THE ESG IMPERATIVE



THE FUTURE WON'T WAIT, NEITHER SHOULD YOU.

10.02.27 | THE MINSTER BUILDING, LONDON

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CIVILSOCIETY media

THE ESG IMPERATIVE

THE FUTURE WON'T WAIT, NEITHER SHOULD YOU.

Stronger, fairer, greener – building charities that stand firm in a time of division and change



Tristan Blythe
editor,
Charity Finance



Jenni O'Donovan
Events director,
Civil Society Media

Welcome to the ESG Imperative Conference

Building on research and feedback from previous years, we've created a varied, practical and thought-provoking agenda designed to inspire fresh thinking and meaningful action across the ESG landscape.

This year's programme explores some of the most pressing challenges and opportunities facing our sector. From the leadership our planet needs in the face of an escalating climate crisis, to rethinking how we use our collective purchasing power through ethical procurement and responsible investment. We'll hear from the Refugee Council about building unity and trust in an increasingly polarised world, explore the ethical risks around AI, and consider the opportunities and challenges of an intergenerational workforce.

We hope there's something here to engage, challenge and inspire you, wherever you are on your own ESG journey, and that you leave with fresh perspectives, practical ideas and renewed motivation to make a difference.

THE ESG IMPERATIVE PROJECT

This event is part of Civil Society Media's ESG Imperative Project. The project comprises of resources, events, training and guidance designed to support charities on their ESG journeys, as well as a commitment from Civil Society Media to progress on our own journey.

Find out more at: civilsociety.co.uk/ESGProject

What do past attendees say?

"The discussions were inspiring, the conversations rich, and it's clear that with the ESG conference you're building something together with other leaders and professionals that will lead to a better, fairer, and more just world."
– Dean Gillespie, International Justice Mission

"I had a fantastic day at the ESG Imperative conference. Some really inspiring talks, so much to learn, good food and great company! It was a great opportunity to meet up with people I know and make some brilliant new acquaintances."
– Hazel McCambridge, British Trust for Ornithology

"I came out of the event full of ideas on how we move our organisation towards an ESG agenda. The task is huge but the overall message I took away was take the first step."
– Tracy Elliott, Versus Arthritis

ESG Imperative is a net positive event

As event organisers, we at Civil Society Media are on our own journey to a sustainable future. We have calculated the carbon footprint of this event and implemented several measures to reduce it, including:

- **Offering a fully vegetarian menu throughout the day.**
- **Selecting a venue with strong green credentials, including achieving landfill neutral certification, offsetting 100% of its carbon footprint through tree planting and using 100% green energy tariffs.**
- **Going paperless—our event app will provide the programme, presentations, and delegate list, replacing traditional printed materials.**
- **Using fully recyclable badges—please hand in your badge and lanyard at the end of the day so they can be recycled and reused.**

We are continually working to monitor and reduce our environmental impact. We have offset the remaining emissions of this event by investing in a carbon offset scheme. We have partnered with an ICROA-accredited organisation, ensuring that only certified carbon offsets from internationally recognised registries are used to meet the highest standards of environmental integrity. Civil Society Media staff chose to support the Safe Water Scheme in Rwanda for this event, which maintains water wells and essential infrastructure to provide clean water, reducing the need for inefficient fires to purify water.

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08:45	Registration, refreshments, networking and time to visit exhibition	
09:20	Welcome from **Tristan Blythe**, editor, *Charity Finance*	
09:25	**Opening keynote – The leadership our planet needs now** As the climate and nature crisis accelerates at a terrifying scale and pace, and extreme weather events across Europe make its impacts an ever more tangible reality, the need for courageous leadership has never been greater. In this opening keynote, Craig Bennett will explore how leaders can respond with integrity, resilience and relentless optimism in the face of unprecedented challenges. Drawing on his vision for a more interconnected approach to conservation, society and the economy, Craig will challenge us to think beyond traditional boundaries and embrace the collaborative, systems-wide leadership needed to protect both people and planet. This is a call to lead with purpose, recognising that the solutions to our greatest environmental challenges lie in working together across sectors to create lasting change. **Craig Bennett OBE**, chief executive, the Wildlife Trusts	
09:55	Transit time	
	Stream A – Responsible investment | Chair: **Diane Sim**, freelance journalist, *Charity Finance*	**Stream B – People and Planet |** Chair: **Rob Preston**, news editor, Civil Society Media
10:00	**1A. Impact Investors' Toolkit: How can charities continue their mission through their investments?** How can charities and foundations use their investments to support their mission, while still meeting their financial objectives? This practical workshop will provide an accessible guide to the growing impact-investing market. We will explore opportunities across climate, nature, health and inclusion, and consider what meaningful impact looks like in practice and how it can be measured. Drawing on real-world examples, the session will address common barriers, explain the different approaches available and highlight potential pitfalls to avoid. Whether you are at the beginning of your journey or looking to develop an existing strategy, this workshop will offer practical tools and insights to help you put more of your capital to work in support of your mission. **Emilie Shaw**, sustainable solutions lead, Cazenove Capital	**1B. The power of ethical procurement** Charities have significant influence through how they spend their money, but how can organisations ensure their purchasing decisions reflect their values and mission? This session will explore what ethical procurement looks like in practice, from human rights and modern slavery to environmental impact, fair work and supplier standards. It will consider how charities can use their purchasing power responsibly, manage ethical risks in their supply chains, and move beyond compliance to make procurement a meaningful part of their wider ESG strategy. **Klara Skrivankova**, director of grants, Trust for London
10:40	Morning coffee and networking	
11:10	**2A. Stewardship: The power of not so passive investing** As demand for passive strategies continue to grow, who is stewarding the companies we own? This session explores how passive investing can leave gaps in shareholder engagement, weakening accountability and long-term value creation. Discover how active stewardship and responsible voting can influence corporate behaviour, and cover key market developments including pass-through voting and regulatory changes. This practical workshop will equip you to engage wealth and fund managers on voting practices, exercise your shareholder voice, and embed stewardship in your Investment Policy Statement. Leave ready to act. Your engagement as a shareholder, however modest, is not passive. It's powerful. **Kelly Eva**, stewardship manager and **Lynne Lamont**, senior director, head of charities, UK, RBC Brewin Dolphin	**2B. From ambition to action: ESG in all shapes and sizes** What does ESG really look like in practice for charities? From smaller organisations with limited resources to larger charities with more established strategies, this panel will explore how organisations are interpreting and embedding ESG in ways that work for their own context. Drawing on real-world examples, we'll look at what good practice looks like across the sector, the challenges charities are encountering, and the practical steps they can take to make ESG meaningful and achievable. Chair – **Richard Litchfield**, chief executive, Eastside People Panellists – **Vivian Allen**, founder and chief executive, DorPIP, **Ciaran Moran**, governance and compliance lead, Avenues Group and **Caroline Lee-Davy**, chief executive, Bliss
11:50	Transit time	
11:55	**3A. Cutting the rope in the sustainability versus profitability tug of war** Headlines often frame the energy transition and maximising profitability as competing goals. However, we believe that, in the majority of cases, optimising energy transition strategies can also help to maximise long-term returns for companies. We believe our new engagement-led investing approach complements traditional ESG strategies and aims to drive real-world change alongside unlocking significant return potential for investors. This session will cover the latest innovations in this space and how they might fit within charities' wider responsible investing strategies **Nick Stansbury**, head of climate solutions, L&G	**3B. How do we build bridges in a polarised world?** As political and social divisions deepen, charities are facing growing pressure over how they speak up, advocate and build public trust. This session explores how charity leaders can navigate an increasingly polarised environment while staying true to their mission. Drawing on the Refugee Council's experience, this session explores how charities can build unity, protect the safety and wellbeing of staff, volunteers and communities, and maintain their ability to advocate in a polarised environment. It will share practical lessons for strengthening cohesion, communicating across divides and building support for mission. **Katie Ghose**, chief executive designate, Refugee Council
12:35	Lunch and time to visit exhibition	
13:35	**4A. Energy Reset: The investment story of our generation** Geopolitics, technology and the race for energy security are reshaping how the world is powered - now more than ever. This session explores the investment opportunities emerging from that transformation, and the role investors can play in encouraging credible progress and shaping what comes next. **Carlota Esguevillas**, head of sustainable investment, and **Charlie Thomas**, chief investment officer, EdenTree	**4B. Purpose First, Planet Always?** How can charities whose charitable purpose isn't environmental protection take meaningful climate action without compromising their mission? Drawing on her research into the social charity sector and experience at Anthony Nolan, Izzy Tulloch will explore the drivers and challenges of embedding environmental sustainability in a medical charity. From carbon measurement and employee engagement to climate risk and aviation, she will examine how charities can balance environmental ambitions with patient needs and service delivery, and share lessons for the wider sector. **Izzy Tulloch**, environmental sustainability lead, Anthony Nolan
14:15	Transit time	
14:20	**5A. Can stewardship activities advance your charity's values?** Join this session for an exploration of how engagement and voting activity aims to drive positive change on social and environmental issues that matter. We will showcase highlights from Evelyn Partners' 2026 stewardship programme, illustrating how active ownership can span a diverse range of topics. Case studies will include engagement on assessing pollution risks in the Strait of Hormuz, reducing biodiversity impact on aquatic ecosystems, and improving corporate disclosures relating to AI red-teaming and governance. Discover how investment managers can work beyond financial returns to aim to achieve broader outcomes that align with your values. **Katrina Brown**, head of responsible investment, Evelyn Partners	**5B. Making reporting meaningful – lessons from the sector** How can charities move beyond compliance-driven reporting to tell a more meaningful and compelling story about their organisation, its people and its impact? Finance directors from across the sector share their experiences, exploring different approaches to measuring and reporting environmental and social impact, the challenges they face and practical lessons to help others assess and develop their own reporting. **Foong-Yee Cross**, director of finance, Royal Mencap Society and **Chris Fyfe**, associate director, finance, Stroke Association
15:00	Afternoon coffee	
15:25	**6A. The minerals dilemma: Can mining ever be responsible?** The transition to a lower-carbon, more technology-driven world is increasing demand for the minerals that make it possible. But extracting them can carry significant environmental, social and human rights implications. So, can mining ever truly be responsible? This session will explore the tensions facing responsible investors, from the growing demand for critical minerals to the impact of mining on communities and the environment. We'll consider the different approaches charities can take, from excluding mining altogether and investing in best-in-class companies, to remaining invested and using engagement to push for change. And, crucially, we'll ask whether engagement really works, what it can achieve in practice, and how charities can assess whether their approach aligns with their values. **Matt Crossman**, stewardship director, Rathbones	**6B. Panel: AI, Technology and Digital Sovereignty** AI and digital technologies offer clear opportunities to reduce costs, improve efficiency and increase impact – but what are we giving up in return? This discussion will explore the wider social, environmental and strategic consequences of our technology choices, from automation and the future talent pipeline to growing dependence on predominantly US-based tech providers. Are we making choices that are intentional, considered and defensible – and having the difficult conversations about what we might gain, and what we might lose? Chair – **Tree Hall**, chief executive, Charity IT Leaders Panellists – **Priscilla Chanda Chomba**, chief technology officer, Greenpeace International, **Avril Chester**, author, Leading with Humanity in an AI World and **Stuart McSkimming**, chief executive and founder, Virtue Chain
16:05	Transit time	
16:10	**Closing keynote – From Boomers to Gen Z: Maximising the potential of a multigenerational workforce** Today's charity leaders are managing the most age-diverse workforce in history. With careers spanning longer than ever and Generation Z becoming an increasingly influential part of the workforce, organisations must rethink how they lead, communicate and develop talent. This thought-provoking session examines what each generation brings to the workplace, dispels common myths about generational differences, and shows how inclusive leadership can turn diversity of age into a competitive advantage. Discover how to create a culture that attracts Gen Z while valuing the experience of longer-serving colleagues – building a resilient, engaged workforce ready for the future. **Alex Atherton**, speaker, leadership coach and author of *The Snowflake Myth*	
16:45	**Chair's closing remarks – Tristan Blythe**, editor, *Charity Finance*	
16:50	**Networking drinks reception**	

REGISTRATION

PRICES

	Early bird (before 15 January)	Final relese tickets (after 15 January)
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Charity team ticket (up to four places) Limited quantity available	£249	£460

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