

## NBO CLIMATE ACTION TRAINING DAY

On 23 February 2019, on behalf of StoneWater sangha, I attended a Training and Consultation Day for Buddhists on Climate Action, held at the SGI (Soka Gakkai International) Buddhist Centre in Brixton, London. Twenty places were made available to represent as many Buddhist traditions as possible. Three organisations -- Religions for Peace, Green Faith and Faith for the Climate Network -- came together with the support of the Network of Buddhist Organisations to offer this day.

The meeting, more brainstorming and sharing rather than "training" as such, was facilitated by **Lizzie Nelson**, from Faith for the Climate Network, and **Jamie Cresswell**, of the Centre for Applied Buddhism and Religions for Peace. The aims of the day were:

- Get to know one another, share our thoughts, concerns, and questions
- Share what in our own tradition inspires us to act on climate change
- Hear what's already happening within the Buddhist community on climate change, in the UK, and internationally
- Learn from the experience of other UK faith communities in their work on climate change -- encouraging individual and corporate action, and in advocacy/campaigning
- Hear about interfaith action and campaigns on climate change in the UK and internationally, that UK Buddhists could join in with
- Think and reflect together how we can build the capacity of the Buddhist community in the UK to come together to act on climate change
- Plan for Buddhist Action Month (BAM) this June, which will have a climate change focus -- what can we build together to help this BAM have real impact for the climate? Some ideas that came up included creating a simple individual sangha event, such as tree planting or meditation walk in nature, or to link with something that's already happening such as the school climate marches or XR actions; meditate in public to raise awareness; host or organise a climate change talk or workshop; arrange a screening of the film Planetary (see trailer link here <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bv5GerlPjyw>)

We discussed core actions within faith groups, which might be categorised as:

- Practices/prayer/teaching
- Lifestyle change
- Corporate decisions
- Advocacy/campaigning
- Non violent direct action

We spent time exploring the values and practices of Buddhist sanghas and what types of action could grow directly from these. It was emphasised that conversations about climate change, and the inspiration to take action, must start with a connection to people's core values. A key question of the day was how can Buddhist groups build momentum and capacity to take action on climate change? There was a lot of enthusiasm for combining forces, moving beyond our separate groups, to enable the Buddhist sector of the UK to be a much more visible, vocal and powerful force for taking -- and leading -- action on climate change. Some of the suggested ways to build this capacity:

- Capturing young people's views and enthusiasm
- Engaging with Joanna Macy's *The Work That Reconnects* to help empower us to "reclaim our lives, communities and our planet from corporate and colonial rule."
- Connecting with nature
- Getting Buddhist voices heard in the media
- Creation of a Buddhist resource kit -- a how-to on climate action (I have volunteered to help with this)
- One-to-one dialogue
- Opening up and continuing conversations in our sanghas
- Joining and strengthening existing networks

## **Organisations & resources**

**The Alternative UK** -- <https://www.thealternative.org.uk/> -- new political platform aimed at creating fresh discourse and creative ways forward

**Climate Coalition** -- <https://www.theclimatecoalition.org/thetimeisnow> -- consisting of WWF, Friends of the Earth etc. Organising a mass lobby of Parliament on 26 June for climate and environmental change

**Dharma Action Network for Climate Engagement (DANCE)** -- grew out of Gaia House, focusing on meditations in public, in particular Barclays, linking with XR events and offering the *Work that Reconnects*. There is a London DANCE FB page

**Faith for the Climate Network** -- made up of 100 faith leaders and organisations. To join the mailing list email [lizzie@faithfortheclimate.org.uk](mailto:lizzie@faithfortheclimate.org.uk)

**Green Faith** -- <https://www.greenfaith.org/>

**Network of Buddhist Organisations** -- <https://www.nbo.org.uk/>

**Religions for Peace** -- <https://rfp.org/act/protect-the-earth/> -- has a downloadable Resource Guide on Climate Change

**Extinction Rebellion (XR)** -- <https://rebellion.earth/>