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Ethnic Diversity in the UK Marine and Coastal Sector

Accelerating Change

April 2024

Ocean and Coastal Futures are challenging themselves to consider their evolving role in helping improve the lack of diversity in the marine and coastal sector.

This year's Coastal Futures conference, *An Inclusive Future for our Seas*, saw seven bursaries awarded to young people currently underrepresented in the sector, two keynote speakers directly addressing equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) and an EDI satellite event bringing together HR Professionals, EDI Leads and Strategic Leads from across the sector for the first time.

Ocean and Coastal Futures recognise there are a lot of reports addressing EDI issues across the environmental sector, but this is the first report of its kind to deeply explore the marine and coastal sector in isolation. The marine and coastal sector is not, as is often reported, a sub-set of the wider environmental sector. Instead, it incorporates a varied and complex collection of stakeholders, who are not solely in the conservation space.



While recognising that diversity is both multifaceted and intersectional, this report intentionally focusses on the current lack of ethnic diversity within the UK marine and coastal sector which is known to be incredibly low – marine science being the *least* ethnically diverse of all degrees.

Due to the varied stakeholders across the sector and the complex issues contributing to the lack of ethnic diversity within it, this report does not set out a route map for change. Instead, it intends to get the whole sector quickly up to speed with the dynamics of the issue, set out a vision of success and signpost to organisations, tools and networks to accelerate change.

It encourages all senior leaders to take the time to reflect on their organisations within this broader context and how they can contribute internally and externally to this much needed change.

This work was a partnership between Ocean & Coastal Futures and Pelagos, supported by generous funding from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.

Ultimately this report seeks to address the following:

“Day 1 of Coastal Futures hardly spoke about coasts and seas and more about inclusion and diversity. It isn’t a race relations event. Does it matter who does what to improve the ocean?”

Attendee feedback, *An Inclusive Future for Our Seas*



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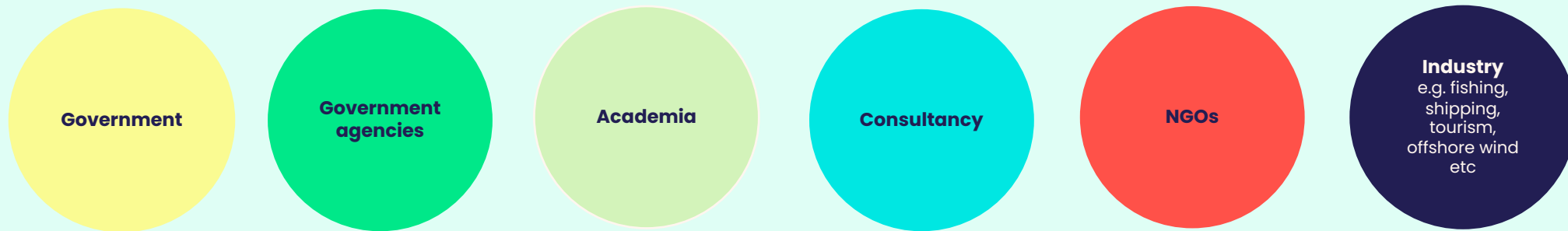
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Terminology

People of Colour – for the purposes of the report we collectively refer to people who are black, brown or biracial as People of Colour (PoC). We recognise there are huge differences of experience within this.

Marine & Coastal Sector – for the purposes of this report we refer to the marine and coastal sector as these broad subgroups:

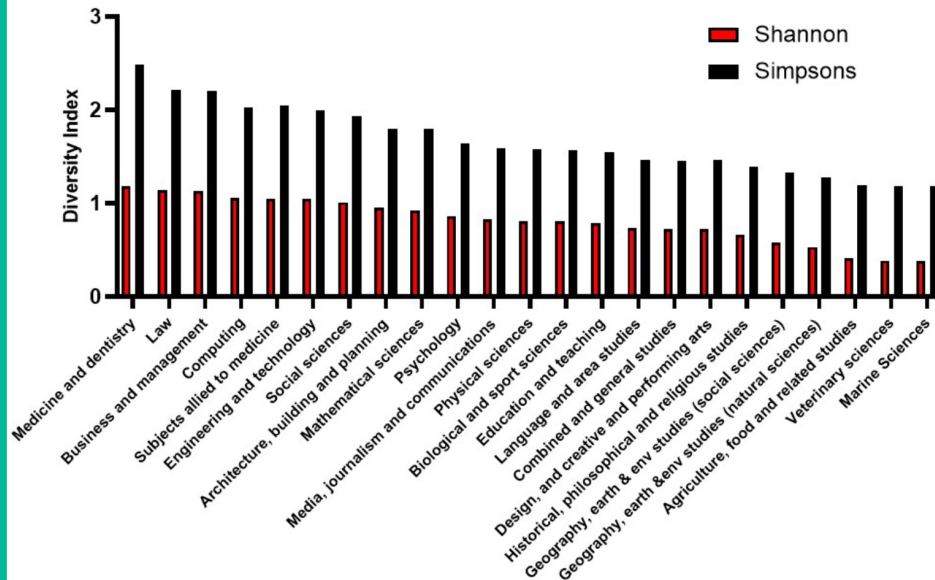


The Coast – for the purposes of this report we refer to the coast as “*a nebulous, ambiguous, multifaceted entity. People travel to it, work and play within it, worry about how to save it, and generally perceive it as a particular kind of location in which social activity takes place*” Gilchrist et al 2014.

What is the problem
and why is it
important?

The UK marine and coastal sector is ethnically homogenous

Marine science is the least ethnically diverse degree in the UK



Source: Professor Alex Ford [Portsmouth University](#)
Data on the diversity of applicants on particular courses was calculated using Shannon and Simpsons indices. The higher the indices the greater the diversity.

2%

Of UK undergraduates in potential feeder subjects to the marine and coastal sector were Black in [2016/17](#).

3%

Of UK undergraduates in potential feeder subjects to the marine and coastal sector were Asian in [2016/17](#).

1%

Of UK PHD studentships in Ocean Sciences have been awarded to Black students since [2016](#).

4%

Of attendees at Coastal Futures 2024 *An Inclusive Future for our Seas* who completed the feedback survey were PoC (n=221).

The business case for equity, diversity & inclusion

Groups of people working together who are diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, social status and disability are more productive and innovative than homogeneous groups and demonstrate greater critical thinking and analytical skills. An ever-growing list of studies by economists, demographers and psychologists confirm this. According to The Wall Street Journal's first corporate ranking examining diversity and inclusion among S&P 500 companies, diverse and inclusive cultures are providing companies with a '*competitive edge over their peers*'.

Marine conservation has a very high complexity index due to the numerous stakeholders it involves and the diverse issues that are being tackled. Complex problems that influence all segments of society, require the ingenuity of diverse investigators to an even greater degree. Diverse teams can understand problems through different lenses and can use their unique experiences and values to collaborate and come up with the very best solutions.

Hiring diverse talent is not enough: the workplace experience shapes whether people will remain and thrive. Key to this is creating an environment where people can be who they are and that values their unique talents and perspectives. This sense of 'belonging' is a consequence of mattering and is both a biological and societal need.



“My message is pretty clear and I say this again and again and again: having good equity is not about helping me, as a black woman. It’s about helping your organisation – making sure your organisation is fit for purpose. Because you cannot be making the best decisions if they are being taken by a homogenous group, within a multifaceted society. And there’s lots of data to show this ...”

Ijeoma Uchegbu, Prof. of Nanoscience & Provost’s Envoy for EDI at UCL

Ocean Justice

The UK marine and coastal sector needs to bring in the perspectives and energy of **currently underrepresented groups**, so the full spectrum of solutions can be heard. The climate and nature crises will not be addressed without also tackling injustice and inequity.

Unpicking the problem

Four key areas contribute to a lack of ethnic diversity within the marine and coastal sector

1. Inequality of access to blue spaces

2. Pre-sector and school issues

3. Higher education issues

4. Within sector issues

1. Inequality of access to blue spaces / the coast

PoC, women, older people, people in poor health, people of lower socio-economic groupings, people with physical disabilities and people living in deprived areas are less likely to be accessing green and [blue spaces](#) in the UK.

While little research has solely focused on blue spaces and instead focused more on green spaces or green/blue spaces in tandem, known barriers (while still hugely individual) include:

- Geographical – PoC are less likely to live by the coast in [the UK](#). It is worth noting that in the UK no-one lives more than [75 miles](#) from a coast making it the most maritime place of any European country, so there is much opportunity within this.
- Financial – both in travelling to blue spaces or for the kit/equipment to take part in blue activities such as surfing, diving, swimming, fishing, sailing, paddleboarding or walking.
- Visibility and representation – PoC are less likely to be authentically represented in outdoor spaces and in blue pursuits making them feel less accessible.
- A sense of belonging – green and blue spaces are sometimes considered predominantly '[white spaces](#)' and this can make PoC feel visible/looked at or out of place. This extends to feeling 'welcome' in certain activities like [surfing](#) or sailing which can be white and male-dominated. PoC may also experience microaggressions and overt racism in blue spaces – any experience of racism in blue spaces can have an impact for several generations, as people take their lead from their parents' use or [lack of use](#).
- Cultural norms and/or societal judgement – a big focus on financial stability and academic study means for some PoC spending time in green and blue spaces is not prioritised or [encouraged](#) and sometimes there is a lack of support from families and [friends](#).

Due to many of these intersectional characteristics and barriers, proximity does not always equal access. 1 in 5 children living in Plymouth (Britain's Ocean City) have not been to the [sea](#).

However lack of proximity does not always impact connection or ocean literacy – while PoC are less likely to live by blue spaces they are more likely to watch nature documentaries and value the importance of oceans [equally](#).



“In many cases, underrepresented minorities are openly told that the natural world is ‘not for them’, whilst experiencing microaggressions and overt discrimination which can deter them from marine science”

Cordelia Roberts, Marine Biological Association



“PoC don’t feel like they belong or don’t feel like they’re welcome. The classic response to that is no-one is stopping you going outdoors . But imagine if you’ve been bought up in a city, in a tower block. You don’t have a garden, your nearest engagement with nature is the local park. The nature outside your flat is urban foxes, it’s rats , it’s squirrels, it’s pigeons. As soon as you step outside your door you’ve got your game-face on.

If you go to your local park (if you’re lucky enough to have a local park), it’s football pitches. There might be a small corner that’s left for stinging nettles or buttercups. That’s nature for you.

Imagine that and now put yourself under 200ft cliffs in Wales next to the ocean. It’s hugely intimidating. Now imagine you’re the only person who looks like you in a totally different culture. It’s like a white boy from Hampstead going to Kampala in Uganda, walking down the market and seeing if he can have a game of football with the local lads. It’s that intimidating. How do you even start that conversation?”

Phil Young, Founder of The Outsiders Project

2. Pre-sector and school issues

In schools, pathways to blue jobs can be very poor. Marine science has a potential brand imagery problem in that it is often wrongly perceived to be *only* marine biology, the study of coral reefs and/or poorly paid. Instead marine science can be the gateway to diverse and varied career options, many with good remuneration, especially outside of conservation. In some cultures [parents](#) play a key role in both the decision to go to University and in the choice of study area, so interventions in this space need to consider their influence.

This brand imagery problem is exacerbated by the lack of representation and [visibility of PoC](#) in marine and coastal jobs. Media representation and access to role models can play an important part in how welcoming the field looks to those from historically excluded groups.

Many leading marine science faculties are additionally in coastal locations (e.g. the University of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Southampton, Bangor etc) which are typically areas of low ethnic diversity compared to larger cities within the UK. PoC are known to choose to study in areas where there is higher ethnic diversity, where they are perceived to be more welcome and less likely to receive racial [discrimination](#).

All of the above means PoC are more likely to [consider](#) marine science but ultimately not choose it.



“I came from a working-class background and an ethnic school. There were no white people. We were all told to be prison wardens but a poster of someone scuba diving stopped me in my tracks and I got curious. I’d only ever visited Margate with my aunties . People still dreamed of being accountants or doctors”

Stakeholder Interview



“Marine science is seen as a sexy career. But the sexy stuff is not well paid, so you need rich parents”

Stakeholder Interview

3. Higher education issues

For PoC that do make it into the marine science field there is a 'leaky pipeline' as individuals progress in their careers. Barriers to participation in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) for PoC exist at every stage of learning and career development but this is even more true in marine conservation science, which is [white and male-dominated](#), particularly in leadership and decision-making positions. This imbalance is self-perpetuating, as Women of Colour who are students and researchers do not feel welcome in the field or are sometimes intentionally or unintentionally excluded whether because of overt discrimination and sexism, unaddressed microaggressions, lack of recognition/rewards and/or an absence of models of success.

Other identified challenges in [marine sciences](#) include lack of leadership roles for underrepresented groups and access to academic conferences or educational networking opportunities. Gaining experience in the field or laboratory is also sometimes essential for accessing graduate programs or wider job opportunities and so students often seek placements outside their university programs. As these are often voluntary, financial barriers disproportionately exclude PoC, parents, and other groups that cannot afford to work unpaid.

Finally, students and early career professionals also require equitable, consistent access to mentorship which is not always forthcoming for PoC.



“Historically, PoC are not always mentored in the same way that their white counterparts are. People are statistically more likely to take someone under their wing who looks like them, who reminds them of themselves when they were younger. So, a white scientist looking at me, they're not going to see themselves in me. That creates an invisible bias that we don't really talk about”

Amani Webber-Schultz, Marine Scientist



“I didn’t do my undergraduate degree in the UK, I ended up going to San Diego due to the diversity of people there, and the biodiversity there. It’s intimidating when universities lack diversity”

Stakeholder Interview

4. Within sector issues

For the small proportion of PoC within the UK marine and coastal sector they can feel isolated or lack a sense of belonging.

Stories of microaggressions, racism and/or feeling emotionally and culturally marooned in white middle-class institutions are common.



“It is hard walking into a room and feeling you have no-one to relate to, no role model, no mentor”

Dr Tiara Moore, Black in Marine Science, USA



“For some who attain a position in marine science, it can perpetuate a sense of estrangement and lack of self-worth. Such impacts counteract the hard work scientists do in combating global change to our oceans”

Cordelia Roberts, Marine Biological Association

Organisations and individuals beginning to tackle these issues

In blue spaces



Wave Wahines

[Wave Wahines](#) was founded by Yvette Curtis in 2016, with top British surfer Karma Worthington, to provide an inclusive, affordable, accessible and supportive entry into surfing for women and girls from all communities and backgrounds.

The club offers a varied surfing programme which includes surf therapy and sessions for different age groups. They often run programs with diverse ethnic and cultural communities to provide entry into surfing and ocean life, with an awareness of the barriers that may exist to participation. These have included sessions for girls from Syrian resettled families, challenging inclusion barriers that face immigrants through the power of sport.

Wave Wahines wants to change the narrative in surfing to create new stories and role models. Championing women and girls from all backgrounds, Wave Wahines has become a voice for diversity and inclusion, encouraging a wave of change within the surf community.



People of Colour Paddle

[People of Colour Paddle](#) was launched across social media channels by Adya Misra in April 2022 to inspire and normalise the participation of PoC in paddlesports.

People of Colour Paddle wants to see more people from underrepresented and marginalised communities have the opportunity to participate in paddlesport at the recreational, competitive and elite level within the UK. They have formed the UK's first nationwide paddlesport club dedicated to the inclusion of people of colour to achieve that mission.

They want to change how the sport is perceived by communities, as well as make the sport more inclusive of diverse faces, genders, minds and bodies. They would like to see a future where WoC can do paddlesports and are encouraged by their family and the wider community to do so.

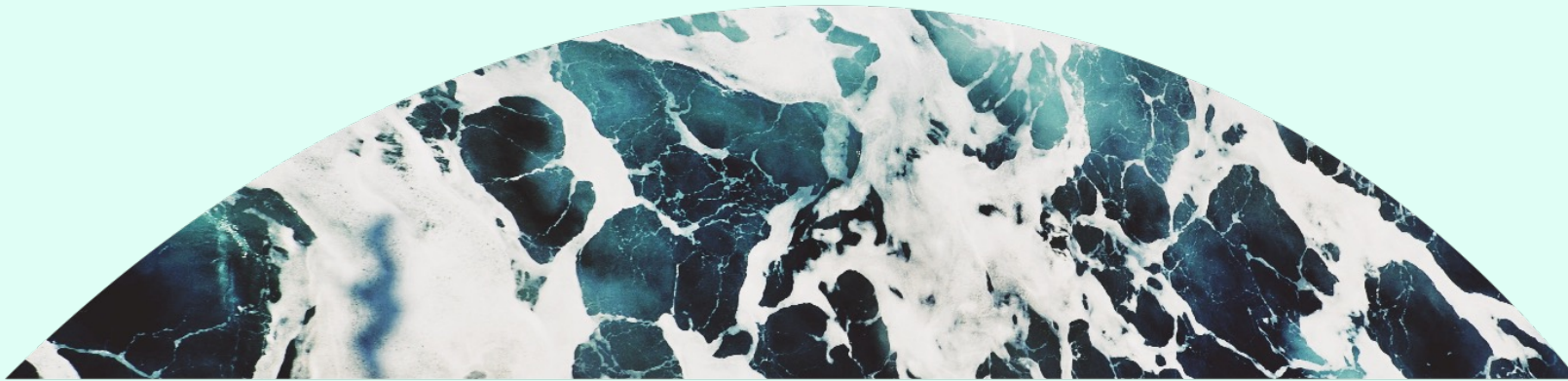


Blue Space Forum

In 2022 and 2023 the Environment Agency, together with project partners from British Canoeing, DEFRA, Groundwork Trust, Natural England, the University of Brighton and the Wave Project, led the [Blue Space Forum](#) project. The aim was to gather the lived experiences of people who used blue space to improve their health and wellbeing as well as those living with barriers to accessing blue space and its benefits. The Blue Space Forum hosted 8 sessions of between 35 and 60 people to explore various aspects of blue spaces.

The group wanted to better understand changing patterns in engagement with, and use of, blue space, in the coastal, rural and urban environments, as well as to look at tensions around equality, inclusion, safe access and use, affordability and risk. With this understanding the group hope to be able to better inform their policies, investment and interventions to improve the health and wellbeing benefits for society as a whole, with a particular focus on equality, diversity and access for all.

The benefits of this networking have been significant – people and organisations have been joining up on initiatives, drawing from each other's work and learning to strengthen their own. The Blue Space Forum wants to evolve into an open, fluid, and self-led network where members can share their details, information, and opportunities with others.



Finisterre + The Outsiders Project

New Lenses on the Landscape

Finisterre's mission was always to produce gear that facilitated widespread engagement with the open sky and sea. However, the missing space in the culture of the outdoors has long been its lack of diversity.

Their New Lenses on the Landscape project is a collaboration with The Outsiders Project to identify issues regarding access to the natural world and support communities in overcoming barriers.

In the first of three Storytelling initiatives they look at how the British coastline is interpreted by three PoC. With the premise that as the UK is an island we are all immigrants from somewhere, they landed on three 2nd generation protagonists who came together to share their experiences and the regular barriers they face in accessing the thousands of miles of British coastline.

New Lenses on the Landscape is part of the work of the wider Finisterre Foundation whose sole purpose is to champion equal access to the ocean for all.

“We need more people asking questions, even if it does feel awkward and difficult. My role in this conversation is to bring people together and to bridge gaps. That is where I feel like I come into my own, in this space. It is a cliché but it is true.

We are stronger together”

Soraya Abdel-Hadi, Founder of All The Elements



Connecting Shores Podcast

The innovative project explores, documents and amplifies young PoCs relationships with the sea and coastal environments, providing a platform for a set of voices often overlooked in marine spaces. Commissioned and funded by Natural England, as part of their Connecting People with Nature programme, the Connecting Shores series has been created by Exeter-born sound artist Somatic. It is hoped that the series will encourage more young people to engage with coastal areas, and support and inform the marine and coastal sector to be more inclusive in their decision-making processes.

Recordings from interviews with eight young PoC in Plymouth have been woven together into eight 15-minute episodes, each centred around a different theme. The audio documentary covers a range of themes, including shaping of identity, early coastal memories, cultural, heritage and water stories, using the coast as a space of health and wellbeing, the perceived future of coastal spaces, barriers to access, migration and how seashores 'here' connect us to the rest of the world.

“It’s been a privilege to be asked to create an innovative series such as this, that through the lens of eight participants highlights some commonalities and differences in the way that we all interact with coastal and marine spaces”

Somin Griffin-Dave, Sound Artist

Young people, pre-sector and in schools

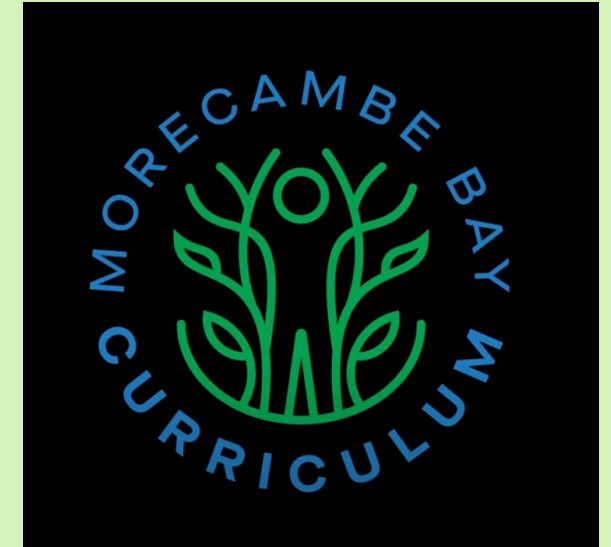


Morecambe Bay Curriculum

The [Morecambe Bay Curriculum](#) is a community-curated, place-based approach to learning about sustainability – a unique environmental framework that focuses on preparing young people for the jobs of the future.

Children and young people across Lancashire and Cumbria focus on themes of land, water, air, economy and community. Using the ecosystems surrounding Morecombe Bay as a classroom, young people can see the tangible positive change their actions make to the environment.

Children are encouraged and empowered to become the change-makers and innovators the planet needs. It is hoped they develop an ownership of the place they live, a responsibility to protect that place and clearly understand the pathways to blue and green jobs.



The Blue Influencers Scheme

The [Blue Influencers Scheme](#) is run by UK outdoor education charity The Ernest Cook Trust and match-funded through the #iwill Fund*. It supports young people from underserved communities and those living in deprived coastal, estuary and riverside locations, by empowering them to tackle environmental and climate issues. The Scheme aims to remove barriers to accessing blue spaces, while helping young people create deep, lasting and meaningful connections to the natural environment via their local coasts and rivers. The Scheme gives them a voice to make a change in their community, and for the planet.



The Blue Influencers Scheme funds 22 Blue Mentor posts based in Host Organisations across England. It aims to engage more than 4,000 young people as Blue Influencers, supporting them in youth-led environmental social action projects in coastal communities and on 'blue' environmental issues. It additionally hopes to reach over 15,000 community members.

The Scheme is entirely youth-led, and even the selection of Host Organisations was made by The Ernest Cook Trust's Youth Advisory Board, made up entirely of young people aged 14-21.

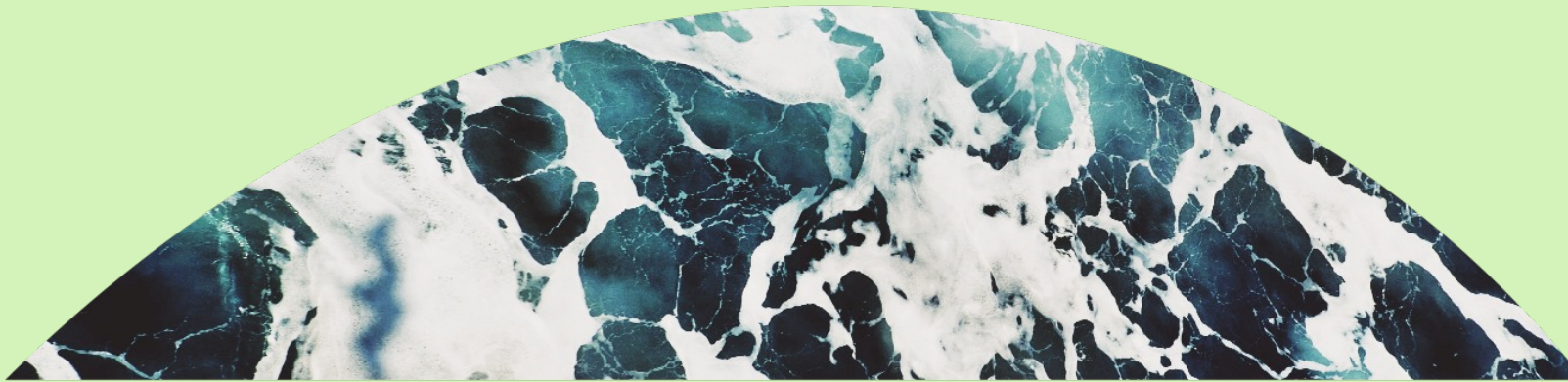
*The #iwill Fund is made possible thanks to £66M joint investment from The National Lottery Community Fund and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to support young people to access high quality social action opportunities. The Ernest Cook Trust is acting as a match-funder and awarding grants on behalf of the #iwill Fund.

Black Ocean Citizens

Black Ocean Citizens was founded in 2024 as deliberative platform to help underrepresented and marginalised groups become more involved in ocean science activities. Black Ocean Citizens believe it is vital that there is greater ethnic and socio-economic diversity in fisheries, ocean science and coastal research and are dedicated to diversifying and promoting ocean literacy and access among visibly BIPOC and underrepresented groups.

Black Ocean Citizens is not just an organisation, but a powerful movement for nature conservation and social change driven by a simple yet profound belief that everyday people possess the power to shape and mould a society where everyone can achieve their true potential. Through extensive outreach efforts, they will awaken individuals and communities to the possibilities that exist in the marine and coastal sector. They are committed to advancing educational programs, scholarships and community outreach with organisations focused on diversifying the sector.

Success, will be a community-driven effort, and they encourage everyone to join, contribute their unique strengths and perspectives, and to be a part of this transformative journey.





“I’m aware that only private schools can afford to pay for school talks, and it’s frustrating that state schools don’t get the same access to speakers. I have to take the funded work to allow me the time to do outreach at state schools and run free workshops but I would love to see a proper funding model to allow a more dedicated approach to ensure we are reaching kids from all backgrounds”

Inka Cresswell, Marine Biologist and Wildlife Filmmaker

In higher education *and career transition*



Sea Rangers Service

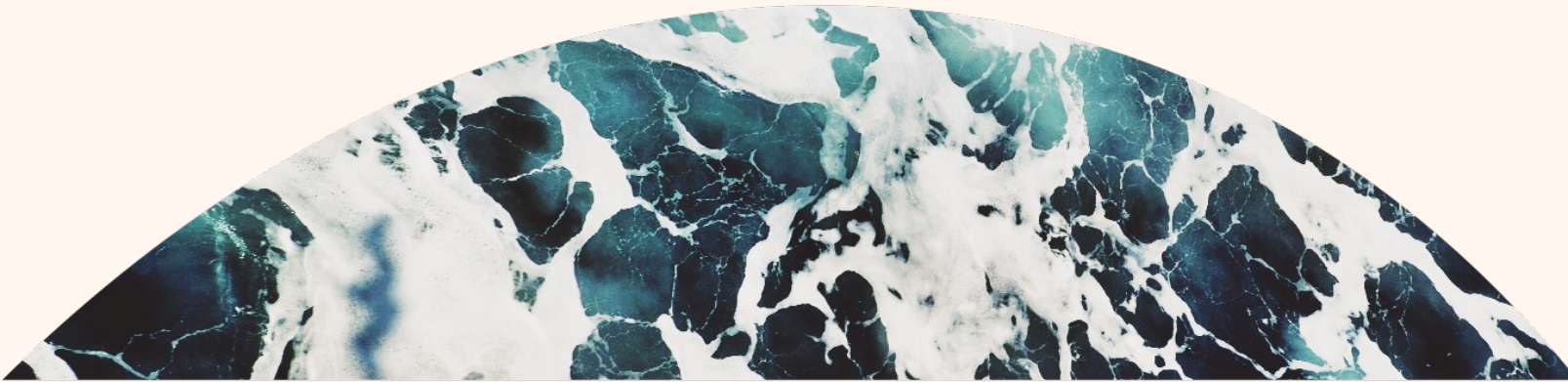
The [Sea Rangers Service](#) is a social enterprise founded in the Netherlands in 2016. Its mission is to restore 1 million hectares of ocean biodiversity by 2040 whilst training 20,000 young people to kickstart a maritime career.



Working with governmental organisations and maritime firms, Sea Rangers Service are on a mission to realise the social-economic regeneration of coastal regions while additionally regenerating biodiversity in the oceans. They provide a rare vocational route into the marine and coastal sector – no experience is needed to enter.

The Sea Rangers Service has launched a new recruitment drive in the UK, with an initial focus in Port Talbot, South Wales, for expected work in the Celtic Sea.

As in The Netherlands, young people aged 18–29 will be trained to monitor, research and protect nature in our oceans. They first take part in a Sea Rangers Bootcamp where they are tested on motivation, teamwork skills and learning abilities. Following this, selected participants will then take to the water on sailing expeditions and will be employed as full-time Sea Rangers.



Portsmouth University

In 2021 Professor Alex Ford received NERC funding to look at *Improving Diversity and Inclusion in UK Marine Sciences*. As part of this work he carried out a survey of PoC in marine/environmental sciences using UCAS data, a survey of marine science course leaders (n=46), a survey of 15-17 year old school leavers (n=408), a survey of the general public (n=1068) and a marketing survey of marine sciences courses pages (n=56). At the time of writing the paper *Extremely low ethnic diversity amongst UK marine and environmental science graduates* was [under review](#).

As a result of this project 12 marine science institutions made best practice EDI pledges to:

1. Incorporate marine sciences into their STEM and widening participation programs with schools.
2. Review online and printed course materials to assess their language and visual presentation for EDI
3. Encourage the universities to provide EDI training specific to marketing and recruitment.
4. Explore the use of university incentive schemes to increase ethnic minority representation.



Watch a video about this work [here](#)



Find a Science Berth (Challenger Society for Marine Science EDIA Working Group)

[FindaScienceBerth](#) is an initiative to support traditionally excluded groups in accessing opportunities for conducting fieldwork in marine science by building a transparent system to advertise available berths on scientific cruises. Individuals from underrepresented minorities tend to have limited participation in research networks compared to their peers. A survey of UK research cruise chief scientists carried out by the Challenger Society for Marine Science EDIA working group revealed that in most cases, individuals are recruited to seagoing fieldwork through internal networks. While chief scientists often wish to recruit participants for research cruises from underrepresented backgrounds, there is no efficient system through which they can connect with such individuals.

FindaScienceBerth, aims to provide a solution to this problem by providing a user-friendly interface between chief scientists and anyone seeking opportunities to participate in cruises. The funding received for FindaScienceBerth was allocated to software development in order to build a platform and integrate it into the national Marine Facilities Planning tool. Spare berth capacity is automatically determined from submitted cruise plans and allows applicants to see cruise details prior to applying for a berth. Berth opportunities are disseminated as they arise through existing platforms and via initiatives specifically focused on underrepresented groups.

EDIA is also embedded into the selection process. For situations where applicant numbers exceed available berths, a flipped selection criterion promotes those individuals who would gain the most from the experience, as opposed to filtering for the most experienced candidates; within this context, prior experience is related to privilege.

FindaScienceBerth received funding with a maximum spend period of five months, which allowed for the initial development of the software platform, but cannot sustain any long-term administrative costs or provide direct financial support to applicants who are successful in gaining a berth.

Across the pond...

Black in Marine Science have just been awarded a large funding grant (\$1.7m) to partner with Hampton University and increase representation of PoC in the marine science field – including engaging high school students with culturally relevant curricula.

The Biden administration also proclaimed June 2023 National Ocean Month. The proclamation states that, environmental justice must be placed at the centre of the White House's Ocean Strategy.



Within the sector



Surfers Against Sewage

Surfers Against Sewage have set themselves ambitious but attainable targets and recognise their engagement in EDI needs a dedicated, organisation-wide strategy. Their aim to create Ocean Activists Everywhere isn't a tag-line, it's a mission to create systemic change within marine conservation. They firmly believe in laying the foundations before they start any building, so have been focused on the following internal processes first:

- Appointment of an EDI Manager
- Anonymous internal audit of staff/trustees on demographics and culture (this helped people confidently bring forward mental health issues and neurodivergence that hadn't shown up in HR)
- Current audience/membership review
- Policy review
- Outward facing resource review
- Partnerships evaluation
- Communications review
- Internal training

Most importantly they have spent a lot of time *listening* to people and collaborating with like-minded organisations. For example they have collaborated with Black2Nature on repeated initiatives including Ocean School, Plastic Free Schools and their Bathing Waters Conference.

They also want to help support a new generation of Ocean Activists and do this through paid internships focussing on young people from lower socio-economic groups.

“Who isn't in the room?”

Yvette Curtis, EDI Manager, Surfers Against Sewage





AtkinsRéalis

Different Makes a Difference

AtkinsRéalis is committed to creating and maintaining an inclusive culture where everyone belongs, can be their true self and reach their full potential. They are the first engineering firm to have been awarded Clear Assured Platinum Standard in EDI recognising their progress and impact with initiatives across several areas including allyship, industry impact, inclusive recruitment and inclusive policies and procedures. They are driven by a belief that the sector is currently not reflective of society which has the real potential to hold them back in terms of meeting the needs of future projects and challenges which will require the very best, most innovative engineering solutions.

Their program sets commitments to weave EDI into everything that they do, to break down barriers every step of the way and to be a leading voice for change. Commitments include:

- Recruiting from the most diverse talent pool and increasing the proportion of women and PoC within the Early Careers intake.
- Setting staff targets for women and PoC and continuously reviewing the Different Makes a Difference plan to ensure they are achieved.
- Overcoming barriers to career progression for women and PoC, with actions based on an in-depth Career Deflection Report.
- Developing a supplier diversity strategy and supporting suppliers on their EDI journey.
- Providing inclusive leadership training for all senior leaders.

Collaboration is the key to getting things right and implementing the program. All of that requires working together across projects, teams, businesses and suppliers. Everyone is encouraged to get involved and make their voices heard – this is most evident in the self-generated Staff Networks which bring all voices in to create a culture that fosters true inclusivity and equality.

The EDI strategy is ongoing and evolving and progress is continuously monitored both through data and how lived experiences have changed.

Ocean and Coastal Futures

The Coastal Futures conference is in its 31st year and is the largest marine and coastal conference of its kind in the UK bringing together different sectors to discuss important developments and concerns. This year approximately 450 people joined in-person at the Royal Geographic Society and 250 people online.

As individuals, and collectively as a new organisation, Ocean and Coastal Futures are challenging themselves to consider their evolving role in helping improve the lack of diversity in the marine and coastal sector.

Coastal Futures 2024 *An Inclusive Future for our Seas* saw:

- 7 bursaries awarded to young people (under 30) currently underrepresented in the UK marine and coastal sector – 4 in person places and 3 online places.
- Two keynote speakers directly addressing EDI – Yvette Curtis, EDI Lead at Surfers Against Sewage and Srabani Sen, CEO and Founder of Full Colour.
- An EDI Satellite Event that brought together HR Professionals, EDI Leads and Strategic Leads from across the sector for the first time to consider the barriers and enablers to change.

The Ocean and Coastal Futures team aims to build on this in 2025 and beyond.

“Its hugely inspiring to see the steps taken to improve accessibility at this years conference. I hope this is a theme that Coastal Futures continues to explore and expand upon as this year marked a good beginning of an EDI journey”

Participant Feedback



What are we striving for?

By 2044...



- The people visiting blue spaces reflect the ethnic diversity of the UK. PoC from all generations feel safe and welcome.
- PoC are authentically represented in blue spaces and in blue pursuits at all levels.
- Young PoC are connected to the ocean from an early age and have strong ocean literacy.
- Marine science is seen as the gateway to a diverse and varied career option and people have a greater awareness, understanding, and respect for professions in the UK marine and coastal sector.
- PoC are attracted to inclusive marine science faculties where they have strong role models and mentors they can relate to. They thrive.
- Diverse career opportunities in marine and coastal jobs are supported through vocational routes into the sector, placements, sponsorships schemes, bursaries and paid entry-level positions that don't require extensive voluntary experience.
- The diversity of the workforce is obvious because there are PoC visible at events, across all career stages, and especially in senior positions.
- PoC feel a strong sense of belonging within organisations across the sector. Everyone is reaching their full potential.
- The sector is at its most innovative and productive – the full spectrum of solutions are being heard and acted upon.

What can you do?

Share this document widely with others across the marine and coastal sector, so we're all on the same page.

Reflect individually and as a group. What can you do, or what more can you do, as an organisation. Internally and externally.

Listen to people across your organisation and the wider sector. Allow yourself to be vulnerable, to be genuinely open to listening and learning from the experiences of others, to have your views challenged.

Collaborate as an organisation, with like-minded organisations, join networks or Communities of Practice.

Challenge those who fall back on lazy arguments or who don't believe improving EDI will help us more effectively tackle marine and coastal issues.

Believe that real change is possible. Get comfortable with the fact that this change is likely to be ongoing and messy!

Ocean and Coastal Futures – 2024 to 2025

Over the next 12 months Ocean and Coastal Futures plan to.

- Develop their pilot bursary into an enhanced package and offer 6 in-person bursaries and 6 online bursaries at Coastal Futures 2025. These bursaries will be focussed on young people from *specific* underserved groups i.e. 4 x bursaries for PoC, 4 x bursaries for those from lower socio-economic groups and 4 x bursaries for those with disabilities.
- Establish an EDI Community of Practice for the marine and coastal sector. The most positive element of the EDI satellite event at Coastal Futures 2024 was the networking and sharing that this allowed. The post-event feedback survey has shown there is an appetite for keeping the group together and welcoming others.
- Set-up an EDI Steering Group to help inform Coastal Futures 2025 and beyond. The steering group would comprise 6–8 individuals from groups currently underrepresented in the marine and coastal sector who would come together on several occasions to consider Coastal Futures 2025 communications, content and venue.

If you are interested in supporting any of the above, please get in touch.

Further Reading, Listening, Watching

Blue Spaces

[Race, place and the seaside](#)

[Bhaji on the beach](#)

[Beyond representation – the future of diversity and inclusion in the outdoors](#)

Young People and Schools

['It's not for people like them'](#)

Higher Education

[Pathways to justice, equity, diversity and inclusion in marine science and conservation](#)

[EDI special issue from the Oceanography Centre](#)

[Extremely low ethnic diversity amongst UK marine and environmental science graduates](#)

Improving EDI in the Workplace

[Route-map towards greater ethnic diversity](#)

[Building inclusive workplaces](#)

[Diversity and inclusion in the workplace – a complete guide](#)

[Podcast on the benefits of embracing EDI in the workplace](#)

White Privilege

[White supremacy culture](#)

[The intersectional environmentalist](#)

Advice, Tools, Networks

Supporting Organisations

[Full Colour](#)

[Be The Riot](#)

[The Outsiders Project](#)

[EW Group](#)

[The Hobbs Consultancy](#)

[The Clear Company](#)

[Do It Now](#)

[Applied](#)

[Inclusive Boards](#)

Tools

[Culture Amp EDI Starter Kit](#)

[CIPD Inclusion Health Checker](#)

[Hello Social Impact – Racial Justice Spectrum Assessment](#)

Networks and Commitments

[Diverse Sustainability Initiative](#)

[The Race Report](#)

[Black Ocean Citizens](#)

[People of Colour Network](#)

[Opening the Outdoors Online Allyship Commitment](#)

[EDI Marine and Coastal Community of Practice – email: \[rosie@pelagos.com\]\(mailto:rosie@pelagos.com\)](#)



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