

Chair Board of Trustees



Welcome from our Chair

It has been a privilege serving as Chair over the past six years and I cannot recommend the opportunity highly enough for an incoming Chair taking the organisation to the next level.

Working with a talented and dedicated board and executive team, we have achieved sustained transformation, aligning ourselves for far greater and lasting impact for our ocean. We have a clear focus with a targeted strategy tied to impact. We have a strong appreciation of our shared values and unique strengths which drive our approach. We have nurtured a cross-organisational culture ensuring integrated working across teams and skill sets. We have been dynamic in ensuring we have the skills we need to achieve.

We have positioned ourselves to be able to deliver ocean recovery projects at scale with a modular approach to budgeting and ambition to grow a pipeline of major initiatives. We have an innovative outlook, for example as thought leaders in Ocean finance and as champions of joined up Marine Spatial Planning. We are also tenacious in seeing through work requiring sustained endeavour, such as meaningful protection for Marine Protected Areas. We have sharpened the focus of the Good Fish Guide, one of our hallmark projects that underpins our brand and influence. We also retain the capacity to be responsive to events and opportunities, such as our successful sewage pollution legal challenge.

We have strengthened our presence in Parliaments throughout the UK growing our influence and profile. This advocacy has boosted campaigns from regulation of “forever chemicals” to deposit return schemes for bottles and cans. Our digital capability is really taking off with a prize winning digital magazine and well targeted offer to engage and inform our members and supporters.

A unique part of our work is our ability to gather our own primary evidence of pollution and litter to prove the need for changes in legislation. As a result, we have been able to campaign successfully for bans on various plastic single-use products, increased scrutiny of water companies, and a source-to-sea approach to water management by the Independent Water Commission. These wins are made possible by our large volunteer community including many young people. Over 14,000 people took part in our beach cleaning programme last year collecting crucial evidence through litter surveys.

Our community focus is a key part of our approach, be that our award-winning work in North Wales or in the UK Overseas Territories. Our vibrant Youth Ocean Network empowers the next generation to make a difference and be heard. Last year our One Ocean Roadshow and Scottish Education Roadshow each reached more than 3,000 people, helping them connect to the ocean, understand the pressures, and take positive action.

The organisation is poised for growing influence, positioning the ocean not as an afterthought but as a fundamental part of national life. I look forward to witnessing the next episode and hope you will apply for the incredible opportunity this Chair role offers.

Amanda Nobbs
Chair
Marine Conservation Society



Welcome from our Chief Executive

It is an exciting time for us at the Marine Conservation Society. We have an excellent team in our Board and our staff, with strong governance and values. And we have ambitious plans over the next few years, with a clear strategy focus on impact that I genuinely believe will make a difference for our seas, even in these slightly more challenging times.

After 6 years strong leadership and support from Amanda Nobbs we are now looking for a new Chair to help us deliver on that ambition – someone who shares our conviction that ocean recovery is both urgent and possible. Here's a flavour of what's ahead.

Our Atlantic Coast Programme continues to grow along the west coasts of Wales and Scotland. On the Isle of Eigg, we are piloting eco-friendly moorings that let boaters enjoy the island without damaging its precious seagrass beds. And in nearby communities we are exploring community-led work on oyster ponds and reefs, seagrass planting and 'no anchor' zones. In Wales we are developing regenerative blue mussel farming and multi-species approaches in several locations. On 8 June, World Oceans Day, FatFace will launch a new clothing range that will raise awareness and vital funds for this programme.

For marine related laws and policies, this is a pivotal year. We are pushing the UK Government's PFAS Plan to be at least as robust as the EU equivalent, so it genuinely tackles substances that harm people, wildlife and planet. We are also working alongside charities across the sector on water reforms, holding our governments to their commitments to clean up the water sector and our seas.

We are investing in how we engage too. Our website is being transformed – easier to navigate, more accessible, and home to a new A–Z fact file on UK marine life. We are setting up a Youth Advisory Panel to embed young voices meaningfully in our work, bringing fresh thinking and lived experience to our ocean goals. After the success of our One Ocean Roadshow in the north of England, we have recently started a second project in Scotland to inspire inland and disadvantaged communities with our ocean the impact they can have to protect it.

Internationally, our Turks and Caicos Islands work to protect turtle species whilst supporting community fishing continues, with community workshops and more. This year also marks 10 years of the Big Seaweed Search, our citizen science partnership with the Natural History Museum, which is helping us track how warming and acidification are reshaping our coasts.

The role of Chair is central to all of this. You would be joining a confident, capable team at a moment when our work matters more than ever. If you can help us drive forward this work, help us make vital connections to support our ambitions and ensure the organisation can deliver effectively we would love to hear from you.

Sandy Luk
CEO,
Marine Conservation Society



About Us

The Marine Conservation Society is a leading UK marine charity – We work for the future of our ocean by driving political and social change through people, science and evidence, protecting habitats and regenerating ecosystems in partnership with communities, business and governments.

We combine rigorous evidence-based advocacy with deep community engagement. Each year our volunteers, citizen scientists and supporters contribute thousands of hours to our work – from beach litter surveys to species monitoring – generating the data that underpins our campaigns and policy influence.

We are solutions focused, working effectively with corporate and industry partners. Advising on sustainable seafood choices and influencing nature positive marine planning. We develop projects that increase ocean health and resilience, greater species richness and an improved ability for the ocean to protect our world against the impacts of climate change.

With approximately 100 employees, supplemented by volunteers and contractors, we operate across the UK with reach into the UK's Overseas Territories. In 2024–25, total income was nearly £5 million and our financial position is stable, supported by a diverse funding base including individual donors, major funders, corporate partnerships and statutory sources.



Why this role matters now

The ocean covers over 70% of our planet. It provides more than half the oxygen we breathe and absorbs nearly a third of our carbon emissions. Right now, it's in crisis.

The ocean is increasingly used for energy production, shipping, fishing and tourism – creating fierce competition for space and resources. This puts additional stress on already fragile marine ecosystems. Pollution and industrial use of our ocean is fuelling the biodiversity crisis, threatening 37% of marine mammals with extinction.

Populations of some of our strongest allies in the fight against climate change – from oysters to blue mussels – have collapsed. Seagrass meadows, some of the most effective carbon stores on the planet, are disappearing.

Every year, between 8 and 13 million tonnes of plastic enters our ocean. Harmful forever chemicals like PFAS enter our rivers and seas and never break down. Sea temperatures are rising faster than ever and the ocean is becoming increasingly acidic making it harder for life to survive.

The role of the Chair

The Chair leads the Board of Trustees and helps ensure it works effectively as the charity's governing body.

The Chair supports trustees to fulfil their duties, keeps the Board focused on strategy and oversight, and helps maintain a strong and constructive relationship between the Board and the Executive.

The Chair provides leadership to the Board, enables good decision-making, supports and challenges the Chief Executive, and ensures appropriate governance and accountability



We need a Chair who will help us face this challenge with confidence, integrity and ambition.

Key Responsibilities

Leading the Board

- Chair Board meetings effectively, ensuring good preparation, inclusive discussion and clear decisions.
- Work with the Chief Executive to agree agendas and priorities.
- Encourage constructive challenge, balanced contributions and collective responsibility among trustees.
- Ensure actions and decisions are followed through appropriately.

Strategy and organisational oversight

- Help the Board shape, review and oversee the organisation's strategic direction.
- Support the Board to consider performance, opportunities, sustainability and organisational health.
- Keep the Board focused on the issues that matter most for mission delivery and impact

Relationship with the Chief Executive

- Build a strong, open and trusting working relationship with the Chief Executive.
- Provide support, sounding-board input and constructive challenge.
- Lead or support the Chief Executive's appraisal and objective-setting process, where this sits with the Chair.

Governance and accountability

- Ensure the Board fulfils its responsibilities under charity law, company law where applicable, and the governing documents.
- Promote high standards of governance, integrity, conduct and accountability.
- Ensure appropriate oversight of delegated authority, conflicts of interest, safeguarding and key policies.

Finance and risk

- Support the Board in overseeing financial performance, sustainability, reserves, internal controls and strategic risk.
- Work closely with the Treasurer and relevant committee chairs where appropriate.
- Ensure trustees receive the information they need to make sound decisions.
- Act as a guardian of our strong reputation and positive public image.

Board development and culture

- Support trustee recruitment, induction, succession planning and ongoing development.
- Help create an inclusive Board culture where different perspectives are valued.
- Encourage regular reflection on Board effectiveness and ways of working.

Ambassadorial role

- Act as an ambassador for our work and our values.
- Actively represent our mission with partners, supporters, funders and other key stakeholders.
- Support profile-raising, relationship-building and, where relevant, fundraising activities.

Person Specification

We're looking for an experienced leader who brings both the skills to chair a dynamic, mission-driven charity and a genuine passion for the ocean and what we're trying to achieve for it.

✓ Strategic leadership and sound judgement

You'll have senior leadership experience – enough to think strategically, exercise sound judgement, and know when to support and when to constructively challenge.

✓ Governance experience

Ideally you'll have served as a Chair, trustee, non-executive director or governor before, and understand what good governance looks like in practice. If your background is outside the charity sector, a willingness to build that knowledge quickly matters more than a CV that ticks every box.

✓ Leading through change

Experience navigating organisational change and transformation – knowing how to lead through uncertainty and help an organisation grow with confidence.

✓ Digital and AI fluency

Comfort with artificial intelligence, digital and emerging technology is increasingly important to how we work and reach people. We'd welcome a Chair who brings genuine fluency in this space.

✓ Active networks and influence

Strong, active networks across the environmental, policy, corporate or philanthropic world – both in building our influence and in opening doors for partnerships and fundraising.

✓ An inclusive, trusting leadership style

You'll build a genuinely inclusive environment in the boardroom, forge a strong and trusting relationship with our Chief Executive and leadership team, and bring the time and commitment the role deserves.

✓ Desirable

Experience of charity governance, stakeholder engagement, advocacy, partnerships or fundraising would be a welcome addition.



What success looks like

In the first year, a successful Chair will have:

→ Built trust at the top

Established a strong, open and productive working relationship with the Chief Executive – built on clarity of roles, mutual respect and honest dialogue.

→ Brought clarity and confidence to the Board

Supported trustees in understanding their collective responsibilities, feeling genuinely valued, and operating as a cohesive and effective team.

→ Reviewed governance foundations

sought feedback for continuous improvement on how the Board works – meetings, committees, decision-making – and identified where improvements will have the most impact.

→ Understood the landscape

Developed a solid working knowledge of our programmes, finances, risks and the external environment – well enough to challenge and support with confidence.

→ Extended our reach and relationships

Actively used their networks to open doors – whether for advocacy, partnerships, funding conversations or raising our profile in the right places.

→ Modelled inclusive leadership

Set the tone for a boardroom where different perspectives are welcomed, all voices are heard, and decisions reflect our values.

Looking further ahead

Over a longer tenure, success means a Board and executive team working in genuine partnership – navigating complexity, responding to change and driving our mission forward with energy and integrity.

The Chair will have contributed to a more financially resilient, digitally capable and publicly influential organisation, and will have helped build a trustee body that's diverse, engaged and effective.



Practical information

Term of office: Initial 3-year term, renewable once

Remuneration: Unpaid voluntary role, reasonable expenses reimbursed

Board meetings: 4 per year, plus preparation and associated events

Committee meetings: Various committees with attendance to be discussed as part of this appointment process

Location: Online and in-person options available

Eligibility: Must be eligible to act as a charity trustee

Support and induction

We're committed to helping our new Chair succeed in the role. The successful candidate will receive a full induction, including meetings with trustees, the Chief Executive and key members of the leadership team, as well as access to core governance documents, strategy papers and recent Board materials.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

We welcome applications from people from all backgrounds and communities. We're committed to building a diverse and inclusive Board that reflects the breadth of experience, insight and perspective needed to lead well.

If you need any adjustments during the recruitment process, please let us know and we'll do our best to support you.

A photograph of a person kayaking on a body of water. The person is wearing a blue cap, a blue jacket, and a red life vest. They are holding a red paddle. The water is blue and there are other kayakers in the distance. The image is partially obscured by a green arrow-shaped graphic pointing to the right.

We believe this is a meaningful opportunity to help shape the future of the Marine Conservation Society. We're proud of what we've achieved so far and ambitious about what comes next. We're looking for a Chair who will bring curiosity, care, confidence and sound judgement — and who will help us lead with integrity, ambition and purpose.

Application process

GatenbySanderson has been appointed as our executive search firm to assist with this appointment. You will be asked to submit the following:

A CV setting out your career history, with key responsibilities and achievements, tailored to information contained in this pack.

A Statement of Suitability (no longer than two pages) explaining:

- Your motivation for applying for this role.
- How you consider your personal skills, qualities and experience provide evidence of your suitability for the role, with particular reference to the information included in this pack.

In addition, you will be asked to complete an optional Diversity Monitoring Form.

Application Portal:

<https://www.gatenbysanderson.com/job/GSe132623>

Should you encounter any issues with your online application or require any reasonable adjustment please contact tracy.aristides@gatenbysanderson.com

The Marine Conservation Society is committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusivity. We welcome applications from all backgrounds and encourage applications from under-represented groups.

TIMETABLE

Closing date:
Monday 22 June 2026

Confirmation of progression:
w/c 29 June 2026

Interviews with Marine Conservation Society:
Early July

CONFIDENTIAL DISCUSSION

Please contact our recruitment advisers at GatenbySanderson:

Oliver Startup, Senior Researcher
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Emily Nevins, Partner
Not for Profit Practice
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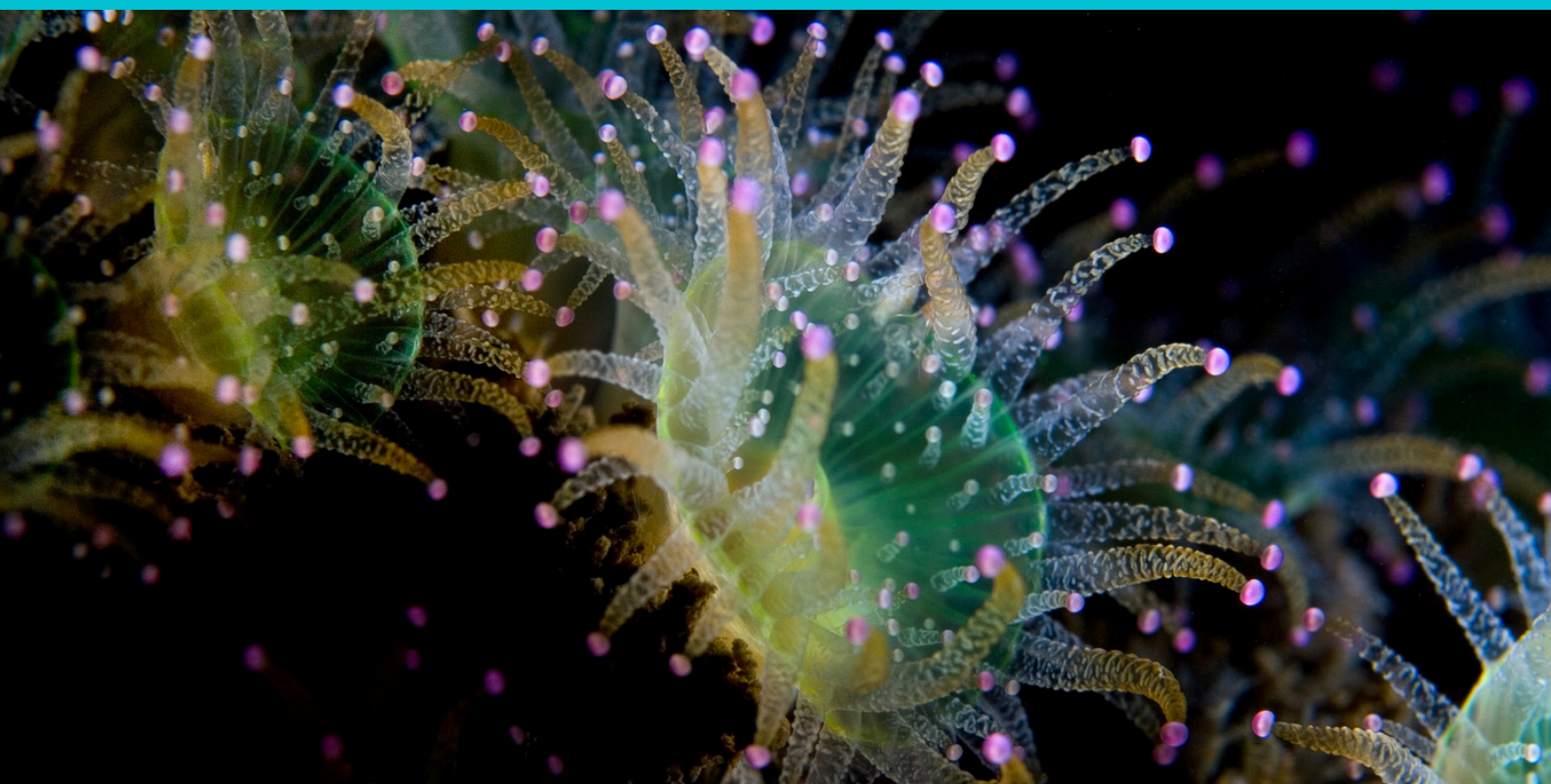




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