

CSLN 2023 Year-in-Review

A look back on 2023, and preview into 2024



January 2024

At the [beginning of 2023](#) Climate Safe Lending Network had our sights set on a distinct vision: nurture our network and strengthen our ability to turn transition plans into action with a genuine consideration of climate justice. We are proud of what's been accomplished this year, and are looking forward in 2024 to building, evolving and accelerating the momentum we've generated in '23 with our partners.

2023 Review

Catalysing a Global 'Race to the Top' for Climate Safe Banking The time has come for preparation – measurement, target-setting and transition planning – to be translated into real action. It is with this in mind that we launched in November 2023 the Climate Finance Catalyst Contest for practical ideas that will help banking institutions make the transition to a net zero future faster, further and fairer. In this contest that will run through Spring 2024, we are seeking innovative approaches to solving the complex challenges facing the transition of the banking sector to net zero.

We want to find ideas, tools, strategies, and approaches that people in the sector can pick up and use to have an immediate impact. Learn more [here](#).

“ *The depth and diversity of proposals submitted to the Climate Finance Catalyst Contest is a vibrant demonstration that there's vitality and creativity 'out there' that needs integration into how banks operate.*

To achieve transformative breakthroughs in sustainability progress, we need banks to catalyse innovation and transition. And that requires joining up the great ideas and innovators out there with the implementers and internal changemakers inside institutions who can nurture new mindsets and drive initiatives at scale. Our growing community of Climate Safe Lending Fellows and the wider community of the network expands that opportunity to make connections capable of catalysing that transformational change. Only if the financial sector play the optimum amplifying role can 2024 truly be an exponential year of climate action. ”

James Vaccaro
Chief Catalyst

Developing Climate Action Leaders This year, our [Climate Safe Lending Fellowship](#) alumni network increased to over 40 fellows from 30 institutions including the world's largest banks as well as specialist and local lending institutions from 11 countries around the world. Delivered in partnership with [Finance Innovation Lab](#), the newest cohort of Fellows inspired the insights report “[Shifting the financial system: accelerating sustainable finance at banks.](#)” This report draws on invaluable insights from banking professionals to explore

overcoming barriers and harnessing opportunities in order to raise bank ambition and accelerate meaningful climate action across the banking sector. Amidst an increasingly complex global context, the report aims to help banking professionals navigate the path towards sustainable change.

As of Winter 2023, the Fellowship underwent a strategic handover and is now managed solely by the Climate Safe Lending Network. We strive to continue to deliver invaluable leadership development training such that Fellows gain practical tools and skills, as well as an inspiring network of peers to learn from and grow with.

In December 2023, we opened applications for the 3rd cohort – which will commence March 2024. Learn more [here](#).

Banking on Climate Justice With climate change already impacting the most vulnerable communities – often those who have contributed the least emissions – there is a growing inequality and injustice inherent in climate change and banking that sits at the heart of these issues. From April 2023 through the end of the year, a diverse set of members of Climate Safe Lending Network (CSLN) came together under the Banking on Climate Justice initiative in hopes of raising the sector’s ambition to incorporate justice into its inevitable transformation during the climate crisis.

As financial institutions face the material realities of climate risks, understanding how to assess risks and transition policies and practices towards greater sustainability are

“ *The Banking on Climate Justice initiative was a 2023 highlight for me. Not only did we have a room full of brilliant people who brought their personal passions and professional wisdom to the table, but the creative liberties taken within the collaborative design process and the content output will inspire much of the work in 2024.* ”

Michaela Crunkleton Wilson
Programme Manager

paramount. Yet in considering how to move forward in the climate transition, we often fail to use a systems approach to problem solving: an approach that considers how the past and present intersections of finance, climate and society have nonlinear implications for the future. In taking a systems approach, we realise that in order to avoid replicating old patterns that have brought us the unforeseen challenges we face today, we must decide to either transition our entire financial system towards one that upholds the principles of climate justice, or continue on this path of global destabilisation.

Learn more about our initiative and access its outputs [here](#).

Challenging Bankers to Rethink what “Good” Looks Like The banking industry is notoriously cryptic and confusing due to the dynamics of competition and security. For industry insiders, experts and influencers, these inherent complexities make it difficult to understand best practice for climate-safe lending. For consumers, the haziness can make it difficult to quickly understand what their banks are or are not doing to address the climate crisis, and how they might influence, benefit from or be harmed by bank action.

In 2023 CSLN engaged in several ways to help bring some clarity, and fresh perspective, to relevant conversations.

- **[Redirecting the Flow of Finance: an examination of bank strategy](#)** (April 2023)
A special closed-session meeting under Chatham House Rules with Dankse Bank discussing their recent and first-of-its kind announcement to not renew corporate level facilities to energy companies expanding fossil fuels, in line with the recommendations of the [UN High-Level Expert Group on the Net Zero Emissions Commitments of non-state entities](#). Being the first GSIB to make this decision, Dankse Bank joins some of the pioneering lenders in sustainable banking. Since then, other banks have stepped up their lending policies in 2024, including [Société Générale](#) and [ING](#).
- **[The Problems with Climate Risk Scenarios - and how to fix them](#)** (November 2023)
This panel discussion hosted in partnership with [Green Central Banking](#) and moderated by Boston University professor Madison Condon brought together global specialists to discuss the disconnect between climate finance models and climate science. Panellists included Sanjay Joshi, Responsible Investment Consultant, Hymans Robertson; Ann Pettifor, Political Economist; Sahil Shah, Co-founder, Tipping Frontier; and Steve Keen, Distinguished Research Fellow, University College London
- **[Accelerating Clean Energy Banking for Consumers: A global assessment of leading financial products and services](#)** (December 2023)
A first of its kind report in partnership with [Integrate to Zero](#), analysing the extent and nature of clean energy finance provided by banks to consumers. The report provides global and regional snapshots of insights based on desk research covering over 144 banks, across 6 regions and 53 nations.

Adapting Internal Strategy to Improve External Impact This year saw several internal organisational shifts. This fall we [announced our new Executive Director](#), Aaron Morehouse, PhD. James Vaccaro has moved to the role of Chief Catalyst.

“ *This past year’s been fun watching Aaron inject our network with power & might. We’ve got so much going on, yet the team keeps the engine running and the energy high. There’s a collective willingness to take things on, navigate ambiguity, be flexible, be creative, and most importantly, trust each other.* ”

Lizzie Flower
Programme Coordinator

Shortly after his appointment, Aaron led the team through a strategic refresh in Fall 2023. This internal exercise underscored the staffing teams desire to support Network individuals in developing skills, building capacity, acquiring knowledge, and advocating for policies needed to enable banks and lending institutions to take the bold climate action that is essential in addressing the global climate crisis. We’ve re-emphasised our role as a convening space, advisory, and nexus for the sector and all associated stakeholders who can advance bold climate action.

Engaging in Global Conversations

A key part of what makes CSLN unique is our desire to continuously and provocatively nudge the debate towards increasingly progressive stances and ensuing action on climate-safe policies and practice. To do this, we remain deeply engaged in the conversations within our network and the broader ecosystem, and maintain flexibility within our strategies and programming to be responsive to these conversations. We engaged in conversation in 2023 through:

“ *We are a global multi-stakeholder network, and that depends on building relationships, participating in dialogue about the important policy changes needed, and engaging directly with our partners and collaborators on tools and approaches to accelerating banks’ contributions to a just transition. Its invaluable to have the momentum and energy from network building with our constituents across the globe.* ”

Aaron Morehouse
Executive Director

- At least one CSLN staff represented in several different global and regional conferences, convenings and conversations
 - [Transforming Finance Conference](#), Finance Innovation Lab, July 2023
 - [IEEFA Energy Finance Conference](#), IEEFA, July 2023
 - James Vaccaro participated as a speaker on the a [Financing Green Energy Solutions panel](#)
 - [Race to Regulation Retreat](#), Race to Zero, July 2023
 - [Reuters IMPACT](#), Reuters, September 2023
 - [New Economies & Mission Lab Days](#), P4NE, September 2023
 - [Ethical Finance Global Summit](#), GEFI, September 2023

- [Climate Week NYC](#), *Climate Group*, September 2023
- [COP28](#), *UNFCCC*, November 2023
- Participation on [GFANZ Advisory Panel](#)
 - GFANZ, Dec 2023: CSLN proposed [Expected Cumulative Emissions](#) as an alternative metric for decarbonisation contribution
- Increasing our digital reach, with an almost 80% net increase in LinkedIn followers, bringing us to over 2500 total followers, and a 14% net increase in subscriptions to our newsletter, enabling us to reach just over 2000 email contacts

Influencing Policy Discussions Policy continues to be paramount to the sector's ability to transition to a climate safe world. In 2023, CSLN was represented and contributed to the [Transition Plan Taskforce](#), including Banking Sector guidelines, and participation in the Just Transition and adaptation working groups.

2024 Preview

Climate Safe Lending Network ended 2023 with an exciting amount of potential energy, bottled up and waiting to be released in 2024. This upcoming year, we're looking forward to:

- **Climate Safe Lending Catalyst Contest** The beginning of our year will see the culmination of the [Catalyst Contest](#). After receiving around 100 entries - many of which contain promising concepts, innovations and approaches - we look forward to introducing these ideas to the banking community in March 2024 in partnership with our esteemed panel of judges.
- **CSL Fellowship Cohorts** We look forward to continuing the Fellowship programming and stretching our creative muscles to find ways to increase its impact and influence. Learn more about the Fellowship [here](#).
- **Advocacy and Advisory** We look forward to continuing to advocate for models that genuinely shift the system, including those that have come out of our [Banking on Climate Justice](#) work, as well as the Catalyst Contest.