

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

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In the blink of an eye it seems, another year has passed and it is time for me to share the progress we have been making here at John Ellerman Foundation in relation to the [Funder Commitment on Climate Change](#) (FCoCC). The FCoCC was originally set up by Nick Perks, and it is now hosted and supported by the Association of Charitable Foundations (ACF). We have been signatories to the FCoCC for three years now, having signed up in December 2019. You can find out about the progress we made in our first year by reading [this update](#) that our former Grants Assistant wrote back in December 2020, and the progress on our second year can be found [here](#).

There are very nearly 100 UK charitable foundations signed up to the FCoCC – all of us united in our belief that whatever our 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.

Highlights from our first two years

As signatories, in our first two years, we achieved a few things of note. Foremost has been a renewed and better defined commitment internally to tackling climate change through the work we fund **and** the way that we operate, which has included a public facing [Investment Policy](#) that recognises the important role our endowment can play in responding to the climate crisis amongst other things too. We remain committed to learning as much as we can about how best we can respond to climate change, and a lot of this has been through grantmaking and investing communities that we are a part of, such as the Environmental Funders Network and ShareAction's Charities Responsible Investment Network. We are also proud of the way in which our increased and more explicit reference to climate change in our funding guidelines has meant that we have been able to support some really interesting and important climate-related work over the past couple of years, in addition to the vital work we also fund through our environment funding category.

Progress made in year three

Over the last year we have very much sustained all that we have been doing these last two years, as well as make key pieces of progress under each of the six commitment areas. It has been positive to build on our progress too, with the main ways in which we have done this outlined below.

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, like Environmental Funders Network, Greenpeace, Climate Outreach, ClientEarth and many others, as well as remaining a member of 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.

Staff and Trustees all attended training by Aim-Hi Earth earlier this year, and in September 2022 Trustees approved that this training should be offered to all our grant-holders too during November

and December 2022. The training is being recorded and will be made available as recordings to all future grant-holders too, as well as being available for those that attended or weren't able to attend the live sessions.

In Spring 2022, we updated and vastly improved our [Environmental Sustainability Policy](#) and also decided to make it publicly available on our website. Since then, we have been asking all second stage applicants to submit their environmental sustainability (or equivalent) policy as part of their application. However it is in no way a condition of getting a grant from us and is simply an opportunity for us to hear from them about their thinking in this space and to offer our own reflections in the hope that this can be helpful.

Under '**Commit resources**', in September 2022 we agreed that we would join the Philanthropy Lab being coordinated by the Environmental Funders Network, which will be looking at the economy and how it can be better configured to respond to the climate and biodiversity crises. We have also provided core costs funding to NPC's 'Everyone's Environment' initiative, which aims to engage the social sector with the environmental crises.

We invested for the second year in an environmental crowdfunding campaign run by the Big Give, which was aimed to evidence that this kind of fundraising could work for the environmental sector. Climate-related work was supported through this initiative.

In spring 2022 we announced publicly the recipients of our funding for the first round of grants to support environmental work for the UK Overseas Territories (UKOTs) through the UKOTs Fund. This meant that in 2021/22 we invested a total of £2,573,919 to environmental work - £1,673,909 through our main environment funding category, which equates to 25% of our total spend, and £900,010 through the UKOTs Fund, which equates to 16% of our total spend. We raised a further £150,000 for the UKOTs Fund from other funders externally. We ran a second round of the UKOTs Fund that made decisions in October 2022 – with a total spend in the second round of £794,000. We contributed £150,000, with a further £100,000 from the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, £500,000 from the Planet Trust (part of the People's Postcode lottery) and the remainder from another source. Supporting environmental work in the UKOTs is essential in responding to the climate crisis, with many of these Territories acting as the first line of defence against the worst impacts of the climate emergency.

Under '**Integrate**', we continue to have governance meetings hybrid or online and to distribute papers electronically wherever possible. We continue to share details of free fundraising training to organisations that we fund and to seek out opportunities to speak or write publicly about the climate and biodiversity crises. We have contributed for example to work by the Luc Hoffmann Institute project on the future of philanthropy for biodiversity.

In relation to '**Steward our investments for a post-carbon future**', we continue to implement our Investment Policy that was agreed in 2020. This has included reviewing voting decisions and strategies of all our fund managers and questioning their ESG credentials more robustly year on year. We remain active members of the Charities Responsible Investment Network, and the Finance Investment and Resources Management group. We have made progress on thinking more clearly about the tools that we can use to pursue a net zero investing strategy, including use of mandates, our own shareholder engagement strategy and looking at our organisational structure over the summer and adding resource in the form of a new Head of Research and Impact who will work with our Finance and Investment Committee, Director and a new Finance and Operations Manager to enable us to be a much more engaged investor.

In relation to the commitment to '**Decarbonise our operations**', we are working to the delivery of our new Environmental Sustainability Policy. 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.

And finally, with regards to the commitment to '**Report on progress**', we remain committed to doing so publicly and in a transparent way through updates like these, our Annual Report, and our Twitter account. As ever we remain very motivated and energised by what our peers are doing, and the fact that the FCoCC community grows year on year. 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. Each year we add to the story of the progress we have made since signing the FCoCC in December 2019. Each year we have the privilege of seeing the progress we are making, but we know that there is still more to do and we remain as committed as ever.