

**The Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee**

**Green recovery**

**Community meeting hosted by Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire**

**16 July 2020, 1pm on Zoom**

**Scottish Parliament staff**

Kate Smith, Community Outreach Team  
Ewan Masson, Community Outreach Team

**Voluntary Action North Lanarkshire staff**

Gina Alexander, Community Solutions Programme Manager

**Organisations attending – 10 people in total**

Northern Corridor Volunteers  
Voice of Experience Forum  
Cumberland Resilience Group  
Chryston Community Council  
Green health Volunteering Getting better Together  
Alzheimer Scotland  
Friends of Cambusnethan Priory

VANL, on behalf of ECCLR committee, invited voluntary organisations in their area who had played a very active role in the Covid-19 emergency response. Delivering essential services to vulnerable and fragile communities. Some also have a green remit.

Voting question

**1. Do you agree or disagree that steps taken by the government to help the economy recover should be designed to help achieve Net Zero?**

Agree? 9  
Disagree? 0  
Not sure? 0

**2. What do you think 'green recovery' should mean?**

Hopefully a continuation of the recent uptake of active travel. A lot of people felt more able to cycle and walk when it felt safer to do so because of the lack of traffic. Now that lockdown is easing, and more HGV's and cars are back on the road then people are less inclined to do so. We need to invest in a better infrastructure in order to help people feel safer to cycle and walk.

We're encouraging people to cycle when the infrastructure isn't there. Council's are investing in temporary infrastructure but only in town centres. Small villages are ignored. It is too dangerous to cycle in our villages.

### **3. How do the principles of sustainable development relate to your work, the people that you support?**

People who need carers will rely on whatever their carers or family's standards are. "ensure fairness is embedded for all" is a difficult principle for certain sections of society who rely on others so heavily.

Working with older people we were able to involve them with the support of their families during lockdown into more green activities. Gardening, being outdoors. But that was entirely dependent upon the support of their families who had more time during lockdown. Now that lockdown is easing and families going back to work these activities are stopping. We don't have the resources or the infrastructure to support that. We are trying to get people involved but we find that the older people that we are support are not interested in the environment or climate change so it is dependent upon their families to support or encourage activities.

The voluntary sector is often dealing with people in crisis situations, so their priority is around their own safety and wellbeing.

We need to look at funding or incentives to support electric buses or community transport. We need support in the long term to sustain this work and support smaller projects to become social enterprises etc.

We need to ensure that funding streams are going to the areas that most need it. Funding has been there to support crisis management during the Pandemic, but the worry is about the longterm support to maintain the good work that has started. Jobs will go as well if these projects are not funded long term. Third Sector resilience funding in our area has gone to more affluent areas and projects and not those who are most in need.

Green projects and initiatives need to be on people's doorsteps otherwise you are creating another barrier to participation. We have seen an inequality in access to greenspaces.

We need to encourage shopping locally and raise awareness of ethical community groups. Set up a system where the start point of an online shopping session is ethics where you filter through your ethical priorities in order to be directed to the ethical products and local producers.

Support ethical producers and retailers to rapidly digitise their operations.

The gap between deprived communities and affluent communities has become wider during this crisis and I think Government needs to keep this in mind as they move towards any kind of recovery. Public transport services being withdrawn in areas where there is low car ownership will have a negative impact not only on the environment but on employment, education and health services.

Digital exclusion is an issue and is creating a bigger divide. Concern about this continuing.

**4. Have you seen positive environmental changes as a result of how communities have responded to the crisis?**

More people cycling and walking while the roads were quieter.

The traffic volume in some villages reduced during the peak of lockdown but since the lockdown easing it has become really busy again.

Lots more people out walking and being active with family members but that will reduce as people return to work.

We've seen things like the Cumbernauld "clean up group" emerge locally as lockdown eases as littering is becoming an issue. This is something that could be sustainable. It now has a Facebook group of 800 people.

We (Cumbernauld Resilience Group) have delivered over 58,000 meals from our foodbank over the last week, prescriptions etc. We have managed to deliver food that is local, fresh and healthy and have a healthy eating, sustainable food initiative which we hope to keep going.

There have been a number of community groups set up specifically because of Covid-19 but are now thinking about how they can continue to contribute to their community through things like litter picks, meal preps etc.

Since Lockdown we are supporting 125 every 70's every week, but we have no funding beyond August.

Voting question

**5. Do you think that government, employers and or others should take steps to encourage lifestyle to change to be more compatible with reaching net zero?**

Agree? 8

Disagree? 0

Not sure? 0

**6. What are the key barriers to delivering a green recovery in the voluntary sector?**

A lot of great work is going on within the voluntary sector, but will it be sustainable in an economic downturn?

Digital exclusion could be a barrier if we are looking to move a lot of things digitally including work, shopping, communications etc. People will need gentle support to be able to use these digital services for their own benefit and not because a health service or the DWP is forcing them to.

A lot of the services available will be digital. The will is there among people who would be deemed digitally excluded if you can explain the personal benefits to them. Access to things like church services and health support groups are often priorities for people.

Infrastructure is a barrier

Clarity of messaging is an issue. Mixed messages like being told green spaces are important for recovery and then you hear about peatland being cleared for housing developments. Local areas really need to have a clear strategy on this. Plans at a local level after consultation is the best approach. Local people involved in the decision making and setting the agenda priorities and plans for their area. Not a top down approach.

Short term contracts and funding are a huge problem. Some projects have been able to access good funding during the crisis but what will happen once this is over. We are concerned about the lockdown. What will happen to all these great community led projects who are supporting people? The immediate priority needs to be to urgently identify and fund existing resources, one's that fit with the green agenda, which have been set up and run by the community and are truly community led. And identify address the increase inequality caused by lockdown.

Chryston Community Council has seen 60 people from the beginning involved in supporting the community and family support and involvement. But this is hard to sustain as people move back to their jobs.

We have seen a huge increase in volunteering, I have supported 3 new groups to become constituted. However. Volunteering is not sustainable in the longterm.

**7. What does your sector need to help protect the environment and to support the communities you work with?**

Greater partnership working could help overcome the barrier of the lack of resources or sustainable funding

**8. What key policies, actions and immediate priorities are needed to deliver a green recovery in the voluntary sector community?**

Policy should insist that carbon cost is considered in any planning decision

Inequality needs to be considered. It has been increased by the crisis. We have 3 villages which are high on the SIMD index villages. They already had extremely limited public transport. We need to target these areas.

**Additional comments following the event:**

- Training and job creation for young people in environmental / conservation type roles - think investment in this could be beneficial on many fronts.