

My first community development job was in Drumchapel, so seeing the devastation wrought by the recent flooding to people living there was deeply saddening. With a spate of wildfires across the world forming the backdrop to the pandemic it sometimes felt over the last year that the world is going to hell in a handcart. With our mental health simultaneously assaulted by COVID; wildfires; flooding and heat domes, it is becoming difficult to ignore the social and economic havoc that climate change is causing people and communities across the world. Trying to bring about positive change can seem almost futile, and we can all feel diminished by the scale of the challenge.

While the recent IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) Report acknowledges that humanity has 'unequivocally' caused 1.5°C climate warming, it also made clear that collectively we can still do something to keep the increase below 2°C and thereby moderate its worst effects, but we all have to play our role and we all have to act NOW.

For our sector COP26 in Glasgow in November has to act as the pivot point to begin the adaptations we must make to get towards NetZero. As the third sector, we have a specific part to play in getting our own house in order. Failure to do so will, not just mean a dereliction of our duty to vulnerable people and communities who will suffer the most, but will over time, make our ability to assist them appreciably harder.

No-one is expecting organisations to address this challenge alone, rather we must address it together. We have to lobby and secure the resources to make it possible for charities to implement change. Although that is not going to be easy, fortunately as a sector, we are not starting from scratch. We have many environmental organisations from community land, forestry and food to community energy, reuse and public transport, that we can learn from.

Over the last year, a strategic grouping of third sector organisations (SCVO, SENS Scot, CEIS, SES amongst others) started working together to consider how the sector can become more environmentally friendly. The social enterprise support agencies have finalised a [NetZero strategy](#) whilst the whole group engaged in a [survey](#) and focus groups with charities to gauge understanding and need in our journey towards NetZero.

The results highlighted a number of positives; in particular the growing realisation amongst organisations that they need to consider their climatic impacts. However, the results also highlighted issues that require serious attention. These include charities not really making the connections between climate change and socio-economic impacts; concerns that non-environmental organisations are lagging behind in their approach and understanding of climate change and finally, the perception that tackling the environmental emergency will be too expensive, too time consuming and too difficult in practical terms.

The urgency with which we must address climate change is coming at a difficult time for the sector. It follows at least ten years of austerity, followed by nearly two years of COVID, both of which have really stretched the sector's ability to meet the needs of the people and communities who rely upon it. But through all of these crises, as a sector we have shown ourselves to be adaptable and inventive when required to be.

So, now we must turn our ingenuity and resources towards ensuring that we hit NetZero by 2045. Only by doing so, can we show genuine leadership and assure the communities and people we serve that we can assist them in making their future a fairer, greener one.

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