CUTTING THROUGH THE NOISE
Using ESG Data to Solve What Matters

JUNE 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

During London Climate Action Week, Menzies LLP and Fluo Technologies, in partnership with 1% for the Planet, hosted the Blue Earth Forum session *Cutting Through The Noise: Using ESG Data to Solve What Matters.*

The workshop brought together professionals from a wide range of sectors to explore the challenges and opportunities associated with ESG (environmental, social, governance) data collection, reporting, and decision-making.

The findings reveal that while most organisations have begun collecting ESG data, many remain reliant on manual, incomplete processes. Only a minority have fully traceable and auditable data systems, and confidence in ESG reporting varies significantly across sectors. Technology and finance organisations demonstrated greater confidence in data traceability, while many charities and non-profits continue to face challenges in gathering and evidencing meaningful data.

A key theme emerging from the discussions was the gap between collecting ESG data and using it effectively. Although many organisations report ESG metrics, fewer are consistently integrating data into strategic planning and operational decision-making. Participants highlighted a strong desire to move beyond compliance-driven reporting and use ESG data to drive business value, prioritisation, and organisational change.

The workshop identified several common challenges across sectors:

- Collecting reliable, consistent, and comparable ESG data.
- Measuring long-term impact and attributing outcomes to specific interventions.
- Determining material issues and prioritising data collection efforts.
- Securing stakeholder buy-in across organisations and supply chains.
- Translating complex ESG information into compelling and credible communications.

Despite sector-specific differences, participants consistently emphasised the importance of balancing robust data with effective storytelling. Organisations recognised that evidence alone is often insufficient; ESG data must be communicated in ways that resonate with stakeholders, support decision-making, and demonstrate tangible value.

Both Menzies LLP and Fluo Technologies are Certified B Corps. And, as members of 1% for the Planet, Fluo and the Menzies ESG service line contribute 1% of revenue to environmental nonprofits.

Several practical solutions emerged from the discussions, including establishing clear measurement frameworks, focusing on material issues, improving stakeholder engagement, investing in education and upskilling, creating stronger supplier data requirements, and leveraging ESG information to build business cases for action. Participants also highlighted the need for greater standardisation of ESG data and reporting practices to improve comparability and reduce complexity.

Across all sectors, one message stood out: organisations should focus on progress rather than perfection. Building an initial baseline, understanding available data, and taking incremental action are more valuable than waiting for perfect information. ESG data becomes most powerful when it is trusted, relevant, and actively used to inform decisions, demonstrate impact, and support meaningful sustainability outcomes.

The workshop concluded that successful ESG strategies require a combination of credible data, stakeholder engagement, clear communication, and practical action. Organisations that can effectively connect these elements will be best positioned to create value, meet growing reporting expectations, and drive lasting environmental and social impact.

INTRODUCTION

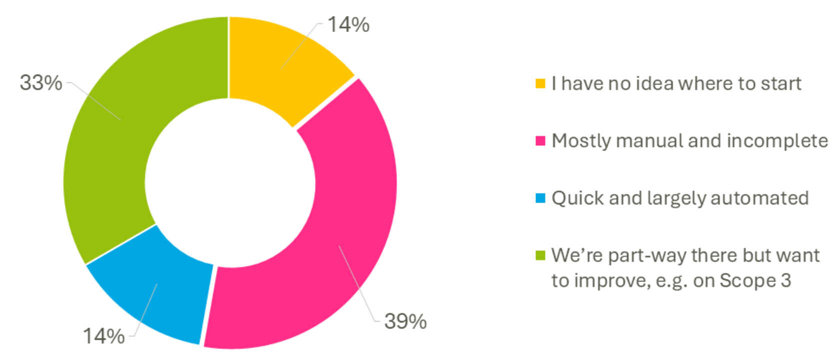
The interactive workshop brought together sustainability professionals keen to share and discuss the challenges they are facing around ESG data and learn from each other what potential solutions might exist.

Participants represented organisations of all sizes across sectors including:

- Charity and non-profits
- Education
- Technology
- Professional services
- Hospitality & leisure
- Property & construction
- Manufacturing
- Transport & logistics
- Healthcare
- Consumer goods

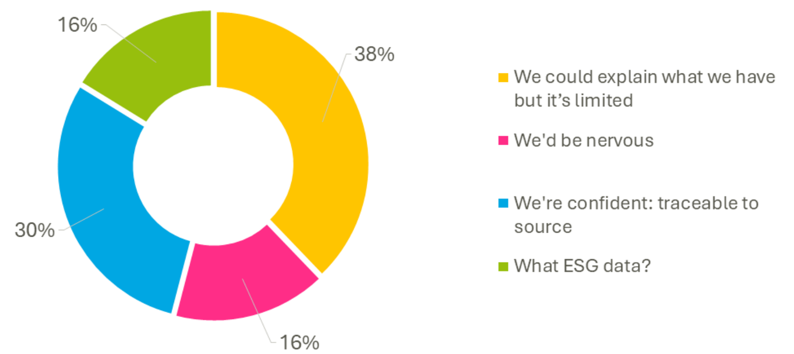
Prior to the roundtable discussions, the audience were asked five key questions to understand how organisations, regardless of size or sector, are addressing the demands of ESG data collection, use and reporting.

Getting your ESG data together is:



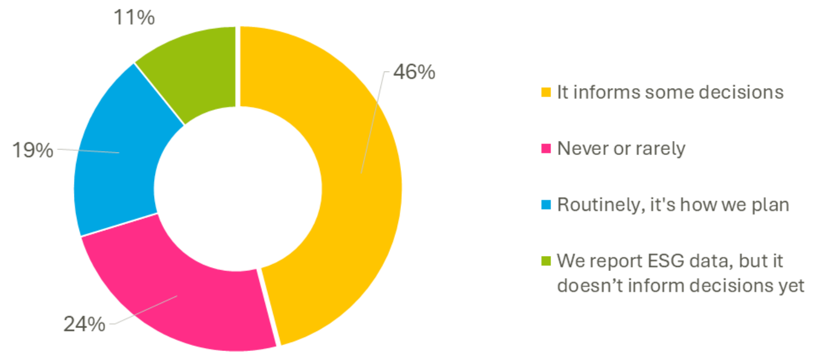
The majority of respondents had some data collection in place, but it was a manual process or not fully complete. No single sector was in a better position; however, smaller organisations tended to fare better, perhaps because of less mandated reporting and smaller, more flexible organisations. A smaller number — 14% — were yet to start collecting data.

If someone challenged your ESG numbers tomorrow:



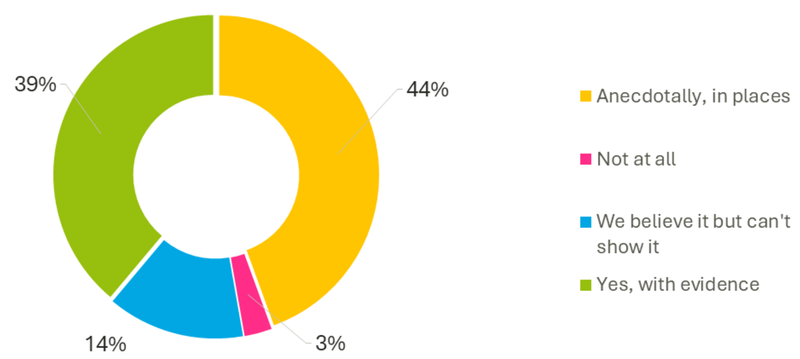
While 38% of respondents could explain what data they have, they felt that the information they could support the data with was limited. Organisations in the technology sector felt most confident in their ability to trace data sources, followed by those in finance and investment. Meanwhile just over half of those in the charity, non-profit, and education sectors felt for the most part they could explain what they had, while the other half were struggling to gather any data.

ESG informs our business decisions:



Technology and professional services are routinely using ESG data in planning operations, alongside those in the charity, non-profit, and education sector — together representing a fifth of total responses. Nearly half of all respondents said that ESG data is informing some decisions in the business, again in these two groups. Small and micro companies (those with up to 49 employees) made up 60% of those using ESG data to inform planning and decision-making, with large to enterprise accounting for just over 30%, and medium-sized companies the remainder.

We can show the value of our ESG work

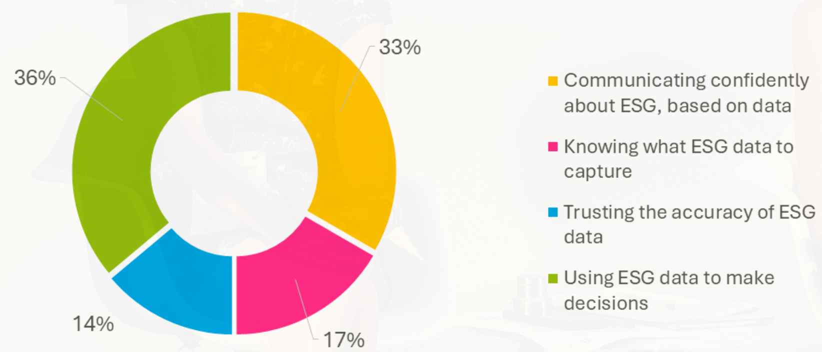


The charity, non-profit and education sectors lead the way in terms of demonstrating value of what they do using ESG data, although it's split between evidence and anecdote-based results. Finance and investment, property & construction, technology, and professional services are more evidence-focused. This could be driven by more mandated reporting and customer demand for those working in these sectors. The biggest response reflects the challenge of not being able to prove what's being achieved with supporting data, with each sector being reflected in this score. Interestingly, smaller organisations are most able to feel confident in providing evidence for demonstrating ESG value, while large to enterprise companies are still using anecdotal methods.

Cutting Through the Noise: Using ESG Data to Solve What Matters

Blue Earth FORUM LONDON CLIMATE ACTION WEEK

If you could fix one of these tomorrow, which would it be?



The two biggest responses here reflect the desire the communicate confidently on ESG data and to use it to make decisions. Small and micro-organisations are the biggest proportion of both responses, reflecting the maturity of larger organisations. Knowing what ESG data to capture is restricted to micro and medium-sized organisations, suggesting that larger enterprises are already well established in data gathering, albeit there are improvements to be made, based on responses to previous questions. The charity, non-profit, and education sector responses are split across all four options, while finance and investment, hospitality and leisure, and transport and logistics have high confidence about what data to collect.

SECTOR-THEMED ISSUES

Each table took time to focus on the main ESG data challenge they were facing, and shared insights on actionable solutions. As seen from the in-room survey, many of the same challenges were reflected across different sectors, regardless of company size.

CHARITIES, NON-PROFIT, EDUCATION (SMALL)

The group discussed the challenge of connecting interventions to long-term outcomes, particularly for small- and medium-sized non-profits.

Key challenges identified:

- Many organisations deliver activities or support that may influence outcomes years later, making impact difficult to attribute and measure. This is especially challenging where outcomes are indirect, long-term, or where there is no shared language or framework for defining success.
- One example shared was a non-profit supporting small businesses through skills development and capacity building. If a business later becomes a B Corp for example, how can the non-profit demonstrate the role its intervention played in that journey?

The group explored a range of approaches to measuring and evidencing impact:

- Pre- and post-intervention surveys to assess changes in knowledge, attitudes, or confidence.
- Using case studies to demonstrate how specific individuals or organisations have progressed following support.
- Measuring behavioural change through follow-up evaluation surveys.
- Focusing on contribution rather than attribution, recognising that organisations are often one part of a wider journey rather than the sole cause of an outcome.

KEY INSIGHTS

The group concluded that data and measurement are essential, but storytelling remains equally important. Impact reporting should combine evidence with the human stories behind the numbers. Bringing the voice of beneficiaries front and centre helps organisations demonstrate not only what changed, but why it mattered. Case studies and lived experience can play a vital role in connecting interventions to outcomes and communicating impact in a way that resonates emotionally as well as analytically.

CHARITIES, NON-PROFIT, EDUCATION (MEDIUM TO GLOBAL)

The group included representatives from arts and culture, international development, environmental conservation, and nature restoration organisations.

Key challenges identified:

- A shared challenge across organisations is translating detailed, in-depth impact evaluations — whether project-specific or organisation-wide — into clear, effective communications for stakeholders.
- Due to the variety of programmes, different metrics and tracking are frequently not comparable.
- The complexity of non-profit operations contributes to engagement challenges: many organisations manage multiple projects, partners, and diverse stakeholder groups, including individual donors of all types as well as corporate funders.
- This structural complexity, especially common in non-profits and present in education, complicates targeted stakeholder communication.

Strategies to overcome these challenges

- A key solution identified was tailoring communications to individual funders or stakeholders, though this approach demands significant time and resources.
- Development of a minimum viable product that addresses the core information needs to stakeholders. This could be accompanied by further in-depth communications as resources allow

KEY INSIGHTS

While some metrics commonly associated with the environmental aspects of ESG data collection are common and portable across reporting needs, the social element remains more elusive and complex across the wide variety of stakeholders and is further complicated by the needs of each sector.

TECHNOLOGY, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (SMALL)

This group were predominantly organisations with limited capacity and budgets to worry about ESG. While there is recognition of the importance of sustainability, there is generally a low level of mandated regulations or client requirements, so ESG activity remains a nice-to-have.

Key challenges identified:

- The main challenge discussed was gaining buy-in and driving change, which requires clear communication of data and connecting with stakeholders on an emotional level (people act based on emotions).
- There is growing relevance around ESG considerations, so how do we connect people with what the different aspects of the environment, social, and governance data mean to them?
- The negative environmental impacts of the tech sector are often not recognised, particularly in areas perceived as ‘cloud’ or intangible.
- Digital operations, including AI and emerging technologies, have significant tangible environmental consequences that need to be better understood across organisations.

Strategies to overcome these challenges

- In the micro and small tech sector, data gathering is seen as less of an issue. The opportunity instead lies with engaging stakeholders and building an emotional connection to the principles behind ESG action by using a narrative that resonates.
- Gaining executive buy-in was cited as a route to embedding change through the business. By aligning ESG demands and language with the leadership roles, such as finance, operations or audit and risk management, the focus shifts to being non-negotiable rather than optional.
- Successful organisations have implemented change by involving all employees through training programmes. This could include Carbon Literacy or any other approach that links actions to impacts. Training raises awareness and engagement; incentives can boost employee participation.

KEY INSIGHTS

Behavioural change can come about by creating buy-in through education and training, then operationalising ESG. Developing a business case for ESG by aligning the demands with the executive leadership helps to position ESG as an operational necessity. Meanwhile, ESG data can be used to provide fact-based evidence, as long as it's relevant and easy to understand for your audience.

TECHNOLOGY, PROFESSIONAL SERVICES (MEDIUM AND LARGE)

This table included a diverse mix of communications agencies, consultancies, and financial institutions, all dealing with varied clients across sectors and sizes, highlighting the widespread nature of the data standardisation issue.

Key challenges identified:

- A major challenge discussed is the lack of reliable, standardised, and comparable data across industries.
- This data inconsistency makes it difficult to drive decision-making, enact organisational change, and measure sustainability performance accurately, while also impacting stakeholder communications.
- The variety of reporting frameworks adds more complexity when looking at which approach to adopt.
- How do you then take this data and use it to tell a compelling story?

Strategies to overcome these challenges

- Solutions include industry-wide collaboration, for example through professional bodies, to promote data standardisation that support common approaches.
- Stronger government regulation to support uniform data practices.
- More engagement with stakeholders, including across the supply chain.

KEY INSIGHTS

With more information demands, such as EcoVadis (driven by customers) and CDP, implementing a common approach to data collection and use will become increasingly important for organisations gathering and reporting data. It also provides a better opportunity to compare 'like-for-like' data when considering business decisions.

HOSPITALITY & LEISURE, PROPERTY & CONSTRUCTION, MANUFACTURING, TRANSPORT & LOGISTICS

The session included a group of professionals from high-emission sectors such as transport & logistics, hospitality & leisure, property & construction, and manufacturing.

Key challenges identified:

- The discussion focused on the importance of emissions, particularly Scope 3 emissions, and the challenges of data collection.
- Understanding what the key issues are, and the role played by materiality also came through as a key element.
- The further aspect of where do you focus attention and then prioritise activity was raised across the group.

Strategies to overcome these challenges

- When considering prioritisation, not only in emissions reporting but also in the broader context of materiality and double materiality, it is key to assess both organisational and environmental impacts. Look at the relative impacts that different actions can have and prioritise accordingly.
- Engaging stakeholders and tapping into internal organisational knowledge were identified as crucial for gathering relevant intelligence.
- Gathering carbon emissions data also offers valuable insights into what's driving those emissions, for example, travel, waste, or water.
- While your first go at gathering information might be imperfect, it's a baseline from which to improve and start to act.

KEY INSIGHTS

The discussion concluded with a focus on just getting started and understanding the data you have. From here you can begin identifying where gradual, step-by-step changes are sufficient versus where revolutionary measures are needed to achieve sustainability goals.

OTHER SECTORS

The group included diverse sectors: healthcare providers, technology providers and consultancy, plastic recycling and circular economy, and consumer goods, indicating a broad range of expertise.

Key challenges identified:

- Gathering high-quality data across the organisation and the supply chain.
- Determining materiality — what data is most important to collect.
- Securing buy-in from internal and external stakeholders.

Strategies to overcome these challenges

- **Education and upskilling:** Providing guidance on how to collect, report, and use data effectively.
- **Contractual requirements:** Requiring suppliers to provide data through binding agreements.
- **Reciprocal data requests:** Asking for data up and down the supply chain, leveraging position for compliance when possible.
- **Commercial incentives:** Demonstrating commercial gain from data collection helps secure internal support.
- **Stick and carrot approach:** Using both incentives and penalties — especially with large suppliers — by emphasising legal obligations and consequences of non-compliance.

A strong theme emerged around credibility and communication

- Emphasis on taking both internal and external stakeholders on a journey through transparency and education.
- Need for early engagement and clear explanations during supplier onboarding.
- The importance of being credible when discussing sustainability metrics, especially Scope 3 emissions.

KEY INSIGHTS

Collaboration is essential. Sustainability reporting cannot be done in isolation. Open communication is critical when ready to share information to make sure you bring people with you on the reporting journey, rather than it being yet another task to manage. There is a proviso of course: companies need to be aware of compliance with emerging and new legislation such as ECGT.

IF YOU'D LIKE TO CONTINUE THE DISCUSSION, PLEASE GET IN TOUCH

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