

Oration for Mr Charles Clover

Charles Clover has revealed through his environmental journalism the stark threat over-fishing poses to our oceans and to us.

But, through his leadership on this issue he is also offering us hope. We can take action and the solutions are not as complex as we may think.

His inspirational message, or perhaps his call to arms, is that there are parts of the world where we are successfully rewilding our seas and bringing back the natural balance. He calls on us to follow those successes carefully, look to implement them in our communities and crucially – “believe we can do it”.

The alternative to taking action is extinction for many fish species and a future world without fish where mass starvation would be a certainty.

We owe Charles a huge debt for exposing the true situation in our seas and oceans, and outlining with complete clarity the choices we can make.

Charles Clover made his name as an environmental journalist and author. He was the Environment Editor for the *Daily Telegraph* for over 20 years and wrote an ecology-focussed column for the *Sunday Times*. He was voted national journalist of the year three times by the British Environment and Media Awards.

He co-wrote with the Prince of Wales his bestselling and influential book, *Highgrove: Portrait of an Estate*, which documented the Prince’s conversion to organic farming and called for increased sustainability in UK agriculture.

However, it is his award-winning book from 2004, *The End of the Line: How Overfishing is Changing the World and What We Eat*, for which he is best known.

Considered the definitive work on the need for sustainable fishing, it won the Guild of Food Writers’ Derek Cooper Award for investigative food writing, an Andre Simon award for food writing, and the Zoological Society of London’s BIOSIS award for communicating zoology.

It also inspired a documentary feature film, *The End of the Line*, which premiered to acclaim at the 2009 Sundance Film Festival, has gone on to win multiple awards and continues to have an impact on the millions who have watched it. As The Guardian said, the film “changed the way we eat fish”.

Charles has been determined to find practical ways to help people and policy makers make the right choices. He was the founder of the sustainable seafood restaurant

guide Fish2Fork, then in 2010 he co-founded with the creators of *The End of the Line*, Blue Marine Foundation, known as BLUE, where he is now Executive Director.

BLUE is Britain's leading ocean protection charity and is dedicated to restoring the health of our oceans by addressing overfishing and promoting the restoration of marine habitats. It is aiming for 30% of the world's oceans to be protected by 2030, and for sustainable fishing in the remaining 70%. In just over a decade.

The charity has secured commitments from MPs and the UK government to create a Blue Belt around all UK overseas territories; it has convinced the EU to ban electric pulse fishing; and it has helped create the largest marine protected area in the Atlantic.

BLUE continues to work hard for real action on protecting marine environments by emphasising that marine restoration boosts the ocean's ability to lock away carbon dioxide. This is an area explored further in Charles' latest book published this year, *Rewilding the Sea: How to Save Our Oceans*, a book praised by many including Isabella Tree, George Monbiot and Stephen Fry. As Stephen Fry notes: "I doubt any more important book will be published this year."

Charles lives in the county with a home in Dedham and we are proud that he has close links with our School of Life Sciences, having previously been a Visiting Professor in the School of Life Sciences.

Our marine biology researchers, like Charles, are working to expose the truth about what is happening in our seas, oceans and waterways. Like Charles they are also making a difference by showing how we can take practical action and protect these environments – from our UK estuaries to coral reefs around the world.

Charles' dedication to making a difference echoes the Essex Spirit, which is so important to our University and influences our research agenda. His passionate belief in conservation and message of hope should inspire us all to take action in our own lives. As Charles says: "We have to believe we can do it," and as he so powerfully shows through his writing, we do not really have a choice.

Pro-Chancellor, I present to you Charles Clover.