

Scottish Borders Green Summit – Our Call to Action transcript

“We connected today through our shared feeling of urgency to act and tackle the climate emergency crisis.

It is clear to all of us that this moment in our shared history requires our urgent attention.

As we witness the mass movement of people due to armed conflict, the crises of public health, environmental degradation, and social disconnection unfold before us, it becomes increasingly evident that we cannot afford to remain passive observers.

We are faced with a profound opportunity and responsibility to heal, connect, and protect - to heal our people, connect our places, and protect our planet.

Firstly, let us talk about healing our people. The health and well-being of every individual is intrinsically related to the health of our environment. Let me share something personal about myself. Some of you know me either from my role as co-founder and chair of Sea the Change, or via my previous community development work but in my spare time, I am also a Coastguard volunteer.

The role involves rescuing people trapped in cliffs, water or mud along the coast, as well as the search for missing persons. Searching missions can take hours and even days, it often happens in extreme weather conditions and for volunteers, often after a long and hard-working day. During the long searching hours, well-being checks are of primordial importance. This is because the coastguard knows that an officer cannot perform an efficient search if they are not well themselves: “If you’re struggling you are not searching” - they say. In the hierarchy of rescue, we need to be well first before we can help others.

Now, how can we talk about healing the planet when people are barely surviving?

When working people are more than ever relying on food banks and the impact of poverty and trauma continues to be so real for many children across the globe, across Scotland and right here in the Scottish Borders.

When the wants of the few continue to be more important than the needs of the many.

I am going to share another personal fact about myself: it may come as a surprise for some of you that my strong accent is not Scottish. I am originally from Brazil but fell in love with Scotland some 20 years ago. And no, it wasn’t the unpredictable Scottish weather that captured me. It was its people, coasts, mountains and beautiful lochs.

How lucky are we in the Scottish Borders to have a mix of all, right at our doorstep? Yet, for many in our communities, access to basic needs such as support services, health, further education and jobs is a massive barrier. Transport continues to be a real issue and despite such a beautiful landscape, our communities are not connected.

As stewards of the Earth, it is our duty to promote and restore the connection between places, explore sustainable land use practices, safeguard biodiversity and preserve the natural heritage. We have in this room today examples of this good work - how can we unite

forces to support more of these initiatives? How can we create new ones? To enable expansion, shift the power and demand systems change from those who hold the purse strings.

Finally, let us commit to protecting our planet. It is our duty to leave it better than we found it.

How can we educate and create new opportunities for systems change?

How can we multiply the good work that's already happening across the Borders?

There's much work to be done so Let's work together.

I invite you all to come together as a collective movement of change makers. Let's support each other to do good work and create a wave of change. Let's turn the conversations today into our action plan to heal our people, connect our places, and protect our planet."

Borders Climate Action Network

