

Strategic Plan

2020–2025



Contents

1	Introduction	3	3	Our Natural World	6	4	A Fairer Future	11	5	Creative, Confident Communities	16	6	Tools	19
1.1	Why change?	3	3.1	Peat	8	4.1	Acting early on the root causes of problems	12	5.1	Communities working together for change	17	7	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	21
1.2	What will change?	4	3.2	Space for nature	8	4.2	Children and young people's rights	12	5.2	Community ownership and regeneration	17	8	Climate Change	22
2	Overall Framework	5	3.3	Freshwater	9	4.3	Young people leaving care	13	5.3	Creativity transforming lives	18			
			3.4	Nature-friendly farming	10	4.4	Tackling injustice	13	5.4	Culture restoring communities	18			
			3.5	Fishing in tandem with nature	10	4.5	Empowering young leaders	14						
						4.6	Removing barriers to creative careers	14						
						4.7	Cultural education	15						

Introduction

Over the past 15 years Esmée Fairbairn Foundation's approach has been to back excellent organisations and support their goals across five different sectors (Environment, Food, Children and Young People, Arts, Social Change).

I.1

Why change?

With our new strategy, we want to make more of a difference. We started working on our new strategy in a time of uncertainty for the UK. Brexit, the effects of austerity, and a growing awareness of the implications of climate change influenced plans for our work. This has been made more urgent by the impact of COVID-19 and the profound levels of inequality it has exposed and threatens to increase.

There cannot be a return to business as usual, and we want to play an active role in responding to the critical issues facing our society.

We have the freedom to ask, "What more could we do?" and so, faced with huge challenges like protecting our natural world, we are changing our approach. By making larger and longer grants, in smaller numbers, we hope we can do more to make a lasting impact. We will contribute all that we can to unlock the change by people and organisations with brilliant ideas who share our goals.

We have developed a series of impact goals against which we will track progress and collect, analyse, and share data and learning. We will concentrate on issues which:

are significant, require a long-term view and are realistically achievable;

offer forward-looking solutions based on opportunity, partnership, and with potential for leverage and systemic change;

reflect the inter-connected nature and complexity of the systems that we want to see changed;

are coherent and purposeful without being prescriptive and programmatic;

push on an open or emerging policy door, devolution agenda, movement for change or business practice; and

build on what we do well, our expertise and experience (e.g. support for the unusual, our appetite for risk and our low ego ethos).

West London Zone



I.2

What will change?

We recognise our role as an organisation in protecting our natural world and addressing the causes and impacts of climate change. This is a long-term issue but one that needs to be tackled with urgency and energy.

In our vision for a fairer future in the UK, social and economic justice are equal and interdependent partners to environmental justice. We have formulated our mission and three supporting aims: 'Our Natural World', 'A Fairer Future' and 'Creative, Confident Communities'. These will balance long-term and immediate need, with clear priorities over the next five years.

For 'Our Natural World', we carried out a detailed research and scoping exercise to identify where we could make the biggest difference, especially those which are currently overlooked by others. We looked at how we could take action ourselves to unlock the change we want to see. We will now use all our tools – not just grants and investments – to broker alliances, use our influence and remove barriers to achieve our impact goals.

For 'A Fairer Future' and 'Creative, Confident Communities', our strategy builds on our long history of funding the arts, children and young people and social change. The strategy combines what has been most impactful with what is now most needed, guided by the needs of climate change, racial justice, and recovery from COVID-19. Over the next year we will be developing this part of our strategy and it is likely to evolve. As we did with Our Natural World, our focus will be to identify where we can make the most effective contribution.

Across all our aims, we hope that working with a clear purpose will create positive ripples way beyond what we can achieve on our own. And where we find something is not working, we commit to learn and make changes.



Overall Framework

Our mission

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve our natural world, secure a fairer future, and strengthen the bonds in communities in the UK. We do this by contributing everything we can to unlock change by people and organisations with brilliant ideas who share our goals.

Our commitment

In everything we do, we are motivated by the need to address the causes and impacts of climate change and to recognise our role in addressing diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Aims

Our Natural World

is protected, restored, and improved



A Fairer Future



Creative, Confident, Communities



Impact goals by 2030

Preserved and improved species health and habitats

Clean and healthy freshwater

Sustainable and ethical food

Injustice and structural inequality is challenged and changed

A new inclusive generation of leaders and artists

Communities take an active role in decisions that affect them

Local economies work better for the people who live there

Everyone can access the benefits of culture and creativity

Priorities in the first 5 years

Peat

Space for nature

Freshwater

Nature friendly farming

Fishing in tandem with nature

Acting early on the root causes of problems

Children and young people's rights

Young people leaving care

Tackling injustice

Empowering young leaders

Removing barriers to creative careers

Cultural education

Communities working together for change

Community ownership and regeneration

Creativity transforming lives

Culture restoring communities

Section

3



Aim

Our Natural World

is protected,
restored, and
improved

We want to ensure that our natural world is restored and protected, and that people benefit from that recovery. Working with others, we will contribute to three key impact goals by 2030:

Impact goals by 2030

Preserved and improved species health and habitats

Clean and healthy freshwater

Sustainable and ethical food



Our Natural World

We have identified five key areas of work through which we believe we can best contribute to these goals in our first 5 years. The criteria we adopted in arriving at these five areas:



Key areas of work

They are pressing in their importance and urgency, on the evidence of our consultations and our own knowledge;

They are tangible and self-contained so easier to identify goals and help align the efforts of others;

There are also connections between them, and they contribute to broader priorities, not least the climate and biodiversity emergencies;

They are timely and of increasing interest to different constituencies and we can help build on momentum. There is clear scope for a funder of our size and profile in making a difference;

They are open to a 'tools in the box' strategy: where we can unlock change through convening, building evidence, supporting alliances, or using our influence and role as an asset owner;

We have a history of engagement with these themes and know the territory well – we are familiar with key players and have internal experience and expertise.

It is likely that the work of many significant players in the environment sector will cross more than one area of work and this will make us more, rather than less likely to support them. To make progress on each area, we will need to support key organisations which work across sectors to convene, mobilise, or generate new ideas.



Our Natural World

Preserved and improved species health and habitats



Cumbria Wildlife Trust

3.1

Peat

Rationale

Esmée has long been a supporter of preserving peatland because of its value to nature, climate change and for a range of other benefits including flood prevention and purifying water. Whilst still under appreciated, peatlands are more effective at carbon storage and mitigation than tropical forests. Peat has relevance across many of our priorities (habitats, climate, freshwater, nature-friendly farming).

Long-term outcomes

Peat is recognised as a climate change superpower as well as for its importance to nature.

Peat is no longer a component of horticultural products and people understand the implications of their buying choices on global peat stores and climate change.

Degraded peatland sites are restored for nature and for people

All important peatland sites, including those outside protected areas, have statutory protections at least as powerful as currently in place and that those are properly applied.

Farmed peat soils are managed sustainably.

All UK countries manage their peat resource sustainably.



3.2

Space for nature



Rationale

The scale of nature's decline in the UK cannot be addressed by our existing nature reserves, nor without fundamentally changing the way we use land. Fortunately, this decline is mirrored by a growing movement for connecting with nature and for finding and creating more wild spaces for nature – enabling natural processes to shape land and sea, repair damaged ecosystems and

restore degraded landscapes.

This is a good time to encourage people's enthusiasm for achieving better land use, and to build the evidence for policy makers. As well as supporting restoration of nature across the UK, we also want to engage communities to lead change near to where they live so that nature is accessible to all.

Long-term outcomes

Space for nature, and biodiversity, is restored at scale in the UK.

Restoration of marine habitats, reconnecting coastal areas with their natural heritage.

More wild spaces for people in the UK to access, understand, enjoy and value – particularly those who have not experienced wild nature.

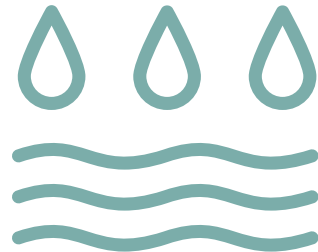
The benefits of investment in different approaches to aiding the recovery of nature, building carbon stores, and reducing flood risk are explored.



Froglife

3.3

Freshwater



Rationale

One of the biggest challenges to the UK environment is the poor state of freshwater and the amplifying impact of climate change on it. Wildlife in freshwater has declined at a faster rate than in other habitats and is particularly susceptible to climate change. Despite the magnitude of the problem, it is easily disregarded by a public unaware of the implications of poor water stewardship.

Many rivers and lakes have water quality below the standard that is considered safe for beaches. There is already competition for available water and that is likely to increase, putting the natural environment at increasing risk whilst pollution from agriculture, industry and waste-water treatment continue to affect many rivers.

Long-term outcomes

Freshwater is valued and supports a flourishing economy and thriving natural environment.

There is enough freshwater for wildlife and people.

Freshwater-dependent wildlife and habitats have been restored.

Floods do less harm to people and wildlife.

Human activity does not cause damaging pollution.



3.4 Nature-friendly farming



Rationale

There has been huge loss of biodiversity on farms – 56% decline in farmland birds since 1970. 97% of wildflower meadows present in the 1940s have been destroyed (3 million hectares). Current farming approaches result in 0.1 to 0.3 tonnes of soil lost per hectare per year.

Large areas of farmland will be unprofitable within a generation under the current model, but markets have not yet recognised the added value of nature-friendly farming. However, increasing innovation and a growing sense of awareness have created a window of opportunity.

Long-term outcomes

The benefits, including health benefits, of sustainable farming are widely recognised.

Farmland wildlife and biodiversity is restored.

The status of other species on farms is better understood and recovery is underway.

Soil health is restored, soils contain more carbon and chemical usage has been reduced.

Working with nature on farms makes good business sense and is widely demonstrated and accepted.

More people have access to and buy locally produced food.



Manchester Veg People



Sole of Discretion

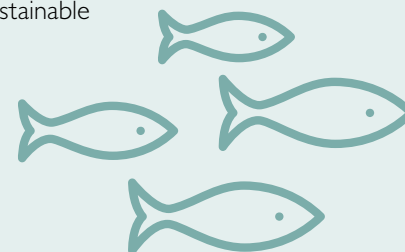
3.5

Fishing in tandem with nature

Rationale

Overfishing is the biggest driver of biodiversity loss in the seas yet there are currently poor safeguards to prevent damaging exploitation. The implementation an effective network of marine protected areas is key to tackling this, alongside more sustainable aquaculture.

With the UK leaving the EU and the Common Fisheries Policy, there is real opportunity for change for marine life, as well as the coastal and island communities who depend upon it.



Long-term outcomes

UK is seen as a global leader in the management of marine resources.

Marine biodiversity is restored at scale and enjoyed by more people.

Seafood consumed in the UK comes from well-managed stocks.

Existing traditional coastal communities are sustained and the economy of small fishing communities is revived.

The status of marine wildlife populations is understood, effectively monitored and safeguards are in place to allow recovery.

Section

4



Aim

A Fairer Future

We want to contribute to a just and anti-racist society, where those who need it most have their rights protected, the opportunity to speak and be heard, and the freedom to express their creativity. We want to shine new light on areas of need and challenge the cultures, systems and behaviours that stand in the way of change.

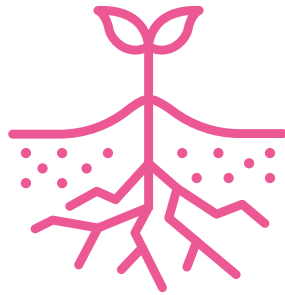
Impact goals by 2030

Injustice and structural inequality is challenged and changed

A new inclusive generation of leaders and artists



4.1 Acting early on the root causes of problems



Rationale

We want to see more action taking place to prevent problems from occurring, not just to cope with the consequences. In particular, getting early support to children is vital, whether that is in the first years of life, at key transition points or to counter the negative impact of trauma that can reverberate through lives.

Long-term outcomes for children and young people

Many more young children facing disadvantage are able to get quality support in the early years.

Early support for teenagers facing challenges before they reach crisis point (challenges like exploitation, early trauma and/or problems with police, family, school).

Long-term outcomes for everyone

There is a shift in the way people and organisations configure or deliver their services towards an earlier or preventative stage.

The root causes that contribute to cycles of disadvantage are identified, challenged, and changed.



4.2

Children and young people's rights

Rationale

We believe all children and young people should have their rights respected, no matter how challenging their circumstances. We recognise some young people do not always get the support or services they need and fund those who work with young people to create fairer systems.

Long-term outcomes

More children and young people access the education, services, and support to which they are entitled.

Legislation, policy, and practice better reflect the needs of those most likely to have their rights denied.

Young people with direct experience of being let down by the system are supported to shape better approaches.



A Fairer Future

Injustice and structural inequality is challenged and changed



4.3

Young people leaving care

Leicestershire Cares

Rationale

We believe more needs to be done across the UK to reduce the risk of young people falling off a 'cliff edge' of support when they leave care. We want to see care leavers supported – by the system and by their own networks – to feel emotionally stable and be financially secure, and ultimately flourish as an adult.

Long-term outcomes

More care leavers develop and sustain stable, supportive, and fulfilling relationships.

Young people leaving care have more say over the decisions that matter to them, their voices are listened to, and acted on.

There is consistent and good quality support for care experienced young people that leads to successful transitions and independence.



The system responds quickly to messages from research, learning about good practice and the voices of young people. There is challenge when things go wrong and sharing and spreading of what works well.

4.4

Tackling injustice



Rationale

A just and inclusive society benefits us all. We seek to support those who are most likely to have their rights denied due to race, gender, disability, or immigration status. We want people's voices to be heard, to shine new light on areas of need, and to change the cultures, systems and behaviours that stand in the way of fairness.

Long-term outcomes

Legislation, policy, and practice better reflect the needs of those most likely to have their rights denied.

Those holding power are held to account.

Complex or hidden issues are better understood and acted upon.

Individuals with experience of being let down by the system have a direct impact on changing it.

Leaders with lived experience are valued and treated as essential to achieving social justice.



Challenging Behaviour Foundation

4.5 Empowering young leaders



Rationale

Young people can play a vital role in driving change. We value the energy, insight and leadership young people bring and the impact this work can have on young people, their communities, and their sense of civic engagement.

We are interested in work that provides progression routes for young people with experience of disadvantage to create a more diverse group of cultural, environmental, and social leaders for the future.

Long-term outcomes

More young people currently under-represented in decision making are steering policy and change.

Young leaders develop solutions to issues they want to change.



Clore Leadership

4.6

Removing barriers to creative careers

Rationale

We want to support those building a cultural sector that reflects our society, with open access for those who are currently missing out or facing significant barriers. A more representative, inclusive workforce could influence policy and practice to ensure better, more fulfilling engagement with high quality culture and creativity for everyone.

Long-term outcomes

An inclusive generation of leadership tackles challenges in the sector.

The workforce represents the wider community, so that the widest range of stories are told and diverse ideas and perspectives flourish.

Freelance artists are able to sustain and develop their careers during the period of COVID-19 recovery and beyond.



Football Beyond Borders



4.7

Cultural education

Rationale

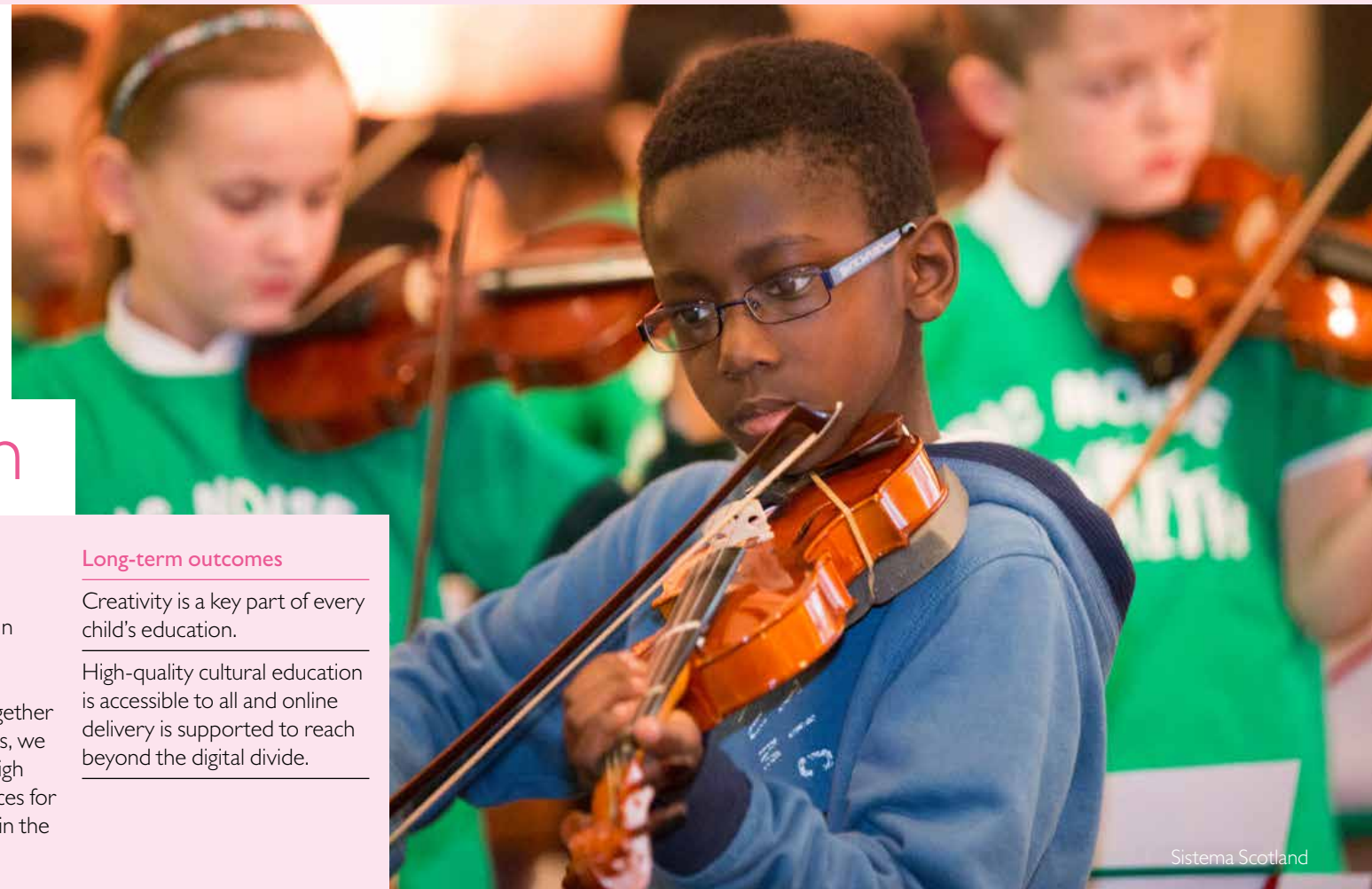
Cultural education – in a classroom or through access to arts and culture – can contribute to all aspects of a child's development, particularly supporting creativity, critical thinking, empathy, and resilience. The arts equip children and young people with skills that will be increasingly important in future careers. Despite this, access to arts and

culture is not distributed equally across the UK or in education settings. By supporting cultural organisations to work together with educators and artists, we will protect the right to high quality creative experiences for every child in school and in the community..

Long-term outcomes

Creativity is a key part of every child's education.

High-quality cultural education is accessible to all and online delivery is supported to reach beyond the digital divide.





Aim

Creative, Confident Communities

We want to strengthen the bonds in communities, helping local people to build vibrant, confident places where they can fulfil their creative, human, and economic potential. Places where the local economy works better for the people who live there, where there is equality of access to arts and culture, and where communities are at the heart of change.

Impact goals by 2030

Communities take an active role in decisions that affect them

Local economies work better for the people who live there

Everyone can access the benefits of culture and creativity



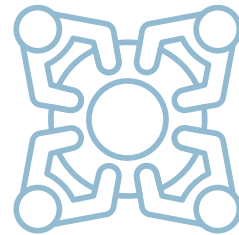
Creative, Confident, Communities

Communities take an active role in decisions that affect them

Local economies work better for the people who live there

5.1

Communities working together for change



Rationale

Communities thrive when people have the power to take action and the ability to work together. We seek out ambitious work that puts communities themselves at the heart of changes they want to make and can provide transformative models for others to learn from. We want to support communities to be confident in having more ownership of their economic, social, and environmental future.

Long-term outcomes

Local communities are fairer and more equal.
 More people have a say in decisions that matter to them.
 Communities are better able to pursue an aspirational vision of what they want their local area to be.

The corporate, cultural, public, and voluntary sectors work better together to deliver collective change with communities.



5.2

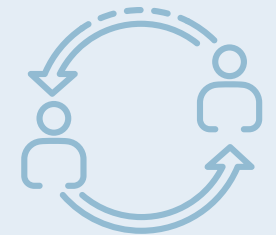
Community ownership and regeneration

Rationale

When communities have ownership of local land, housing, and services, they have a stake in more than just assets. We believe that community ownership could help rebuild local economies, and should play a central role in creating collaborative, thriving, and green local economies for all.

Long-term outcomes

Communities are central to rebuilding local economies in recovering from COVID-19 and in the future.
 There is an increase in models of community ownership and regeneration (of land, assets, housing, and services) across the UK.
 Increased models of economic development rooted in social and environmental justice and a green recovery.



Local economies address inequality.
 Locally rooted institutions use their purchasing power and assets to achieve greater social and economic justice in their communities.
 Sustainable enterprise and natural solutions are the building blocks of regeneration.



Tremayne Hall (Locality)



5.3

Creativity transforming lives

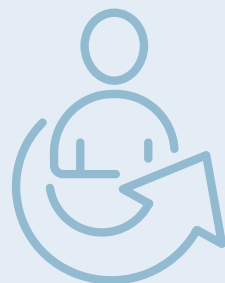
Rationale

We believe creative activity can help people facing difficult social or personal issues and can be a powerful way to call attention to inequality and injustice. We are interested in those who use the power of creativity to address vital issues and help individuals and communities to reach their potential.

Long-term outcomes

The power of creativity to change lives, perceptions and relationships is available to all. Creativity is a proven and valued tool for addressing and raising the profile of social and environmental issues.

Creativity and culture are a key part of individual and collective recovery from the impacts of COVID-19 and beyond.



5.4

Culture restoring communities



Rationale

The inequality of access to culture and to developing personal creativity that already existed across the UK has been made worse by the impact of COVID-19. Culture and creative activity can help to restore those communities most affected, inspiring them to see themselves in new ways and to change the ways others see them.

Long-term outcomes

Communities are strengthened and enhanced through engagement with creative work. Communities are transformed through a collaborative approach to culture that involves local people alongside cultural organisations and other local players.

Cultural organisations with a good track record of community engagement recover from the impacts of COVID-19 and strengthen their engagement with their communities.

B Arts, Artcity Stoke



Tools

We want to strengthen the bonds in communities, helping local people to build vibrant, confident places where they can fulfil their creative, human, and economic potential. Places where the local economy works better for the people who live there, where there is equality of access to arts and culture, and where communities are at the heart of change.



Funding

We will continue to provide core/unrestricted, long term funding to the organisations that are best able to help us achieve our impact goals.

We see our expertise in social investment as being a key component to our new strategy. We are already discussing and designing environmental outcomes-based financing with Defra and are looking to build on our experience in using social investment to support local social enterprises and co-ops for communities. We believe that social investment will increasingly be important in delivering our mission.

Funding Plus

Over the last four years we have developed a capacity building product that we can be proud of and we aim to make sure that it continues to enable the organisations that we support to flourish.

Influencing and Co-Design

We have learnt from some of our more strategic relationships and initiatives that when we use our expertise and experience to co-design or be part of a larger initiative, we are often likely to have significant, if quiet, influence. This might be in setting more ambitious outcomes, in holding a strong line on mission, in being on advisory or recruitment panels.

Research/Evidence

We have seen that where we work with other experts and practitioners in commissioning research and evidence, the ripple effects are much greater than if we do so alone. We do not always have to lead on these initiatives but are involved in their core design and development (see above).

Infrastructure/ Intermediaries

Through our funding we will support key infrastructure organisations or intermediaries and those who support collaborations through representation. They are often best practice hubs and develop work and strategic partnerships, amplifying the collective voice around an issue. We will support key infrastructure organisations which contribute to each impact goal, but also those which work across our aims to ensure the independence, capacity and integrity of the charity sector.

Tools

Convening/Connecting

We have sometimes used our position to convene and connect networks of organisations to meet regularly to foster dialogue, share learning, create joint opportunities and develop new, collective approaches. We support those collaborations that bring together corporate, public and voluntary sectors to work better together to deliver collective change. We are also approached by others who are trying to convene people around a particular issue. In our new strategy we will be open to convening and to be part of other efforts where this supports our strategy and is appropriate.

New ideas

Throughout the development of our strategy we have been told that one of our key strengths is to be open to the new and unusual. This has been described variously as ‘left-field’, ‘punk element’, ‘growing oaks from acorns’. We have also been told that our key strength is also to stick with these ideas through their growing pains. We will support new ideas which contribute to each impact goal, and also those which work across our aims to unblock barriers, test new approaches or build movements for change.

Data and digital

We recognise the importance of digital and data in both our own strategy and for those who we fund. We will embrace the opportunities brought by tech innovation, and be open to experimenting with new technologies, without changing for change's sake. These efforts should be collaborative and involve other funders and charities where opportunity allows, while accepting that sometimes we will need to take the lead.

Environmental Social, and Governance (ESG) Investment Strategy

We have begun to use our role as an asset owner and investor in support of our impact goals. Working with our advisors, we are transitioning our portfolio towards ESG factors, planning our move to net-zero and becoming a more challenging shareholder. We will also continue to avoid investing in new funds that are directly in conflict with our impact goals and will continue reporting, monitoring and challenging investment managers on their ESG performance.

Communications and Learning

We will build on our strong reputation for sharing insights and challenges from our work, further developing this approach to ensure that what we learn influences our strategic decisions. We will also work to ensure that what we ask from those we fund is proportionate and useful – in line with the principles for better reporting we developed together with IVAR and other partners.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

We are committed to social justice, and to tackling injustice and inequality. Racial justice is a critical element in this, in the UK and across the world. We acknowledge that we have a role in addressing structural and systemic racism in the UK both as an organisation and through the work we support.

As an organisation, we are committed to understanding, tracking, improving and sharing our progress on diversity, equity and inclusion. To do this, we will use the recommendations of the 2019 Association of Charitable Foundation's report *Diversity, Equity and Inclusion: The Pillars of Stronger Foundation Practice*¹ as central principles in putting our new strategy into practice over the next five years, and commit to sharing our actions and progress through our website.

Through our work, we have funded some significant organisations seeking to tackle injustice, including racial injustice, for many years. However, we know that we need to do much more. Under our new strategy, we commit to funding more organisations led by Black or Asian people, or those from other ethnic minorities by:

giving more long-term funding and support to organisations already in our portfolio that are working to advance racial justice;

working with partners to identify, fund, and nurture smaller organisations led by Black, Asian or other ethnic minorities that are working towards our impact goals; and

using our power as a funder to influence recruitment and governance practice to be more inclusive in sectors (e.g. environment) where the majority of organisations are not ethnically diverse.



East London Dance

¹ www.acf.org.uk/downloads/ACF_DEI_Thepillarsofstrongerfoundationpractice_final.pdf

Climate change

We are a signatory to the Funder Commitment on Climate Change.² This means that we will report annually on our progress against the six goals in the Commitment. We will encourage other foundations to consider climate change as core to what they do.

² <https://fundercommitmentclimatechange.org>



Devon Wildlife Trust



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