

"Combating Blue Monday - a net zero member forum"

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This blog by Karen Shackleton is part of a weekly series from the Pensions for Purpose team. This week, she reflects on Blue Monday and suggests combating the blues by considering Pensions for Purpose's exciting new member forum.



Today - if you didn't know already - is "Blue Monday". It is so-called because, apparently, it is the most depressing day of the year. The financial pressure of Christmas hangs over us, the weather is miserable, the days long, and we've probably put on a few pounds as a result of the seasonal festivities. You may not know it, but there is even a formula for Blue Monday:

$$\frac{[W + D - d]T^Q}{MN_a}$$

Where W = weather, d = debt, T = time since Christmas, Q = time since failing our new year's resolutions, M = low motivational levels and N = a need to take action.

Well, first of all on Blue Monday, I'd like to acknowledge the amazing impact that some of our Affiliate and Influencer members achieve by investing alongside social enterprises and charities who are helping those with mental health issues. Thank you for all that you do. Please feel free to add to the comments box on our social media accounts to highlight your valuable work helping those who are struggling.

Second of all... Blue Monday was in fact a PR stunt by Sky Travel (sorry to crush your excitement on such a depressing day) ... but the name seems to have caught on, and PR aside, there is no doubt January can be a difficult month for many.

The advice to combat the blues is often to focus on something positive. I'm already a glass-half-full person, so this is relatively easy for me to do... but there is one new initiative that is really getting me excited at the moment... and that is a new, specialist member forum that we will be launching this quarter.

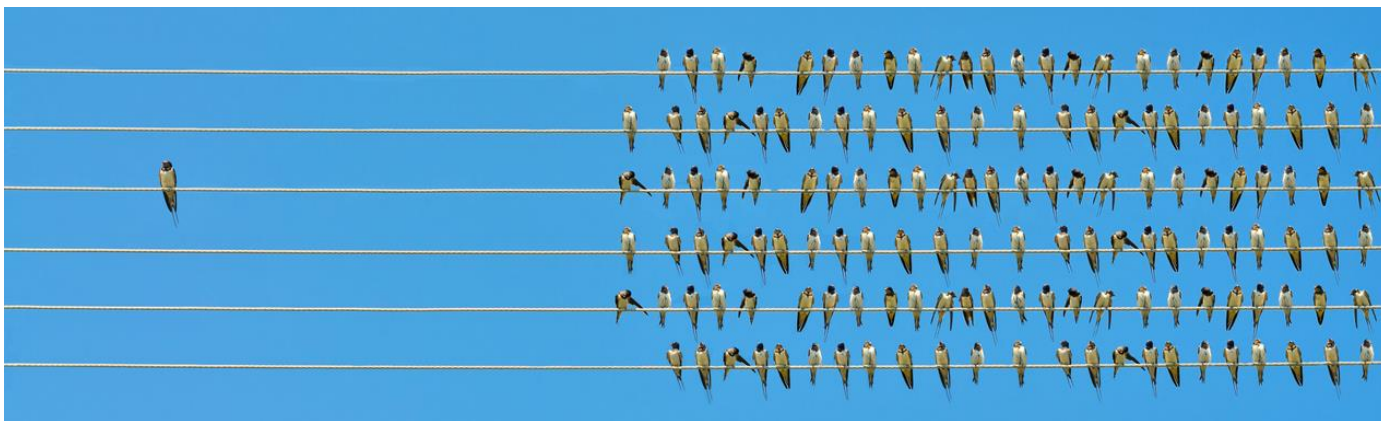
A lot of the conversations we are having with pension funds centre around climate change, and how asset owners can combat the effect of global warming within their investment strategies. A lot of the same questions seem to crop up amongst pension funds: "How can we achieve net zero in our investments?", "How can we measure our progress", "How can we avoid green-washing", just to give some examples.

This has led us to conclude that there is a place on our platform for a specialist member forum focusing on Paris Alignment, net zero, TCFD and other climate-related issues. We are still in the formation stage of setting this forum up, and would welcome your thoughts and suggestions, but ideas include:

- Asset-owner-only meetings facilitated and organised by Pensions for Purpose, where you can share best practice and raise questions, insights or challenges under Chatham House rules.
- A quarterly newsletter which signposts to content on our platform which discusses a particular climate-related issue, brings you up to date with new advice, guidance or developments, and lets you know what we have planned over the next three months on the forum.
- Influencer-sponsored discussion groups to talk about a climate-related topic in more detail, along similar lines to our Afternoon Tea debates.
- Meetings with a wider group of stakeholders including consultants, lawyers, regulators, managers, asset owners and pools, where we can discuss new developments.
- Training sessions from the Pensions for Purpose team on how best to move forward to achieve your climate goals.

If you would like to feed into this discussion, please email me at karen.shackleton@pensionsforpurpose.com. I'm interested to know from Influencer members whether they would prefer to sponsor on a quarterly basis to be part of the wider forum, or whether they would prefer to sponsor events where they were the only Influencer present. I would also very much like to hear from Affiliates members, or any other asset owners: what would be most valuable for you if you joined such a discussion forum?

We hope to roll our new member forum out this quarter, so if you would like to indicate an expression of interest, to find out more as and when we launch, then please email me [here](#). Don't get left behind in 2021... please consider joining our conversation!



Karen Shackleton

18th January 2021