

# Supporting effective environmental action in Scotland

*Funding trends, insights and stories to inspire from the Scottish environment sector*



Environmental Funders Network



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*Quotes in light green are from funders*

*Apart from in the case studies, quotes in dark green are from civil society organisations that responded to EFN's 'What the Green Groups Said' survey of 2021.*



## Foreword

The Environmental Funders Network, twenty years old in 2023, brings together the UK's charitable trusts, foundations, and individuals that provide funding for work on environmental themes.

We emphasise that as the natural environment deteriorates, all philanthropic causes are affected – and almost all giving, done well, can bring benefit to the environment.

During the seven years to October 2022 (when I chaired the EFN board), by our reckoning environmental giving by UK trusts and foundations increased over three-fold to some £350m per year. Through our work supporting funders to give effectively towards environmental causes, scaled up during that time, we are proud to have contributed to that increase. We are not complacent, however: even as philanthropic giving has increased, so too have the alarms being sounded about the state of nature and climate both here in Scotland and around the world. There is much to be done.

Anticipating standing down as UK chair, I have worked with our Scotland Coordinator Julie Christie to bring together an Advisory Group for Scotland – EFN's only such area committee, so far, in the UK. Our seven members include foundation directors, lawyers, philanthropy advisers and donors, and our purpose is to increase the focus of Scotland's foundations on environmental themes, and increase the flow of funds for environmental action.

Environmental groups tell us regularly that foundation grants are particularly valuable as sources of income as they can be flexible, quick to secure, and support hard-to-fund work.

Our hope is that this report, and EFN's work more generally, will help grantmakers to resource a more effective, resilient and robust environmental sector in Scotland, for the benefit of everyone.

**Hugh Raven**  
Chair, EFN Scotland Advisory Group  
April 2023



# Introduction

*When we walk at the coast  
and notice, above the sea,  
a single ragged swallow  
veering towards the earth-  
and blossom-scented breeze,  
can we allow ourselves to fail*

'Landfall' by Kathleen Jamie  
(Scotland's Makar)

Scotland is host to a whole ecosystem of charities and other civil society organisations who know that when it comes to our natural heritage, we cannot allow ourselves to fail. On land, in the sea, and 'upstream' in terms of changing behaviour, attitudes and policies, they work in a remarkably collaborative way to turn philanthropic funding into 'wins' for society and nature.

Whatever drives your giving, you too will likely recognise that we need functioning ecosystems and a habitable climate for people and other living beings to thrive in Scotland – and that, as Edinburgh-based medic and climate activist Mikaela Loach says, **'Things don't just get better. We choose to make them better.'**

There is much work to do. Scotland's globally-renowned beauty and drama belie the fact that it has become one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world. We have destroyed habitats and biodiversity on land and at sea, and we continue to further their decline through intensive farm and woodland management, pollution, industrial fishing and fish farming. Human-caused climate change is adding extra stress. Put simply, Scotland's wildlife and habitats are a shadow of their former selves.

Funders are key to turning the state of nature around in Scotland. They can provide the flexible, long-term and unrestricted funding that civil society groups most need to succeed.

It can be hard to know where to start, but the Environmental Funders Network exists to help funders be effective in their giving on environmental causes: to join them up with one another, connect them with the many excellent organisations making change, and provide them with resources, including research, to inform their giving. In particular, we analyse what philanthropic funding is available for environmental work, and where and how it is being disbursed, as well as where environmental groups are getting their funding from, how they're deploying it, and what they think the sector needs to become much more impactful.

For this report we have distilled what that research has told us about funding for environmental work in Scotland, and the needs of environmental organisations working here. We have also included some stories of effective environmental work to highlight different approaches undertaken by different groups on a range of thematic issues.

We hope it starts a conversation, and that you will be in touch for further guidance, sign-posting or useful connections.

**[info@greenfunders.org](mailto:info@greenfunders.org)**



# Environmental funding in Scotland

## Key takeaways

- Funding from UK foundations for environmental work in Scotland has increased in recent years, although not as significantly as levels of UK foundation funding for environmental causes overall have grown. Despite this growth, environmental funding remains a very small proportion of total UK foundation funding for philanthropic causes.
- The majority of foundation funding for environmental work in Scotland has come from foundations based outside Scotland.
- Most environmental funding from foundation and lottery sources goes towards the following thematic issues in Scotland: *biodiversity & species preservation*, and *sustainable communities*. The same issue areas that receive the lowest shares of funding globally (the so-called 'Cinderella' issues) also receive very low shares in Scotland: *consumption & waste*, *toxics & pollution*, *trade & finance*, and *transport*.<sup>1</sup>
- UK foundation and lottery funding is spread widely and thinly across the Scottish environment sector, with a large number of grantees mostly receiving very small amounts of funding; a trend that is not specific to Scotland.



<sup>1</sup> Descriptions of all the thematic issue categories in the taxonomy used for our 'Where the Green Grants Went' and 'What the Green Groups Said' research can be found in Appendix I.



EFN has been tracking and analysing environmental grants from UK-based funders since 2002 through our [‘Where the Green Grants Went’](#) report series, which aims to identify funding trends and highlight potential gaps that might otherwise remain hidden. We know that many funders have used our analyses to inform their own grantmaking strategies.

*‘The ‘Where the Green Grants Went Scotland’ report has been instrumental in the development of our foundation, particularly with the Marine & Aquatic sub-group. I am really glad that we could help support this insightful research.’*

**UK funding trends:** Based on our research<sup>2</sup> and conversations with funders, we know that funding to environmental causes is growing, albeit from a very low base, with more new donors entering the space and some established funders scaling up their environmental giving. In 2018/19, funding to environmental causes from UK foundations<sup>3</sup> and lottery sources amounted to £313 million; a 47% increase from 2015/16. Funding from UK foundations alone nearly doubled between 2015/16 and 2018/19, reaching £222 million; the proportion of total funding from UK foundations that was directed towards environmental causes increased from four per cent to six per cent in this period. Since then, it has continued to grow, and we estimate that environmental funding from UK foundations is now likely to exceed £300 million per year.<sup>4</sup>

*‘[When EFN was established] environmental funding was a pond — now it’s a lake; let’s turn it into an ocean!’*

**Scotland funding from foundations:** In Scotland, environmental giving from UK foundations is on a clear upward trajectory, reaching just under £7 million in 2018/19; a 39% increase from 2015/16 (Chart 1). In total, 108 foundations gave at least one grant for environmental work in Scotland in the 17 years during which we have been collecting data, and 41 in 2018/19 alone.



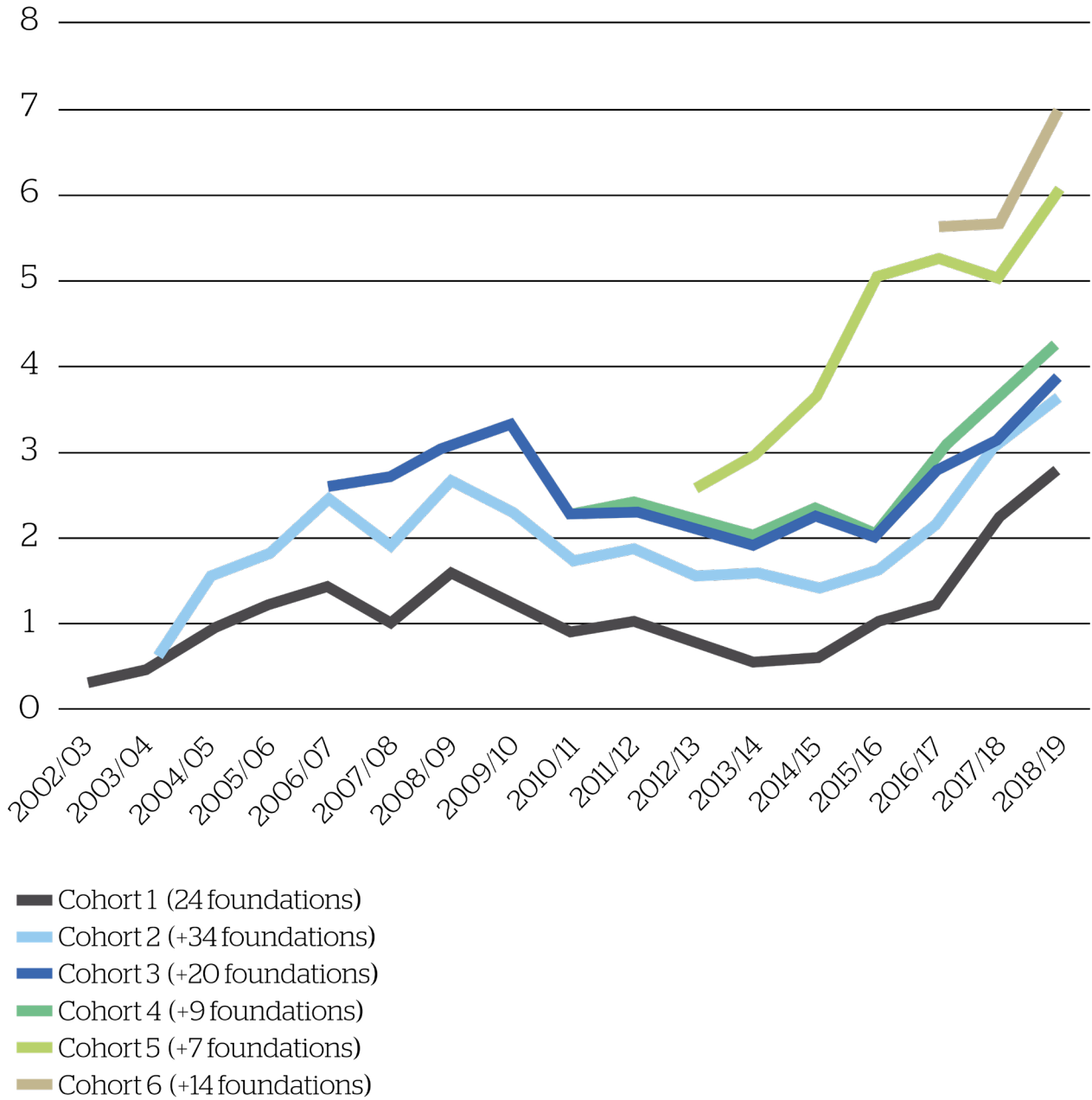
<sup>2</sup> Full details of the methodology used to derive the figures on environmental funding used in this briefing can be found in [‘Where the Green Grants Went 8’](#).

<sup>3</sup> Except where otherwise specified, ‘foundations’ includes Landfill Communities Fund and Scottish Landfill Communities Fund distributors, as well as philanthropically-funded trusts and foundations.

<sup>4</sup> Data for UK foundation funding for environmental causes since 2018/19 have not yet been comprehensively compiled; this estimate is based on our knowledge of the current funding landscape from conversations with funders and other experts.

# Chart 1:

Total UK foundation funding to environmental work in Scotland over time, tracked in six cohorts of foundations (£m; nominal figures).



*'At John Ellerman Foundation, we are committed to supporting environmental work in Scotland delivered by environmental charities working there. We have supported environmental work for many years now, and in that time feel that we have developed a good understanding of the environmental charities operating in Scotland, including the fact that many of them are small or medium sized. We are often struck by the ways in which these organisations deliver highly ambitious and effective work that benefits not only their cause areas, but the wider UK environmental movement. We know that Scotland has some of the most substantial and significant marine and land environments in the UK, and that even as a broad-based environmental funder our multi-year core costs funding, with an average grant size total of about £110,000, can go a long way and elicit many positive outcomes.'*

**Top foundations funding in Scotland:**

The five foundations that gave the largest amounts of funding for environmental work in Scotland in 2018/19 were (percentages indicate the proportion out of total UK foundation funding in Scotland):

- Esmée Fairbairn Foundation (39%)
- Leverhulme Trust (13%)
- The Robertson Trust (10%)
- Garfield Weston Foundation (7%)
- John Ellerman Foundation (7%)

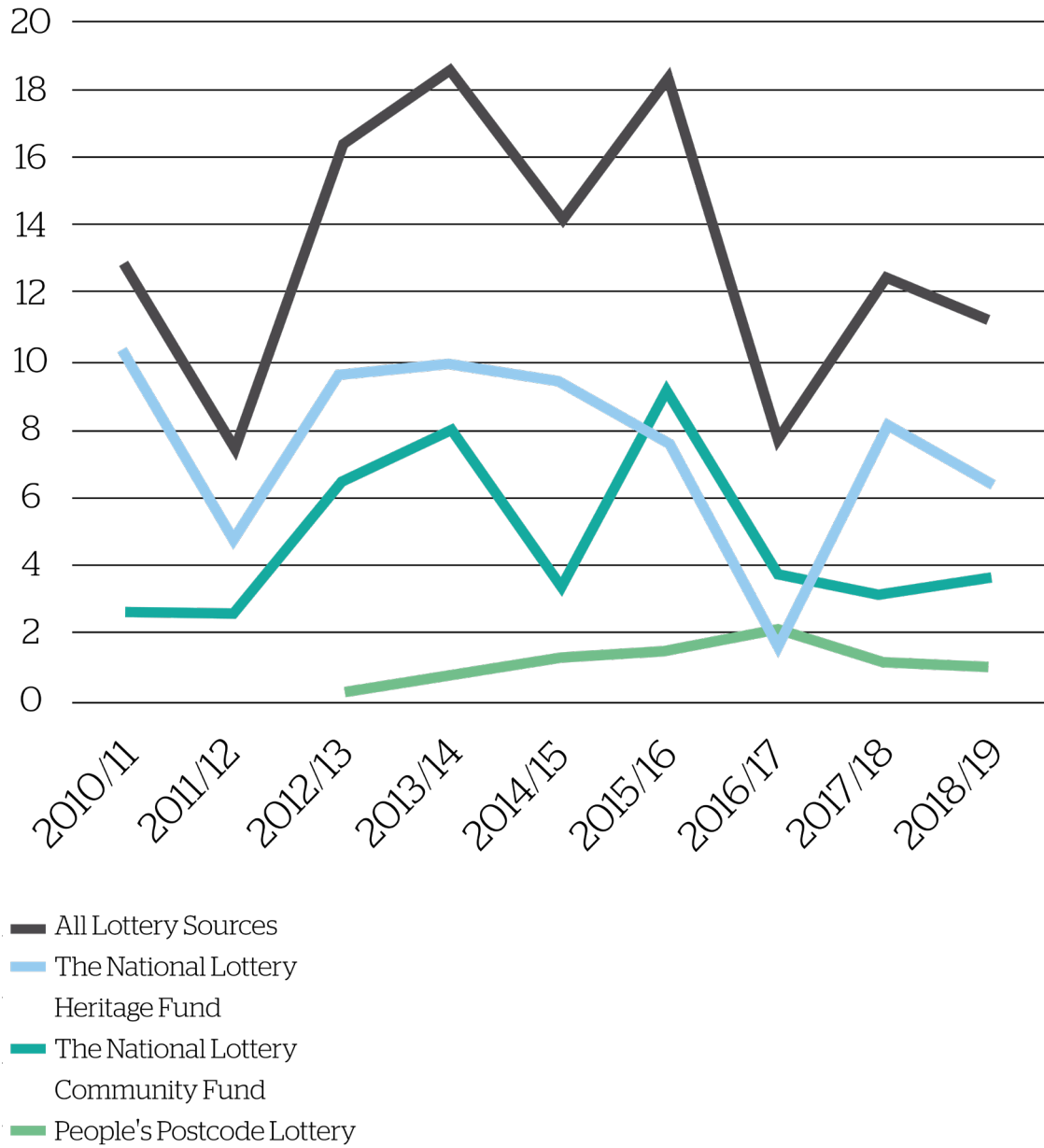
**Funding from Scottish foundations:**

Only one of the top five foundations funding in Scotland, The Robertson Trust, is based in Scotland. In 2018/19, 17 per cent of foundation funding for environmental work in Scotland came from Scottish foundations.

[The Robertson Trust](#), one of Scotland's largest independent foundations, is ramping up its focus on tackling climate change, including through its investments and its charity hubs in Glasgow and Stirling. It funds environmental work where the interventions align with the foundation's core goals of addressing poverty and trauma. For example, [Greener Kirkcaldy](#), a community-led charity working locally to bring people together, take positive action on the climate emergency and support people through fuel poverty and food insecurity, received £90,000 towards salary costs.

## Chart 2:

Funding from lottery sources to environmental work in Scotland over time (£m; nominal figures).



**Scotland funding from lottery sources:**

There has been significant fluctuation in environmental funding from lottery sources in Scotland: the National Lottery Community Fund (previously Big Lottery Fund), the National Lottery Heritage Fund (previously Heritage Lottery Fund), and the Postcode Trusts (funded by players of People's Postcode Lottery) (Chart 2). This reflects the picture in the UK as a whole, where there has been no consistent upward or downward trend in levels of environmental funding from lottery sources.

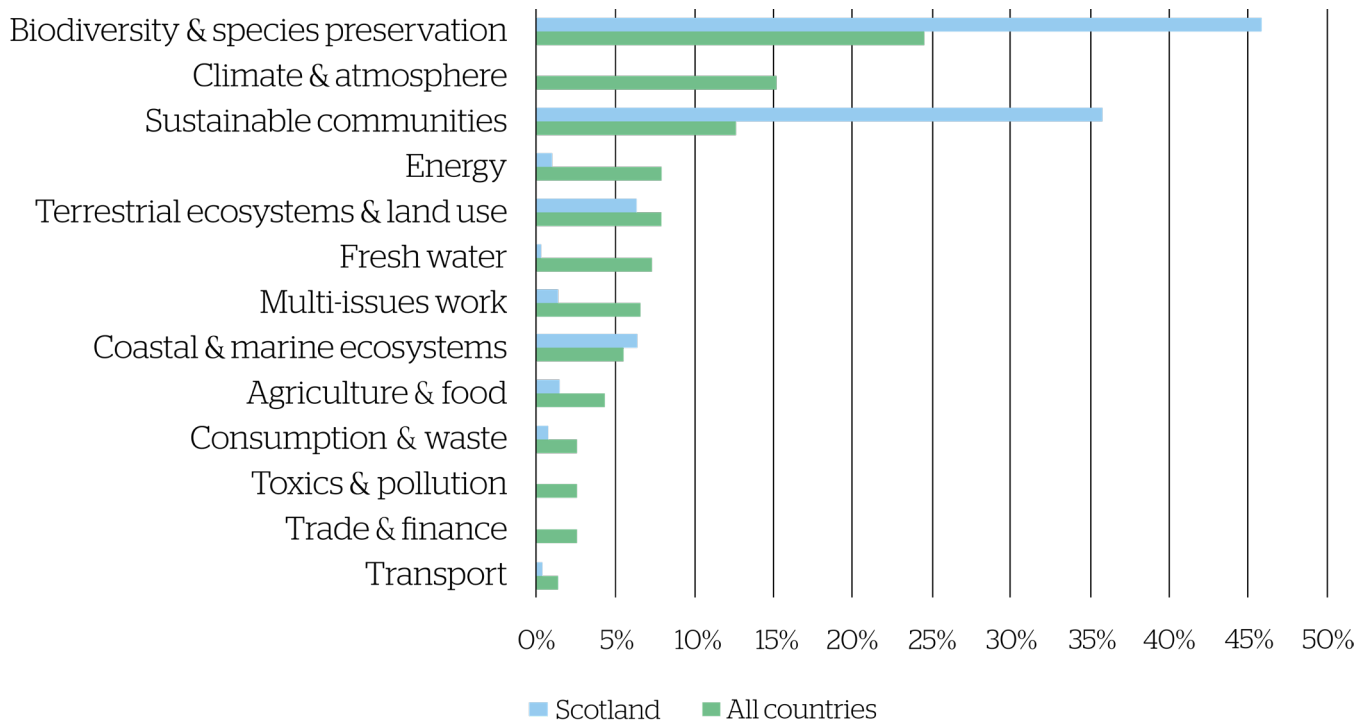
**Funding by issue in Scotland:** *Biodiversity & species preservation and sustainable communities* were the issue areas that received the largest share of environmental funding by far in Scotland (46 per cent and 36 per cent of total environmental funding from foundation and lottery sources, respectively), and received a much larger share in Scotland than globally (Chart 3).

**'Cinderella' issues in Scotland:** The same issue areas that received the lowest shares of funding globally also received the lowest shares in Scotland: *consumption & waste, toxics & pollution, trade & finance, and transport* – which we have generally termed the 'Cinderella' issues as they arguably deserve far more attention from funders than they have been receiving for many years, given that they include some of the most significant drivers of environmental degradation.



## Chart 3:

The distribution of funding from UK foundation and lottery sources for environmental work across different thematic issues, in Scotland and globally, in 2018/19.<sup>5</sup>

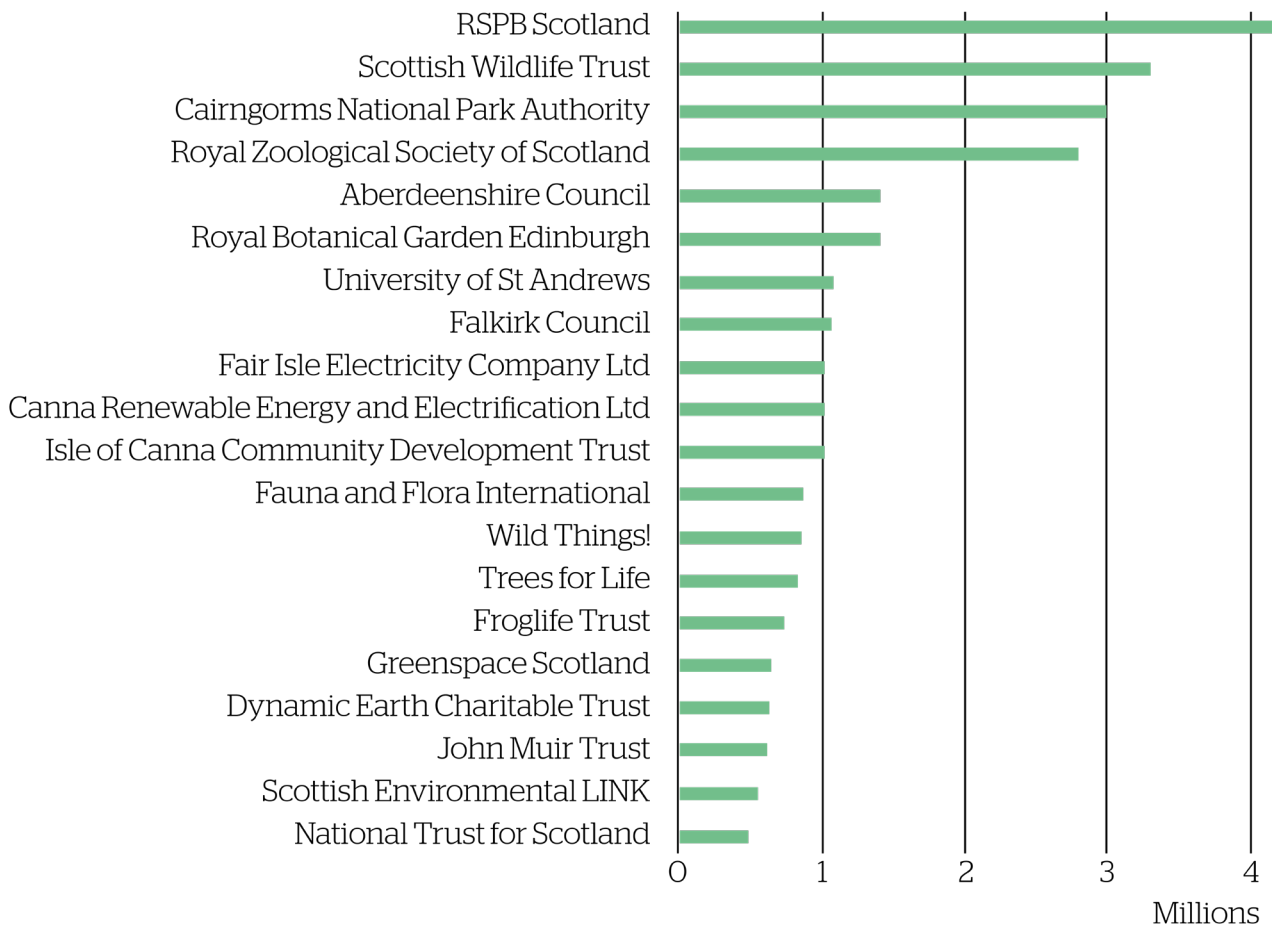


**Environmental grantees in Scotland:** In the three years from 2016/17 to 2018/19, 680 organisations and individuals received funding for environmental work in Scotland from UK foundation and lottery sources. The 20 organisations that received the highest amounts of total funding for environmental work in Scotland over this three-year period are shown in Chart 4.

<sup>5</sup> Descriptions of all the thematic issue categories in the taxonomy used for our ‘Where the Green Grants Went’ and ‘What the Green Groups Said’ research can be found in Appendix I.

## Chart 4:

The 20 organisations that received the highest amounts of funding for environmental work in Scotland from UK foundation and lottery sources over the three-year period 2016/17 to 2018/19, and the total amount they each received (£m).



**Funding levels across the Scottish environment sector:** Of the 680 organisations and individuals that received funding, 80 per cent received less than £100,000 in total over three years for environmental work in Scotland from the funders covered in our dataset, and about 50 per cent received less than £10,000. This reflects a similar picture when looking at UK foundation and lottery funding across all countries – environmental funding is spread extremely widely and thinly across the sector.

# Insights from the Scottish environment sector

## Key takeaways

- Foundations are an important income source for UK environmental civil society organisations (CSOs), and appear to be particularly important for CSOs based in Scotland.
- A sample of 14 Scottish-based environmental CSOs reported their financial health to be generally 'good' or 'moderate', though among non-Scottish CSOs a greater proportion reported their financial health to be 'good' or 'very good'.
- The following strategies for change were considered by CSOs active in Scotland to have the highest potential to increase the effectiveness of the environment sector as a whole: *movement building, political advocacy, societal debate, litigation, public campaigning, and ecosystem protection and restoration.*<sup>6</sup>
- The sample of Scottish-based environmental CSOs were generally positive about the sector's overall performance on collaboration, and more positive than non-Scottish CSOs, and most felt this had improved in recent years.
- Messages to funders from Scottish-based environmental CSOs included the importance of core funding; providing support beyond grants; encouraging new funders to give to environmental issues; and funding not just the purely practical work, with communications and policy coordination work highlighted as being particularly difficult to fundraise for.

EFN's '[What the Green Groups Said](#)' research series collects data and opinions from a wide range of UK-based environmental civil society organisations (CSOs), to provide insight relating to their priorities, strategies and financial health, and to act as a source of collective intelligence on what their leaders perceive as the sector's key challenges, opportunities and funding gaps.

14 Scottish-based CSOs took part in our most recent survey, completed in autumn 2021. Another 53 CSOs that responded to the survey reported that they are active in Scotland. These 67 CSOs active in Scotland represent 58 per cent of the overall pool of 116 CSOs that responded to the survey.<sup>7</sup>

**Income:** The 14 Scottish-based CSOs had a combined environment-related income from all sources of £29.3 million in their previous financial year. Foundation grants and donations from individuals are the most common income sources; 12 of the 14 CSOs received income from foundations, and 12 from individual donors. Foundation funding contributed up to 82 per cent of their total income (median 34 per cent). This reflects a similar picture for environmental CSOs in the UK as a whole, although for non-Scottish CSOs the median proportion of income from foundations is lower, at 25 per cent.

<sup>6</sup> Descriptions of all the strategies for change in the taxonomy used for our 'What the Green Groups Said' research can be found in Box 1.

<sup>7</sup> The 14 Scottish-based CSOs were: Atlantic Salmon Trust, COAST (Community of Arran Seabed Trust), Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland, Nourish Scotland, Planning Democracy, SCOTLAND: The Big Picture, Scottish Badgers, Scottish Environment LINK, Scottish Seabird Centre, Scottish Wildlife Trust, The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland, The Green Team, The National Trust for Scotland and Trees for Life. See '[What the Green Groups Said 2021](#)' for the full list of CSOs that responded to the survey, methodology and analysis of responses.



**Financial health:** None of the 14 Scottish-based CSOs rated their financial health as 'very good' (compared to 11 per cent of non-Scottish CSOs). Half of them rated their financial health as 'good' (compared to 57 per cent of non-Scottish respondents); the majority of the remainder rated it as 'moderate' and one rated it as 'poor' (only one other CSO in the full UK-wide dataset gave this rating).

**Expenditure:** The combined environment-related expenditure of the 14 Scottish-based CSOs amounted to £26.1 million in their previous financial year.

*Biodiversity and species conservation* is by far the environmental issue most widely covered in this sample of CSOs (11 out of 14 CSOs); a focus on *marine* and/or *terrestrial ecosystems* is also common (5 CSOs in each case).<sup>8</sup> *Political advocacy* is the most widely used strategy for change (12 out of 14 CSOs); other popular approaches include *environmental education* (9 CSOs), *research and evidence-sharing* (9 CSOs), *ecosystem protection and restoration* (7 CSOs), *species conservation* (7 CSOs) and *public campaigning* (7 CSOs) (Box 1).

### Box 1: Strategies for change

In our 'What the Green Groups Said' 2021 survey, respondents were asked about their expenditure and their views on effectiveness in relation to the following strategies for change:

- Political advocacy (e.g. engaging with governments and politicians)
- Litigation (e.g. legal action aimed at changing government policy or harmful corporate practices)
- Direct action (e.g. demonstrations, boycotts, brand attacks etc)
- Movement-building (e.g. grassroots mobilisation, constituency building, civil society co-ordination)
- Funding (e.g. awarding grants to other organisations)
- Public campaigning (e.g. to engage individuals as consumers, citizens and voters)
- Societal debate (e.g. public outreach to shift values and norms, re-think concepts like economic growth)
- Species conservation (e.g. conservation science, breeding programmes, species re-introduction)
- Ecosystem protection and restoration (e.g. through direct management or partnering with other land, sea or river managers)
- Environmental education (e.g. provision of courses, development of curriculum materials, hosting school trips)
- Service provision (e.g. farmers' markets, community renewables, maintaining access to nature including amenity green spaces)
- Research and evidence-sharing (e.g. scientific research, expert advice)
- Business influencing (e.g. providing advice, running certification or monitoring schemes, entering partnerships with companies or banks)
- Other activities

<sup>8</sup> Descriptions of all the thematic issue categories in the taxonomy used for our 'Where the Green Grants Went' and 'What the Green Groups Said' research can be found in Appendix I.

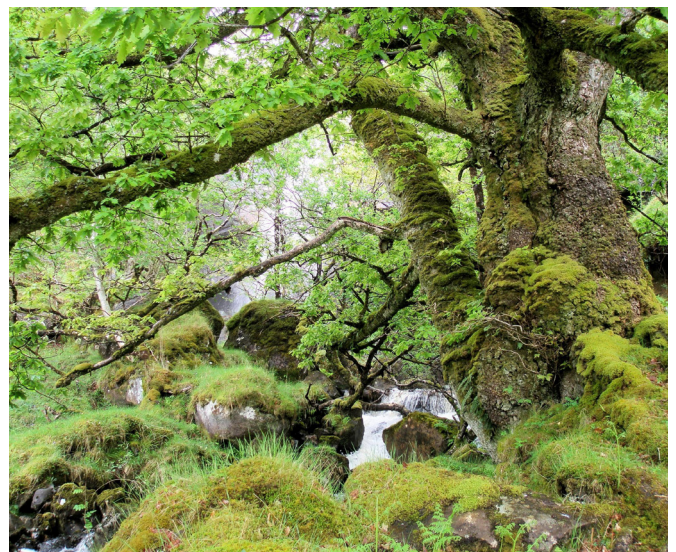
**Effectiveness:** We asked CSOs which strategies for change they considered to have the most potential to increase the effectiveness of the sector as a whole. The responses were broadly consistent between CSOs active in Scotland and those active elsewhere: *movement building, political advocacy, societal debate, litigation, public campaigning, and ecosystem protection and restoration* were the highest-rated strategies by both groups. Scottish-based CSOs rated *litigation* equally to *movement building* as the strategies with the highest potential, followed by *political advocacy* and *societal debate*.



**Most impactful organisations (as rated by their peers):** We invited all 116 respondents to name up to five non-profit UK environmental groups (not including their own) that they think accomplish the most, given the resources at their disposal – or have potential to accomplish the most in the case of new organisations. The RSPB, ClientEarth and the Wildlife Trusts were ranked as the most effective overall by their peers; 13 Scottish-based CSOs were nominated (the number of nominations is indicated in brackets):



- [Community of Arran Seabed Trust \(3\)](#)
- [Trees For Life \(3\)](#)
- [Environmental Rights Centre for Scotland \(2\)](#)
- [Fidra \(2\)](#)
- [Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group \(1\)](#)
- [Coastal Communities Network \(1\)](#)
- [National Trust for Scotland \(1\)](#)
- [Revive \(Scotland\) \(1\)](#)
- [SCOTLAND: The Big Picture \(1\)](#)
- [Scottish Badgers \(1\)](#)
- [Scottish Environment LINK \(1\)](#)
- [Seawilding \(1\)](#)
- [Stop Climate Chaos Scotland \(1\)](#)



*'Scottish Environment LINK is a significant factor in the overall success of the sector in Scotland'*

**Collaboration and partnership working:**

Scottish-based CSOs rated the sector's overall performance on collaboration more highly than non-Scottish CSOs (nearly half rated it as 'very good', compared to a quarter of non-Scottish CSOs), and the majority felt that performance on collaboration had improved in the past few years (10 out of 14; a similar proportion to non-Scottish CSOs). One respondent suggested that this may be because the pool of environmental organisations active in Scotland is relatively small, and 'co-operation is easier and more necessary (fewer people / less money / 'more' nature)'. Respondents mentioned [the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest](#), [Cairngorms Connect](#), [the Flow Country Partnership](#), [the Missing Salmon Alliance](#), [the Scottish Community Alliance](#), [Scottish Environment LINK](#), [the Scottish Food Coalition](#) and [the Scottish Rewilding Alliance](#) as examples of impactful collaborative initiatives.

*'We gain a lot from working with others, but it is incredibly time consuming for a small organisation.'*

**Messages to funders:** Respondents were asked what they find difficult to fundraise for, the ease of securing core funding, and what philanthropic funders could do differently in their support of the environment sector. Scottish CSO responses included:

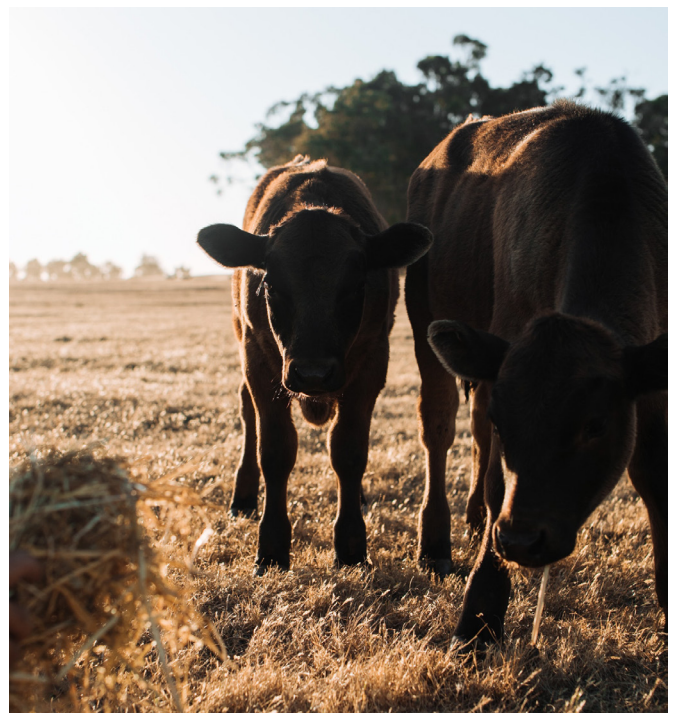
*'It is fairly difficult to fundraise for campaigning, communications and policy coordination work on just about every topic, aside from a few trusts that know this is important.'*

*'[Funders should] recognise the complexity of problems. It's not just practical action that makes the difference.'*

*'A couple of our funders have been hugely helpful in moving from project funding to core funding in the last couple of years.'*

*'[Funders should] help grow the sector. Collectively, environmental funders could be a powerful voice persuading non-environmental funders to start including environmental issues within their priorities, particularly where there is demonstrable overlap between environmental and social outcomes.'*

*'What we've seen recently is more funders walking alongside us and seeing themselves as change makers with us, rather than simply grant givers. This has been brilliant – keep it up!'*



# Case studies of philanthropically-funded environmental action



# The Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland

Since its founding in 1926, the Association for the Protection of Rural Scotland (APRS) has promoted care for all of Scotland's countryside and rural landscapes.

Concerns about litter in the countryside prompted them to launch the '[Have You Got the Bottle?](#)' campaign, backed by a coalition of 100 organisations, in 2015 to campaign for a deposit return scheme for Scotland in order to radically reduce littering, increase recycling and kickstart moves to a real circular economy for Scotland.

Being a tiny organisation, with only two permanent staff, running a major campaign came with its challenges; thankfully, funding wasn't one of them. Their eight-year campaign was funded mainly by Tomra (a Norwegian recycling company) and by unrestricted grants from the Craignish Trust and the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation.



The campaign found cross-party support and initial success very quickly, with an announcement in 2017 that the Scottish Government would implement an 'all-in' deposit return scheme. However, in the past two years, it has faced an extraordinarily well-connected and well-funded counter-campaign.

For APRS, it has come as a surprise that deposit return has become such a 'controversial' story in the media (and was even a key issue in the recent race to be First Minister), when it is one of the most effective and widely used anti-litter policies across the globe.

The partnership of a long-term funder with an organisation known for its longevity and persistence in campaigns (APRS has been campaigning on National Parks, Greenbelts and planning for over 80 years) has been critical in having the perseverance to keep the campaign on track since 2015.

As of March 2023, two billion drinks containers, more than 90 per cent of the annual total volume of eligible products, are now included in the scheme and hundreds of Scottish producers and businesses have committed to take part when it begins.

*'For far too long our seas and beaches have borne the brunt of business not taking full responsibility for the waste that their products create. Our volunteers found drinks-related litter on 93% of beaches surveyed in Scotland during our Great British Beach Clean last year. A bottle and can deposit system is a proven step towards a circular economy, helping to address the climate and nature emergencies. We know that these schemes work, having seen their success in countries across the globe. We're looking forward to Scotland leading the way across the UK in rolling out the scheme for metal, plastic and glass drinks containers.'*

**Calum Duncan, Head of Conservation Scotland, Marine Conservation Society**

## Cairngorms Connect

Biodiversity projects by their nature often require sustained investment until a clear tipping point has been reached. Equally, the factors driving nature loss and biodiversity decline are pervasive. Large-scale action, able to bring a suite of habitats and entire ecosystems back to health, is a demonstrably effective mechanism to restore biodiversity at a scale where it is more likely to survive into the future.

[Cairngorms Connect](#) has an ambitious 200-year vision to enhance habitats, species and ecological processes across a vast area within the Cairngorms National Park. It is the largest ecological restoration project in Britain, encompassing 600 sq.km. (230 sq. miles) of contiguous land – from the River Spey to the summit of Ben MacDui, Britain's 2nd highest mountain – dedicated to wildlife.

Project partners (Forestry and Land Scotland, NatureScot, RSPB Scotland and Wildland Limited) are working together to control deer numbers to allow forests to expand; to naturalise rivers; to restore huge tracts of peatland; and give common messages to visitors.



The project was one of the first in Europe to be funded through the [Endangered Landscapes Programme](#) of the Arcadia Fund, back in 2018. More recently, in 2023, the work of Cairngorms Connect was featured in the documentary 'Saving Our Wild Isles' narrated by Sir David Attenborough that tells a story of hope in a time of crisis for nature in the UK.

*'Bringing the project and science supporting it into greater visibility is really exciting. As a large-scale partnership project, there's a lot of work that enables landscape-scale restoration to happen beyond the work on the ground that goes unseen, from the administration and securing of funding that make the project possible to the science and monitoring that helps us to understand that what we're doing is working in the way we want it to.'*

*I find it so hopeful, working for a landscape-scale restoration project with a vision stretching across 200 years, far beyond the scale of time any of us might expect to see as individuals. Allowing natural processes to establish takes time, but spending time in the landscape across field seasons, you begin to notice small shifts. New seedlings finding their way through and above the heather as the forest begins to expand under low deer densities, species of moths that rely on those new species appearing too. There is a lot of cause for discouragement, looking at the state of nature within the UK, but looking out across the partnership area is looking out upon a landscape of hope. Hope that, importantly, is being met with action.'*

**Ellie Dimambro-Denson, Monitoring Officer, Cairngorms Connect**

## Edinburgh Tool Library

It's an exciting time for the circular economy in Scotland, with a growing network of repair, reuse and recycling charities and social enterprises working to prevent materials from entering landfill, create local jobs and economic opportunities, and support social and environmental justice in their communities (for example, many sharing libraries are lending thermal imaging cameras which help people be more energy efficient in their homes and, crucially, save them money).

**'Why buy when you can share?'** is the motto of the UK's first tool library, set up in Edinburgh in 2015.

From its humble beginnings using a spare bedroom and a police box, [Edinburgh Tool Library](#) now has three locations across Edinburgh and is supporting multiple groups in its community.

They've loaned tools 35,000 times (one of their drills has been borrowed by 120 different people) and estimate they've saved their members in the region of £1.5m by sharing equipment rather than buying themselves.

They've been fortunate to be supported by some great organisations and funding bodies, including Foundation Scotland, The National Lottery Community Fund and the Tudor Trust.

*'We're always being asked by funders to innovate but we're all about repair and maintenance – there's a lot to be said for maintaining and continuing to do what we do and watching the impact grow.'*

**Chris Hellawell, Founder and Director of Edinburgh Tool Library**



# Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation

[The Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation \(HIEF\)](#) is a re-granting charity that supports talented and dedicated people to turn ideas into action to fight climate change and protect and restore biodiversity to Scotland's beautiful outdoors.

Since awarding its first grants in October 2020, HIEF has supported 27 incredible community-led projects tackling key environmental issues across the Scottish highlands and islands.

Grant funding has helped to make a meaningful impact including supporting:

- [Plastics@Bay](#) to remove over 1,000 kg of plastic waste from the ocean.
- [RSPB Scotland's Community Woodland Rangers](#) to prevent 28 campfires from taking hold in endangered woodlands.
- Seawilding to grow and release over 35,000 native oysters in [Lochaline](#) and [Wester Ross](#).
- The [Coastal Communities Network](#) to take a phased approach to plotting chemical emissions from 144 fish farms to evaluate the cumulative impact on wild fish.
- [GreenTweed Eco](#) to install 1,750 bird boxes to provide new nesting habitat.

None of this would have been possible without the staunch support of individual donors and charitable trusts, contributing over £500,000 to HIEF in its first two years.

*'When faced with environmental problems, often there is a sense of pessimism as the scale can seem overwhelming. One of the things I love about HIEF is that our funding is especially directed towards local people and community groups to bring about change on their doorsteps.'*

**Hugh Raven, Chair of the Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation**



*'Nature must be at the heart of our fight to save the planet. People must harness nature's extraordinary powers to turn the tide on climate change.'*

**Sir David Attenborough**



# Seawilding

Scotland has committed to take strong and bold action to halt biodiversity loss and there is a groundswell of ambition to restore the abundance and diversity of life to Scotland's land and seas.

In Argyll, award-winning, community-led marine restoration charity [Seawilding](#) is working to restore native oysters and seagrass meadows\* to their local loch, Loch Craignish, while also helping other coastal communities do the same.

In 2023, the charity started a seagrass nursery in order to research best practice methodologies to improve germination rates and decrease cost so that seagrass restoration can become a reality around the UK coastline.

The charity won the Coast and Waters category at the RSPB Nature of Scotland Awards 2022. And, in recognition of the growing amount of science and community-based restoration taking place at Loch Craignish, an application will soon be submitted to the Scottish Government to designate the loch a 'Demonstration and Research Marine Protected Area'.



The charity's first grant was a mere £828 from Sea-Changers back in 2018! Seawilding's income has increased exponentially in the last two years, and the charity now employs seven full-time staff thanks to philanthropic grants and donations, including from Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, Highlands and Islands Environment Foundation, John Ellerman Foundation, The National Lottery Heritage Fund and William Grant Foundation.

*'Philanthropic funding has been critical for us to get our projects going. We are still hugely dependent on it. It's helped us leverage significant funds from the Scottish government and because these government funds are ring-fenced in ambition, short-term and often not for core costs, philanthropic funding has been invaluable for getting projects started and for plugging the gaps. We are immensely grateful to all our donors.'*

## **Danny Renton, CEO and Founder, Seawilding**

\* Native oysters are 'ecosystem engineers', filtering and cleaning water, sequestering carbon and contributing substantially to inshore biodiversity by creating reefs that become fish spawning grounds and nurseries. Oysters were once common, but human predation, pollution and disease have led to a 95 per cent decline across Europe.

Seagrass meadows are biodiversity hotspots and an important carbon sink (although covering just 1 per cent of the seabed globally, seagrass meadows account for 15 per cent of ocean carbon storage). It is estimated that 95 per cent of global seagrass meadows have been lost as a result of mechanical disturbance, poor water quality and disease.

## Women on Wheels

The world of everyday cycling is dominated by a white male demographic. It is much less common for women to cycle for transport and leisure, especially women of colour.

[Women on Wheels \(SCIO\)](#) is a Glasgow-based, all-inclusive cycling hub on a mission to empower and enable women to overcome their barriers to cycling – for the environment, to improve their physical and mental health, and for the pure joy of it!

The charity has attracted a wide range of funders and supporters in its first year, with an estimated 95 per cent of its circa £250,000 income coming from grants (e.g., from Cycling Scotland, People's Postcode Trust, The National Lottery Community Fund and University of Glasgow).



*'Cycling Scotland's [annual research into attitudes and behaviours towards cycling in Scotland](#) shows the gap between women and men's opportunities to ride bikes, as women are significantly less likely to travel by bike than men. 80% of women cited not feeling safe on the roads as an important barrier to cycling versus 56% of men. A key action needed is more dedicated inclusive cycle paths for women to feel safe cycling as every journey cycled makes a difference.'*

*Women on Wheels has delivered multiple weekly cycle lessons and led rides, encouraging and enabling women and families to cycle through their volunteer-led programmes. The work achieved to date demonstrates the demand and need for inclusive approaches to helping more people to cycle.*

*Supporting the work of Women on Wheels along with a number of other community groups across Scotland is essential to make Scotland cycling friendly. Choosing to cycle instead of taking the car, when and where possible, helps to tackle climate change.'*

**Kath Brough, Head of Behaviour Change at Cycling Scotland**

# Appendix I: Thematic issue categories

EFN uses the following taxonomy of thematic issues for its 'Where the Green Grants Went' and 'What the Green Groups Said' research, developed in coordination with other environmental grantmaking networks around the world.

**Agriculture & food** – a very broad category. It includes: support for organic and other forms of sustainable farming; training and research to help farmers in developing countries; campaigns relating to the control of the food chain; initiatives opposed to factory farming; horticultural organisations and projects; education on agriculture for children and adults (e.g. city farms); opposition to the use of genetically modified crops and food irradiation; work on food safety and on the genetic diversity of agriculture (including seed banks); and soil conservation.

**Biodiversity & species preservation** – again a broad category, focused on work that protects particular species, be they plant or animal, vertebrate or invertebrate. Included within this is support for botanic gardens and arboretums; academic research on botany and zoology; the protection of birds and their habitats; funding for marine wildlife such as whales, dolphins and sharks; projects that aim to protect endangered species such as rhinos and elephants; and defence of globally important biodiversity hotspots, including the use of refuges, reserves and other habitat conservation projects; and wildlife trusts.

**Climate & atmosphere** – the bulk of the money in this category is targeted towards work on climate change, with a much smaller sum directed towards the issue of ozone depletion. Also included: work on acid rain, air pollution and local air quality.

**Coastal & marine ecosystems** – this category includes support for work on fisheries; aquaculture; coastal lands and estuaries; marine protected areas; and marine pollution (such as marine dumping).

**Consumption & waste** – this category covers work directed at reducing consumption levels; initiatives that look to redefine economic growth; projects on waste reduction, sustainable design and sustainable production; recycling and composting schemes; and all aspects of waste disposal, including incinerators and landfills.

**Energy** – this category covers alternative and renewable energy sources; energy efficiency and conservation; work around fossil fuels; hydroelectric schemes; the oil and gas industries; and nuclear power.

**Fresh water** – this category covers all work relating to lakes and rivers; canals and other inlandwater systems; issues of groundwater contamination and water conservation; and projects relating to wetlands.

**Multi-issue work** – there remain grants that are hard to allocate to specific categories, generally because they take the form of core funding to an organisation that works on a range of different issues, or because the grant supports environmental media titles (e.g. Resurgence & Ecologist) or environmental education projects covering a wide range of issues. Some grants provided to generalist re-granting organisations are included in this category as it is not possible to identify which issues will be supported when the funds are re-granted.

**Sustainable communities** – this category covers urban green spaces and parks; community gardens; built environment projects; and community-based sustainability work.

**Terrestrial ecosystems & land use** – as with 'agriculture' and 'biodiversity', this is a broad category encompassing land purchases and stewardship; national or regional parks; landscape restoration and landscape scale conservation efforts; work on land use planning; tree planting, forestry, and work directed to stopping deforestation; and the impacts of mining.

**Toxics & pollution** – this category covers all the main categories of toxics impacting on the environment and human health: hazardous waste; heavy metals; pesticides; herbicides; radioactive wastes; Persistent Organic Pollutants; household chemicals; other industrial pollutants; and noise pollution.

**Trade & finance** – the trade and finance category encompasses work on corporate-led globalisation and international trade policy; efforts to reform public financial institutions (such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and Export Credit Agencies); similar work directed at the lending policies of private sector banks; initiatives around the reduction of developing country debt; and local economic development projects and economic re-localisation.

**Transport** – this category includes all aspects of transportation, including public transport systems; transport planning; policy on aviation; freight; roadbuilding; shipping; alternatives to car use plus initiatives like car pools and car clubs; the promotion of cycling and walking; and work on vehicle fuel economy.



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