

The Environmental Fundraiser's Handbook

Understanding the bigger picture

[00:00:00] **Natasha:** Welcome to The Environmental Fundraiser's Handbook, a video mini series from the Environmental Funders Network and the Green Fundraisers Forum. [00:00:15] This is a series about why environmentalism isn't broken, it's broke. I'm Natasha Ratter and I run the Green Fundraisers Forum. And from looking after this community, I know that the need for more funding has

[00:00:28] **Natasha:** never been greater, [00:00:30] and yet fundraisers are navigating a system that is stuck, shaped by scarcity, closed doors, and short term thinking. This series is here to open up honest, peer-led conversations about what actually [00:00:45] works in environmental fundraising and how to do it without burning out. We're recording here in The Onion Garden in Westminster, in London, a small patch of green in the middle of a busy city, which feels like a very fitting place for these [00:01:00] important conversations.

[00:01:01] **Natasha:** So wherever you are joining, you are very welcome here and let's get into it.

[00:01:06] **Natasha:** It's easy to feel siloed as a fundraiser or an environmental group leader working on a particular issue or within a particular organisation. And so how do we break out of our silos and connect with the bigger picture without getting lost in its complexity?

[00:01:22] **Natasha:** In episode two, we explore what it means to see your work as part of a wider movement to understand where [00:01:30] environmental issues intersect with other issues, for example, health or poverty and justice, and to have a sense of where the funding is flowing. Our first guest is my fantastic colleague, Patricia Cremona, who [00:01:45] is the Research Manager at the Environmental Funders Network.

[00:01:49] **Natasha:** Patricia has been one of the driving forces behind our flagship report Where The Green Grants Went. We hope to give you a bit of a

bird's eye view of where UK [00:02:00] environmental philanthropic funding is going. So let's head online to speak to Patricia.

Meet Patricia

[00:02:09] **Natasha:** Welcome to The Fundraisers Handbook, Patricia, and thank you so much for joining us.

[00:02:13] **Patricia:** Thanks Natasha. Great [00:02:15] to be here.

[00:02:15] **Natasha:** So Patricia, I wondered actually if you could just tell us a little bit about yourself, and where does your kind of passion for nature and the environment come from, and why is research kind of so important to you within [00:02:30] your work?

[00:02:31] **Patricia:** Hmm. Yeah, a good question.

[00:02:34] **Patricia:** Well, I, I think, you know, probably my reasons for working in this sector are, are similar to, those of many, of, many of, well, you and many of those listening. it's really just, you know, appreciating the natural world around me and recognising the importance that being in nature has for my own health and wellbeing.

[00:02:52] **Patricia:** and, and that of others. And I guess, feeling the, the frustration of seeing that, you know, the health of the ecosystems [00:03:00] decline and the effect that that has that has on on me and on communities around me, and especially on communities, you know, around the world that are most affected by the environmental issues that we're working to address.

[00:03:13] **Patricia:** there's a real sense of the kind of the [00:03:15] unfairness of it. and the fact that, you know, healthy natural environments is something that, we should all have a right to, for our own health and wellbeing as much as them having a right to exist in themselves as well, and I think [00:03:30] research plays such an important role in helping us to understand, both understand the importance of nature for us and, for, you know, communities, for the planet as a whole.

[00:03:42] Patricia: but also understanding how to, [00:03:45] address the threats to nature and to the natural environment. and. You know, it's data obviously is a really important part of that, and sort of quantitative evidence. and obviously the, Where The Green Grants Went to are one example of, [00:04:00] of that in terms of helping us to understand what's being done and what might need to be done.

[00:04:05] Patricia: but, you know, evidence comes in a variety of different forms as well. It's not just data, you know, I think we, we need to also listen to the stories of those who are most affected, [00:04:15] and those who are experiencing, firsthand the effects of these environmental crises. And I see, I see research, you know, not just as a sort of data gathering exercise.

[00:04:24] Patricia: As a way of really kind of understanding all of those stories, and listening as deeply as we [00:04:30] can to those that are most affected. And obviously trying to hear the voice of nature in there as well, which is, is obviously quite difficult to capture in traditional, research. But it's also something that's obviously really important to, to remember to take into account.

[00:04:44] Natasha: Wow, what a [00:04:45] beautiful answer.

[00:04:46] Natasha: I wonder if we could kind of go back to, I guess a bit of an explainer of the Where The Green Grants Went report, that, you know, we've been doing for a few years now. so can you sort of give us a bit of a summary of what the report is and why it feels important?

[00:05:06] Patricia: Yeah, absolutely.

[00:05:07] Patricia: So, so our, Where The Green Grants Went series, it goes back, over 20 years now that we've been compiling, collating this [00:05:15] data. So it provides a really good sort of long-term overview and essentially, it shows an overview of environmental grant making by UK-based trusts, foundations, and lottery sources.

[00:05:27] Patricia: and it looks at trends over time [00:05:30] as well as patterns across different thematic issues and geographies. So both within and outside the uk. And we know from what we hear from funders and fundraisers that the

research is really valuable, in helping them to understand [00:05:45] the environmental funding landscape and they're placed within it.

[00:05:48] **Patricia:** it helps to identify possible gaps and make the case for more funding so both for the environment overall, but also for particular issues and geographies.

[00:05:56] **Natasha:** Amazing.

[00:05:57] **Natasha:** How much money is flowing out of the UK philanthropy system to environmental causes?

[00:06:05] **Patricia:** Well, so our research indicates that giving to environmental causes from UK foundations and lottery sources, which is what we track [00:06:15] through our research, amounted to just under £700 million

[00:06:19] **Patricia:** in 2021. And I mean, that figure is already, was already about three times higher than we saw in our previous edition, which was three years [00:06:30] prior. So that was a huge, a huge increase that we saw over time, coming from foundations in particular.

[00:06:36] **Natasha:** And so the most recent report is 'Where The Green Grants Went 9'.

[00:06:41] **Natasha:** So it's the ninth report.

[00:06:43] **Natasha:** Um, what kind of things does this cover? and where exactly is the data from?

[00:06:49] **Patricia:** So the data that we include in the report primarily come from annual financial reports. Some funders upload their data to the 360 Giving website, which is a really useful resource, [00:07:00] and we'd love to see more funders uploading their data there.

[00:07:02] **Patricia:** We're confident that our reports capture the vast majority of environmental funding from UK philanthropic organisations. The report covers UK based organisations, but it does look at funding across the UK [00:07:15] and

outside the UK. and many of the funders, included do fund outside the uk. So it's very much not a UK specific, piece of research.

[00:07:23] **Natasha:** Great.

[00:07:24] **Natasha:** Um, so what, what kind of are the issue areas that the money's going to and has that changed?

[00:07:31] **Patricia:** So what we've seen, which is possibly not surprising, is that the largest sort of environmental issue area that this, this funding goes towards is climate. That, and that accounts for approximately a third of all of the environmental funding that we were [00:07:45] tracking.

[00:07:45] **Patricia:** We also saw work on financial systems. that also was a particularly significant increase and that now ranks sort of second in our list of environmental issues, under climate. Other categories where we saw significant uplifts were [00:08:00] terrestrial ecosystems, which now ranks third in the list. And agriculture and food was another big one.

[00:08:06] **Patricia:** But despite the overall increase in funding that we saw, the amounts going to certain issue areas actually decreased. So for example, marine and [00:08:15] coastal ecosystems, fresh-water issues, and also toxics and chemical pollution were some of those that we saw an actual decrease in the amounts.

[00:08:24] **Natasha:** And so, yeah, I think the report kind of talks about those

[00:08:28] **Natasha:** issue areas [00:08:30] that receive the least amount of funding and they sort of label those as the 'Cinderella' issues. So I was wondering if you could talk a bit more about this, this concept of Cinderella issues? You know, what are they, why maybe are they [00:08:45] underfunded and have there been any kind of trends over time?

[00:08:48] **Natasha:** Or are they always the least funded issues?

[00:08:51] **Patricia:** So these issues that we call, we call them Cinderellas because they receive such little attention and have generally received very little attention,

you know, over the course of, of our [00:09:00] research, sort of stuck at the bottom of the list. and we have seen some recent trend in terms of some of these issues, rising, but others remain stubbornly at the bottom of the list.

[00:09:11] **Patricia:** So I've already referenced fresh water issues and chemical [00:09:15] pollution. They still remain, very low down unfortunately. And as I said last time, they actually, saw a very slight decrease, in the amount of funding going towards those issues. There are three other categories that we've previously referred to as Cinderella issues, that's [00:09:30] trade and finance, transport and consumption and waste.

[00:09:33] **Patricia:** And we did see the amount of funding going to all three of those, increasing in particular to the finance category. but of those I just wanted to flag in particular, consumption and waste is, is another one that still [00:09:45] remains very near to the bottom of the list accounting for about 1% of overall funding.

[00:09:49] **Patricia:** And so despite the increases still, you know, receive a very small amount of the overall funding and that, and that is concerning given that consumption patterns obviously represent a critical [00:10:00] underlying driver of environmental destruction.

[00:10:03] **Natasha:** Yeah, it feels so surprising to see those issues at the bottom because they really do feel like the key drivers behind so much environmental change.

[00:10:11] **Natasha:** So it'll be really interesting to see what the data says when the report [00:10:15] comes out later this year and if there's any shift.

[00:10:17] **Natasha:** Um, so you talked earlier a bit about the, you know, the funders are based in the UK, but they give both within the UK and internationally, what are the kind of trends around, I guess geographic distribution of, environmental funding?

[00:10:36] **Patricia:** Yeah, so, so we see funding very much going, internationally around the world. So foundation funding went to 114 different [00:10:45] countries worldwide. And not surprisingly, the UK was the largest individual country

recipient. But what's interesting to see is that the proportion of funding staying within the UK has been declining over time.

[00:10:56] **Patricia:** So in 2021 it was just 17%, and three years [00:11:00] previously it was about double that proportion. So it's, that seems to be quite a significant trend in terms of funders spending less their money within the UK and more outside the UK. And when we look at the picture overall, so nearly half the foundation funding went to work

[00:11:13] **Patricia:** that was at [00:11:15] international levels, so taking place across multiple continents. But in terms of sort of more con continent specific funding, we saw 14% of funding going to Europe outside of the uk, 11% to Asia, 6% to Africa, and only very [00:11:30] negligible proportions to other continents.

[00:11:33] **Natasha:** Okay. That's interesting.

[00:11:34] **Natasha:** And I guess we don't necessarily have the information around, around why, or like the motivations behind the different international giving strategies? [00:11:45]

[00:11:45] **Patricia:** We know that, given such a large proportion of the funding is going at this international level, so across sort of multiple countries, we know that that's, a lot of that is coming from big climate funders that are supporting

[00:11:58] **Patricia:** climate work that [00:12:00] happens at an international level. Climate is obviously a very, you know, it's, it's a global issue. It's not specific to one country. And so I think that that, is perhaps the reason behind the trend that we're seeing there in terms of funding going at that kind of global level.

[00:12:14] **Natasha:** Yeah, [00:12:15] that's really interesting and it was really striking as well when I had a look at the report, how the data is so skewed by these kind of ten big funders, who give huge grants.

[00:12:27] **Natasha:** I think the average is over a million or something like that. [00:12:30] But, but in terms of the majority of funders, EFN, is has been describing the funding as scattershot. Can you talk a bit about, yeah, I guess what we mean by scattershot funding? [00:12:45]

[00:12:45] **Patricia:** Yeah, absolutely. So I think what we really mean when we say that is that, grants are generally speaking, spread very widely and very thinly. I mean, those larger funders that you talk about are somewhat an exception to that in terms of their large grant [00:13:00] sizes, but in the majority of cases, the majority of grants in our dataset are very small. So we found the median grant sizes just £10,000 .

[00:13:09] **Patricia:** and we recorded, I think it was 4,500 different F Foundation grants, and those were distributed to [00:13:15] nearly 3000 recipients. That's an average of 1.5 grants per recipient. And if most of those grants are at the level of £10,000 or below, you know, that's, that's not, that's not huge. And in fact, research has shown that, it might cost a charity

[00:13:29] **Patricia:** between [00:13:30] about £3000 -£4,000 to apply for a grant on average. And we found nearly a third of the grants in our dataset were worth, worth less than that amount. and so that's really, you know, I think that's a key takeaway for funders is, you know, grants of this small size [00:13:45] are, are they worthwhile for the organisations receiving them given the cost?

[00:13:50] **Patricia:** which I think is often not appreciated by, by certain funders, the cost it takes to apply for that grant.

[00:13:56] **Natasha:** Yeah. I found, that really alarming when, [00:14:00] when I was looking at the data as well because I spent so many of my first years as a fundraiser applying for grants under £5,000 and, you know Yeah

[00:14:10] **Natasha:** seeing the mass that, that might have actually cost my organisation quite a lot is, [00:14:15] yeah, very startling to read.

[00:14:16] **Natasha:** Um, so 'Where The Green Grants Went 9' was a bit unique in the kind of series of reports because it included a sort of second section, that shared really strong recommendations for funders, but also kind of pushed the sector to really acknowledge

[00:14:36] **Natasha:** the opposition, and how they are funding. And so there was some really, really interesting kind of narrative around, [00:14:45] yeah, I guess the

strategies and the fundraising, funding strategies of, the opposition and the far right. and yeah. I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about that?

[00:14:58] **Patricia:** Yeah, yeah, [00:15:00] absolutely. So, so this part of the report aimed to draw learnings from really the successes of those funders that support work in opposition to the environmental movement. and understand the ways in which they've funded to achieve those successes and see what we [00:15:15] can, we can learn from that.

[00:15:17] **Patricia:** And the recommendations we make on the basis of these learnings really closely reflect what we often hear from fundraisers that they need from funders in terms of how they fund, so it wouldn't come as a surprise. They're things like longer-term funding, [00:15:30] increased flexibility, more trusting funding relationships, higher risk tolerance.

[00:15:34] **Patricia:** Reduce bureaucracy, but there are also recommendations about what kind of work needs more funding to drive a systemic change needed. these include things like not shying away from [00:15:45] issues that are seen as more radical or political, such as challenging capitalism. Centering a suit of justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion, and investing in cross-cutting institutions and infrastructure that strengthens the movement of a, as a whole.[00:16:00]

[00:16:00] **Natasha:** Yeah, absolutely. And yeah, and the, the report, this particular report is the reason why I wanted to work at EFN 'cause as an environmental fundraiser, and I know many other people feel the same, it's. Something that you just read [00:16:15] front to back because the information within it is just so helpful and important when you are feeling quite siloed to be able to get that bird's eye view and it's very rare to be find a report so readable that's so [00:16:30] clear and engaging.

[00:16:32] **Natasha:** so yeah, thank you so much for all of the work that you do to pull it together.

[00:16:36] **Natasha:** I just had one final question as well. so. The European equivalent of EFN has just published their report on where environmental funding is going. So can you share kind of any of the headlines of that report, and how it may or may not kind of compare to ours?

[00:16:56] **Patricia:** Yeah, of course. So, so Philea

[00:16:59] **Patricia:** is an [00:17:00] organisation at the European level that coordinates a European Environmental Funders Group, and they produce regular analyses that are similar to ours, but they cover foundations and lotteries across Europe. Their latest report covers 2024. That's just been published. And it gives us some [00:17:15] indication of the trends in UK funding that we might expect to see in our next, 'Where The Green Grants Went' report.

[00:17:20] **Patricia:** So they found that environmental funding in 2024 totaled €2.2 billion, and that was a 38% increase compared to their previous report in 2021.

[00:17:30] So a really encouraging increase, fresh-water and pollution, which we spoke about earlier, remain at the bottom of the list unfortunately. But funding to both categories did increase compared to 2021.

[00:17:42] **Patricia:** and two other of the Cinderella issues [00:17:45] that we've spoken about, so consumption and waste and transport received less funding than in 2021, so some interesting trends coming through there. Ones to keep an eye out for in our own report when it comes out later this year.

[00:17:58] **Natasha:** Yeah, absolutely. And [00:18:00] yeah, thank you so much for, for sharing that, like sneak peek with us as well.

[00:18:05] **Natasha:** so yes, thank you so much Patricia, for joining us. it is just so incredibly helpful to understand where the green grants are going, the [00:18:15] key trends, the changes over time and the recommendations that can be taken from the data. and also importantly how we apply all of these insights into our funding and fundraising practices.

[00:18:29] **Natasha:** So thank you [00:18:30] so, so much for sharing these insights with us.

[00:18:33] **Patricia:** Thanks, Natasha. My pleasure.

Meet Jess

[00:18:39] **Natasha:** I am so pleased to introduce our second guest, Jess Boyd. Jess is the [00:18:45] Philanthropy & Partnerships Manager at the Environmental Investigation Agency. She's here today to bring the perspective of someone fundraising within an organisation that works on a global scale and on issues that deeply intersect with social justice.[00:19:00]

[00:19:00] **Natasha:** She does this all whilst experimenting with the ways that we might do fundraising differently. Hi Jess. Thank you so much for joining us.

[00:19:09] **Jess:** Thank you so much for having me.

[00:19:11] **Natasha:** So you joined, the Environmental Investigation [00:19:15] Agency as a Philanthropy Manager and then kind of expanded the role to include partnerships.

[00:19:21] **Natasha:** So can you tell us a little bit about that evolution and I guess what it has revealed about what fundraising work actually is? [00:19:30]

[00:19:30] **Jess:** So when I joined the Environmental Investigation Agency or EIA, I'd recently moved back from Seattle where I'd been really embedded in the philanthropy landscape there, and more of the progressive approach to philanthropy.[00:19:45]

[00:19:45] **Jess:** So I was looking for somewhere that was open to that kind of approach. So even though I started as the Philanthropy Manager. I was very much trying to build foundations along the way to embed more of a kind of [00:20:00] partnerships and relationships based approach to it. And I think part of that necessitated bringing along the organisation and creating some cultural change about what.

[00:20:11] **Jess:** Philanthropy and fundraising can look like. but also kind of [00:20:15] selling people on that by demonstrating the power of it, by showing it to them. So I think once they started seeing what it looked like in practice, there was a lot more scope to broaden the role. So when I expanded my [00:20:30] role to include the term Partnerships Manager as well.

[00:20:33] **Jess:** I think it was a helpful flag to a lot of people in the organisation because ultimately philanthropy is all about moving assets so that people and [00:20:45] issues that need the funding that they should already have, have access to it. and that all dependent upon visibility and relationships and engagement and touch points and experiences.

[00:20:57] **Natasha:** Amazing. Thank you.

[00:20:58] **Natasha:** Um, and so fundraising for like really complex issues, so environmental crime, human rights systems change all of the work that EIA does and also like in so many different contexts and countries, comes I'm sure with its own kind of set of opportunities, but also definitely challenges.

[00:21:22] **Natasha:** so what, what have you kind of learned about communicating that complexity and, do funders get it? [00:21:30]

[00:21:30] **Jess:** well, firstly, I love a complex issue and I think that people are really complex and the world we live in is really complex. And kind of intersectionality touched so many people's lives, [00:21:45] whether or not they're being vocal about it or perhaps even aware of it.

[00:21:49] **Jess:** And I think that when you talk honestly about the complexity and tensions of the things that we are fundraising for and working on, [00:22:00] it's a much more authentic and understandable picture. So I found that EIA's work very much sells itself. You know, there were, the problems that we're working on are so complex and [00:22:15] nuanced, like you said, environmental crime and investigations and campaigns all around that.

[00:22:20] **Jess:** But environmental crime is huge. You know it, we are working on wildlife, we're working on climate, oceans, forests, and then underneath each of those [00:22:30] buckets, there's subsections of it. and it's happening in different countries around the world. I feel like when you share that complexity and nuance with people, they feel also valued and respected, that you're not kind of [00:22:45] giving them this very kind of sanitised, infantilised version of what's happening, and that you are trust them with the complexity at hand.

[00:22:56] **Jess:** and I found that to be. Really impactful in the [00:23:00] conversations that I've had.

[00:23:01] **Natasha:** Yeah. I remember, speaking to you about this a while ago and it really stuck with me that, that sense of, actually it can be almost quite patronising to assume people can't handle that complexity and also your own [00:23:15] authenticity.

[00:23:16] **Natasha:** And actually it's almost a form of, well humanising people and almost even flattering them to say, actually we, I think you can get it. You can handle the complexity and the authenticity.

[00:23:27] **Jess:** I think the, the additional part in that is having that [00:23:30] conversation in a way that doesn't fully centre the donor or the funder as the most integral piece of the puzzle.

[00:23:38] **Jess:** But I think when you begin to kind of cater to funders and donors in an. [00:23:45] In an overt way, it's really easy to lose sight of the work and the authenticity that actually engages people in the long run.

[00:23:53] **Natasha:** Yeah. Amazing.

[00:23:54] **Natasha:** And that leads quite nicely onto my next question, which is, around your approach to your work.

[00:24:01] **Natasha:** So. I'm really, really interested in your emerging work around what decolonisation means for fundraising. we hear a lot about that from funders and kind of philanthropy more [00:24:15] generally, but what it means specifically for fundraising and fundraisers. So I was wondering if you could talk a little bit about this kind of, how did, how did that work start, and, where is your thinking leading you at the moment?[00:24:30]

[00:24:30] **Jess:** I think I'm really grateful to have fallen into fundraising and philanthropy in America. I think as a mixed race person growing up in London, I was always very aware of [00:24:45] living kind of in grey spaces or in between spaces, which I think often helped me think about things differently from both a position of privilege,

[00:24:56] Jess: but also experiencing bias and certain struggles as [00:25:00] well. but because in the UK there's quite kind of a polite and passive and at times still quite violent approach to the ways we discuss things like race, [00:25:15] or access to income and those things, it's hard to really get my teeth into it. And I think living in America where there is such overt and visible violence forces [00:25:30] out really

[00:25:31] Jess: obvious, wonderful good as well.

[00:25:35] Jess: Um, and I was lucky enough to come up in philanthropy surrounded by a lot of people questioning norms and creating something different. and some of those people are Vu Le, who's a Vietnamese American who has a blog. And I want to say it's called Nonprofit af, but he changed it a while ago, so it was more pc, but yeah, I think it's Nonprofit AF and he's amazing.

[00:26:03] Jess: And he actually introduced me to my friend Michelle Muri, one of my friends who's also in the philanthropy space in Seattle. And with Michelle. She invited me to help [00:26:15] create a movement and organisation called Community-Centric Fundraising, which really was founded on this idea that so much of philanthropy and fundraising is basically [00:26:30] catering to those with finances and the capacity to create change.

[00:26:34] Jess: So instead of really creating change, you're all kind of dancing around the 1%, which is so difficult because then you lose so much [00:26:45] of what you were were trying to do in the first place. so they really talk about recognising things like race and the intersectionality of identity and being in community, and that ultimately, if [00:27:00] we are all working towards the same causes, then does there need to be so much competition between nonprofits and charity?

[00:27:07] Jess: If we all ultimately believe that our number one goal, for example, in our case is protecting the environment, then if a different [00:27:15] environmental organisation gets the grant whilst disappointing, is that also not still a win for our sector? So that was really interesting and to help build that movement with her, I think really opened my eyes to [00:27:30] the ways that you can really have these conversations.

[00:27:34] Jess: But I think it also gave me the confidence to have them, because I was surrounded by so many people pushing back.

[00:27:41] Jess: And then I think when I moved to the UK I was unsure of what the response would be to that kind of approach. And then I think additionally, once you start unravelling the thread of charity and look at, you know, the roots of charity and the politics of pity and where it all started, you know, it's often

[00:28:03] Jess: people wanting to help other people without understanding those people. And we obviously work in the environmental sector, which is really interesting because you know, when you're [00:28:15] working, let's say on forests.

[00:28:18] Jess: Trees don't necessarily have a voice, but at the same time, there are Indigenous and local communities who do have a voice, who are dependent on those trees and those forests.

[00:28:28] Jess: So I think [00:28:30] constantly questioning the roots of the work. And how deeply that's embedded into how we talk about it and how we approach it and how we engage with people is really helpful in [00:28:45] re-imagining it. And you know, if we're talking about, for example, facilitating relationships with indigenous people and local communities, but then we're working in organisations and talking to our [00:29:00] friends using colonial language.

[00:29:02] Jess: We're just perpetuating the same norms under a slightly different guise. So yeah, I've been thinking about that a lot.

[00:29:09] Natasha: Gosh. Yeah. What a rich and, yeah, beautiful answer.

[00:29:15] I feel like we could do a whole podcast series just on this one topic. but yeah, and how it, how it feeds into so many different areas.

[00:29:25] Natasha: and it's also so interesting how, yeah, you are sort of bringing some of the [00:29:30] work that you started in the States and also how that, how that confidence kind of comes from doing this work in community with other people, 'cause it is so hard to, I guess forge new, [00:29:45] things just on your own. And my next question was actually gonna be around, the.

[00:29:49] **Natasha:** Particular kind of stories from your organisation that, you feel most, I guess, passionate about? Are there any other kind of, or do you have a [00:30:00] particular kind of success story or impact story that, yeah, that you might be able to share?

[00:30:08] **Jess:** I was actually thinking about this question on the way over here.

[00:30:12] **Jess:** and at first I was thinking of quite big [00:30:15] wins, but actually I think. And, and we do have so many big wins, but actually I think what most excites me are the really small and quiet everyday wins. And the, these very [00:30:30] kind of intimate ways that relationships have slowly built. since I've joined EIA and I think one example of that is someone, who donated to us, I believe through 1% [00:30:45] For the Planet. And

[00:30:47] **Jess:** when I joined, I began getting to know him and it's a really small consultancy, but he's built it around his ethics and getting to know him and how [00:31:00] he's kind of taken a pay cut and loses clients because what's most important to him is a certain type of ethics.

[00:31:07] **Jess:** I'm really excited by the Future Stewards programme, and that was born out of

[00:31:15] **Jess:** talking to people about brand ambassadorships, which have their place, but too often a form of greenwashing and kind of amassing as many celebrities as you can, and then kind of putting MySpace style photos of them on your website. [00:31:30] So when I started talking to people, they were saying they're really burnt out by this, and they felt it was kind of watering down their brand as well, and that people were just kinda harvesting as many celebrities as they could.

[00:31:42] **Jess:** And so I think taking that same relationship-based [00:31:45] approach led to the birth of the Future Stewards. And that shouldn't be particularly radical, but to a lot of people it was that, wow, you're not gonna ask me to fit into this kind of uncomfortable box that doesn't acknowledge, you know, the life I lead or the [00:32:00] work I do, was really freeing to people.

[00:32:02] **Jess:** And it was really exciting to see people, feel the spaciousness of that.

[00:32:09] **Natasha:** Yeah. Amazing. And yeah, really excited to see how that particular project as well, [00:32:15] pans out over the coming months and years. but yeah, just left to say thank you Jess, for such a, a rich and incredible conversation. just always so impressed by how much you lean into complexity [00:32:30] and, bring people with you as well.

[00:32:33] **Natasha:** and also just how refreshingly authentic. you are. And yeah, and it's just always such a, such a joy to, to chat with you. So yeah, thank [00:32:45] you so much for coming on the podcast.

[00:32:46] **Jess:** Thank you. The feelings were very mutual.

Meet Elizabeth

[00:32:52] **Natasha:** We'd now love to bring in the perspective of someone working on an incredibly important, quite technical and specific issue [00:33:00] area, chemicals, toxics, and pollution. This is one of those Cinderella issue areas that Patricia spoke about in our first interview. Chemicals, toxics and pollution remain a key driver of environmental [00:33:15] change and are having a huge impact on human health and the health of our ecosystems and wildlife.

[00:33:22] **Natasha:** I'm really pleased to be joined by the co-founder of the CHEM Trust, the powerhouse that is Elizabeth Salter Green. [00:33:30] Welcome to The Fundraiser's Handbook Elizabeth,

[00:33:33] **Elizabeth:** Thank you very much for inviting me.

[00:33:37] **Natasha:** So you started your career in marine conservation and within very kind of [00:33:45] specialised science, looking at endocrine physiology.

[00:33:49] **Natasha:** So can you kind of take us back to that moment when you realised that chemicals had become, really central to environmental protection work?

[00:33:59] Elizabeth: Yes, [00:34:00] I can. it was knowing the science and undermining how the manmade synthetic chemicals that we're all taking for granted that we are using day in, day out in our [00:34:15] 20th, 21st century lifestyles and how they

[00:34:19] Elizabeth: do a lot more than the things they're in the products to do. And they can disrupt our hormones and they can cause reproductive difficulties. [00:34:30] They can cause neurological problems in children, and a lot are now implicated in increased cancer rates. But I started my career on endocrine or hormone disrupting chemicals at WWF

[00:34:43] Elizabeth: and we had very [00:34:45] much a wildlife focus and there's a lot of data out there back in the 1990s that was showing that wildlife populations were crashing because of the industrial chemicals [00:35:00] to which they were being exposed.

[00:35:01] Natasha: And you, you kind of helped take this work, from a programme within WWF and into founding the CHEM Trust.

[00:35:12] Natasha: So what was it like kind of moving [00:35:15] from being a scientist and a kind of policy expert into suddenly also needing to be a fundraiser?

[00:35:24] Elizabeth: That, yes, that was such a hard [00:35:30] job. And of course, when WWF gave me the opportunity, I just grabbed it with both hands because I really, really wanted to do it and I knew, I knew the science and I knew I knew the policy, and I didn't even think about.

[00:35:44] Elizabeth: Where the money was [00:35:45] going to come from. But, I was very fortunate that, I had some incredibly good support. They introduced me to, a fundraising consultant [00:36:00] and I then at the same time, in about 2014, I discovered the Environmental Funders Network and those three things really just changed the [00:36:15] fortunes of CHEM Trusts around.

[00:36:16] Elizabeth: They really did, and the Environmental Funders Network has just been such a support to me, incredible.

[00:36:23] **Natasha:** and it's, yeah, just really, really heartening, to hear that, yeah, that we're having an impact. [00:36:30] So you have previously kind of described fundraising at the beginning of your journey with fundraising as one of, the kind of loneliest parts of the job in some way.

[00:36:42] **Natasha:** and now CHEM Trust has grown from being [00:36:45] two people to 22 people. and so. I guess what helped to kind of transform, that experience, but also yeah, the organisation. Can you talk a bit more about that, that journey? [00:37:00]

[00:37:02] **Elizabeth:** it was incredibly lonely because, I didn't know any other fundraisers and I didn't really have any experience on how to, to, to raise money at all.

[00:37:14] **Elizabeth:** But [00:37:15] with, the support that I got. I quite quickly worked out that it's all about building relationships. It's about [00:37:30] finding rapport with people, and it's about understanding why they care about the environment or why they care about future generations of both wildlife or humans, or the quality of the river that [00:37:45] runs at the bottom of their garden, or their passion, which is the Amazon Rainforest.

[00:37:50] **Elizabeth:** And what is so obvious to me is that it doesn't matter how much biodiversity protection you do. [00:38:00] It doesn't matter how much you try and mitigate that wildlife and that environment against climate change if you are not addressing toxic pollution at the same time, those species that live there, [00:38:15] they won't survive anyway for all your biodiversity and climate change protection.

[00:38:21] **Elizabeth:** And so it was, I, I found it quite easy to communicate with people and I could persuade them of the [00:38:30] importance of the work. And as a result, CHEM Trust was well supported. And yes, we went from two to 22, we're in four nations now. And it's a success, but in [00:38:45] 2014, I had to focus on getting the money in because no one else was going to do it.

[00:38:53] **Natasha:** Yeah, absolutely. And you are clearly very, very good at it.

[00:38:57] **Natasha:** Um, and yeah, just diving into that, you know, telling that story as well, so chemical pollution can be quite a difficult, issue to fundraise for. It can be kind of easier to raise money for tigers than it is for endocrine disrupting chemicals,

[00:39:16] **Natasha:** so how, how have you kind of learned to communicate such a complex and technical issue, in a way that. That kind of resonates with people, I guess, yeah, how do you kind of relate it to the bigger picture? [00:39:30]

[00:39:30] **Elizabeth:** Well, yes, no, you're completely right, raising money for tigers, elephants, rhinoceros, I'm sure it is hard work, but toxic chemicals is a whole lot more hard work.

[00:39:41] **Elizabeth:** But I think. If you [00:39:45] think about the end points and you think about how, our orcas, our resident orca population in the United Kingdom, who that lives in our seas around here, they can no longer reproduce. [00:40:00] They are a doomed population. They will all die out. Why is that? Because they're all so heavily polluted with PCBs and other nasty chemicals, and it's not only, Wildlife that are impacted by toxic [00:40:15] chemicals. There is no doubt about that, that the links are growing stronger between, our difficulty to reproduce fertility problems, the increased rate in hormonally driven cancers, and now the neurological [00:40:30] impacts on children. You know, they are being linked to the

[00:40:34] **Elizabeth:** chemicals that are in the products in your everyday life. In my everyday life, they're in the bedroom, they're in the shower, they're in your kitchen. [00:40:45] And you know they're in your office and your school. They're everywhere.

[00:40:49] **Natasha:** And I remember, speaking to someone in your team who said, they're now in the rain in every raindrop.

[00:40:56] **Natasha:** Um, and maybe this is just a really naive [00:41:00] question, but I just like, there, there's a thought in my mind that's screaming, how did we get here? How did we get here?

[00:41:07] Elizabeth: It's, it's very simple. I think after the Second World War we started manufacturing [00:41:15] lots of synthetic chemicals in the 1930s and 40s, and there was no control over them.

[00:41:23] Elizabeth: And as our ability to manufacture chemicals increased, we [00:41:30] just put them into products and there was no responsibility on the manufacturer to test their chemicals, to look at the chemicals, to see if they're, they're toxic or not. It's not like. Drug [00:41:45] manufacturer where you have to do lots of tests to check that the drugs are safe, that you are developing.

[00:41:49] Elizabeth: That wasn't the case with, with chemicals and products being developed from plastics and pesticides and things like that. And so there has now [00:42:00] been what I term 'toxic toxicological', trespass, you, me, we haven't given permission for the flame retardants that are neurologically toxic, or the phthalates that [00:42:15] knock off sperm counts or the other chemicals that are very bad for our health to be inside us.

[00:42:22] Elizabeth: It's just happened.

[00:42:24] Natasha: I can't even go to the shop and buy my son's, school trousers without reading that [00:42:30] they are advertised as Teflon trousers with lots of, yeah. forever chemicals on them. So it, it's quite a terrifying place that we find ourselves. and yeah, very grateful for the work that, you do and the [00:42:45] relentless campaigning that you do as well.

[00:42:47] Natasha: and obviously it's something that. You can't necessarily do alone or definitely can't do alone.

[00:42:53] Natasha: And so I wanted to talk about collaboration, which does really seem to kind of sit at the heart of the CHEM Trust's work. so why has partnership kind of become so important, when tackling something as technical but also as systemic as chemical pollution?

[00:43:14] Elizabeth: [00:43:15] Well, I think you've hit the nail on the, on the head. It's technical, but it is utterly systemic and CHEM Trust classically does the technical end. We take the most up to date science and we produce the [00:43:30] best

policy to say, you know, these are the solutions, and we take those to regulators who are decision makers on chemicals.

[00:43:38] Elizabeth: But we're a very small technical organisation and therefore we absolutely a hundred percent rely [00:43:45] on partnerships with other NGOs and the big NGOs who can magnify our message. And I think also other NGOs. They know that our science and our policy is quite accurate. They know that [00:44:00] we don't over egg the science and therefore they take our policy.

[00:44:03] Elizabeth: It gives them the confidence to work on the issue, and they know that we have good scientists in CHEM Trust that they can rely on for more support and further help and, [00:44:15] and things like that. And so, yes, CHEM Trusts would not be where it is now without all our NGO partners in the UK and in the European Union and, and then, you know, we've got very good partners elsewhere in the world and, and global partners as well.

[00:44:29] Natasha: And also you've, [00:44:30] you've previously mentioned the kind of growing awareness around, forever chemicals, which is one of the key issues that you are working on. so how are you feeling about the progress on this issue and [00:44:45] what would kind of success look like in the next few years?

[00:44:48] Elizabeth: I, I need to caveat my, my response, first of all, with enormous frustration because if the chemicals regulation had worked, we wouldn't have used the [00:45:00] per-fluorinated forever chemicals.

[00:45:01] Elizabeth: They wouldn't be being sold in your son's Teflon trousers. They wouldn't be sold in the non-stick, cookware. However, we are in that status now, but the [00:45:15] level of awareness is growing. The liability of the companies is growing. The insurance companies are becoming aware of the liabilities of the companies who have [00:45:30] manufactured these chemicals and I think know per fluorinated chemicals in our water, polluting our rivers,

[00:45:38] Elizabeth: it is a discussion that people are having down the pub or on the way to work as they [00:45:45] commute. And so I think that general awareness of, hmm, should we use chemicals in a willy-nilly fashion that are hormone disrupting, that are so persistent that they never [00:46:00] break

down, that are mobile and meaning that, you know, we might use them here but they end up in the arctic polluting polar bears.

[00:46:07] Elizabeth: so I am positive, I've got to be positive. I founded CHEM Trust and I want CHEM Trust to be a success, and I, I do [00:46:15] want to reduce exposure to toxic chemicals so that humans, wildlife, and the wider environment become gradually less and less polluted.

[00:46:26] Natasha: That is the vision we all hope for. yeah. Thank you so much Elizabeth.

[00:46:30] Natasha: And I just wanted to end by kind of bringing it back to, the fundraising. and I remember you saying that in your fundraising, you almost, never actually ask for money. [00:46:45] and instead you really focus on communication and on the cause kind of resonating with the people that you're speaking to. so I was wondering if you could speak to that a little bit and that philosophy of fundraising by never actually asking for money?[00:47:00]

[00:47:01] Elizabeth: Well, what I absolutely, fundamentally do believe that. but yes, when I meet people who might be able to support CHEM Trust, I [00:47:15] chat to them as if we're, you know, having a glass of wine somewhere. And I try and understand what it is that interests them, and it might be. orcas or citations [00:47:30] in the marine environment.

[00:47:30] Elizabeth: It might be the river that flows at the end of their garden, or it might be their grandchildren. But what I do know is that all those things, wherever their interest is, it will be impacted by toxic chemicals. And so then you [00:47:45] learn what their interest is, and then you slowly educate them as to why toxic chemicals are a problem,

[00:47:53] Elizabeth: and then they become interested and they become motivated. Then they tend to give very [00:48:00] generously, which is a fantastic, you know, story for CHEM Trust.

[00:48:04] Natasha: Yeah, absolutely. And, yeah, it's just, it, it just goes to show the impact of that kind of communication and that listening. [00:48:15] and also just,

yeah, how, how something that's sort of seemingly quite specific and technical actually

[00:48:22] **Natasha**: can relate to almost everything and everyone, and absolutely, definitely does. so thank you so much, Elizabeth, [00:48:30] for just a really, really fascinating conversation. it's always just really inspiring speaking with you and kind of hearing your passion, and knowing that there's just such an amazing, person kind of advocating for these really [00:48:45] important changes on a

[00:48:46] **Natasha**: topic and an issue that affects every single one of us. So yeah, thank you so much for, being here today and, and kind of sharing with us, and thank you.

[00:48:57] Elizabeth: Thank you for asking me.[00:49:00]

Nature connection exercise

[00:49:02] **Natasha**: Now we'd love to bring in Andy and Chloe from Change in Nature to guide us through a short nature connection exercise. They will help ground us in today's themes, reflect on what we've heard, and [00:49:15] explore how we might want to integrate some of the learnings into our work. So over to you, Andy and Chloe.

[00:49:23] **Andy**: Hi, I am Andy,

[00:49:24] **Chloe**: and I'm Chloe.

[00:49:25] **Andy**: And we are Change In Nature

[00:49:27] **Chloe**: and we take [00:49:30] environmentalists out into nature so that they can bring the voice of nature back into their environmentalism.

[00:49:36] **Andy**: So this episode's been all about connecting to the bigger picture, and so often in the work that we do, we can feel [00:49:45] alone. We can feel very separate, we can feel overwhelmed, and it's sometimes really helpful to go to nature for guidance and support.

[00:49:55] **Andy:** 'cause of course, nature has been navigating complexity and [00:50:00] challenges for millions and millions and millions of years. So Chloe, I'm gonna ask you maybe look around. See what you can notice and just so the listeners and the viewers can, just get a [00:50:15] sense of where we are. You can probably hear the crackling fire.

[00:50:18] **Andy:** You might be to hear some bird song. There's trees all around us and an amazing, evening sky.

[00:50:29] **Chloe:** Yeah, [00:50:30] I'm, I'm really noticing like a variety of different. Trees and some in fruit and some in blossom. different shrubs of [00:50:45] different sizes, some in flower, the sounds of birds, the way that some plants are growing on other plants. I can see the ivy there creeping up some of the trees and using the trees as its [00:51:00] structure to grow upwards and outwards.

[00:51:05] **Chloe:** yeah, a real diversity of life, I suppose.

[00:51:09] **Andy:** So when we're in a place like this, we can often focus on the individual. Like we can often [00:51:15] focus on this hawthorne tree or this oak tree, or this robin, and we can often miss the interconnection.

[00:51:23] **Andy:** And that's the same in our work. So there are times where we might feel really separate, really alone [00:51:30] and not connected to the bigger picture.

[00:51:33] **Andy:** But what we know and what science is now showing, it's finally caught up with indigenous wisdom that places like this are completely interconnected. There's this whole [00:51:45] mycelium network underneath our feet where there's communication, sharing resources. The more mature trees showing resources with the less mature trees and

[00:51:58] **Andy:** there's a real network of [00:52:00] support and care. We can be in places like this and we can have different lenses in how we relate to it. Yeah. I'm wondering, does that relate to anything when you were growing up? Like how you related to your ecosystems or the nature you were part of? [00:52:15]

[00:52:15] **Chloe:** Well, I definitely, I, I feel like I grew up in a time where the story was

[00:52:20] **Chloe:** all of these different beings are competing with each other. A lot of narrative around survivor of the fittest, the trees are just going up [00:52:30] straight so that they can outcompete each other for light. It's the kind of a feeling of all these, a forest being a place of jostling, of like trees fighting each other to get resources.

[00:52:42] **Chloe:** That felt like it was quite a present story around [00:52:45] me.

[00:52:46] **Andy:** And obviously there's another story of interconnection. So finally, finally, the science has caught up with the Indigenous wisdom, and that shows how interconnected a place like this [00:53:00] really is. How there's all these roots and mycelium networks, communicating, sharing resources, sharing water, sharing carbon, sharing oxygen, carbon dioxide,

[00:53:12] **Chloe:** warning each other about pests and [00:53:15] diseases and kind of threats as well.

[00:53:17] **Andy:** And it is extraordinary. We are learning so much at the moment, and there's this, Yeah, a really inspiring quote from Suzanne Simard saying that a place like this, a forest like this, it is like a single [00:53:30] organism that is wired for wisdom and care. So how can we bring that into our work? 'cause I'm sure there's times where we feel the competition, we feel the limited resources, we feel the scarcity, and [00:53:45] it can feel like we're just fighting for, to get the best light, the best resources, the best water.

[00:53:51] **Andy:** But how can we also connect to that wider systems we are part of and really collaborate like a wider organism?

[00:53:59] **Chloe:** [00:54:00] Hmm.

[00:54:00] **Chloe:** It really makes me think, and I hope I'm not embarrassing you by saying this, but it really makes me think of that project that you set up in Cornwall, Andy, and I've said this to you before, which is National Lottery funded project to run

[00:54:15] **Chloe:** kind of nature connected sessions for the community down in Cornwall. Right. But the way that you've set it up is that it's happening on a community garden where they need volunteers and you are bringing in [00:54:30] local artists to deliver each session that don't have that much opportunity. And so that benefit of, of that resource coming to you is being shared with local artists.

[00:54:41] **Chloe:** It's being shared with the beneficiaries. And the [00:54:45] beneficiaries are often then choosing to stay on um volunteer at the community garden, which is benefiting the community garden. So it's like how can the way that we construct the things that we're doing actually have this like ecosystem ripple effect where the benefits are, are spreading out [00:55:00] beyond the.

[00:55:01] **Chloe:** Yeah, the direct project that we're delivering? Hmm.

[00:55:03] **Andy:** So the reflection for this week is how can we make the best use of the networks we are all part of? And how can the ripples of that just go further and further out so it's not just [00:55:15] benefiting ourselves, but and benefiting others in the ecosystem and having a bigger impact overall.

[00:55:22] **Andy:** And the invitation this week is to go out into nature, maybe go to some woods or somewhere else that you really [00:55:30] enjoy, and to really reflect on how everything you see is so interconnected.

[00:55:36] **Chloe:** We hope you enjoyed listening, and we hope to see you again next [00:55:45] week.