

Case Study: Scottish Parliament Corporate Body

“I see my little boy - 18 months. He is at an eco nursery and we bring him up to hopefully love what’s around him and look after it. That’s just optimism in a little bundle.”

“You can’t just say to the planet, ‘Hold on a minute, I’m busy.’”

Abstract from Masters thesis:

“The impact of a values-based change method on the environmental performance of an organisation”
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Scottish and UK governments have set challenging targets to reduce levels of CO₂e emissions by 2020 and 2050. Organisations, public and private, have a significant amount of influence on government and individuals, and therefore have a large responsibility and influence over the amount and significance of pro-environmental behaviour in society at large. Behaviour change literature reviewed for this research, covering organisational and environmental change, shows that an appeal to values, through emotions, engenders effective (demonstrable, significant and long-lasting) change. This research examines the impact of a values-based change method on the environmental performance of an organisation, through the delivery and evaluation of a pilot for one group of employees. The Carbon Conversations set of workshops, designed for community work, was used in the pilot as it creates a safe and supported environment where people can access and express emotions. Carbon Conversations employs a mixture of factual input and psychology-based group work techniques to take participants through an examination of the issues and options attendant to climate change and resource shortages.

Ten participants from the Scottish Parliament Corporate Body provided information to calculate individual carbon footprints, completed an environmental attitudinal survey, and participated in six two-hour Carbon Conversation sessions. They took part in individual semi-structured interviews, completed an evaluation form and repeated the attitudinal survey two to four months after the sessions completed. Two senior managers were also interviewed.

The data derived from the carbon footprints, semi-structured interviews, attitudinal surveys, and evaluations demonstrates that emotions and values are evoked during participation and that behaviour both at home and in the workplace was affected: over 150 home and work pro-environmental actions are reported completed or planned, and over 12 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalents emissions were saved from the completed home actions alone. Participants of Carbon Conversations are now actively assisting with a programme to raise environmental awareness within the organisation using some of the skills and techniques acquired from the sessions. Analysis confirmed that Carbon Conversations’ behaviour change methods (as supported in the literature reviewed) engendered demonstrable and significant change, with indications this change will be being long-lasting. The findings and analysis confirm that values-based change methods are powerful and transformative and can impact the environmental performance of an organisation.

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