

# Civil Society Work on the Climate Crisis

## Case Study

### The Scottish Community Safety Network



**Can you describe the actions you have taken? How did you identify the problem and implement a process? Examples: investments; pensions; climate/sustainability strategies and action plans; measuring your carbon footprint; emissions reduction plans; offsetting; energy efficiency; water efficiency; staff behaviour and initiatives; travel; events; digital carbon footprint; anything else**

#### **How did we identify the problem and implement a process?**

The climate crisis is a problem it is difficult not to be aware of given the increasing media coverage and the evidence of our own experience, with increases in severe weather events including storms and heatwaves. The hosting of COP26 in Glasgow in 2021 also served to increase awareness around the climate crisis.

One of our staff members raised the issue of the climate crisis and how it might potentially affect our areas of interest during a team discussion. We began to think in more detail on this and we realised that climate change would be likely to have a major impact across far more community safety issues than we had previously considered.

Given how blatantly obvious it is that having a stable climate capable of sustaining human life is the absolute prerequisite for any of our charitable aims (and indeed for almost all third sector organisations) – we should almost certainly have realised this sooner.

We began attending some events on the climate crisis in order to broaden our understanding of what the issues were and what we could do. Subsequently, we decided that it would be appropriate and useful to host our own 'Climate Change and Community Safety' event.

In terms of implementing a process, we've only recently begun to consider how we can truly embed action to address the climate crisis throughout our organisation and work. We plan to ensure that our next organisational Business Plan and Strategy will do just that.

#### **Actions we have taken so far**

Whilst we have yet to fully incorporate action on the climate crisis into our Business Plan and Strategy, we already begun to implement numerous actions across the organisation.

These include:

- **The Climate Crisis is now a standing agenda item at our Board meetings** – trustees will consider the effect our organisation has on climate change, and how climate change impacts on our organisation
- **‘Climate Crisis Corner’** – this is a new section that we've added to our month Safety NETworks newsletter and our monthly Community Safety Media Monitor. Whilst we aim to focus on stories most relevant to community safety policy areas, we also include more general stories on the climate crisis (including climate science) so that we can play our part in raising the public consciousness of the seriousness of the situation we face
- **‘Thinking about Climate Change and Community Safety’ Workshop** - On Tuesday 19 October 2021, SCSN hosted and facilitated a 2-hour online workshop. Over 30 people attended from a spectrum of community safety organisations. Attendees included representatives from RoSPA, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, Community Safety Partnership (CSP) Leads, SEPA, Neighbourhood Watch Scotland and the Scottish Flood Forum. You can read the learning report on this event on our website [here](#).
- **Newsletter online only** – we took an early decision some years ago to stop printing our Safety NETworks newsletter and posting to members. Our newsletter is now published online and sent by email unless paper copies are specifically requested.
- **Early adopters of a four day working week: encouraging Staff to be Climate Conscious** – We recently completed a 6 month pilot of a four day working week. In our staff surveys during this time, we included questions on travel, use of electricity and whether and how staff would like to use additional time off to do some with a positive environmental impact. Following the success of the pilot, we have now introduced a permanent four day working week. Some of our staff team have begun doing voluntary litter picks, which as well as contributing to a positive environmental effect, they report as also being good for their own health and wellbeing. Staff are now required to travel to offices far less often either by car or public transport.
- **Website/Social Media** – We now make a conscious effort to post or share posts relating to the climate crisis and actions people and organisations can take to mitigate climate change. We have followed a number of relevant organisations and people, including climate scientists. We also post about climate crisis events, strategies or toolkits on our website.
- **Staff training/learning** – Our staff team have been attending various events on how we can continue to contribute to raising awareness of the climate crisis, make our organisation sustainable and climate friendly – and we have been publishing learning reports on these for our members/stakeholders on our website/newsletters.



- **Blog Post** – Our Communications Officer wrote and posted a [blog post](#) on our website on Climate Anxiety and Community Safety

We recognise that there is much more we can do to improve on being a sustainable and climate friendly organisation, as well as raising awareness of how our members and stakeholders can contribute to tackling this issue. This is an ongoing learning process for us and we are committed to ensuring we take all actions we can.

We envisage that embedding action around the climate crisis into our next Business Plan and Strategy will be the culmination of our efforts.

### **What has been successful? What would you most like to celebrate from the action you took?**

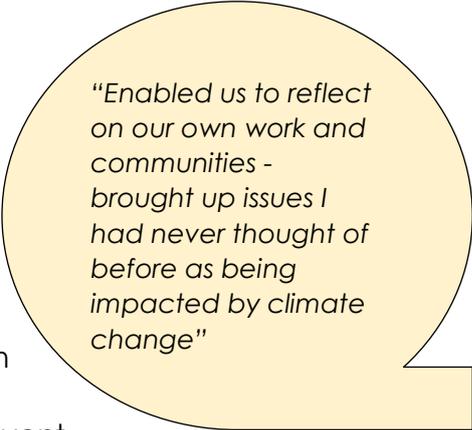
We feel that our 'Thinking about Climate Change and Community Safety' online workshop was hugely successful. It was the first time professionals from a broad spectrum of the community safety sector in Scotland had been brought together to discuss the impact on our work of the climate crisis.

The feedback we received on the event was extremely encouraging, including:

- 100% of respondents felt the topic was relevant.
- 75% of respondents rated the event overall as 4 or 5/5 stars.
- 60% of respondents rated the breakout sessions using jamboard as 4 or 5/5 stars.
- 83% of respondents would definitely or very likely attend another of our events.

The main 'takeaways' reported by attendees were around:

- A wider understanding of the complexities of climate change including the variables and less obvious implications
- The effect of climate change on the most vulnerable
- The need to think about social care and health alongside community safety
- Working with communities to educate and prevent
- The need to build better networks and partnerships to adequately prepare
- The many cross-cutting areas and opportunities for collaboration
- Lack of meaningful awareness around climate change



*"Enabled us to reflect on our own work and communities - brought up issues I had never thought of before as being impacted by climate change"*

We completed and disseminated a detailed Event Summary Report which has been disseminated to members and stakeholders, including via our Safety NETworks newsletter, and is available on our website [here](#).

Following the event we have committed to utilising the skills of an experienced graphic designer, to summarise the findings in a simple, easy to understand and engaging illustration, perhaps resulting in a poster or zine, digital or physical. We will also consider a future webinar on the same topic which will focus on mapping out solutions to concerns we identified.

### **What has been most challenging? Have you had to change your approach in any areas?**

Thankfully, we have not yet experienced too many challenges in our work to address climate change as a community safety issue, or in changing organisational practice to mitigate our impact on climate.

Our Board, members and stakeholders have readily accepted and quickly understood that this should be an organisational priority. We understand that for some in the third sector, it may be a harder sell to convince members, funders, donors or other stakeholders that the climate crisis is relevant to their charitable aims.

However, we would agree with those who point out that without a sustainable and liveable environment, all other charitable aims cannot be met. We would encourage organisations working in areas where climate change might not seem an immediate priority to think very deeply about this – perhaps even to consult climate change experts – because you may well find that climate change might impact on your aims or on your service users in ways you weren't previously aware of.

In terms of addressing the impact of our organisation and working practices on climate change, many of our 'people over process' commitments and other commitments and policies designed to improve staff wellbeing, have dovetailed rather well with actions necessary to reduce our impact on the climate.

We do however, remain alert to the possibility that there may be challenges ahead which we have yet to discover.

### **What did you learn from starting work in this area? What learning points would you most like to share with other leaders?**

Along with our members and stakeholders, we've learned that there was a lot we didn't know, and a lot we didn't know we didn't know – both on our impact on the climate, and the impact of climate change on our areas of interest.

Our 'Thinking about Climate Change and Community Safety' event allowed us, along with members and stakeholders, to flesh out a lot more of what we didn't know as a sector on how climate change will impact on communities and community safety in Scotland.

Attending learning events run by different organisations has allowed us to flesh out a lot more we didn't know about our own impact on the climate. To give one really

good example, we recently attended an event run by Charity Comms on 'Communicating to Create Change' on the climate crisis.

At this event, we learned that the internet is responsible for 2% of global carbon emissions and that this is equal to the entire global aviation industry. Part of the reason for these large emissions caused by the internet is pressure on servers caused by 'heavy websites' which contain more pages than necessary, or large files such as video files, PDF files which haven't been compressed and PNG image files (where JPEG image files, which are smaller, would be just as good).

As part of a wider website review, we will perform a website clean-up – where we will delete old/unused web pages and files, compress and re-upload PDF files, and where possible replace PNG images with JPEG images. We will also continue avoid embedding video files on the website, instead uploading to Youtube and uploading those links instead.

You can view our summary learning report from this event [here](#).

**How could the sector more effectively collaborate or share knowledge in this space? Can ACEVO or other membership bodies support this work in ways which would have helped you?**

We are really encouraged and pleased to see ACEVO share case studies on this topic on their website and are pleased to contribute our own to this space.

In terms of what the sector could do more broadly, we think that some of the following might be useful:

- Hold events specifically focussed on your areas of interest and how climate change may impact on them
- Share the work you do in this area, and the work of others on your comms channels (social media, websites, newsletters)
- Include climate change as a standing item in CEO check ins

For more information on the work we are undertaking on the climate crisis please contact us at [info@scsn.org.uk](mailto:info@scsn.org.uk)