

Greening the Sector

Analysing and sharing sustainable practice in the professional body sector

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Foreword by Emma Wilcox – Society for the Environment



Professional Associations
RESEARCH NETWORK

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Foreword

We have all had to adapt to a challenging environment as a result of the spread of COVID-19. However, the broader environmental issues and opportunities we face have not gone away. There lies ahead a significant opportunity to do better – to reflect on the positive work we are already doing and do more to build back better.

As the umbrella body responsible for championing and registering environmental professionals, at SocEnv we know the importance of both professional competence and collaboration. We work in partnership with many professional bodies and witness the difference they make. We are committed to ensuring professional bodies are at the forefront of climate and environmental action, embodying their commitment to expertise, skills, dedication, and professional standards.

To achieve the change required, professions must work together, which is why the work of PARN is critical and why SocEnv are pleased to support this work.

We can all learn from each other on the road to increased sustainability – and it is hoped that this report will provide insight and expertise which will prove both useful and inspirational in stimulating continued action towards a more sustainable future.

Emma Wilcox – CEO, Society for the Environment

Introduction

In early March 2020 when we embarked on a new piece of research the world looked different and certainly we did not anticipate the changes that were about to befall us all. As we quickly realised the area we were researching was inextricably linked with a series of events we now know as the global COVID-19 outbreak. We say linked because both issues, global climate change and global epidemic, are a reflection of how we were living our lives and how we continue to abuse the resources we have at our disposal.

We were surprised to receive almost 50 responses, and it quickly became clear that this was an issue that was engaging many of our members and often taking centre stage for them. But of course with a self-selecting sample such as this, care is needed when extrapolating across the wider sector.

We should also note that this was the first time we tried something different to our more regular Ask the Network survey (ATN). We wanted something we could 'turn around' very quickly and we wanted something that would form the basis of a short report which we could then perhaps use to stimulate further debate and discussion. We called it a Flash Report with the intention of keeping the gap between 'flash and bang' as short as possible. The survey was comprised of nineteen questions; around double the number we usually have with our standard ATN's.

Every recipient of the survey was also invited to take part in a more detailed one to one discussion with PARN Deputy CEO – Robert Pitts. There were four such interviews conducted and these form a central part of the following report. The survey was open between the 5th of March and 30th of April, and all participants were sent a simple summary of tabulated results.

We also carried out the four interviews, these interviews were quite free flowing, with a brief 'interview guide' created for each one ahead of time which was based off interviewees' responses in the survey. Each of these interviews were transcribed and written into concise case studies, which were then approved by the interviewees. These case studies are included in this report where we felt they fit best. Analysis of the survey responses and information from the interviews make up the content of this report.

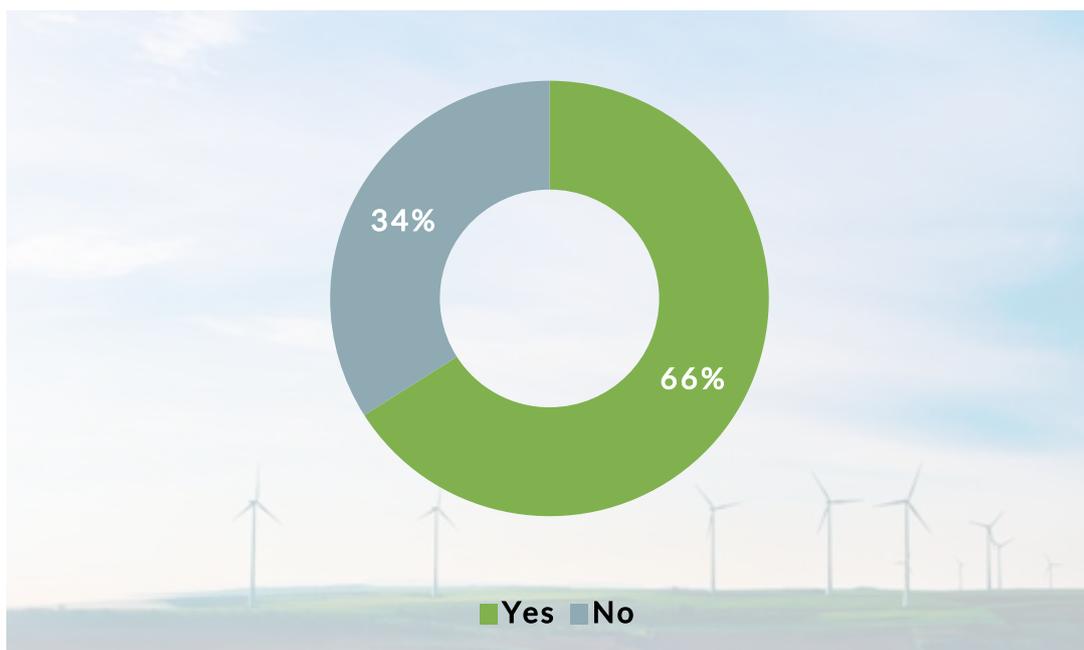
PARN would like to express thanks to all the organisations taking part in the exercise and especially those four who agreed to take part in the short discussions. These were: The Association for Project Management (APM), Society for the Environment (SocEnv), The Institute of Conservation (Icon) and The Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE). We should also very much like to express a special thanks to Emma Wilcox at SocEnv for her support and for generously agreeing to write the foreword to the report and also to Sally Hayns at The Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management (CIEEM) for her valued input in creating the survey. We would also like to thank Olivia Arnold and Harriet Mortimer at PARN for their help in designing the final report.

Environmental sustainability at Professional Bodies

We opened the survey by asking if recipients had an environmental sustainability policy?

We asked: Does your organisation have an environmental sustainability policy/green plan or an equivalent?

As noted above, some care is needed when applying these results across the sector, certainly we expected that the majority of those taking time to respond would have something already in place. However we were encouraged to receive a large number of responses from organisations that did not have a formal policy in place. A result that helps to give us some assurance that these results may well be transferable to the wider sector.



Base: 44

- Almost two thirds of responding organisations have an environmental sustainability policy in place (66%)
- Just over a third do not have an environmental sustainability policy in place (34%)

We went on to ask how long these policies had been in existence.

We asked: How long has this policy been in place for?

It was clear that this is largely a new area of development and focus for many in our sector with the majority noting that the introduction of their policy had only taken place within the last two years or less. This we might note is perhaps reflective of the media attention and the gathering public moment around the subject, with Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough often being cited as driving forces for change.



Base: 29

- Most with an environmental sustainability policy have only introduced said policy recently, with 55% of respondents noting this policy has been in place for 2 years or less
- Almost a third (31%) noted their environmental policy was very recently introduced (within the last 12 months)
- Conversely, 17% of responding organisations have had an environmental policy in place for over 10 years, however, most of these were either specialist professional bodies or very large professional bodies

One particular example of a professional body recently introducing an environmental sustainability policy is APM. We wanted to find out more and arranged to interview David Thompson.

Case Study 1: Association for Project Management



David Thompson



David is Head of External Affairs for the Association for Project Management (APM) and is responsible for external engagement, research, thought leadership and policy. The APM thought leadership programme includes the APM Research Fund, research summary series, policy reports and other major research activity, including the current campaign about the future of the project profession – ‘Projecting the future’. Prior to this he worked for the Chartered Insurance Institute 2007-16 and Barclays 1995-2007.

Introduction

The Association for Project Management (APM) is the Chartered body for the project profession. David Thomson, Head of External Affairs, spoke to us about the steps APM has taken over the last 12 months to promote sustainability within APM, and how the project profession may have a bigger role in combating the climate emergency.

Policy

When asked about the introduction of APM’s recent environmental and climate change policy, David told us it is a member led policy initiated by the APM board. But he noted that two previous pieces of work were key contributors in bringing this policy into existence. The first was [a piece](#) written by a former APM Chair, Professor Peter Morris, in 2017. This paper called on the project profession to be more active with environmental sustainability and climate change, by going beyond simply mitigating environmental impact, and instead looking at taking a leadership role in both UK but also world effort to address the issue. A more recent project, which David also utilised as a catalyst for their policy, was [Projecting Future](#) which started in June 2019. This programme looked at six ‘mega themes’ which will impact the project profession – climate change was identified as one of these.

David describes the climate change and sustainability policy as ‘principle based’, with a five point action plan. This is split into two halves: what APM can do as an employer and an organisation with its own carbon footprint, and what APM can do in terms of public obligation and leadership for the profession. Whilst David feels there is no need to build climate change into APM’s ethical code, as the ethical code is principle-based, nevertheless climate change is an ethical challenge, as it goes to the heart of a professional’s obligation to challenge and think about the consequences of their actions and their impact.

Targets

When we asked about environmental targets, David told us APM is looking at setting some targets around reaching Carbon Net Zero. David noted that APM is first planning to look at what it already does and where the gaps are.

For example, he believes that while APM is good with recycling, and has a modern and efficient building, there is room for improvement in terms of staff and volunteer travel. He observed that very few employees currently use public transport due to the location of its main building. David hopes that APM's climate change plan will become a part of APM's reporting cycle.

Promoting environmental sustainability within APM

David explained to us that outside of the policy, APM has introduced environmental sustainability into volunteering and 'giving back' projects. He told us that staff members have been leading some of these initiatives, and finds them an effective way to get members and staff to engage with environmental sustainability. David also noted that the association has a highly successful annual 'green week' to promote sustainability amongst members of staff.

Promoting environmental sustainability among members

David feels that the biggest challenge in promoting sustainability is the diversity of the membership of APM. Different sized organisations may have different levels of agility to make big decisions. It can therefore be difficult to ensure policies and actions are suitable, for example covering both large, defence or oil industry corporate partners, as well as small, self-employed architects. David also feels that APM's statements on environmental policy need to be principle-based, to cater for their diverse membership. He cited the Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation's environmental statement as one which does this well.

The APM are also developing [case studies](#) of members' approaches to the practical challenges of achieving Net Zero, commented David. As part of the *Projecting Future* programme, the organisation has convened a number of live streams and conferences on this topic, including one that had breakout sessions with the Grantham Institute, who provided an external challenge to discussion. When we asked if environmental sustainability was discussed at the Board level, David told us that the Board is very engaged and sets the strategy. He noted that this is a Board-led executive initiative; therefore their engagement is a key part to developing an action plan. However, David feels that environmental sustainability is a fast-changing topic which benefits from member and volunteer support as well. He believes that as APM is a small organisation, it can act quickly and easily implement new policy and change.

Having established the relative recency of policies we then wanted to find out who had been involved in both drafting and reviewing these new policies.

With this in mind we asked: Who has been involved in drafting and/or reviewing the policy?

Most respondents noted that senior staff had been involved in drafting ES policies and that a little under half had been involved in the review of these. We can note from these returns that generally staff (at all levels) were engaged with the process of ES policy creation and management.

- 69% of respondents stated that senior staff had a role in drafting their environmental policy and 45% stated other members of staff had a role in drafting environmental policy
- 41% stated that senior staff had a role in reviewing their environmental policy, and a notable proportion (38%) noted their governing body had a role in reviewing their environmental policy

However this then raised the question of external consultation – it seemed unlikely these policies were being generated within a vacuum. So just how widely and with whom were our ‘survey sample’ consulting in order to ensure they ended up with the best policy?

So we went on to ask : When developing the policy, did you consult environmental policies of other organisations and examples of best practice?

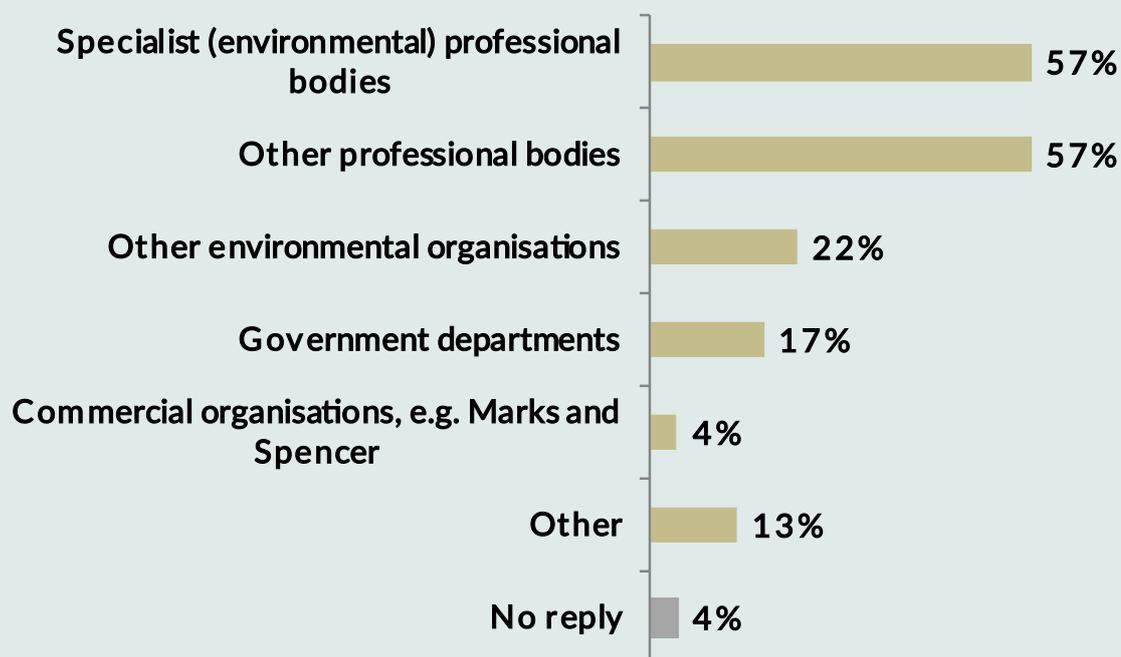
Most had indeed consulted with other organisations whilst in the process of developing their own policy. But a significant number, around one fifth, claimed not to have done so. This is perhaps a little surprising but there is also perhaps a subtle difference in consulting, that implies some formal process, and merely reviewing what other have done in a less formal way. Possibly, we were picking up this difference here.

- 76% of those with a sustainability policy consulted the policies of other organisations when developing their own policy

This then suggests a significant majority consulting but with whom?

In order to resolve this, we went on to ask: Which organisation/s environmental policies did you consult?

Here we didn't know what to expect – we felt the sector is open and willing to share to a fault – so perhaps we hoped to find a considerable degree of sharing best or good practice and indeed that is what we did find to a larger extent at least. So the majority had consulted with another professional body (often a specialist in this field). There were few that consulted commercial organisations despite the many good examples which are 'out there', two noted consultation with a university.



Base: 23

So we unearthed a fairly limited compass but a general willingness to consult with fellow travellers.

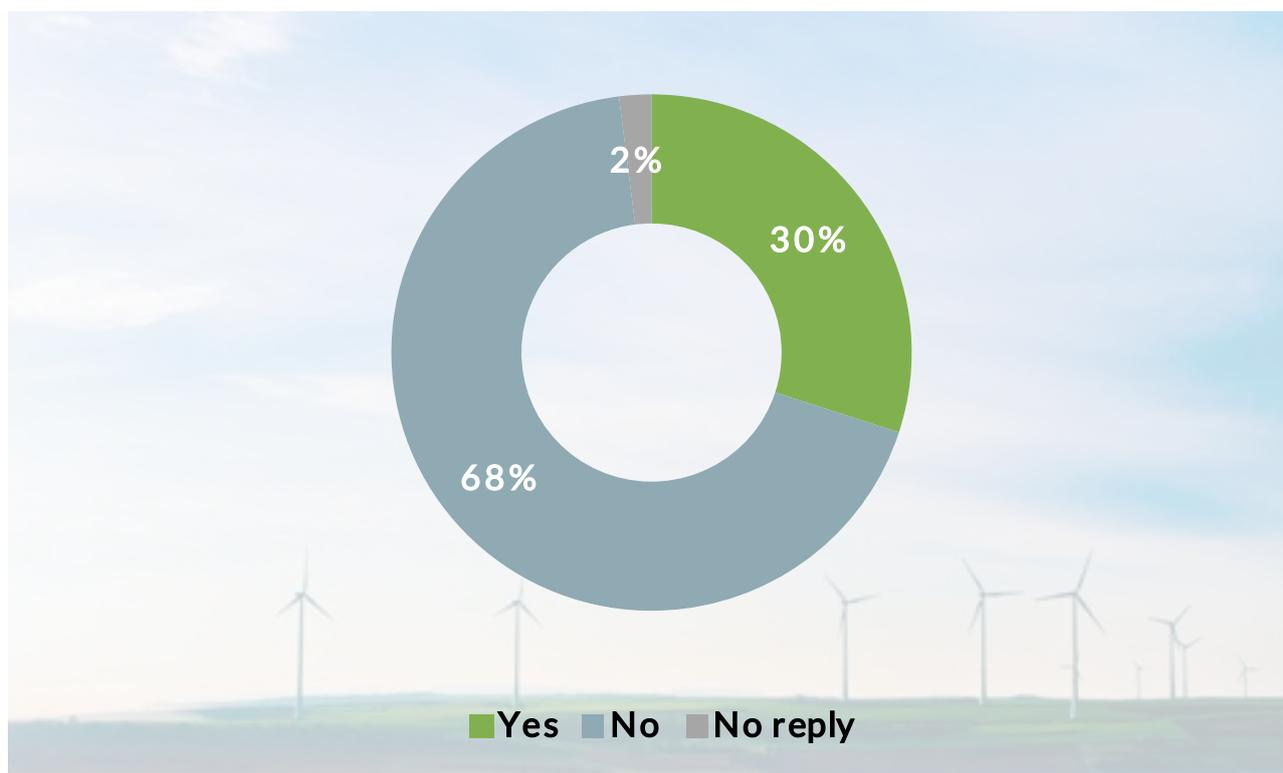
- Specialist professional bodies and other professional bodies were both consulted by 57% of responding organisations.
- Only one organisation consulted commercial organisations such as Marks and Spencer
- Three organisations noted they consulted environmental policies from sources not listed, two stated they consulted universities, and one organisation stated they used a consultant organisation to help with the development of their environmental policy

Environmental sustainability targets and performance at professional bodies

In the next section of our survey we wanted to test the presence of targets, how these were used and their performance measured.

So we started by asking: Does your organisation set itself environmental sustainability targets?

We were probably not prepared for what we discovered from this simple question. Under one third of our survey sample noted that they currently set ES targets. It may be that given this is such a new area of focus for professional bodies there simply has not been time to establish targets and that we may see these begin to emerge with more vigour over the next few years. Certainly we might argue that it is little more than 'green window dressing' if there is policy without performance.



Base: 44

- Only 30% of respondents currently set environmental sustainability targets.

SocEnv is one professional body that has been using targets as part of their policy for a number of years, their case study helps illustrate the way a professional body can incorporate targets as part of their environmental sustainability policy.

Case Study 2: Society for the Environment



Emma Wilcox



Emma joined the Society for the Environment as Chief Executive in July 2015 and has successfully overseen growth in the number of registered environmental professionals while also ensuring the reputation of Chartered Environmentalists and Registered Environmental Technicians has been enhanced and maintained. Emma is a Fellow of Institute of Materials (FIMMM), Chartered Manager (CMgr) and a Fellow of the Chartered Management Institute (FCMI) as well as a graduate of the Goldman Sachs 10k Small Business Programme.

Introduction

The Society for the Environment (SocEnv) is the Royal Chartered professional body for the environment. SocEnv is an umbrella organisation for the environmental sector. As a specialist professional body, it has been championing environmental sustainability for over ten years. Our researchers spoke with Emma Wilcox, the CEO, to discuss the work the society is doing to promote sustainability.

Policy

SocEnv has had an environmental policy in place for over ten years. Emma told us this policy is reviewed annually; at the same time that SocEnv reviews its combined report.

Emma believes the way the policy has evolved is more to do with the way the Society communicates its policy, than the content of the policy itself. We went on to talk about the current effects of COVID 19 and how this is reshaping the need for virtual meetings, extending beyond the reach of the outbreak. Emma then told us that SocEnv is challenging its staff's thinking around expenses policy for travel, and considering steps to not reimburse staff and volunteers who are flying nationally to meetings. Encouraging them to embrace more efficient modes of transport.

Targets

We asked Emma about the targets which SocEnv sets in its environmental policy. Emma told us that along with targets on standard issues, every year SocEnv focuses on one key issue and sets additional targets for this. For example, in 2018 the Society focused on reducing single use plastic. Emma went on to explain that one key area identified for change was event venues, as many venues used by SocEnv provide food in single use plastic. Emma then told us that now the Society is specifically asking venues not to do this when hosting events for them. They also make efforts to avoid using venues which have used single use plastic in the past.

Emma told us that another key part of SocEnv's target setting is the [Pledge to Net Zero](#). The pledge started from environmental services and is now open to professional bodies and other organisations. It involves pledging to hit 'Net Zero' based on science based targets. Emma explained that the pledge has three 'parts' which those who sign up must follow:

- Signing up to hit Net Zero by 2050
- Taking actions to do this, and recording and publishing these actions annually
- Publishing a piece of research, or a case study every year to help other organisations

Promoting environmental sustainability among members

When we asked how SocEnv is promoting sustainability among members, Emma told us that the Society is producing webinars and a monthly podcast. The Society also has a number of groups which are working on specific environmental issues: including an advisory council and a policy forum. Emma told us that SocEnv currently has a task and finish group looking at soil and stones, which she hopes will bring together a wide range of professions on one specific issue. Emma also told us that sustainability is a Board level issue at SocEnv.

We finally asked how easy it has been for SocEnv to promote sustainability among its members. Emma told us that the impact of high profile climate change figures, such as Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough, has led to SocEnv's members being keener to work more sustainably. Emma told us that some of SocEnv's licensed members are based in very old buildings which are inefficient, and difficult to work with when trying to be more sustainable. However, Emma feels that SocEnv's member organisations recognise where they need to improve and are finding more ways to be sustainable, in a way which works best for them.

Next, we wanted to find out about whether professional bodies reviewed the targets they set.

We then asked: Does your organisation review its performance against these targets?

All the organisations who set targets told us they review these targets. Over half review these targets on a regular cycle and the rest review targets on a more 'when needed' ad hoc basis.

Next we wanted to find out how professional bodies took action on reviews, as while reviewing targets is all well and good, the true 'proof in the pudding' is whether professional bodies actively change their behaviour and policy as a result of their targets.

So, we asked: Does your organisation take action as a result of these reviews?

All but one of the organisations which sets environmental targets takes action as a result of reviews, clearly professional bodies deem targets as an important way to reflect on what they can be doing to be more sustainable.

Next we wanted to find out about whether professional bodies share their performance against their goals.

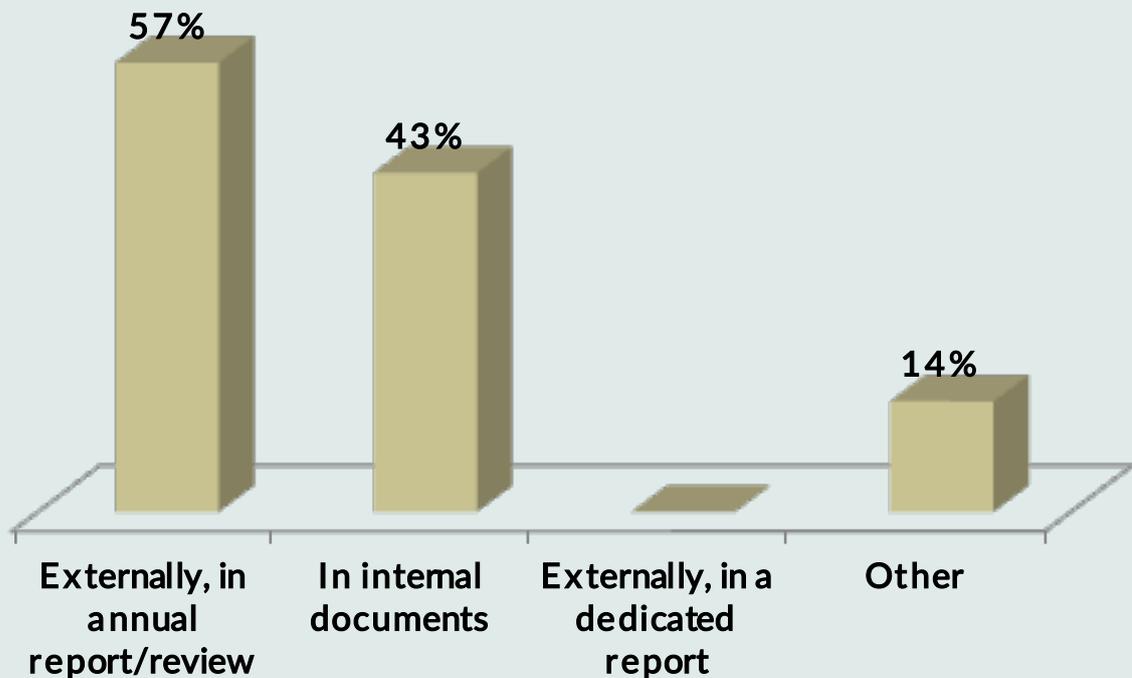
We asked: Does your organisation report on its performance against environmental sustainability targets?

Just over half (54%) of organisations which set targets told us that they report on their performance, either internally or externally.

Next, we wanted to find out where exactly these results were published, whether professional bodies kept their performance behind closed doors, or whether they were available in publicly available documentation.

So, we asked: Where does your organisation publish reports on its performance against environmental sustainability targets?

A number of organisations told us they shared their performance publicly through an external annual report, while a slightly smaller number told us they kept these numbers to an internal document. None of our sample report performance in a dedicated, external report.



Base: 7

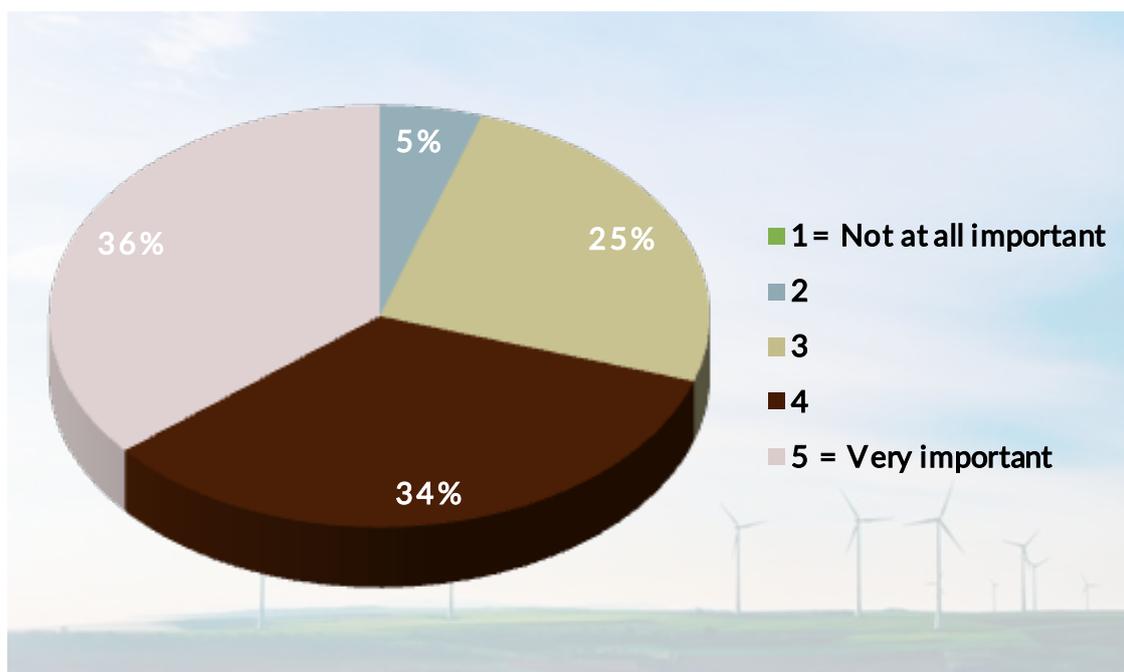
- Four respondents publish reports on performance in an external annual review
- Three report it in internal documents
- No organisations report on targets in a dedicated, external report
- One organisation noted they report their targets internally to their governing body and council

Promoting environmental sustainability internally

In this section we asked respondents a set of questions about the measures they are putting into place to promote sustainability internally among their staff and volunteers.

We asked: On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is it for your organisation to promote environmental awareness within itself?

The importance of promoting sustainability internally was generally rated as high, with many rating the importance as 5. A very small number rated the importance at less than 3, clearly demonstrating that the sector is well engaged.



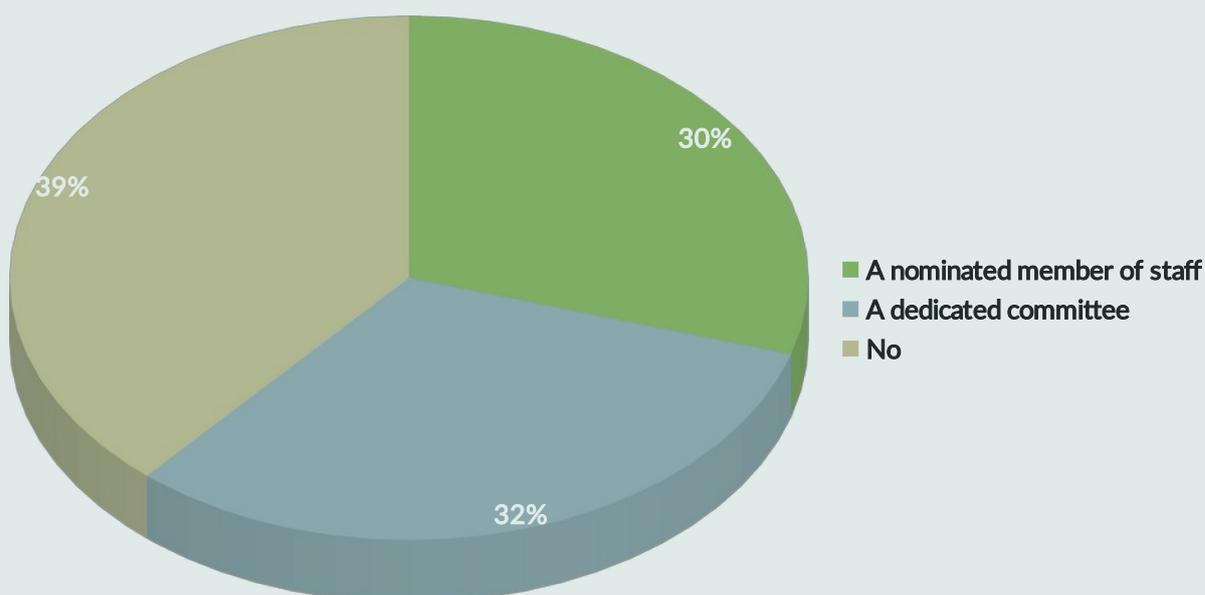
Base: 44

- The average importance was rated as a 4/5, showing that generally professional bodies felt it was important for their organisation to promote environmental awareness within itself
- Impressively, 70% of professional bodies rated the importance as a 4 or a 5
- The plurality rated importance as a 5 (36%)
- Conversely, no organisations rated the importance as a 1, and only two organisations rated the importance as a 2/5

We next went on to ask which organisations had resources dedicated to overseeing their environmental activities.

We asked: Is there a dedicated staff member or committee responsible for overseeing environmental sustainability within your organisation?

A number of respondents did not have a dedicated staff member or committee charged with overseeing their ES activities. Many are likely to have this role shared amongst members of staff or committees. We should note that dedicated committees were slightly more common than nominated staff members for overseeing such activities.



Base: 44

- Over a third of respondents do not have a dedicated committee or member of staff who oversees environmental sustainability within the organisation (39%)
- 32% of organisations have a dedicated committee and 30% have a nominated member of staff

In order to illustrate this, we interviewed Sara Crofts, CEO at Icon, an organisation that has a dedicated member of staff looking after their sustainability issues.

Case Study 3: Institution of Conservation



Sara Crofts



Sara trained as an architect at Edinburgh College of Art where she specialised in historic building conservation. She worked for a number of architectural practices dealing with the repair and conservation of historic buildings before taking on roles at Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB) and the Heritage Lottery Fund. She was responsible for drafting the environmental sustainability element of the current National Lottery Heritage Fund strategy and brought her climate change concerns into her new role as Chief Executive at Icon. She is currently coordinating one of the Climate Heritage Network working groups.

Introduction

The Institute of Conservation (Icon) is the professional body for the conservation of cultural heritage. We spoke to CEO Sara Crofts, who has taken the lead on promoting environmental sustainability within her organisation. Sara firmly believes that William Morris's guiding conservation principle that we are only trustees for those that come after us fits very well with ideas of environmental sustainability.

Policy

Icon has only recently started its work on environmental sustainability, with much of its policy and action plan being a work in progress as of the time of writing. For Sara, environmental sustainability is a personal commitment. She brought experience of developing environmental sustainability policies from her previous role at the Heritage Lottery Fund, to start developing a policy and a set of action plans for Icon.

Sara told us the policy will likely be treated like other documents, with a two year review cycle. Alongside the policy, Icon will also develop an action plan which will be reviewed annually.

Targets

Sara explained that Icon does not plan to include 'targets' within their policy as such, but have created what she referred to as a route map, which is split into three strands:

- The first being internal; these are things which Icon as an organisation might do. This will be a fairly limited part of the overall plan. Icon believes that as a small organisation working out of rented office space, options to effect operational change are quite restricted though they have, for example, made a commitment to [DefaultVeg](#). Sara went on to tell us that Icon is however considering transport measures; although staff generally travel by public transport, some volunteers are more likely to travel by car. But there is some concern about the implications of telling volunteers what they can and cannot do.

- The second strand looks at supporting members to be sustainable in their workplaces. Icon is planning to set up a new member network as part of this initiative. The network's objective will be to capture and share good practice through peer-to-peer learning.
- The third and final strand is leadership. This looks at what Icon can do to communicate and advocate, and how promoting sustainability will influence their communications.

Sara deems the second strand to be the most important of the three.

Promoting environmental sustainability within ICON

Sara told us that Icon is increasing [messaging about environmental issues](#) and sharing these on its website. It is also building relationships with other organisations who are working on environmental sustainability in conservation - such as the National Trust's [Fit for the Future](#). This brands itself as an 'environmental dating agency' which shares best practice through peer learning. Sara Crofts also told us that she personally is a member of the international steering committee of the [Climate Heritage Network](#), and is co-ordinating one of the 8 working groups (with a focus on communication).

Promoting environmental sustainability among members

Sara feels that members of Icon are responding well to the introduction of policy, and some members have started to engage and ask for Icon to take action, such as changing to digital publications (magazine and journal). Sara also noted that she feels well supported by four board members who are especially engaged with sustainability.

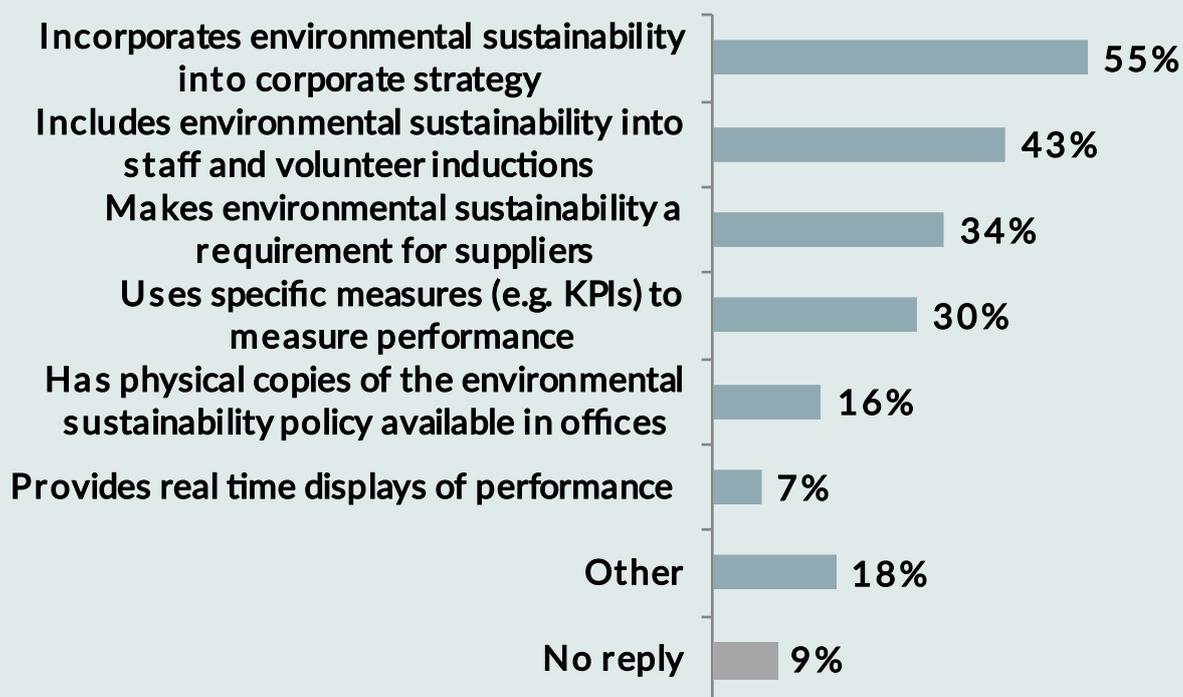
Icon is planning to introduce a member network for environmental sustainability. The network will be one where any members can join, with a level of commitment which suits them. Sara is keen to see how much interest the network gathers; whether only a handful of members join, or whether half of the member base sign up to be involved. Considering the increasing level of interest in environmental sustainability over the last 18 months, Sara believes it will be closer to the latter.

Next we asked respondents about the steps they have taken as an organisation to promote sustainability.

We asked: What steps has your organisation taken to promote environmental sustainability across your organisation?

Respondents told us they have been doing this in a variety of ways. The most common of these was through including ES into corporate strategy. In some instances, this has become an expectation, with for example, IChemE telling us they reviewed its corporate strategy to ensure ES was incorporated following member requests.

Other common steps included, ES being built into staff and volunteer inductions, and requiring suppliers to be ES aware. Some, for example SocEnv, are avoiding suppliers who use single use plastic. Only one organisation told us they are not doing anything to promote sustainability internally. Overall the sector certainly appears to be taking serious efforts to improve general practice when it comes to ES.



Base: 44

The three most commonly taken steps were:

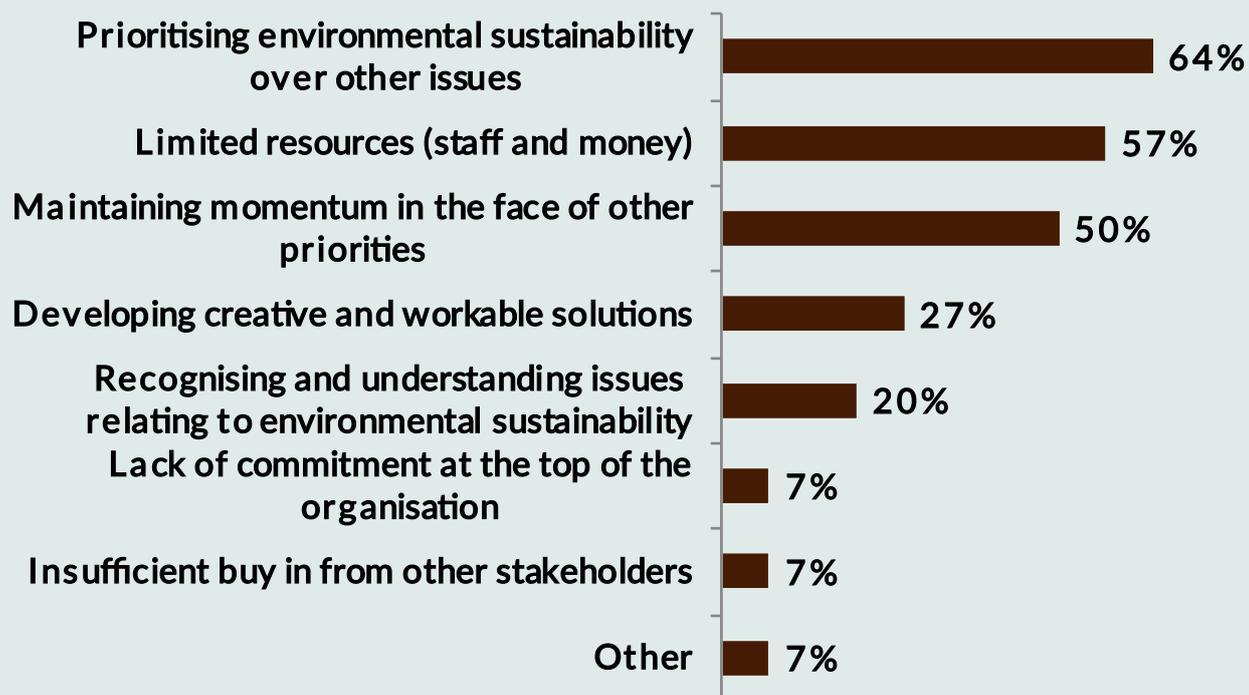
- Inclusion of environmental sustainability into corporate strategy (54%)
- Environmental sustainability included into staff and volunteer inductions (43%)
- Environmental sustainability as a requirement for suppliers (34%)

8 organisations noted other steps not listed in the question, these covered actions from recycling to online hubs, from volunteer and staff forums to encouraging sustainable travel.

While we are sure most professional bodies would wish to embark on large scale projects in order to promote sustainability, they have limited resources and often this activity is some way down their agenda.

We asked: What challenges are there to promoting environmental sustainability within your organisation?

We asked professional bodies what the biggest challenges were to promoting sustainability, the most commonly given answers was the issue of prioritising sustainability over other issues and limits on resources. Half told us it was difficult to maintain momentum in the face of other priorities. Many professional bodies may be struggling to implement environmental targets and have had to put plans to install green energy on hold due to the pressures of weathering the consequences of the COVID-19 outbreak.



Base: 44

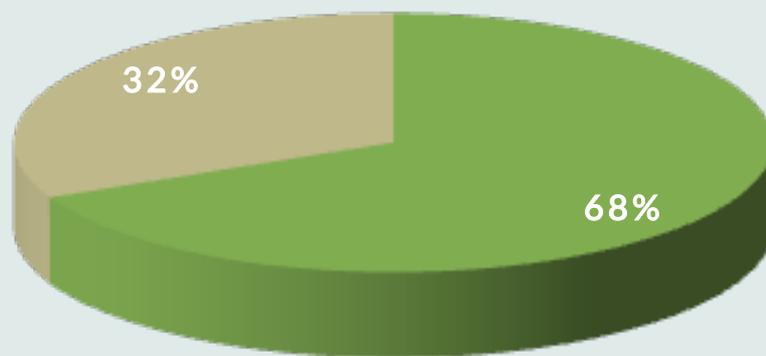
The three most common challenges were:

- Prioritising sustainability over other issues (64%)
- Limited resources (60%)
- Maintaining momentum in the face of other priorities (50%)

We next asked about the change in interest in sustainability among staff and volunteers.

We asked: Has there been a change in the prominence given to environmental sustainability issues within your organisation in the last 18 months?

Over two thirds of our survey sample felt that environmental issues had been pushed up the agenda over the last 18 months. The rest of the sample felt that the priority had stayed the same, none of our respondents felt that environmental issues had become a lesser priority over this time.



- Yes, environmental sustainability issues are a higher priority now
- Yes, environmental sustainability issues are a lower priority now
- No, priority given to environmental sustainability issues has remained the same

Base: 44

- 68% feel environmental issues are more prominent within the organisation over the last 18 months
- No organisations feel environmental issues are lower priority now
- 32% felt priority given to environmental issues has stayed the same

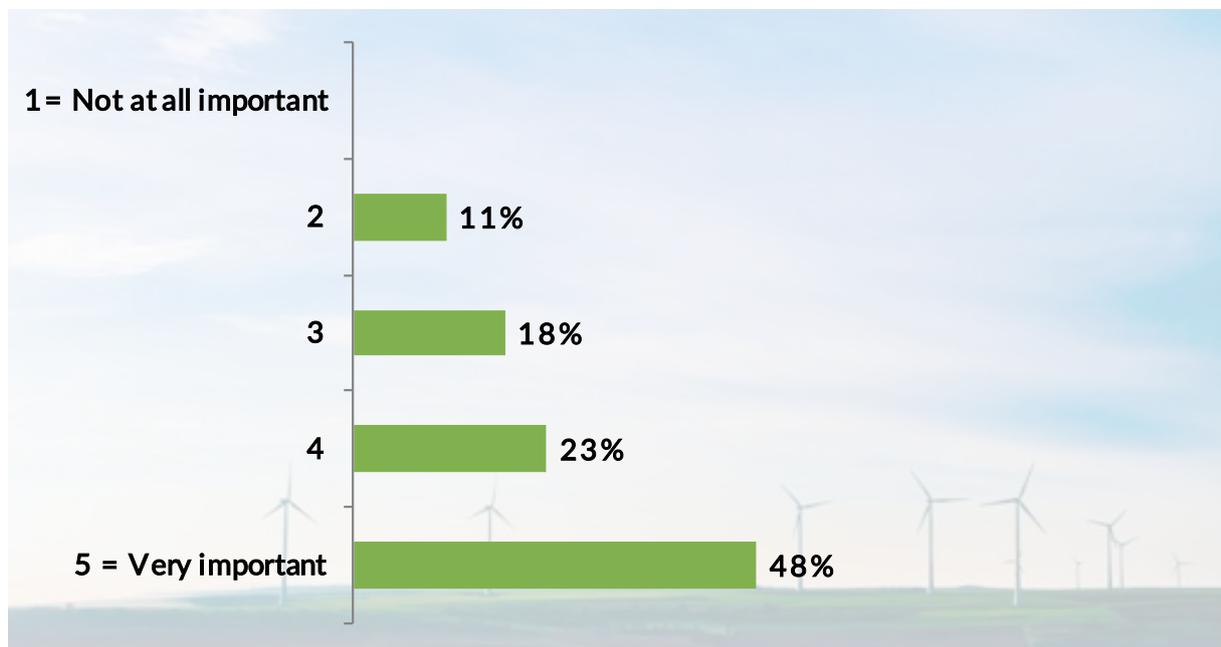
Promoting environmental sustainability among members

In the final section of the survey we asked respondents about how their professional body promoted environmental sustainability among its members, we first asked how respondents rated the importance of doing this on a 5 point scale.

We asked: On a scale of 1 to 5, how important is it for your organisation to promote environmental awareness among members?

Professional bodies felt that promoting ES amongst their members was highly important. With a sizeable proportion rating the importance at 5.

Promoting ES to members was seen as more important than promoting internally. This was reinforced by the interviews we were able to conduct.



Base: 44

- On average, organisations rated the importance of promoting sustainability among members as a 4/5
- Almost half (48%) rated the importance as a 5
- Only five organisations rated the importance as a 2, and no organisations no organisations rated the importance as a 1.

We then asked about the particular steps which are being taken to encourage members to work in a more sustainable way.

We asked: How does your organisation help/encourage members to work in a more environmentally sustainable way?

There was a wide range of responses, the most common of which was signposting to useful resources, used by almost 60% of survey respondents. Less than a quarter told us they have incorporated ES into their ethical code. Changing the ethical code is perhaps a bigger ask than some other actions professional bodies are taking to promote sustainability among members. However, the fact over a fifth of our survey sample have done this is still significant. A small number of respondents told us they do not currently promote ES among their members. We should note that all of these organisations assigned a score of 3 or less to the importance of promoting amongst members. This perhaps shows that while the vast majority of professional bodies are taking steps to promote ES among members, a few do not currently see it as a priority, but these organisations seem to be few and far between.



Base: 44

The top three ways organisations help members to work in a more sustainable way are:

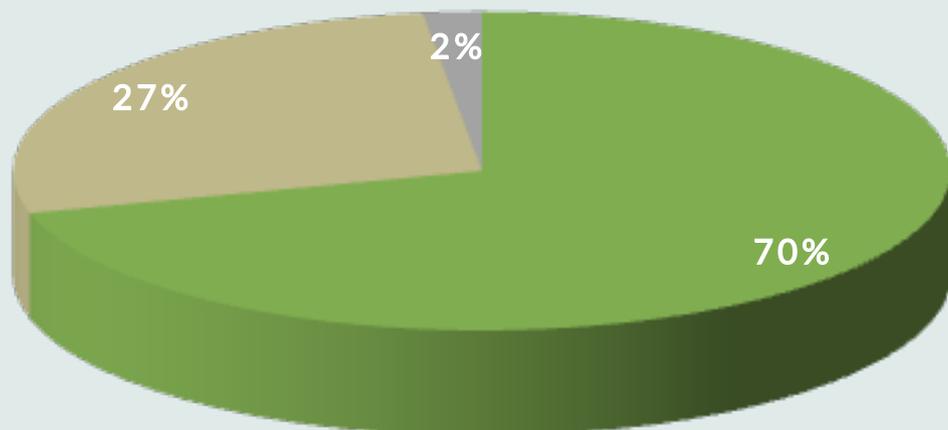
- Signposts to useful resources (59%)
- Knowledge sharing events (55%)
- Publishing articles on environmental sustainability (50%)

Five organisations note their organisation does not do this

Next we went on to ask our sample how the level of interest has changed recently, due to the growing urgency of the climate crisis in both science and the media.

We asked: Has there been any change in the level of interest from members in how they/the profession can practice more sustainably in the last 18 months?

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of organisations felt the level of interest in sustainability among members had increased over the last 18 months. This result is not surprising at all, with environmental sustainability becoming an increasingly urgent and high profile issue, advanced by figures such as Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough. A small number have noted that interest has remained stable and no respondents observed a decline in interest.



- Yes, the level of interest has increased
- Yes, the level of interest has decreased
- No, there has not been any change in the level of interest
- No reply

Base: 44

- 70% of organisations felt the level of interest among members has increased
- No organisations felt the level of interest has decreased
- 27% felt the level of interest has stayed the same

Due to an engaged membership, some professional bodies have felt they are very much pushing at an open door when it comes to encouraging environmental sustainability among members. We would now like to illustrate this further with the case study of IChemE who felt that their member base has been one of the key pressures for being more environmentally sustainable.

Case Study 4: Institution of Chemical Engineers



Nooryesha Choudhury



Nooryesha graduated in 2018 with an MEng in Chemical Engineering from Aston University and joined IChemE as a Technical Knowledge and Policy Intern. She supports a range of technical interest groups including the water, biochemical engineering, pharmaceutical, food and drink Special Interests Groups (SIGs). This most recently includes IChemE's work to support Government to tackle the challenges presented by COVID-19 and also investigating how the Institution can play its part in climate change mitigation.

Alana Collis



Alana has a background in chemistry and chemical engineering with research experience in high value products from biomass through biorefining as well as pharma and fast moving consumer goods. Alongside these technical areas, Alana has experience working on issues relating to research careers and equality, diversity and inclusion (ED&I) in STEM. At IChemE, Alana leads the Learned Society team that provides technical support to members, facilitating and supporting collaboration, technical projects and policy work as well as developing direction on ED&I. Current work involves support for IChemE's work on

a climate change position statement.

Introduction

The Institution of Chemical Engineers (IChemE) is a Royal Chartered professional body for Chemical Engineers. While IChemE does not currently have an environmental sustainability policy, this is something it is working towards. Sustainable and efficient processes are core to what Chemical Engineers do, so they are hoping to incorporate these ideas into a future environmental policy. We spoke with Alana Collis, Learned Society and Policy Manager, and a member of her team, Nooryesha Choudhury, to find out how IChemE is planning to promote environmental sustainability.

Policy

Alana explained that IChemE has received increased pressure from members to increase focus on environmental sustainability. Both Alana and Nooryesha are part of a team researching ways in which IChemE can 'practice what they preach' by introducing sustainability policies which work for them as a small organisation.

Alana told us IChemE has considered signing up to *Pledge to Net Zero*, but did not do so in December 2019. This was because there were insufficient resources to deliver on this commitment and the Institution needs to be absolutely certain that they have the resources to fulfil such a commitment. Nooryesha noted that they are planning to take a proposal for a sustainability policy to the Board of Trustees before the end of 2020 however, COVID-19 may impact this.

Targets

Alana went on to explain how IChemE plan to include achievable, evidence-based, targets as part of their policy. For example, if IChemE were to set targets around their energy efficiency, she would want to investigate what their minimum energy consumption could be and set that as an ambitious, but achievable target. Alana told us that any targets must be measurable, allowing IChemE to publish an annual review on these targets, to demonstrate the progress and work that IChemE has made to meet them.

Promoting environmental sustainability at IChemE

Outside of policy, both Alana and Nooryesha told us that IChemE has some small scale initiatives to promote environmental sustainability within the organisation, such as recycling plastic bottles, tins, paper and card, batteries and printer cartridges. Alana also told us that IChemE is looking into providing electric vehicle charging points in the office. Alana believes this would be very useful as some staff, including herself, own electric vehicles. This is likely to increase in the future, so charging points would be good future proofing. Alana also noted that there are a number of grants available for this type of provision, which would help bring down the cost.

Promoting environmental sustainability among members

Alana believes that promoting sustainability is part of what chemical engineering is about; when a new product or process is developed, there is a responsibility to do it as sustainably as possible, both economically and environmentally. Alana told us that a task group of IChemE's Energy Centre has produced a [guidance document](#) to help support members and the industries they work in. The guide lists 10 steps to help members be more environmentally sustainable in their work and processes. Alana also told us that IChemE is in the process of creating some supplementary case studies to help share best practice. To further supplement their guidance document, Alana told us that IChemE has held webinars and workshops in both Australia and South Africa. These workshops had guest speakers from around the world and Alana noted the event held in South Africa featured attendees from around 20 different countries.

Alana observed how IChemE is very keen to use peer learning and feedback as a way to improve the guidance they give to support their member base. We were told that many of IChemE's members work for consultancy companies, which means both Alana and Nooryesha feel they are pushing at an open door when it comes to seeking scrutiny and advice on the work they are doing.

Conclusions

When we started this piece of research we had very little idea of the sort of response we would solicit, in a real sense it was new, untravelled ground for PARN. Against the continuing backcloth of climate change and global warming it did feel important and something that all professional bodies would need to come to terms with. Little did we know that the urgency of our project was about to be eclipsed by something even more pressing in the form of a global pandemic.

Of course in many ways the two things are inextricably linked and there are many who feel that both are simply a reflection of our mistreatment of our environment. But perhaps we should leave such arguments to others better qualified to pass judgement and to find solutions. Here, we have focused on how the professional body sector is shaping up to the challenge of securing some level of organisational environmental sustainability.

We were delighted to receive a record number of responses for such a survey and this clearly told us there was work underway. What also became clear very early on was that the sector was at very different stages in coming to terms with organisation wide responsibilities and initiatives. The sector is not being swept by a single green wave of activities but rather splashed by intermittent and localised green showers. We were equally pleased that during the course of our research, we did not find a single case of cynical use or indeed misuse of green credentials in order to present an organisation in a beneficial but quite artificial environmentally aware light. In other words the initiatives and approaches all bore the hallmark of authenticity and genuine wishes to make a difference.

Perhaps as a result some elements of our sector were well ahead of the curve and very often these organisations did have a vested interest in the subject matter, it was at the core of their mission and their objects. They serve as valuable templates signposting where others still need to grow and develop.

We would perhaps expect SocEnv to actively promote ideas around environmental sustainability and accountability and that we found a sector leader in this regard. They are prepared to openly proselytize through sharing of best practice which is reassuring. That we found another perhaps in Icon, whose work in the world of conservation clearly has parallels with conservation of the natural environment, was equally pleasing.

At different points on the chart there were many organisations recording some activity and the recent introduction of new initiatives, demonstrating that we are still mapping out new territory, certainly for many in our fold.

Interestingly, while a large number of professional bodies have ES policies, very few have made use of ES targets, and even fewer report on these targets externally. However, this does not mean that professional bodies are necessarily 'not trying' by not setting targets, as a number of professional bodies may not see internal targets as a very effective initiative for change. This can be seen in the Icon case study, where Sara Crofts told us that targets were a lesser priority, as she felt the biggest impacts would be from members making positive changes, rather than a small team of staff.

There are four great case studies here that are well worth looking at in more detail and benchmarking against your own organisation, there are some useful ideas too and certainly PARN itself will be picking some of these up and implementing them.

Perhaps developing an environmental awareness at a corporate level is not something essential for a professional body to flourish but it is essential for us to flourish as a people and we believe it will become increasingly essential if professional bodies are to flourish in the future.

In closing we are wondering how PARN can help with what we might think of as a transition towards a greater green awareness in our sector?

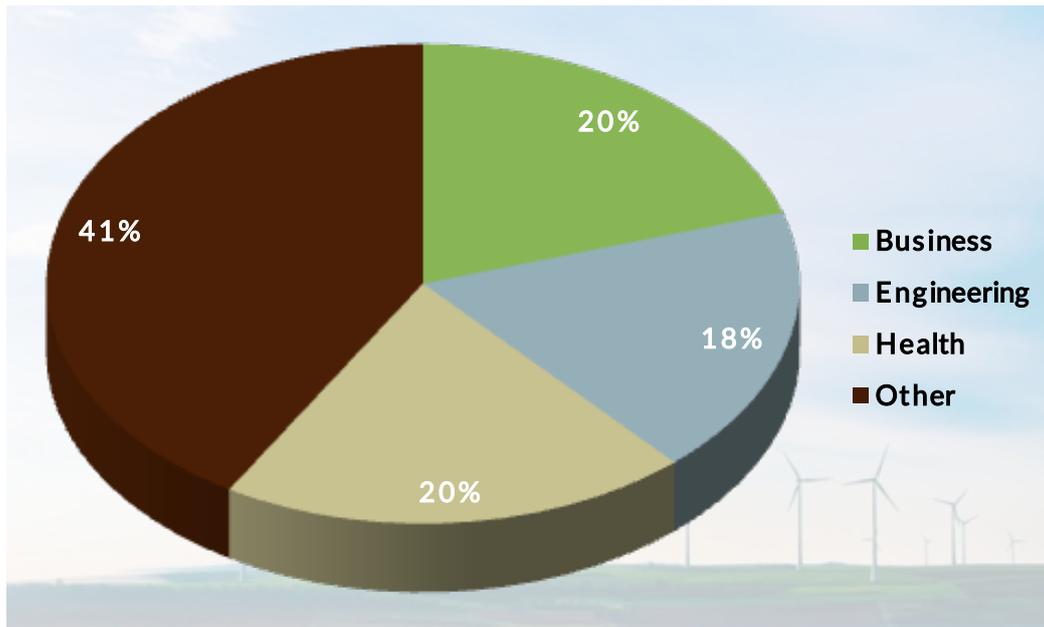
What can we do to help? These were some thoughts pulled from our survey, and includes those we are already starting work on:

- Share good practice/create a guidance documents (16)
- Conferences and workshops (3)
- Sustainability SIG (3)
- Create online tools and resources (2)
- Work with specialist professional bodies (1)
- Work with government bodies (1)
- Research on ISO 14001 (why professional bodies are struggling to obtain it) (1)

We will be taking these results and the intention is to run one or two virtual round table sessions for all PARN members and contributors to the research. This will help us all better understand what works and what we can put in place, what is realistic and what is not. From these we hope to be able to establish a sustainability Special Interest Group (SIG) – we would encourage expressions of interest to be registered with me at robert@parnglobal.com.

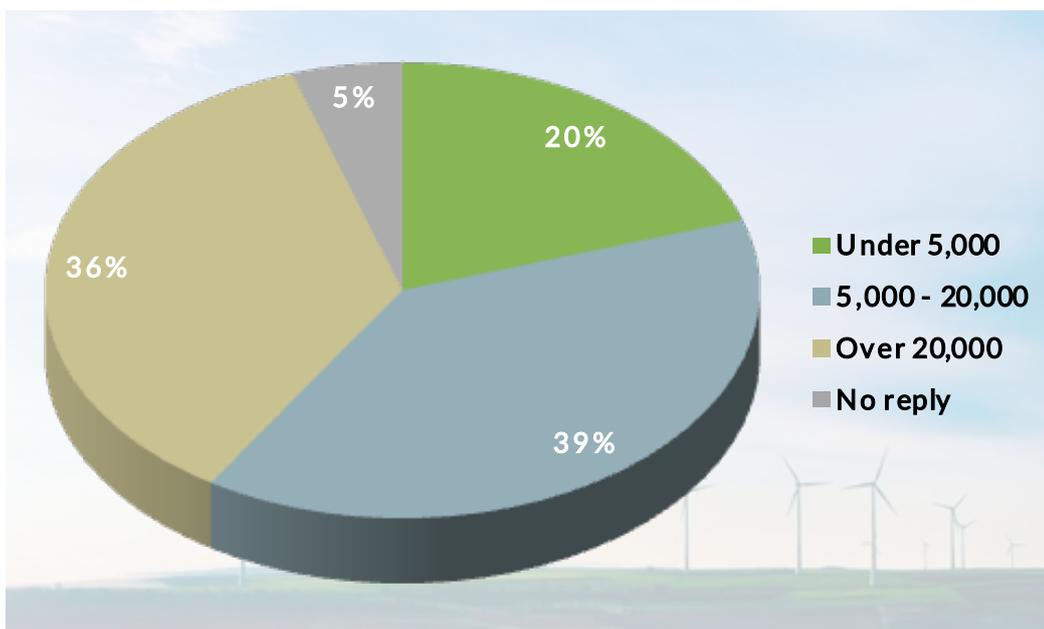
Survey Demographics

Sector



Base: 44

Number of members



Base: 44

About Flash Reports

This 'Greening the Sector' Report has been run as a pilot for a new model of PARN research project. These Flash Reports are intended to provide a quick and concise view of key and current issues. The subject areas can be really quite wide ranging but inevitably will focus on special areas of interest that reflect the activities and concerns of professional bodies.

The process begins with a simple survey of PARN service users and members, very much like the regular PARN Ask the Network questionnaires sent out each fortnight. These may perhaps cover issues in a little more depth however.

This is then followed up with a number of one to one interviews exploring the subject area in more detail. These interviews are used to create a number of case studies that uncover interesting and good practice, and even sometimes examples of what can go wrong.

This creates a really useful backcloth to the topic allowing more detailed examination and further discussion, something that we believe the sector will find both stimulating and very valuable.

But PARN then goes on to develop the Flash Report further with the addition of round table events (virtual or live) to extend the discussion and follow up on prompted concerns and ideas.

The idea always is to have a very quick 'turn around' between inception and completion and our target is to complete the survey, interviews and report within around eight weeks. The round table events will be run according to availability with the regular PARN calendar.

Flash Reports can be commissioned by any professional bodies (we do offer a discount for PARN members) for any subject area they wish to explore. If you would like further information on this new service please contact Lily Roff - lily@parnglobal.com or Robert Pitts – robert@parnglobal.com. We are very happy to discuss your requirements.

In the meantime PARN will be conducting a number of other flash reports as an occasional series of research pieces.