



Garfield Weston FOUNDATION

Public and funders still don't understand urgent need to act on climate crisis – new report

Charities say they are struggling to persuade the public of need to act rapidly on environmental issues

Environmental organisations are struggling to communicate the sheer scale and complexity of the climate crisis to the public and funders. That's according to a new report by the Garfield Weston Foundation which found that almost half of organisations highlighted lack of public understanding as their biggest challenge when it comes to the environment.

The Foundation commissioned I.G. Advisors to survey 68 environmental organisations across the UK, including the Woodland Trust, the RSPB, Buglife and Hubbub. The report, *'Prioritising our Planet'*, reveals that three-quarters of environmental charities are finding financial sustainability a challenge, while almost 80% admit they are unable to raise the money they need to achieve the impact they want. Over a quarter of organisations fear Brexit and Covid-19 are weakening charitable efforts when it comes to policy work.

RSPB CEO, Beccy Speight, says:

"We know that if we are too hard-hitting and the news is too bleak, then people switch off. What we haven't done enough of yet is highlighting the positive solutions as well as the dangers. We need to get that balance right."

"The next eighteen months are pivotal. Covid-19 has given us an opportunity to raise awareness of climate change and nature. We need to highlight the value that tackling the carbon crisis and restoring habitats can bring, such as jobs and new opportunities in a more resilient and healthy economy."

Garfield Weston decided to commission the report after receiving very few applications from charities working on environmental issues despite encouraging the sector to apply for funding. The report comes at a critical time for the environment, with many influential figures speaking out. The Foundation recently supported Sir David Attenborough's latest film in partnership with the WWF, and welcomes the newly announced Earthshot prize which encourages action to find solutions to some of the greatest environmental problems.

The Garfield Weston Foundation's Director, Philippa Charles, says:

"While we are all experiencing a Covid-19 crisis, we also still face an environmental crisis. This report highlights the need for powerful conversations between environmental organisations, grant makers and the public, to ensure that excellent organisations are able to do what they do best. We need to break this vicious circle so that organisations have clear

messages, the public understands the urgency to act and funders are motivated to provide support.

While the pandemic is causing significant uncertainty across all areas of our society our Trustees are very clear that, as well as helping charities with revenue funding, supporting organisations tackling all aspects of climate change remains a key priority.”

The research also found that only 30% of those surveyed believe trusts and foundations understand their environmental work and one in four organisations struggle to identify sources of funding.

In response to the findings, the Foundation is partnering with the Media Trust to develop a programme specifically for environment charities to help them build capability in the area of communications, messaging and profile-raising. The programme will run in 2021. The Garfield Weston Foundation is also encouraging charities working on all issues relating to the environment to apply to them for funding.

During the pandemic, the Foundation Trustees aim to give away more than ever before and have already donated over £40 million since April to support charities affected by Covid-19.

– ENDS –

Notes to Editor:

Information on funding and how to apply can be found at: <https://garfieldweston.org/apply-to-us/>

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Research Background

This report is based on the findings from a survey directed at non-profit environmental organisations in the UK. The survey was sent to a sample of 150 non-profit organisations, and included organisations of all sizes, UK geographies and thematic issue areas. A small pilot of the survey took place first, before officially launching between 20th April – 8th May 2020. During this period, 68 different organisations across the UK responded, 86% of which were UK registered charities. Surveys were completed primarily by executive leadership (59%) and senior fundraising staff (38%).

- Almost half of organisations (48.5%) believe the biggest challenge the UK charity sector faces is a lack of public understanding about the urgency to act on environmental issues.
- Almost 80% of organisations are unable to achieve their strategic impact goals because they cannot raise funds as quickly as they need to.

- 75% of organisations find financial sustainability a big challenge and almost 60% of organisations struggle with staff capacity.
- Almost one in four organisations (24%) struggle to identify sources of funding.
- Over a quarter of organisations fear Brexit and Covid-19 are weakening charitable efforts when it comes to policy work.
- Over half of organisations (55%) reported that one of the biggest challenges their organisation faces is the ability to persuade the public of the need to act rapidly.
- Nearly 60% of organisations would need an additional 50% of income to reach their strategic goals.
- Whilst half of surveyed organisations' income primarily comes from trusts and foundations, only 30% of them believe trusts and foundations understand their environmental work.
- Three-quarters of organisations stated they feel confident in the skillset necessary to raise funds, yet almost half of organisations (46%) consider income generation one of the biggest challenges.

Garfield Weston Foundation

Established over 60 years ago in 1958, the [Garfield Weston Foundation](#) is a family-founded, grant-making charity which supports causes across the UK and gave over £88million last year. It has donated well over £1billion to charities since it was established.

One of the most respected charitable institutions in the UK, the Weston Family Trustees are descendants of the founder and they take a highly active and hands-on approach. The Foundation's funding comes from an endowment of shares in the family business which includes Twinings, Primark, Kingsmill (all part of Associated British Foods Plc) and Fortnum & Mason, amongst others – a successful model that still endures today; as the businesses have grown, so too have the charitable donations.

From small community organisations to large national institutions, the Foundation supports a broad range of charities and activities that make a positive impact in the communities in which they work. Around 2,000 charities across the UK benefit each year from the Foundation's grants.