

# Essential Read – Environmental Responsibility

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Arts Council England



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## **Cultural organisations and individuals lead the way in their approach to environmental responsibility.**

The climate and environmental crisis is one of the most significant challenges facing us all. The cultural sector has already taken major steps to reduce its carbon footprint and has developed skills and knowledge that bring cultural and environmental practice and policy together. Arts Council has supported this movement since 2012 with a range of initiatives (<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/resilience-and-sustainability/environmental-programme>).

The Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle is not a new commitment, rather an evolution of our existing policy. We are no longer asking you to be merely ‘sustainable’ and monitor your environmental data but to take ‘responsibility’ for our environment across all your work.

We will continue to support the sector to understand and manage its environmental impacts and to nurture expertise in this area. We understand that everyone will be at different stages of their environmental journey and will provide access to relevant guidance, tools and resources that recognise this.

Alongside reporting environmental data we are asking the sector to align its work to relevant environmental policies, the evolving science, and to frameworks such as net zero carbon pathways. We encourage and support the sector to look beyond its carbon footprint, to expand ambitions and embed environmental thinking into everything it does. We especially welcome innovative, creative and thoughtful perspectives and encourage cultural leaders to champion, educate and advocate in response to the climate crisis.

Underpinning our Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle are three elements:

# Understanding the data

## **Our ambition:**

We want the sector to be an exemplar at the collection, reporting and understanding of its environmental data. This data should clearly inform environmental planning and initiatives and will play a demonstrable role in decision and policy making.

## **What this means for you:**

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You collect and use good quality data to inform your environmental strategies and initiatives, including your action plan and policy.

You should think about:

- collecting, reporting and interpreting your own environmental data.
- data beyond your carbon footprint - such as audience and programme data - that could inform new initiatives and innovation.
- how you utilise the data to inform your decision making.
- sharing your data with key stakeholders such as audiences, peers and funders.

# Plan, action and change

## **Our ambition:**

We want the organisations and individuals we support to forefront their commitment to environmental responsibility through considered planning and actions. We expect this to result in continued carbon reductions and to also highlight the potential of culture to connect, mobilise and inspire places and communities, and champion cultural leadership.

## **What this means for you:**

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Your environmental strategy needs to be a core part of your planning. It should be supported by relevant actions and targets that reflect a commitment to environmental responsibility and where relevant net zero carbon pathways. You should strive to demonstrate positive change via the actions and initiatives in your strategy.

Consider covering these points:

- You have an environmental plan and policy that is specific to your organisation or practice.
- You set targets that are appropriate to your plan and policy.
- The projects and initiatives you undertake highlight and contribute towards your environmental commitment.
- You think creatively and make plans that highlight your cultural leadership.

# Influence, educate and advocate

## **Our ambition:**

We want the organisations and individuals we support to lead by example, promoting the need for environmental responsibility in the communities in which they work, within partnerships and with audiences and stakeholders. There will be an increased awareness of the cultural sector's role in catalysing change, demonstrating how culture can influence and inspire action locally, nationally and internationally.

## **What this means for you:**

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Many practitioners and organisations across the sector have pioneered good environmental practice and developed invaluable knowledge. By sharing your data, plans, experiences and outcomes with your team, partners, stakeholders and the public you demonstrate your commitment to our environment.

This might include:

- the presentation of purposeful work, practice, programming or conversations that highlight what you do in relation to environmental responsibility.
- active membership and/or leadership in climate-related networks or groups.
- relevant training or learning experiences for your staff, governing body, stakeholders and audiences.
- you profile and celebrate your own and others excellent environmental practices.

# Conclusion

With international stakeholders looking to the Arts Council's environmental programme for inspiration, we can take this opportunity to collectively restate our commitment, utilise the power of the cultural sector's voice and remain leaders in this field. To achieve this, we are asking you to expand your ambitions and embed environmental thinking in everything that you do.

## Further thoughts...

To help you deliver this, we will provide the necessary tools, support and up-to-date environmental thinking to inspire, inform and develop your environmental work.

We will continue to share best practice and learning and celebrate pioneers and innovation in this field. The Arts Council is on this journey with you. We are committed to embodying Environmental Responsibility across every aspect of our organisation.

To learn more about our expectations around this principle, and particularly for those in receipt of, or with the ambition to apply for, regular funding, look out for further resources this summer. To ensure you get notified of new material, you can sign up to our newsletter here: <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-organisation/sign-our-email-updates>.

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