

EDINBURGH CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK - WRAP NOTES

Scottish Communities Climate Action Network

On 31.05.2023

at 23/09/22

Overview

There are hundred of groups across Edinburgh, often representing a micro neighbourhood, street, or even just one tiny patch of green in a back yard.

Locations:

There are definite clusters of groups within the city. These tend to be serving areas high on the deprivation index:

- West (Gorgie/Saughton/Broomhouse/Sighthill/Wester Hailes)
- East (Craigmillar/Niddrie)
- North (Leith/Granton/Muirhouse/West Pilton; and also Restalrig)

It's positive that there are so many groups doing outstanding work in these communities. However, they are all increasingly pressurised due to current cost of living crisis etc.

There is less activity in the South of the city, or at least no clearly defined clusters (possibly due to less urgent needs there?).

Types of projects:

It seems that many groups gravitate around Growing projects.

Other key areas are Conversation and Housing.

Then there are fewer groups working on Energy, Sharing Economy, Transport, Waste as well as other climate issues.

Activities:

Many groups are currently working on pressing food and fuel concerns.

Feeding communities has come to the fore - there are now many new community fridges, pantries, and communal meals popping up all over the city. More affluent areas have community gardens and sell produce to the local community.

Some groups in the cluster areas are now offering programmes to help residents navigate their fuel bills this winter. There's also a push by several groups to look at retrofitting as an urgent priority for the city.

There seem to be lot of groups focused on general Awareness Raising and Community Support, but not running defined programmes as such.

Impact of the end of CCF Funding

In my opinion, the abrupt ending of the CCF funding has had an undeniable negative impact on climate activity in Edinburgh and affects some potentials for the CAN/Hub going forward.

The CCF funded notable work by several organisations in the city. This was work lauded in Scotland and beyond. For example, a few highlights from my conversations:

- 1) **The Shrub:** Have had to cut staff due to end of CCF funding, at a time when food insecurity is skyrocketing. As a result, they are very short handed at the moment and have not been able to meet with me.
- 2) **The Welcoming:** Had been running many excellent programmes to raise environmental awareness and action, recognised internationally through the Ashden Award for Green Communities announced at COP26 in a ceremony attended by the President of Costa Rica Carlos Alvarado. Since then, they have had to close most of their green programmes due to ending of CCF funding and do not know if or when these programmes will resume.
- 3) **Edinburgh College Students Association:** Their “Go Green” sustainability project provided workshops, classes, community fridges, swap shops etc. This programme was nominated for multiple awards including winning the 2022 Green Gown Awards in the UK & Ireland; and the first-ever Net Zero Award from the Edinburgh Chamber of Commerce. Due to the end of CCF funding, the ECSA has had to close the Go Green programme and lay off its two staff members (who have since both moved to positions with other organisations, and one of them out of the sector entirely).

These were some of the leading lights for climate programmes in our city and could have been vital within the Edinburgh CAN and Hub. However, at the present time what remains are organisations (these and others) that have cut programmes and are very stretched for staff time. They have said they have limited capacity to get involved with the CAN/Hub. This leaves a definite gap.

General Impressions

Overall impressions are that the majority of people/groups I met with have limited capacity or interest to get involved in the CAN/Hub formation process. Many seem over-stretched at the present time. These tend to be the more diverse people and groups in the city, and/or those offering the most impactful programmes. They are supportive of the idea of a Hub but have limited time or desire to be on a committee or part of this planning work. Definitely, they would like to make use of the CAN/Hub once it is up and running to access networking, events/training, funding and other resources etc. There is the desire to come together and network in an inclusive and supportive space.

There *are* groups who are able to commit time and energy towards the CAN yet these tend to be much more limited in terms of demographics and experience and operating in a bit of a bubble. Many of these groups are offering general awareness raising and community support rather than clear programmes. Perhaps this is the reality of who can offer to get involved at the present time, those with the time and means to do so. But also should perhaps not be those exclusively leading the charge and speaking for everyone in the city. It has been mentioned by some minority groups feel that the funding/spotlight always goes to the 'usual suspects' in Edinburgh and they feel excluded, or not often invited to participate.

Next Steps

Moving ahead, I'm not sure how to resolve this diversity issue and create incentives for more groups to get involved in leading the way to the Hub. Possibly, just to make sure that everyone is invited to sit at the table, even if they don't have the time to do so.

Practical things:

There are definitely some more groups to meet with that have been hard to pin down (e.g. WHALE Arts/Score, NSK, The Shrub).

Then the next stage will be hosting visioning workshops (or “charettes” as we’d say in the US) or or world cafe type events. Online surveys can also be sent out. The questions for these events & surveys still need to be clearly defined.

Events should be hosted in locations across the city as one way to reach out to groups (e.g. Granton Parish Church; Broomhouse Hub; WHALE Arts, Ripple project; Lauriston Farm; Liberton Kirk etc). Events should be accessible and welcoming, and provide food & beverages.

Also, meeting people where they already are and the groups and networks they are already involved in - so finding those groups across the city that could host a workshop as part of their ongoing programming, or inviting ECAN to speak and participate at their regular meetings. There is a digital divide and not everyone is online (some groups I’ve been trying to reach barely check email) so ways to connect in-person are vital.

If the budget allows: offering people a small stipend/reimbursement to be able to attend a workshop event in-person to cover their costs of their bus tickets, parking, or childcare etc. Whatever it is that would help them be able to be there and attend. (Requests should be made in advance of the meeting). At least definitely offering them food & beverages at the meeting.

Details of orgs/people are in the ECAN Airtable database. I’m happy to run through this and my notes with the new Coordinator and make suggestions for the way ahead with the people I spoke with and have yet to reach out to.