## **OPINION**

## As COP28 focuses on climate change, it is timely to ask: What role does the sea play in regulating our climate?

Globally, our oceans produce more than half of the oxygen we breathe, forming every second breath we take, as well as absorbing about 30% of all our carbon dioxide emissions Marine Foundation

ARINE-PROTECTED areas provide a mosaic of improvements to the environment, economy and communities. Jersey's Marine Spatial Plan looks to find the right balance in management to ensure we reap these benefits.

On Thursday, COP28 (the UN climate change conference) commenced in Dubai and, today, discussions will focus on climate action. The topic of environmental protection for climate-change resilience is gaining significance within the space of governments, scientists, communities and environmentalists. But what is the relevance to Jersey, and how can our natural resources contribute to mitigating the threats posed by climate change?

Many of you reading this will know how small our Island is. It's a common saying that, here in Jersey, "you are never more than ten minutes from the sea".

more than ten minutes from the sea". But did you know just how significant the size of our waters is compared to our land? For context, 95% of our entire territory is made up of sea, truly dwarfing the little piece of rock which makes up our Island. Understandably, we are somewhat limited by the grand le grant of land.

limited by the small amount of land we have when looking at nature-based solutions to tackling the number of environmental issues we face. With a vast expanse of sea, we need to recognise the significant role this could play if managed in the right way. Globally, our oceans produce more than



## Freddie Watson, Jersey project manager for Blue

half of the oxygen we breathe, forming every second breath we take, as well as absorbing about 30% of all our carbon dioxide emissions. These processes are driven by ocean biology, chemistry and physics, which makes up the "carbon pump", the process determining the movement of carbon into, out of and within our oceans.

The balance between these three processes is delicate and, if either is too far out of sync, then we start to see drastic impacts on our environment and communities. We are already seeing this through warming oceans, sea-level rise and ocean acidification, which is responsible for bleaching coral and discreting challs dissolving shells. The effects of climate change on our

marine environment can even be seen here in Jersey. Warming seas are pushing key commercial fishery species, such as chancre (brown) crab, further north, and sea-level rise poses a risk to our coastal communities in areas such as St Aubin. the Waterfront and all along our southeast coast.

In May 2019, the States Assembly recognised "that there exists a climate emergency likely to have profound effects in Jersey" and Jersey's roadmap to carbon neutrality was born.

Within the roadmap, there is a specific policy which states that nature-based solutions will be used to tackle the climate emergency and blue carbon [carbon captured and stored in the sea] was identified to play a key role in this. Following the publication of the Carbon Neutral Roadmap, the government last



In his opening address at the World Climate Summit at COP28, King Charles III called for "transformational action" to combat climate change Picture: CHRIS JACKSON/PA WIRE

year released a research paper estimating that more than 10.000 tonnes of carbon is absorbed by our seabed every year. This is the equivalent of the amount

of CO2 produced by our agriculture and waste management sectors combined.

It is clear that our seas play a significant in relation to carbon, and Jersey is fortunate to have a diverse marine environment hosting more than 3,000 species found in our waters. Habitats such as seagrass, maerl and kelp were found to be the most important areas in terms of absorbing and storing carbon.

Jersey's Marine Spatial Plan looks to protect these sensitive habitats from trawling and dredging, activities widely known to cause significant disruption and release of carbon into the water column and atmosphere. By safeguarding column and atmosphere. By safeguarding these key blue carbon habitats, they can maintain their integrity, ensuring that they are given the best chance possible to continue drawing down the 10,000 tonnes of carbon every year. This also provides these habitats with longer-term resilience to the ever-changing environment we are evperiencing.

It goes without saying that, as well as playing a key role in regulating our climate, sensitive marine habitats such as seagrass, kelp and maerl also act as key search ass, kelp and meet and breed hey nursery, feeding, sheltr and breeding grounds for an array of marine life. Their health is integral to boosting local marine biodiversity, improving the health of fish stocks, benefitting fishing as well as other orbitilito curch as promotioned during activities such as recreational diving. This is something I have delved into more

deeply in my previous opinion pieces. The Marine Spatial Plan is under consultation until 2 January. Its proposal for real, large-scale and meaningful

marine protection can help us tackle the climate crisis, while also improving biodiversity, fisheries reliance and overall benefits to our community and economy. However, it needs your support. Jersey is at a crossroads in determining the fate of our seas, so have your say on the future of Jersey's seas by scanning the QR code below and responding to the online form.



## What do you think?

How relevant is the topic of environmental protection for climatechange resilience to Jersey? How significant are the Island's waters?

How can we shape the fate of our seas?

Send your thoughts to editorial@ jerseyeveningpost.com or #jointhedebate on social media



What Christmas Gift lasts a lifetime? UNIQUE IDEAS