



**Coastal
Futures
2027**

Delivered by OCF

Coastal Futures 2027

Royal Geographical Society, London & online
27 & 28 January

Outline Programme

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Coastal Futures 2027 looks at what a changing climate means for the UK's coasts and seas, and for the work we do on them.

Seas are warming, marine heatwaves are reaching our shores, species are moving north and into deeper water, and storms and flooding are testing coastal defences and the communities behind them. The summer of 2026 brought sustained heat and wildfire risk to parts of the UK that rarely see them. For many people working on the coast and at sea, climate change now shapes decisions they make every week.

Each session takes a subject our delegates care about (coastal change and marine planning, joining up land and sea, protecting and recovering nature, fisheries, and how decisions are made) and asks how it needs to adapt: what the evidence says, what is already working, and what has to change. Scientists will share the stage with the people who plan, regulate, develop, fish and live on the coast, bringing practical examples from the ground. We will also hear from countries that have been adapting for longer than we have.

The programme is practical and forward-looking. Government plans for clean energy, jobs and regional growth, new legal drivers for nature restoration, and a stronger public voice bring opportunities as well as pressures. Over two days we will look at where recovery and resilience can be built into growth, where that is already happening, and what it will take to go further.

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Outline themes

1 - Change, growth and space

Planning for rising seas, clean energy and jobs on a crowded coast

Rising seas and stronger storms are forcing hard choices about where we defend the coast, where we adapt and where we let it change. At the same time offshore wind, grid connections, ports and shipping all need space, often in the same places, and governments across the UK want growth that brings jobs and lasting benefits to coastal regions. This session looks at how coastal management and marine planning can deal with both: funding adaptation where defences are no longer possible, planning and consenting infrastructure on finite space, and whether growth and recovery can be planned together rather than traded off. It asks who carries the costs and benefits, and how developers, regulators and NGOs can work together.

2 - Source to sea

Joining up land, rivers, coast and sea

Rivers, estuaries, coasts and seas work as one connected system, but we still plan and manage them in separate pieces. What happens upstream shapes what happens to the sea: sediment and nutrients, flood water, pollution, and the movement of fish and other wildlife. Heavier rainfall, drought and rising seas make those links harder to ignore. Integrated coastal management and catchment-based approaches have been pursued, but source-to-sea thinking is now gaining ground. This session asks what joined-up management looks like in practice: how voluntary partnerships, regulators, water companies, farmers, planners and marine managers can work to shared goals, how river basin planning and the UK Marine Strategy can connect, and how to work at a larger scale whilst delivering locally.

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conference@coastms.co.uk



www.coastal-futures.net



Ocean and Coastal Futures



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Outline themes cont.

3 - Nature recovery

Protecting and recovering marine and coastal biodiversity

Marine and coastal wildlife is under pressure from fishing, development, pollution and warming seas, and a changing climate is shifting where species can live. Marine protected areas now cover a large share of UK seas and the UK has committed to protecting 30% of its seas by 2030, but many sites are not yet well managed, and sites designated for today's conditions may not suit tomorrow's. This session looks at marine and coastal nature recovery as conditions change: what the latest science says about species and habitats on the move, how protected areas should be managed and adapted, how to reduce the pressures on them, and where restoring habitats such as seagrass, saltmarsh and shellfish reefs fits alongside protection. It will also bring together headline findings from the Environment Agency's ReMeMaRe conference, which OCF delivers in partnership with the EA, and from OCF's Blue Finance conference.

4 - Sustainable fisheries

Evidence from scientists, managers and fishing communities

Fishing matters to coastal economies, food security and the health of the sea, yet it is often treated as a side issue in wider marine debates. Warming seas add to the pressure, changing where fish live and breed, bringing new arrivals such as bluefin tuna and octopus to some waters and putting familiar stocks under strain. This session brings together fishers, managers, scientists, the seafood sector and conservation organisations to look at where UK fisheries management is heading: how fisheries management plans are being delivered, how access and quota arrangements with neighbouring countries are working, how monitoring and new technology are changing the way fishing is managed, how management can keep pace as stocks move, and what role aquaculture should play. It will also look at the pressures fishing communities face, from costs and access to competition for space with offshore wind and protected areas, and ask whose voices shape the decisions that affect them.

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5 – Coastal community voice

Who decides, and how, as coasts change

People who live on the coast are seeing climate change at first hand, and many want a say in how their coast changes: new cables and grid connections, sea defences, managed realignment and restoration schemes. Too often decisions arrive with little real engagement, and the places that host new infrastructure are not always the ones that benefit. New regional structures in England and regional marine planning in Scotland create a chance to rethink how coastal and marine decisions are made. This session asks whether our decision-making is ready for the climate we face: how participation, local knowledge and citizen science can shape marine planning and major projects, what working together looks like beyond consultation, what devolution means for the sea, and what different ways of valuing nature, from natural capital to the rights of nature, bring to those decisions.

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