



THE SCOTTISH WOMEN'S CONVENTION

# A BLETHER ON...

*World Environment Day*



June 2024

# World Environment Day 2024

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On the 5<sup>th</sup> of June 2024, the SWC Team invited women to come along and celebrate World Environment Day as part of our ‘A Blether on...’ series. World Environment Day is an event which recognises the importance and vulnerability of our planet’s ecosystems. Women were asked to provide their expertise on climate-focused solutions, as well as share their views on the current climate crisis.

During our conversation multiple themes arose such as: **awareness, accessibility, the role of community** and **the consultation process**. The following report contains a summary of each theme, alongside **four key recommendations** which focus on how policymakers can improve women’s engagement with the natural environment.

## 4 Recommendations:

1. Provide improved climate-based education for all ages through community groups.
2. Events and community engagement should be provided at a range of times to meet the varying needs of women.
3. Re-establish community services through improved funding and resourcing, enabling women’s environmental engagement.
4. Take a place-based approach to the development of environment policy, while also considering a range of lived experiences.

### **The Scottish Women’s Convention (SWC)**

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The SWC is funded to engage with women across Scotland to ensure that their views are represented in policy and decision-making processes. The SWC uses the views of women to respond to a variety of parliamentary, governmental, and organisational consultation papers at Scottish, UK, and international levels.

The SWC gathers information using different methods, including roadshows, thematic conferences, surveys, and both in-person and online roundtable events. This submission presents the views of a range of women, reflecting their opinions, ideas and lived experience. Working together with many other equalities organisations and community groups, we use our broad network to ensure that women from a range of backgrounds are heard and acknowledged. We are continually reviewing innovative ways of engaging with women and developing our trauma-informed and culturally sensitive practice to support vital contributions from as many women as possible.

# Women's Views:

## Awareness

**“...when we're talking about climate change, they don't understand. So, awareness raising should be an ongoing process, as well as funding”**

Initially, women discussed the importance of engaging with a range of individuals, ensuring that positive conversations around climate activity were regular. Some attendees felt that there was a lack of awareness, with regards to specific environmentally friendly behaviours, such as recycling or growing household fruits and vegetables. Women highlighted that individual climate responsibility could be relatively low-cost and uncomplicated, however the ease at which this could be done was not widely known. It was reiterated that improved awareness should be targeted at middle-aged to elderly people, as most children and young people receive good quality education around the challenges facing our climate. Attendees suggested community groups and events were valuable ways to increase individuals' knowledge about Scotland's environment.

- “...it needs to reach people outside of the school curriculum as well, they should be able to come along to climate cafés, climate conversations”
- “I'm a community facilitator...and I see so much good work and I'm concerned about how we join all the dots and create that awareness...and share, not only in Scotland, but across our islands as well”

## Accessibility

**“...it's great to engage with people who are already switched on to the issue, but really, you want to generate conversations with people who maybe... they have very busy lives, and they find it too overwhelming...so we really want to be supportive and encouraging...so they don't feel threatened or polarised by some of the discussions.”**

Linking with the above point, women felt that there was a lack of accessibility for the average woman when environmental action is considered. They highlighted that there should be a focus on engaging with those who do not feel confident or empowered to carry out environmentally friendly behaviours, thus ensuring a wider range of individuals are working towards a greener Scotland. Attendees explained that sometimes language surrounding climate can be off-putting, particularly if there are undertones of blame/shame. Women instead felt that conversations should remain positive, highlighting what can easily be done within households, remaining considerate of women's hectic personal and professional lives. This idea of women's continual 'juggling act' - balancing work, home, family and education - was raised as an additional barrier to women's access to environmentalism. Attendees proposed that due to women's limited free time, they are often unable to attend information/training meetings surrounding climate action. It was therefore suggested that any sessions such as these should be mindful of women's schedules, becoming more flexible or held at a range of times.

- “Yeah, the language can be quite off-putting, doing things for the community, and it's maybe that language, how they market those events to the community.”
- “If I go back to my community, I know that some of them are quite busy with children, studies, work, which means that sometimes they can't attend events...the way we work with them, is to work at their pace, to make sure we take the services to them”

## Role of the Community

**“...the benefit of [climate action] hubs are that it puts different groups in contact with each other, enabling peer-to-peer support, so you know what works in your local place and environment”**

Women continuously highlighted the importance of the community in environment action. They explained that community groups often provide the setting for peer learning and support, enabling improved education for all involved. Multiple examples were given of community projects which had benefited their local environment, contributing to a better sense of social cohesion. However, attendees went on to discuss the continued degradation of community services across Scotland, which had detrimentally impacted women’s ability to engage with climate action. They stated that the third sector is under immense strain due to a lack of resourcing, which ultimately results in the reduction of services, such as training and information sharing. Women called for the re-establishment of third sector funding to enable improved support regarding climate engagement.

- “They [South Machar’s Community Centre] use local people to show others how to forage, how to bottle vegetables, all these interesting courses that are available”
- “...there’s a massive loss of adult learning, and where they have been thriving before in the past, that would be a natural outlet for conversations about local environmental action, shared learning, peer support...It’s a huge loss”
- “When you think about it, the community and voluntary sector...they provide so much support for the statutory services, but don’t get the recognition for that.”

## Consultation and Co-design

**“The sharing of lived experience is everywhere; out of that comes need, out of that comes action, a feeling that we’re all involved in something, and what’s more important than climate for everyone?”**

Attendees went on to discuss their frustration at government agencies, and the general lack of public engagement when policy is being developed. Women focused on the need for improved consultation processes, ensuring that a range of voices inform policy creation, with diversity being key. Involving communities in the design of policy was also seen an important mechanism to enable meaningful change. Women suggested that through participation, communities were more likely to become involved in carrying out action, with lived experience opening the gateway to original solutions. Furthermore, they stated that in order to effectively tackle the damaging effects of climate change, the Scottish Government had to take a place-based approach. It was felt that through considering the varying needs of communities, innovative and effective solutions could be found.

- “...these consultations run for two weeks maybe, and they contact a group of eight or ten people, who don’t represent the entire community. So, listening, engaging with these communities to understand them...that would work”
- “By co-design...it’s about who should be in the room and about working together, because we need the formal institutions, but they should be informed by the informal processes, by the informal realities of people’s lives.”

# Thank You!

Thank you to the women who shared their experiences, and plant growing tips, with the SWC. We will continue to advocate for women across Scotland so that their views are included in the policy-making process.



## SWC CONTACT DETAILS

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