

Footsteps – Faiths for a Low Carbon Future



Future Direction and Priorities Survey: Results and Conclusions

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Survey design informed by Faith for the Climate Network Research Report September 2018.
John Nightingale & Pete Doubtfire, Footsteps steering group assisted with the questionnaire design and interpretation of the results



Footsteps
Faiths for a Low Carbon Future



BCF
BIRMINGHAM
COUNCIL OF FAITHS

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SURVEY PURPOSE

The survey was designed to help inform to Footsteps future direction and priorities. We wanted to respondents to tell us about the importance of the different work that Footsteps does, unconstrained by the resource implications for Footsteps and its small volunteer steering group.

SURVEY METHODOLOGY

The questions used in our survey were adapted from some of those used by Faiths for the Climate Network (FFCN) for its Members & Partners Research Report September 2018. To encourage response, the questions were kept as simple as possible and, unlike the FFCN survey, there were no follow up telephone interviews.

The survey was sent electronically or forwarded by partners to approximately 100 people who had attended Footsteps events or been involved with Footsteps in other ways. 33 completed questionnaires were returned. We felt was an encouraging response rate and that the survey provides a valid insight into supporters' views on Footsteps' future direction and priorities.

With the benefit of hindsight, if some of the questions had more focused they might have provided a sharper insight into some of the areas covered in the survey. The open ended and overlapping nature of some questions, though, did give richness to some of the responses that might have been lost had greater use been made of closed questions.

BACKGROUND

Footsteps was founded early in 2016 following an interfaith Walk of Witness and Gathering in Birmingham in the run up to the November 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP 21, held in Paris in November 2015. Footsteps is now an autonomous project within the Birmingham Council of Faiths and took the interfaith 2015 Lambeth Declaration on Climate Change as the basis of the Footsteps Steering Groups terms of reference.

Since Footsteps inception it has run three well attended annual 'flagship' Tread Lightly conferences at the Birmingham Central Mosque, the Birmingham Progressive Synagogue and the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, Smethwick as part of National Interfaith Week. There have also been three summer interfaith walks, including in 2016 walking between different places of worship in Moseley and Balsall Heath learning about energy saving and environmental action being taken.. In 2016 and 2017 two week long interfaith Small Footsteps summer schools for over 40 young people were held. A number of ad hoc Footsteps events were also run including a Faith, Ethics and Climate Change panel discussion at the Birmingham University multifaith chaplaincy.

In addition to Footsteps own events, individuals from Footsteps have contributed to a range of faith and secular environmental events and activities organised by others. These range from imam environmental training workshops and a Christian ecumenical environmental conference to a community Divali celebration and contributing to a Faith for the Climate Symposium at the Liberal Jewish Synagogue, London. Footsteps also participated actively in a series of community engagement workshops organised by Climate Action Network West Midlands (CANWM).

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

In general respondents indicated that Footsteps should be concentrating on influencing local faith communities, working together across faith boundaries, engaging with young people, encouraging Birmingham faith leaders to speak out and taking faith-based messages to local Councillors, MPs and secular environmental groups.

In relation to the **work** that Footsteps is **already doing**, respondents indicated that:

- **Interfaith events and activities** that bring people from different faith communities together on environmental issues are important
- **Engaging with young people** and the Small Footsteps activities are important

In terms of **who** Footsteps should be working with, respondents indicated that:

- Footsteps should be working with **Birmingham's worshipping communities and their local leaders**
- Footsteps should be encouraging **Birmingham's faith leaders to speak out** on climate action
- Footsteps should be taking a **faith-based message to local politicians and secular environmental and climate groups**.

In terms of **what** Footsteps should also be doing, respondents indicated that

- There is a need to be able to **develop and better communicate** the faith and values based reasons for climate and environmental action
- Footsteps can play an **environmental and climate advocacy role** based on shared faith-based values

Q1 SURVEY RESPONDENTS

An invitation to take part in a survey of Footsteps' purpose and priorities was emailed by Pete Doubtfire to the 70 people on the Footstep's mailing list who had given permission to be contacted by Footsteps. People were invited to provide feedback to help inform Footsteps' priorities and focus in the coming years. Steering group members also forwarded the email to other contacts and networks, including Faith for the Climate Network members in London.

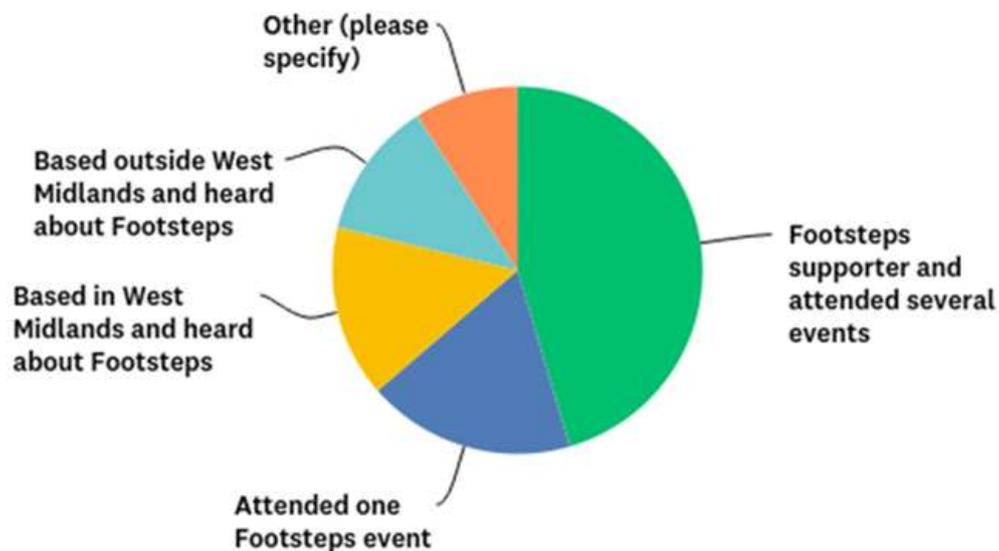
An invitation to complete the survey was placed on the Birmingham Council of Faiths website. 33 responses had been received. Respondents had, on average, taken 7 minutes to complete the survey.

QUESTION

Respondents were asked to tick one box to describe what best described their involvement with Footsteps

- a) Supporter and attended several events
- b) Attended one event
- c) Based in West Midlands and heard about Footsteps
- d) Based outside West Midlands and heard about Footsteps
- e) Other - please expand in comment box at end

RESPONSE



Three respondents ticked the 'Other (please specify)' box. They described their involvement with Footsteps as (1) as a member of Climate Action Network West Midlands (CANWM), (2) Member of Faiths for the Climate Network Steering Group - so not present so far at Footsteps events and (3) Member of the planning committee

Two thirds of the respondents (21 out of the 33) described themselves as having attended one or more Footsteps events. Nine respondents (out of the 33) described themselves as having heard about Footsteps, with five based in the West Midlands and four outside the West Midlands

Q2 FEEDBACK ON FOOTSTEPS EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES



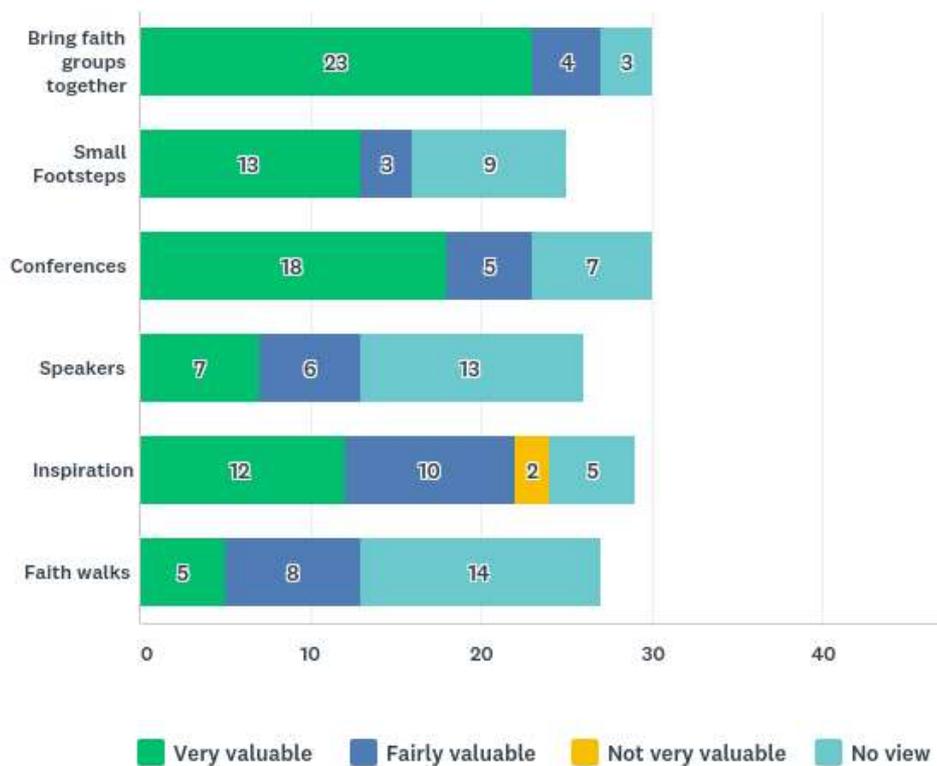
We wanted to find out which Footsteps events and activities respondents thought were most valuable.

Respondents were asked to rate the different types of Footsteps events and activities as:

- (1) Very valuable, (2) Fairly valuable,
- (3) Not very valuable (4) No view.

- a) Tread Lightly **conferences**: Central Mosque, Progressive Synagogue and Sikh gurdwara
- b) The Summer **faith walks**: Moseley / Balsall Heath, Cole Valley, Centre of the Earth
- c) **Small Footsteps** environmental summer schools for young people
- d) **Footsteps speakers** at your own events and activities
- e) **Bringing faith groups together** on environmental issues
- f) Sources of **inspiration** and ideas
- g) **Other** - please explain in comment box at end

RESPONSE



Respondents placed the greatest value on the way in which Footsteps' activities brought faith groups together on environmental issues, the Small Footstep work with young people and the Tread Lightly conferences. Almost all activities were, though, seen as valuable. Respondents mainly expressed views on activities that they had attended.

Q3 FOOTSTEPS' UNIQUE, FAITH-BASED CONTRIBUTION



There are a number of active climate and environmental organisations in Birmingham and environmental initiatives within individual faith groups. These range from Friends of the Earth and the Climate Action Network West Midlands to Eco Sikh, Eco Islam and the Birmingham Anglican Climate Action Group.

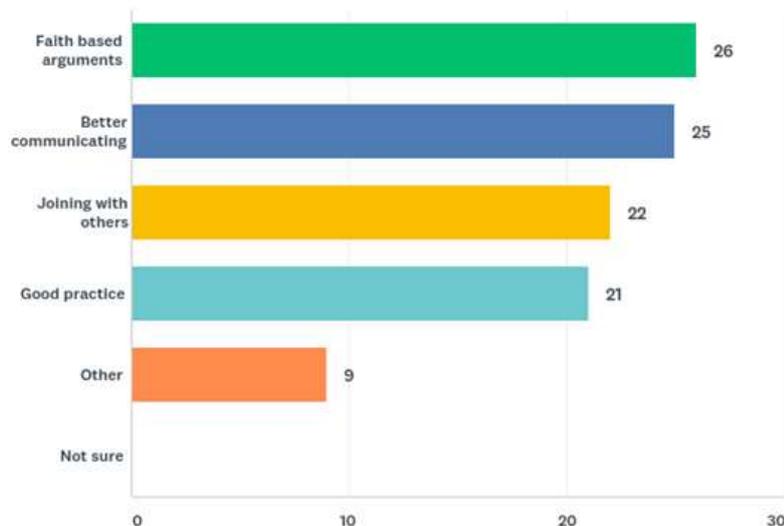
We wanted to try and better understand the unique contribution that Footsteps can make as

an interfaith environmental initiative.

Respondents were asked to indicate all of the following that applied.

- a) Identifying how to **better communicate** the need for urgent climate action
- b) Developing values and **faith based arguments** for climate action involvement
- c) Taking faith and values into other environmental campaigns (**joining with others**)
- d) Identifying and developing what works well that can be used more widely (**good practice**)
- e) **Not sure**
- f) **Other** - please explain in comment box at end

RESPONSE



Respondents most frequently rated developing values and faith based arguments for climate action involvement and identifying how to better communicate the need for urgent climate action as Footsteps' unique contribution.

A slightly lower number of respondents rated taking faith and values into other environmental campaigns and identifying and developing what works well that can be used more widely.

There was also, though, a rich source of other suggestions, including: "Showcasing dialogue - climate change is problem for ALL", "Translating the work of national actors and science for local faith audiences, making real concrete action in the local area viable and valuable", "networking with faith venues and local leaders", and "Introduce the uniqueness, power and significance of religious faith in asking God for help in the challenges we face

Q4 WHO SHOULD FOOTSTEPS BE WORKING WITH?

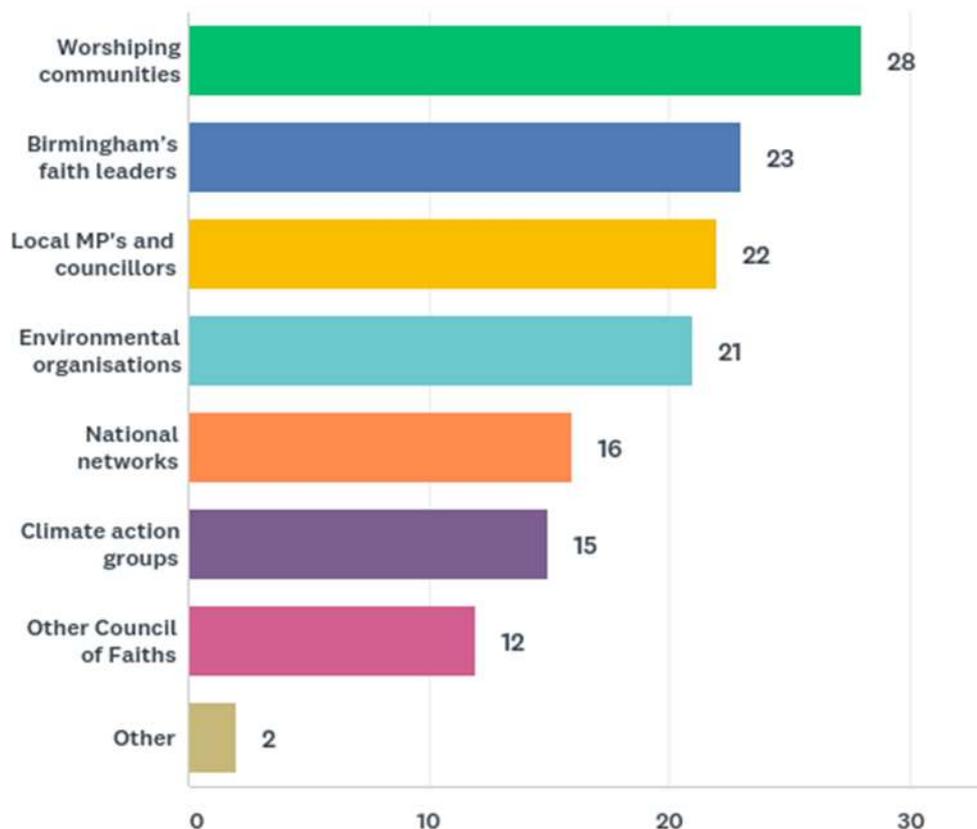
Footsteps is well networked with other environmental and climate action group not the least because most of the steering group members are also involved with initiatives within their own faith communities.

As well as engaging with other groups in Birmingham, Footsteps has also worked with wider interfaith environmental groups, in particular, London based Faiths for the Climate Network and the global GreenFaith initiative. footsteps1944

We wanted to try and establish which groups respondents felt that it was most important that Footsteps worked with. Respondents were ask to check up to four of the following groups

- a) **Worshipping communities** and their leaders (imams, ministers, rabbis, priests etc)
- b) **Birmingham's faith leaders**
- c) **National** interfaith environmental **networks**
- d) **Local MP's** and Birmingham city **councillors**
- e) **Other council of faiths** within the West Midlands Combined Authority area
- f) **Environmental organisations** and campaigns (Friends of the Earth, etc)
- g) **Climate action groups**
- h) **Other**

RESPONSE



Almost all respondents indicated that Footsteps should be working with worshipping communities and their local leaders. Slightly fewer then identified Birmingham faith leaders, local MP's and City Councillors and environmental organisations as groups Footsteps should be working with.

Q 5 - WHAT SHOULD BE THE NATURE OF FOOTSTEPS' WORK?

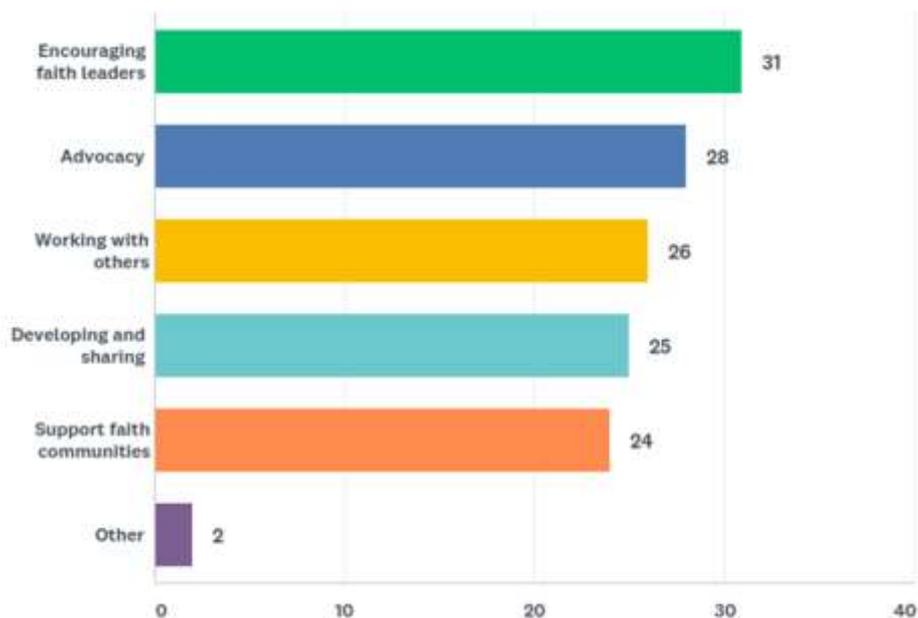


Footsteps has very limited resources so we wanted to identify what respondents felt it should be the purpose and nature of its work.

Respondents were asked to check all of the following that applied.

- a) **Supporting** work within individual **faith communities**
- b) **Developing and sharing** resources between faiths
- c) **Advocacy** - taking our faith and values based approach to local MP's, councils, and the West Midlands Combined Authority
- d) **Working with other** environmental and climate action groups
- e) **Encouraging** Birmingham **faith leaders** and leadership groups to speak out on climate and environmental issues
- f) **Other**

RESPONSES



All respondents answered this question. 31 respondents indicated that Footsteps should be encouraging Birmingham faith leaders and leadership groups to speak out on climate and environmental issues. 28 indicated that Footsteps should be adopting an advocacy role.

There was also strong support (26, 25 and 24 respondents respectively) for working with other groups, developing and sharing resources between faiths and supporting work within individual faith communities.

Q6 WHAT KINDS OF ACTIVITIES SHOULD FOOTSTEPS UNDERTAKE ITSELF?



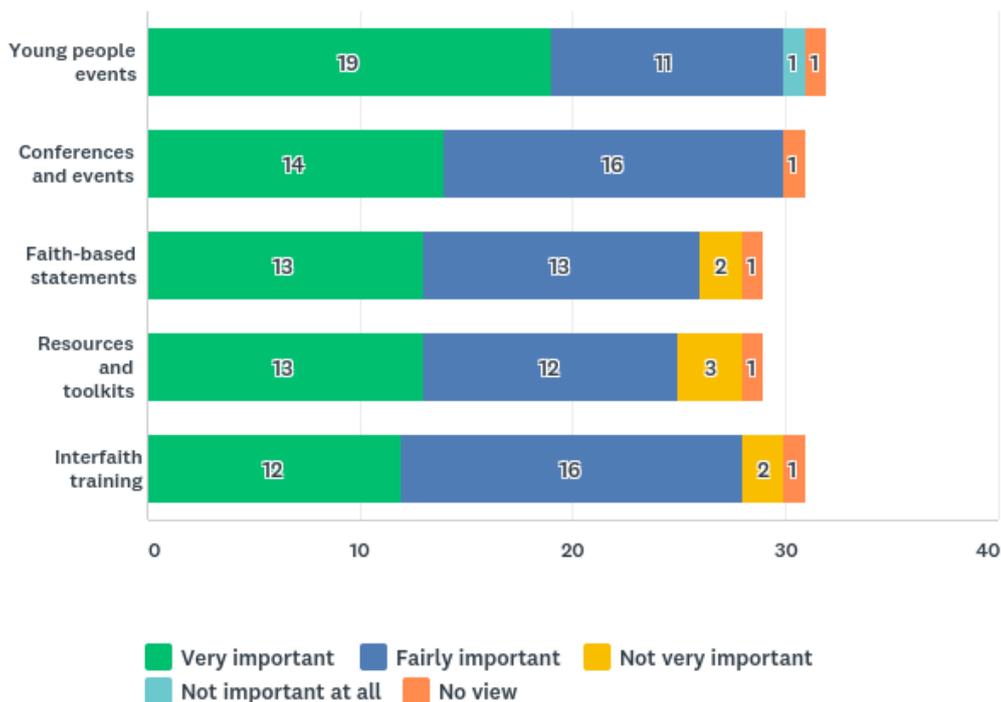
Footsteps has both run its own activities and events and contributed to events run by others.

We wanted to find out which events and activities that respondents felt that it was most important that Footsteps ran itself.

Respondents were asked to rate the following Footsteps events and activities as (1) Very important, (2) Fairly important, (3) Not very important (4) No view.

- Run interfaith environmental **conferences and events**
- Provide **interfaith training** and workshops
- Provide **resources and toolkits** for faith based action on climate issues
- Make **faith-based public statements** on climate related issues
- Provide interfaith **young people events**
- Other

RESPONSE



Providing interfaith events for young people was rated overall the most important. 19 respondents indicated that these were very important and 11 fairly important.

Running interfaith environmental conferences and events was rated overall the second most important. 14 respondents indicated that these were very important and 16 fairly important.

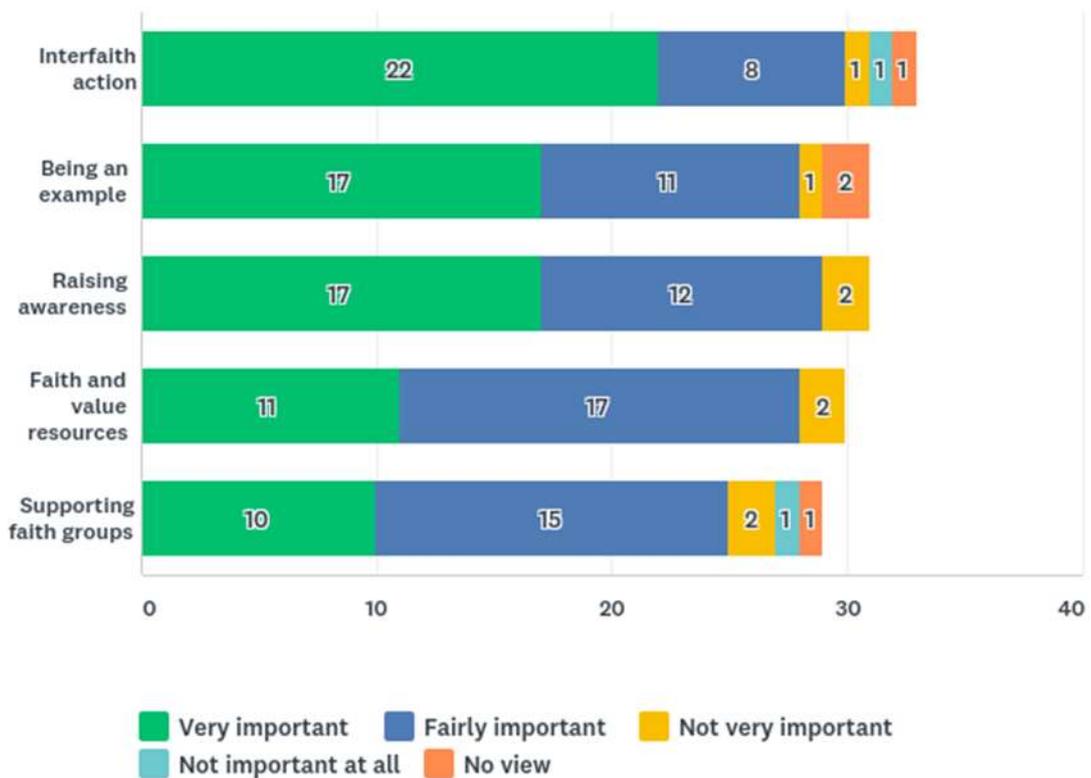
Q7 KEY PRIORITIES FOR FOOTSTEPS GOING FORWARD

Respondents were asked to rate the importance of Key Priorities for Footsteps going forward as
 (1) Very important, (2) Fairly important, (3) Not very important (4) Not important at all

Key priorities:

- a) **Raising awareness** of faith-based action on the climate (e.g. with the public, media, politicians)
- b) Enabling and encouraging **interfaith action** on the climate
- c) Providing **faith and value based resources** (e.g. through website, publications)
- d) **Being an example** of Birmingham faiths working together for the public good
- e) **Supporting faith groups** and places of worship with their existing work

RESPONSE



Enabling and encouraging interfaith climate action was rated overall the most important. 22 respondents indicated that this was very important and 8 fairly important.

This was followed fairly closely by both providing an example of Birmingham faith groups working together for public good and raising awareness of faith based action on the climate.

Three respondents made other comments about key priorities for taking Footsteps forward.

- (i) “The most important thing is to use small resource wisely for what will deliver the biggest local impact - so not reinventing the wheel on designing training, communication tools or resources, but translating and bringing what’s already out there to local audiences, making climate issues and action real in the WM context”,
- (ii) “Have ignored resource implications. We don't need to create all the resources ourselves - we could endorse existing resources and make available through Footsteps”
- and (iii) “linking with XR activities”

Q 8 WHAT ELSE WOULD YOU LIKE TO TELL FOOTSTEPS?

To try and capture anything that respondents felt that had been missed in the survey, we gave respondents an open ended opportunity to complete if there was anything else they wanted to tell us.

Nearly half of the respondents took this opportunity to comment. Most of these comments were compliments about the Footsteps and its work. These included: “Thank you for existing!”, “I think the work Footsteps is doing is really valuable”, “Stick at it! Thank you for what you do”, “..... - it is a privilege to be in collaboration with you”, “We think you are doing amazing work and would like to continue to work with you” and “you are doing vital work, please keep going”

There were also some quite thoughtful comments, including:

“I value the interfaith aspect especially. This lends credibility to the voice in the public square”
“Important to build confidence of faith groups in Birmingham about the significance and quality of our work”

RESPONDENT INFORMATION

About half of the respondents identified themselves on a confidential basis. This aided the interpretation of the results.

WEBSITE OPTIONAL QUESTION

At present the Footsteps website at <https://footstepsbcf.org.uk/> is used primarily to provide details of upcoming Footsteps’ activities and accounts of past events. It is maintained on Footsteps behalf by the Peace Hub and its structure is aligned with the Birmingham Council of Faiths website.

The Footsteps steering group is, though, working on developing the website to provide Small Footsteps resources and also to make available a wider range of faith and value based environmental and climate action resources.

An optional question was asked about the website which was only answer by 13 out of the 33 respondents. The response suggested a low level of awareness of the website. One useful comment, though, was “It's so difficult to articulate really complex issues in a single space. I've just been looking at Christian Climate Action - some really good stuff on theology and personal convictions + stories of people being prepared to risk quite a lot for their beliefs. Could you do more of this?”

CONCLUSIONS

The survey was intended to help inform to Footsteps future direction and priorities. We wanted respondents to tell us, unconstrained by the resource implications, about the importance of the different work that Footsteps does.

The survey does indicate that there is significant and broadly based support for Footsteps' work. The response rate to the questionnaire was relatively high for a survey of this type and in Question 8 respondents specifically indicated how they valued Footsteps' work.

In general respondents indicated that Footsteps should concentrate on influencing our individual faith communities, working together across faith boundaries in Birmingham, assisting in relating our faith leaders in relating to our Councillors and MPs and encouraging work among children and young people.

In relation to the **work** that Footsteps is **already doing**, respondents indicated that:

- **Interfaith events and activities** that bring people from different faith communities together on environmental issues are important
- **Engaging with young people** and the Small Footsteps activities are important

In terms of **who** Footsteps should be working with, respondents indicated that:

- Footsteps should be working with **Birmingham's worshipping communities and their local leaders**
- Footsteps should be encouraging **Birmingham's faith leaders to speak out** on climate action
- Footsteps should be taking a **faith-based message to local politicians and secular environmental and climate groups**.
- There is less support for extending Footsteps work outside our own area.

In terms of **what** Footsteps should also be doing, respondents indicated that

- There is a need to be able to **develop and better communicate** the faith and values based reasons for climate and environmental action
- Footsteps can play an **environmental and climate advocacy role** based on shared faith-based values

Additionally, there appears scope to further develop the Footsteps website to provide, or signpost, faith and values based climate and environment based resources.