



●●● **ESG ACCORD** Spotlight Interview

Alasdair Coutts-Britton
Better World Financial Planning

Alasdair has seen a lot of change over the past year. He left the IFA business that he was with to start up his own advisory business, which was authorised at the start of 2021. The purpose was to create a specific entity that offered a focus on ESG investing for clients. As Alasdair said, **“in a few years all will be ESG advisers”**, and he wanted to be ahead of the game. He went on to say **“I want to be able to direct money that will make a difference and change things”**.

We asked how things had developed since he started his new business. He said, **“the concept still needs to be sold, though momentum is growing. Investors still don’t understand that investing sustainably is profitable In fact increasingly more so, and we can prove this through FE Analytics”**.

We then talked to Alasdair about the dangers of ‘greenwashing’. **“There have been a plethora of new fund launches and greenwashing is a massive temptation for some fund managers. Just having existing funds repackaged is a worry”**.

We then moved on to COP 26 and the ambition of the government to make the UK the best place in the world for green and sustainable investing, and how advisers can contribute to this. Alasdair’s response was that he feels it is the role of the adviser to be actively selling this to their clients.

With regards to the ESG Accord compliance framework, which he is now using, our first question was why he felt that he had a need for this. **“I needed to be able to demonstrate that ESG solutions had a metric that can be demonstrated to my clients. And increasingly fund managers in this sector have a process that they are happy to share. There have been other positive outcomes as well. It has enabled me to understand the due diligence of funds when a client has a specific view, so that I can find the right funds for the needs of specific clients”**.

“ESG Accord has proved to be a great starting point for me, helping me to unpick what is in a fund, and more than that it helps me to keep abreast with what is needed”.

Finally we asked Alasdair what else would help him to grow ESG and sustainable investing in his business; **“There are several things; there is growing confusion with the number of players in the market and a lack of clarity on the terminology used. In fact clarity of regulation is needed as well, and it would also help if we had uniform disclosure on documents, so that it is easier to make comparisons between different funds and companies”**.

Thank you Alasdair for sharing your views and experience.

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