

Funder Commitment on Climate Change – two years on (6 minute read)

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This month, in honour of COP26, we have been sharing blogs relating to the climate and biodiversity crises, which you can find [here](#) on our website. One of the blogs we shared relates to our journey towards [becoming net zero](#), and the other is about our [climate change related grantmaking](#). This blog is our third and final blog in this series, and relates to the progress we are making with the [Funder Commitment on Climate Change](#) (FCoCC).

We have been signatories to the FCoCC for two years now, having signed up in December 2019. You can find out about the progress we made in our first year by reading [this blog](#) that our Grants Assistant wrote back in December 2020.

There are around 80 UK charitable foundations signed up to the FCoCC, and they have all agreed that regardless of their charitable mission and field of expertise, we can and must play our part in addressing the climate emergency. Those that sign up commit to the following six things: to educate and learn; to commit resources; to integrate the commitment in all that we do; to steward our investments for a post-carbon future; to decarbonise our operations and to report on progress. The FCoCC was originally set up by Nick Perks, and it is now hosted and supported by the Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF).

Highlights from year one

In our first year as signatories, we made the following progress:

- A renewed and better defined commitment internally to tackling climate change through the work we fund **and** the way that we operate, which built on the work that we had already been doing such as using renewable energy across our operations.
- Developed a [new Investment Policy](#) that for the first time is public-facing, and it recognises the important role our endowment can play in responding to the climate crisis amongst other things too.
- Carried on supporting climate change related work through our grantmaking, with our support for this kind of work specifically mentioned in our Funding Guidelines for the first time from September 2020 onwards.
- Continued being an active participant in climate discussions taking place across our networks, including those organised or promoted by the Environmental Funders Network (EFN), Greenpeace UK, Peers for the Planet, Client Earth and others.
- Invited Richard Black from the Energy and Climate Intelligence Unit (ECIU) to speak at our March 2020 Board Meeting.
- Instigated meetings every three to four months between Matthew Whittell, our Head of Finance and Resources, Philee Ang-Chen, our Grants Assistant, Sufina Ahmad, our Director, and Tufyal Choudhury, our lead Trustee on the FCoCC. These meetings were used to discuss our ideas and the progress we are making in relation to the FCoCC.
- Reported on the progress made against the FCoCC externally through our blog and Annual Report, and to the ACF.

Our second year as signatories of the FCoCC

Going into our second year as signatories, we wanted to sustain and build upon what we had achieved in our first year, whilst also doing even more against each area of the FCoCC. Looking back, it has been reassuring to see that on the whole this is what has happened.

Under the commitment to **'Educate and learn'**, we have continued to engage climate change experts in our work and have attended seminars and events organised or promoted by various organisations, as well as actively contributing to the Climate Funders Group. We have shared the details of these events with staff and Trustees, and next year we will be thinking about how to do this with our grantees too, where appropriate. We are also in the process of arranging some training on climate change for our Trustees and staff with AimHi Earth, after two members of our Grants Team went to one of their taster sessions and absolutely loved it! However, if we struggle to make a booking with AimHi Earth, we will reach out to Carbon Literacy Group and Nick Perks for training options with them.

Under **'Commit resources'**, we made some COP26 specific grants to Climate Outreach and Stop Climate Chaos Scotland, as well as investing in the first ever environmental crowdfunding campaign launched by the Big Give, with support from the EFN. At the moment, £618k of our spend in the environment category is towards climate related grants. From this month onwards, we agreed to ask all second-stage applicants to submit a copy of their environmental sustainability (or equivalent) policies. Our hope is that that our interest in this policy will encourage all applicants to prioritise this as part of their operations, and it is not our intention to withhold a grant due to a lack of a policy. In the next year, we hope to support some work that is being planned to help engage the social sector with the climate and biodiversity crises, as well as thinking through new ways that we can help our applicants and the organisations we fund to finance actions that will support the just transition.

Under **'Integrate'**, we are continuing to share details of free fundraising training to organisations that we fund, as well as distributing many of our governance-related papers electronically only. We also participated in research and events that a group of Clore Emerging Leaders organised that explored the intersection of environmental and social justice. Next year we hope to carry on seeking out opportunities to speak or write publicly about the climate and biodiversity crises, and to consider the best ways in which we could engage all of the organisations we fund across the arts, social action and environment categories on this issue.

In relation to **'Steward our investments for a post-carbon future'**, our focus this year has been on the implementation of our Investment Policy, and this has included reviewing voting decisions of all our Fund Managers in more detail and seeking clarifications where needed, questioning their ESG credentials more robustly, and agreeing a pilot that means working with ShareAction and other investors to bring forward shareholder actions that seek to address the harms caused by climate change. Somewhat related to this last point, recently we were signatories to the 'COP26 Declaration of asset owner climate expectations of asset managers'.

We remain active members of the Charities Responsible Investment Network, and the Finance Investment and Resources Management group, convened by the ACF. On the latter, our Head of Finance and Resources has been part of the steering group over the last year.

Over the next year we will be thinking in more detail about what it would take for our endowment to be net zero, with some of our initial thinking on this published earlier this month in a blog. We are also hoping that in the next year we will have more clarity on how we could use impact investing to support the just transition, in addition to being invested in the markets.

In relation to the commitment to '**Decarbonise our operations**', we started updating our environmental sustainability policy this month. We continue to discourage Trustees and staff from driving or taking flights when carrying out their Ellerman duties (where feasible), and we have reduced the amount of meat and dairy served at events that we cater. Next year, we will be thinking about completing carbon footprint calculations on our operations, including for cloud storage, and determine what changes we could be making as a result of these findings.

And finally, with regards to the commitment to '**Report on progress**', we remain committed to doing so publicly and in a transparent way through blogs like these, our Annual Report, and our Twitter account. As regular attendees at the FCoCC meetings organised by ACF we are inspired and motivated by what our peers are doing, and these very much inform our own thinking and our discussions in the regular internal meetings we have on the FCoCC.

We report on an annual basis about our progress to our November Board meeting and to the ACF. Next year we hope that our reporting will offer more of a story of the progress we have made since December 2019, rather than focussing on just the previous 12 months.

I hope that the above demonstrates our deep belief in the FCoCC as an important way in which funders in the UK can respond impactfully to the climate crisis. As ever there is always more that we can and must do, as outlined in the work that we are already have planned for the year ahead, but I hope that this blog demonstrates just how integral the FCoCC has been to our work over the last two years.