. Overfishing, bycatch and bottom towed fishing gears have damaged habitats, altered marine foodwebs, depleted our fisheries resources, and left many species on the brink of extinction. While in some areas overfishing has simply resulted in fewer large and long-lived fish, some stocks, like cod, have collapsed and been replaced by shorter-lived species which exist further down the food chain, such as crustaceans and jellyfish.

The perception-changing moment for the oceans has arrived. It comes from the realisation that in a single human lifetime we have inflicted a crisis on the oceans greater than any yet caused by pollution. That crisis compares with the destruction of mammoths, bison and whales, the rape of rainforests and the pursuit of bush meat. It is caused by overfishing.” Charles Clover Journalist and author of ‘End of the Line’

Fishing pressure makes ecosystems vulnerable to impacts such as climate change, ocean acidification and pollution. Subsequent changes in the abundance of species and structure of the food chain can lead to less secure futures for coastal communities that have, in many cases, relied for centuries on the fishing industry.

In recent years, MCS has been working hard to influence the reform of the European Union’s Common Fisheries Policy – the overarching legislation managing Europe’s fisheries. Changes to the new policy in 2013 were extremely positive with targets for sustainable fisheries and aquaculture engrainged in the legislation. The challenge now is ensuring that these promising new targets are properly implemented. The fisheries team is helping to drive forward both policy and consumer-led actions to support development of good fisheries and aquaculture management.

Our fisheries team is also busy working with industry to promote and support aquaculture production that is based on innovative and responsible practices. Two of the top five species eaten in the UK are farmed: Atlantic salmon and warm water prawns. Both rely on marine proteins and oils in their diets which we get by catching wild fish or crustaceans to feed them. We believe the sustainable management of feed fisheries, along with increased use of non-marine feed ingredients, will ensure that aquaculture can contribute to our future food security by being a net producer of fish protein.

Sustainable fisheries

In the UK we eat 467,000 tonnes of seafood a year, which is 7.2 kg/person...

...that’s the equivalent of about 15 billion fish fingers a year!

An estimated £6.2 billion was spent on seafood in the UK in 2013

£1.1 billion is spent on fish and chips every year in the UK

Over 10,500 takeaways and fish and chip shops serve around 380 million meals a year in the UK

MCS also understands the importance of encouraging progressive developments in the seafood sector, and through our work with the Global Aquaculture Alliance MCS developed an award to showcase and encourage innovation in the global aquaculture industry.

MCS also works to ensure that environmental needs are incorporated into aquaculture production standards through the Global Aquaculture Alliance Standards Oversight Committee. By 2015 nearly 900,000 tonnes of certified aquaculture products were available globally.
Everyone can support sustainable wild fisheries and responsibly farmed fish through their purchasing power. Our readily accessible information on the most sustainable seafood choices, as well as fish to avoid, is helping to support the transition to abundant fish stocks, well managed fish farms, productive seas and sustainable livelihoods.

Seafood ratings
MCS’s seafood ratings underpin the sourcing policy for the London 2012 Olympics, over 80 tonnes of seafood was eaten at the Olympics and all of it was rated a 3 or better by MCS. The 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow committed to serving no fish from the MCS Fish to Avoid list. Additionally, MCS seafood ratings and recommended policies underpin sourcing practices of major retailers and suppliers, including Marks and Spencer, The Co-operative and The Compass Group.

The UK Government’s own Buying Standards for public sector food and catering services obliges central government and related organisations to avoid buying fish that MCS has rated as Fish to Avoid, and source only from our fish-to-eat list.

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall
Chef, TV presenter, and oceans campaigner

The UK imports over 50% of its seafood and is 8th largest importer of seafood in the world. 6,500 fishing boats in the UK catch up to 150 different species all around Britain, yet most people only eat 5 species groups – cod, haddock, tuna, salmon or prawn.

Farmed fish and shellfish production will have to increase by 133% between 2010 and 2050 to meet projected fish demand worldwide.

21.7 million tonnes of wild caught fish are used for non-human use. That’s the weight equivalent of over...

...75% of this is used to produce fishmeal and fish oil primarily for use in aquaculture

100,000 blue whales
...and you’ll get all the information right there – both at a glance, and in full detail if you need it.

Good Fish Guide App
Download for iOS or Android.

4

We’ll work to minimise the impacts of fishing on endangered, threatened and protected habitats and species with domestic and regional fisheries management bodies.

High level engagement

Top level pressure

The Common Fisheries Policy is key to the future of European fisheries and aquaculture production. We’ll work with other Member States, devolved bodies and Advisory Councils to ensure and influence its effective delivery.

Supporting best practice

We’ll help retailers, restaurants, suppliers and takeaways to adopt sustainable seafood policies and develop recognition schemes so people know where to dine and buy their seafood.

No MCS Fish to Avoid sold by all major retailers and suppliers.

Behaviour change

We’ll develop our Good Fish Guide website and Apps to include information on all fresh, frozen and canned wild and farmed fish products sold in the UK, giving the consumer the tools to drive demand for more sustainable seafood.

Raising standards

Environmentally responsible fish farming is vitally important, we’ll help the development and adoption of improved standards through international, European and national working groups.

AS/EEU commercial fish stocks fished within Maximum Sustainable Yield

20% of Scottish farmed salmon certified by Aquaculture Stewardship Council.


2015-2020 focus

Our 2015-2020 focus is to achieve recovery of depleted fisheries and minimisation of the impacts of wild capture fisheries and fish farming on our seas, and to increase availability and consumption of sustainably caught and responsibly farmed seafood in the UK.

133%
For generations, the seas around the UK coast were treated as an international dumping ground. Everything went in, from raw sewage to toxic waste, and by the 1990s the North Sea was considered the most contaminated sea in Europe.

As if that wasn’t bad enough, in the 1950s the world began its love affair with the indestructible miracle material – plastic. Plastic, in all its forms, started finding its way into the sea and onto the beach – bags, bottles, packets and packaging.

Since 1994 plastic litter on UK beaches has increased by 180%.

But it’s not all bad news and MCS has been leading the fightback - through investment in water treatment driven in part by MCS campaigns, and controls on some hazardous substances, there has been an improving trend for the quality of our water and all that depends on it.

Our work to influence a revised Bathing Water Directive has also resulted in stricter standards to protect our health. But there is still much to be done to ensure waste from sewage, agricultural run-off and urban areas ceases to be a threat to human health and the wildlife we all care about.

Sources of beach and marine litter are many and varied, and MCS beach litter surveys show that general public litter, which is either dropped at the beach or washed down rivers and blown by winds from inland, accounts for 40% of the total recorded. Other key sources include lost and discarded gear from fishing boats, sea anglers’ lines and tackle, waste thrown overboard from ships and sewage related debris – that’s the stuff going down the loo that shouldn’t - including wet wipes, cotton buds and tampons.

The UK coastline is under attack from both sea and land – but ultimately from our activities. Litter on beaches and poor quality water to swim in not only reduces our enjoyment of the coast but impacts health, businesses and livelihoods and threatens marine habitats and wildlife. But, it’s within all our grasps to do something about it.

Shimmering seas, golden beaches, wildlife havens and sparkling rockpools – it’s what we dream about seeing when we visit the UK coast. But the reality can be very different. Some designated bathing beaches in the UK are failing to reach the standards of the revised Bathing Water Directive, due to unhealthily high levels of bacteria, and beach litter levels are rising at an alarming rate.

Water and air, the two essential fluids on which all life depends, have become global garbage cans.”
Jacques-Yves Cousteau, oceanographer

Litter has increased by 135% since 1994, with plastics increasing by a staggering 180%.

Every day millions of microplastics enter the sea from personal care products such as scrubs and toothpastes.

Scrub It Out!

Raising awareness of the plastic content of many personal care products has been the focus for ‘Scrub It Out’, a joint campaign between MCS and Fauna & Flora International (FFI).

Many everyday products like toothpastes, scrubs and shower gels contain tiny pieces of plastic called microplastics. These tiny particles are flushed down the drain, eventually reaching the sea, where they can seriously threaten marine life.

Alongside the downloadable ‘Good Scrub Guide’ and smartphone app, ‘Scrub It Out’ collected public pledges to ditch products containing microplastics.

Armed with rising pledge numbers and public buy-in via social media, MCS and FFI approached UK retailers and asked them to phase out the use of microplastics in their own-brand products within committed time periods.

By early summer 2015, 15 UK retailers had done so including Superdrug, Marks & Spencer, Sainsbury’s, Waitrose and Tesco.

The joint campaign is now focusing on microplastics in luxury products. We’ll be asking the public to help spot plastic ingredients and we’ll be contacting the companies for commitments to remove them.
Over decades, one plastic bottle bobbing along in the ocean can break down into hundreds of tiny plastic pieces. Some designated UK bathing beaches are failing bathing water standards because of unacceptable levels of bacteria. Around 40% of UK beach litter can be directly sourced to the public. Globally, plastic litter has reached every part of the world’s oceans. 8 million tonnes of litter ends up in seas worldwide every year.

### Clean seas and beaches

**Our 2015-2020 focus** is to reduce litter and bathing water pollution at UK beaches.

**Top level pressure**
- As part of the EU-wide Marine Strategy Framework Directive, governing how our seas should be managed, we’ll work at national and European level to ensure effective action plans and policies are adopted.

**Citizen science**
- With support from thousands of volunteers we’ll run beach cleans and surveys all over the UK to monitor the amount, types and sources of litter on UK beaches.

**Behaviour change**
- Single use plastics are the scourge of our oceans. We’ll change attitudes and habits on their use and disposal through campaigns and education.

**Raising standards**
- We’ll drive achievement of high water quality standards set by the Water Framework and Bathing Water Directives.

**Supporting best practice**
- Promote responsible design and disposal of packaging and work with manufacturers and retailers to remove microplastics in personal care products.

**Awareness**
- Our Good Beach Guide website will be the UK’s ‘go to’ digital tool for information about beaches and great water quality, promoted widely on social media to new audiences.

**Marine Litter Action Network**
- Although marine litter is a global problem, the MCS pollution team identified that inroads could be made if different sectors could work together.

- The key to the success of the Marine Litter Action Network (MLAN) was bringing together organisations from all sectors.

- From the plastic industry to local authorities and environmental organisations, MLAN gave itself an initial year to make a difference.

- Projects in such diverse areas as creating boardshorts from marine rubbish, fishing litter initiatives, and the war on microplastics in personal care products got off the ground. Members who were prepared for challenging times discovered collaborations which were far more than a talking shop.

- A year on there’s a real desire to keep the Network going past its initial twelve months. With so many productive relationships and partnerships created, which are already delivering real-world change, it’s clear that MLAN has been a real success.

**Good Beach Guide**

When the Good Beach Guide was launched in the late 80s, raw sewage was regularly discharged into the sea around much of the UK. Over nearly 30 years the Guide has highlighted beaches with the best and worst bathing waters, and its findings have been used to lobby governments to increase water quality standards and persuade industry to invest in sewage treatment. All of that has paid off because in 2015 new bathing water standards were finally put in place, going above and beyond the aspirational MCS ‘Recommended’ status.

Now the Guide has gone beyond water quality and become a vital tool for all coastal visitors, offering the most up to date water quality information including daily pollution risk forecasts, wildlife sighting information near the selected beach, weather forecasts, RNLI lifeguard information and tide times.

- Our 2015-2020 focus is to reduce litter and bathing water pollution at UK beaches.
- 50% reduction in the amount of sewage related debris on UK beaches.
- 10,000 volunteers engaged in beach litter surveys each year.
- 75% of UK bathing waters achieve Excellent water quality standard.
- All UK manufacturers and retailers committed to removing microplastics from personal care products.
Working seas

As an island nation, the UK has used the sea as a workhorse to provide everything from our energy needs, food, sand for concrete, transport of goods, imports and exports and even our internet cables. This long term exploitation means that today our seas are amongst the most heavily used in the world. Expansion of marine developments can have considerable impacts on our marine wildlife and habitats.

It’s 50 years since the first oil platform was erected in the North Sea, with full oil and gas production starting in the 1970s. Over the last decade the UK has become a world leader in the development of offshore wind power and our wave and tidal power is also beginning to be exploited.

Our seas remain incredibly busy for concrete, transport of goods, imports and exports, by weight, and our internet cables. Our seas are amongst the most heavily populated part of the UK, is vital for ports, harbours, sewage works and power stations, and also hugely important for recreation.

MCS works to ensure that these industries are developed as sustainably as possible. Achieving ecological sustainability of marine industries at a time when economic growth is considered the first priority will not be easy – but we need to green the ‘Blue Growth’ agenda.

Going forward, we will support sustainable industries such as offshore wind whilst encouraging other industries to operate within environmental limits. Environmental policies and legislation need to be implemented more robustly through marine spatial plans, strategic environmental assessments, licensing, the adoption of an ecosystem based approach, and strong measures under the Marine Strategy Framework Directive to achieve Good Environmental Status.

High level engagement
We’ll work with maritime industries to ensure developments don’t adversely affect rare, threatened or protected habitats or species, or the integrity of our ecosystems.

Raising Standards
Marine spatial plans for all UK sea areas are needed to ensure growth is within environmentally sustainable limits – we’ll input into these plans and influence their correct implementation.

Supporting best practice
We’ll support offshore wind developments which have a key role to play in delivering renewable energy targets – we’ll work with the industry to ensure developments minimize impacts on marine life and habitats.

Top level pressure
UK seas need to achieve Good Environmental Status by 2020 and we’ll be influencing governments to make sure this is achieved.

Involvement
We’ll work with industries to help them adopt best environmental practice for both established and emerging marine projects.

MCS led the calls for inclusion of marine planning in the UK Marine & Coastal Access Act and Marine (Scotland) Act. We are now influencing the implementation of the Marine Planning elements of the Acts. Through representation on marine planning groups and input to draft Marine Plans in England, Scotland and Wales, MCS promotes the application of an ecosystem based approach and consideration of the cumulative and in-combination effects of proposed developments, to ensure these are within the environmental limits of the region.

Over 90% of UK imports and exports, by weight, are transported by ship. Our coastal zone is the most heavily populated part of the UK, is vital for ports, harbours, sewage works and power stations, and also hugely important for recreation.

Marine Planning

Developments in MPAs

Over 20 million tonnes of sand and gravel sales in England and 48% in Wales, with approximately 20 million tonnes dredged annually. 15% of UK energy must be produced from renewable sources by 2020.

Marine aggregates supply around 20% of sand and gravel sales in England and Wales, with approximately 20 million tonnes dredged annually.

Over 90% of UK imports and exports, by weight, are transported by ship. For oil and gas development in Moray Firth and Cardigan Bay Special Areas of Conservation. We opposed a proposal for a breakwater in the Manacles Marine Conservation Zone of the Lizard peninsula, after seawatch dive surveys revealed the development could damage the site’s protected species, maerl beds and rocky reefs.

If our oceans are not healthy, our economy will be sick. This common objective of economic development and environmental protection is at the core of my political mandate. It is at the core of Europe’s Ocean Governance and Blue Growth agenda.”

Karmenu Vella, European Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries.
Engaging our audiences

Engaging with people and involving them in what we do is of paramount importance to MCS. We have a long tradition of harnessing the power of passionate volunteers throughout the UK and beyond to help us bring about positive changes for the marine environment. Never before has there been a more critical time to increase this public engagement.

Between 2015 and 2020, we want to involve more people in new and varied ways to help deliver and develop a more widespread understanding and appreciation of the diversity and value of the marine environment, and establish a reconnection with our seas where it may have been lost.

We want to improve people’s knowledge and understanding of the importance of healthy seas and people’s roles in protecting them, and ensure decision-makers make the right choices for the long term sustainability of our seas.

We may be “all about the fish”, but it is people who are at the very heart of our strategy – because it’s people that can make a difference, for the good of our seas.

The public’s understanding of marine ecosystems has increased over recent years. However, there is still a disconnect between everyday human activities and the long term impacts our activities have on the environment, posing a huge threat to the future of our seas, marine wildlife, coastal livelihoods and wellbeing.

Increasing public understanding of the need for marine conservation is critical to the future sustainability of our coastal natural heritage and in helping us achieve our conservation goals.

We will work to better understand and more effectively influence key decision makers and those who use the sea, or have roles managing our seas and shores.

As a trusted charity with a strong scientific basis and credible position in the policy and industry sector, we are ideally placed to facilitate dialogue and collaboration and inform and influence changes in government policy, industry practice and public behaviours.

We want to create experiences and provide active engagement opportunities that will increase people’s enjoyment and appreciation of our coast and the marine environment as well as inspire them to take action to help us protect and conserve it.

We cannot do it alone, but together we can make a difference.

5.4 million people spend time in contact with the ocean every year, including around 800,000 kayakers, 624,000 surfers, 51,800 sailors, 4,800,000 swimmers and 271,000 scuba divers

MCS will encourage people to visit the coast, learn about the marine environment, enjoy it and provide ways they can help to keep it healthy and productive into the future

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Far and away, the greatest threat to the ocean, and thus to ourselves, is ignorance. But we can do something about that.

Sylvia Earle  Marine biologist and explorer

Sea Champions

Thanks to funding from Marks & Spencer through the Forever Fish partnership, the MCS Sea Champions volunteer scheme has gone from strength to strength since it began in 2012, with 470 having been recruited by 2015. The next five years will see MCS campaigns taken to even wider audiences, throughout the UK.

We expect our social media audience to continue to grow to in excess of 200,000 by 2020

We will promote a lifelong connection with our seas, shores and wildlife through our national network of thousands of volunteers

Education - Cool Seas

Cool Seas takes learning about our seas into schools across the UK. Through performances, workshops, assemblies and beach visits we have already engaged well over 100,000 children.

Our new Cool Seas Investigators project reaches out to secondary schools using problem based learning to get young people thinking about identifying local solutions.

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Far and away, the greatest threat to the ocean, and thus to ourselves, is ignorance. But we can do something about that.

Sylvia Earle  Marine biologist and explorer

5.4 million people spend time in contact with the ocean every year, including around 800,000 kayakers, 624,000 surfers, 51,800 sailors, 4,800,000 swimmers and 271,000 scuba divers

MCS will encourage people to visit the coast, learn about the marine environment, enjoy it and provide ways they can help to keep it healthy and productive into the future

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We may be “all about the fish”, but it is people who are at the very heart of our strategy – because it’s people that can make a difference, for the good of our seas.

The public’s understanding of marine ecosystems has increased over recent years. However, there is still a disconnect between everyday human activities and the long term impacts our activities have on the environment, posing a huge threat to the future of our seas, marine wildlife, coastal livelihoods and wellbeing.

Increasing public understanding of the need for marine conservation is critical to the future sustainability of our coastal natural heritage and in helping us achieve our conservation goals.

We will work to better understand and more effectively influence key decision makers and those who use the sea, or have roles managing our seas and shores.

As a trusted charity with a strong scientific basis and credible position in the policy and industry sector, we are ideally placed to facilitate dialogue and collaboration and inform and influence changes in government policy, industry practice and public behaviours.

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We cannot do it alone, but together we can make a difference.
Rolled out our national Sea Champions volunteer initiative involving almost 500 people giving us over 16,000 hours of their time.

Engaged 150,000 people at over 500 public events, and piloted community projects focussed on Sewage Related Debris and Marine Litter.

Grew our Education Programme with an interactive website, touring puppet show and in-school workshops for nearly 50,000 primary school children around the UK.

I got involved in Seasearch because I wanted to learn more about the life I saw on dives. I continue to learn through my fellow Seasearch divers. I also really enjoy going out on organised boat dives to sites where Seasearch wants to explore - quite often these are places where the club diving wouldn’t take us.

Wendy Northway
Seasearch Tutor, Cheshire

Between 2011-14 we...

During 2015-2020 we aim to...

Some of our volunteer initiatives include...

**Big Beach Clean-up**

Through our Forever Fish partnership with Marks & Spencer the Big Beach Clean-up was created in 2012. Its aim was to introduce the issue of beach litter and our beach clean programme to a new audience taken from the high street retailer's staff and customers.

Since spring 2012, nearly 30,000 volunteers have cleared away over half a million pieces of rubbish as part of the MCS/M&S Big Beach Clean-up, now in its fourth year. 100 tonnes of litter have been cleared from over 400 beaches in over 1,000 bin bags!

**Seasearch**

Seasearch, our MCS volunteer dive programme has engaged thousands of volunteers in exploring some of the richest marine habitats in our seas. To help them improve their skills we’ve run over 600 Seasearch courses, awarded 750 Seasearch qualifications and produced a series of well-respected guides to identifying marine life.

**Our 2015-2020 focus** is to achieve increased public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of UK seas and active involvement in their conservation.

**Raising profile**

We’ll further grow and develop all of our communications and social media platforms to increase the profile of our seas and the actions needed to protect them.

1 million visitors to MCS online platforms annually.

15,000 volunteers actively engaged in MCS activities annually.

**Inspiring future generations**

The children of today are tomorrow’s decision makers. We’ll inspire children to understand the need to protect our seas through our programme of formal and informal learning resources.

**Behaviour change**

We want to make sure that people who don’t live on the coast love it as much as those that do. From Northampton to Nairn, we’ll promote the benefits of the marine environment to our health, wealth and well-being.

**Involvement**

We’ll expand our UK-wide network of volunteers to promote marine conservation at grass roots level. We’ll develop partnerships with recreational user groups to increase awareness, and participation in conservation projects.

**Citizen science**

We’ll run projects and surveys that provide people with new learning opportunities as well as increase our understanding of UK marine life.

Our 2015-2020 focus is to achieve increased public understanding, appreciation and enjoyment of UK seas and active involvement in their conservation.
Ensuring that we generate the funds to be able to deliver our conservation strategy over the next five years is key to the success of MCS. Our Fundraising, Marketing and Communications teams play a vital role in helping the charity achieve the conservation goals we are working towards through income generation, membership growth and brand and stakeholder awareness.

As we move into the next five year period we anticipate further sustained income from our rolling trust and grants programme, combined with an increased focus on partnerships with businesses and a new focus on presenting funding projects to high value donors. All of this will be underpinned by a continued growth in our media coverage, social media followers, e-newsletter sign-ups, mobile apps and use of video on our digital platforms.

Over the last five years the Fundraising team has significantly increased income through support from business, trusts and grants, legacies, individual and community fundraisers and events. This increase has been underpinned by continued relationships with high profile organisations like Debenhams, Waitrose, Marks and Spencer, People’s Postcode Lottery and Glenmorangie.

Between 2015 and 2020 our aim is to build on our current strengths. In a crowded market place we will be focusing on audiences whose work area and ethos chime with our own. At the heart of reaching out to industry, companies and individuals will be our continued growth on digital platforms where we can speak directly to audiences and build awareness of the charity and our work.

We will continue our focus on partnerships with the business community.

Long term relationships are extremely important to MCS and we will seek to build on existing partnerships and to maximise new opportunities, particularly with retailers and restaurants linked to our sustainable seafood and aquaculture work.

One key area for growth in the coming years will be acknowledging the importance of packaging our work for larger statutory funding bodies in the UK (e.g. Big Lottery Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund, etc). We’ll also be investigating the potential for funding from overseas grant making bodies, in particular in Europe and the US.

We’ll be seeking joint working opportunities with other non-governmental organisations to enhance our ability to secure grants and funding from bodies that see the benefit of organisations working together to achieve a specific result. We will also look to grow our Major Gift and Legacy marketing programmes which are new areas for MCS.

Alongside our continual need to grow our financial support is the need to increase the MCS brand profile. Excellent brand recognition leads to a wider supporter base - a vital growth area for us.

Through our Marketing and Communications programme we will seek ways to enhance our relationships with a wide audience to support our conservation aims. We will encourage participation in our campaigns, and engage more through social media and enews.

MCS online shop

As MCS has continued to develop and enhance its digital communications, its commercial activities have similarly followed suit with the re-launch of its online shop in 2013.

Since the re-design to appeal to its growing audience, enhanced payment security and new product range, over £20,000 worth of products have been sold, including clothing, jewellery, pin badges, calendars, books and Adopt-a-Turtle packs.

New corporate partnerships have allowed MCS to broaden its range and offer more bespoke products aligned with our values. Isle of Wight-based, award-winning eco fashion label, Rapanui, has built up a successful relationship with MCS since its initial marine-themed T-shirt launch and is now one of the site’s best sellers of a range including sweatshirts, hoodies and bags.

We have been delighted to have been working in partnership with the Marine Conservation Society. The marine environment is vitally important to Marks & Spencer and our 33 million customers. MCS’ inspiring work to protect our beaches, oceans and sea life has provided practical opportunities for our customers and employees to make a real difference right across the British Isles.”

Mike Barry Director of Plan A, Marks and Spencer

“Through beach cleans and fundraising activities such as the Great Glenmorangie Bake Off we have achieved unprecedented levels of staff engagement, exceeding the targets we’d set ourselves. Working alongside MCS, we have also initiated an exciting reef enhancement study of the Dornoch Firth with Heriot Watt University Life Sciences Department.”

Hamish Torrie Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at Glenmorangie

Glenmorangie

The Glenmorangie distillery is situated on the banks of the Dornoch Firth in a Special Area of Conservation. At the core of the partnership is a bottling of whisky called Dornoch – sold worldwide with a contribution to MCS from every bottle sold.

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Hamish Torrie Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at Glenmorangie
Between 2011-14 we...

Grew our membership from 4,500 to 5,750 (+27%)

Developed a new face-to-face recruitment programme, attending hundreds of events, resulting in 550 new members

Appeared in the media over 15,000 times

Significantly grew our online presence by attracting 7,000,000 visits to our websites and 50,000 people to our social media pages

Reached 44,500 people with regular and targeted e-newsletters.

During 2015-2020 we aim to...

Increase regular giving supporters from 5,750 to 8,620

Increase annual supporter income (committed giving, memberships, cash appeals and fundraising activities) from £321,000 to £634,000 by 2020

Increase total database contacts from 59,000 to 200,000

Increase regular email recipients from 44,500 to 100,000

Increase prompted brand awareness of MCS from 28% to 33%

Increase social media contacts from 70,000 to 150,000

Measure and report on our impact so funds and resources are put to best effect

We spend your money wisely

We use our funds to invest in the charity’s future growth and development so we can increase our effectiveness and ultimately our ability to deliver our conservation aims. The bulk of our income is spent on the work areas that can really make a difference to the UK’s marine environment with the remainder helping us support those aims.

Conservation programmes, education and campaign communications

Funding and membership

Building partnerships

Our Fundraising Team work with large and small businesses in partnerships that benefit MCS and business alike. From sponsoring events, donations via purchases or continuing financial support, we pride ourselves in building and servicing relationships that work for everyone.

High level engagement

We’ll look at new ways of getting the MCS brand more widely recognised and valued. Building awareness of our brand through increased partnerships, promotion and communications will support our wider marketing and fundraising work.

Leaving a legacy

We’ll increase our investment and focus on generating a strong foundation of legacy pledgers to pave the way for a secure and healthy income stream from gifts and Wills in future years.

Product development

By growing our adoption schemes and developing our range of online shop products we’ll appeal to wider audiences and increase income streams. We’ll increase supporter benefits with an improved, customer-centric online experience.

Involvement

We’ll find new ways to reach more people, grow our network of members and regular supporters and develop strong relationships to underpin our work and help us achieve our long term aims.

Inspire company employees through volunteer and engagement activities and raise £150,000 from Major Donors by 2020.

33% prompted awareness of MCS and our work.

£1.78m income generated by 2020 from company supporters, Trusts, our members and regular givers.

Our 2015-2020 focus is to establish sustainable income streams which will provide regular annual income of at least £2 million from both restricted and unrestricted sources.

Securing the means

here’s how we’ll do it...
1977
Underwater Conservation Year – highlights rough times ahead for our seas.

1983
Marine Conservation Society set up in a garden shed in Herefordshire.

1987
The annual Good Beach Guide book focuses on woeful state of UK’s bathing waters.
MCS lobbies European Commission for higher Bathing Water Directive standards.

Bathing waters reaching the highest Guideline standards increased from 29% in 1990 to 78% in 2014.

New standards came into force in 2015. Signs will advise no swimming at failing beaches, and online pollution alerts will highlight when there’s a health risk. All available at goodbeachguide.co.uk – now a one stop online beach information shop.

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1994
Beachwatch is launched – a UK-wide clean-up and survey of beach litter.

By 2015 over 108,000 volunteers have collected 7 million bits of litter from almost 4,000 km of UK beaches.

MCS campaigning leads to single use carrier bag charges in all the home nations by October 2015.


1998
10 year MCS campaign results in basking sharks being protected under UK law.

Don’t Let Go campaign launched to stop mass balloon releases.

By 2015 over 40 local authorities ban balloon and lantern releases on their land.

2000
MCS establishes its Scotland programme based in Edinburgh.

30 Scottish MPAs established in summer 2014, including Europe’s largest along with MCS recommended sites.

Scotland pilots its first drinks bottle deposit system, taking advice from MCS based on our litter data.

2003
Seasearch volunteer diver programme launched to record and monitor wildlife and habitats.

By 2015 almost 800 Seasearch divers have been trained, 17,000 survey dives and 550,000 records of marine habitats and species gathered.

2005
Cool Seas Education project begins taking life size marine inflatables to thousands of classrooms.

2007
MCS launches Marine Reserves Now campaign to get the public behind the need for marine protection.

2009 / 2010
UK Marine and Coastal Access Act and Marine (Scotland) Act enter into law – after 10 year campaigns by MCS and our NGO partners.

2012
Sea Champions volunteer programme launched.

By 2015 almost 500 Sea Champions had given over 16,000 hours in support of marine conservation.

2013
Reformed Common Fisheries Policy introduced including targets for achieving Maximum Sustainable Yield and an end to discarding.

2014
27 Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) established in English waters.

180 Parliamentarians sign up to MCS-led Marine Charter.

2014
MCS launches Marine Litter Action Network, bringing together 60 organisations to help tackle litter issues.

2015
Scrub It Out! is developed out of the network to get manufacturers and high street retailers to remove microplastics from own brand personal care products - by June 2015, 15 UK retailers had pledged to do so.
Our strategy is a blueprint for the future of our seas as we head towards 2020.

Your support is crucial to ensure our seas are fit for life – for marine life, livelihoods and future lifetimes.

Thank you for your interest.

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