



Preparing for different futures: climate change session report

CONTEXT

Throughout May and June 2020 WCVA facilitated a programme of on-line discussion forums to gain an understanding of the issues facing the voluntary sector in Wales as a result of COVID-19, the different future possibilities that are emerging and how we can best prepare; by steering towards the future outcomes that the sector wants. This builds on the [initial learning](#) that WCVA published in May 2020.

A series of six sessions, each focused on a different topic, ran alongside a wider questionnaire. These were promoted across WCVA's membership and were free to access.

This work focusses on four key questions:

- What has been the impact of Covid-19?
- Where could this lead to long term change - both positive and negative?
- What are the implications for the voluntary sector in Wales?
- What could voluntary organisations, WCVA, government, or other decision-makers do that can help steer us towards a better future?

A summary report was prepared by [Richard Newton Consulting](#) session, along with a final report which sought to pull together key themes and actions.

These will be shared widely with the sector and others, such as funders and policy-makers.

These reports seek to establish themes and actions rather than create a summary of what was said. They reflect the survey responses and contributions during the events, rather than WCVA or Richard Newton Consulting's positions. We cannot verify if they are wholly accurate or rather people's perceptions.

On 11 June 2020 the fifth discussion forum was held exploring how the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted on climate change.

Over 60 organisations registered to attend representing a breadth of organisations from the not-for-profit sector. This included registered charities and community interest companies, along with support organisations including WCVA, CVCs and local authorities.

CLIMATE CHANGE - WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF COVID-19?

The few months since the Coronavirus pandemic necessitated Wales to lockdown represent a small percentage of the wider timeline of debate about climate change. However, as a result of lockdown there have been a number of behaviour changes which have the opportunity to impact on climate change.

Participants reported:

- Lockdown, in particular restrictions on transport have resulted in a significant reduction in carbon emissions.
- Many individuals have re-connected with their local communities. This has included shopping locally, engagement in community growing schemes and community schemes that broker local needs with local offers.
- This community response has utilised the 5 Ways of Working as outlined in the Well-being of Future Generations legislation; often without those being involved in the response being explicitly aware of this.

- On a national scale issues such as those that the UK has faced with ventilators and PPE has highlighted some of the challenges of local and just in time supply chains.
- As we start to move to an easing of lockdown there are concerns about car use – the car is now seen by many as a ‘safe-space’ and as such a preferred mode of transport. Initiatives such as staggered starts at school also do not deter car use.

CLIMATE CHANGE - WHERE COULD THIS LEAD TO LONG TERM CHANGE - BOTH POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE?

It was identified that there are clearly opportunities for long term change, dependent upon how the voluntary and community sector (and other sectors) respond to exiting lockdown. Whilst there is a concern that some of the immediate focus from policy makers (and many delivery organisations) in respect of climate change has been displaced by COVID-19; there is a strong recognition that climate change should be considered as part of an integrated plan for wider economic and health recovery.

To secure this long term change a number of elements need to be considered:

- Stakeholders need to evaluate if the behaviours that have evolved over lockdown are the change that we aspire to. In effect is it a sustainable or an imposed model?
- The infrastructure to support positive behaviour needs to be developed. This extends from cycle routes through to developing networks.
- Food poverty is a significant influencer of people’s capacity to engage with the localisation agenda and this needs to be addressed.
- In addition to the ‘traditional’ interventions to address climate change, there is a need to explore wider opportunities that have emerged through COVID-19, i.e. the potential to convert redundant office space to deliver health and bio-diversity benefits, and focusing interventions to support economic recovery and address unemployment on the green agenda.

CLIMATE CHANGE - WHAT ARE THE IMPLICATIONS FOR THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR IN WALES?

The voluntary and community sector in Wales can play a key role in addressing climate change. As outlined in session four on influencing, the sector needs to be regarded as a key partner by policy makers across a breadth of activities including climate change.

Climate change is one of the most complex and challenging issues facing the planet. Whilst the voluntary and community sector can play a key role in creating a different future for this to really work it needs to be embedded into wider strategic priorities. There is a clear feeling that at a local level the foundations are in place for a community response to climate change, but a failure for this to be led by policy at a Wales level. This work will align with many of the initiatives to develop the Foundation Economy.

Given the right funding and wider policy environment the voluntary sector can play a key role in addressing climate change in Wales, building on the response to the Coronavirus pandemic and wider learning.

CLIMATE CHANGE - WHAT COULD VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS, WCVA, GOVERNMENT, OR OTHER DECISION-MAKERS DO THAT CAN HELP STEER US TOWARDS A BETTER FUTURE?

There are a number of actions emerging from the session for WCVA and members to consider and take forward with other stakeholders in order ensure that the sector is best placed to respond to the challenges of climate change.

- ▶ WCVA and other voluntary sector stakeholders need to campaign to ensure that climate change is embedded into the COVID-19 plans being developed for Wales. This includes the Welsh Government's external advisory group in recovery led by the Counsel General, through to sector focused recovery groups.
- ▶ The community response has the potential to be a key deliverer of change for climate change. Work needs to be undertaken to engage the emerging community leaders in climate change and sustain the community response.

- ▶ The TSSW network can play an essential role in linking the grassroots community based response to national policy and enabling knowledge transfer.
- ▶ Whilst some voluntary sector organisations are focused on climate change, others are not. A 'hearts and minds' exercise needs to take place to develop an understanding across the sector of how organisations can have an impact of climate change whilst delivering their primary purpose. Voluntary sector organisations are being encouraged to evaluate their COVID-19 response and their learning, in respect of climate change, should be a cross cutting theme to this work.
- ▶ The right space needs to be created to enable organisations to share experiences and to share best practice that has / is emerging from the pandemic and the new environment that is emerging.

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