
Sustaining Great Art

Environmental Report

2015/16

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND THE



Foreword

Arts and culture not only respond to the world around us; they also influence our individual and collective experiences, and shape the direction we take. Through discussion and through our own behaviour, the creative community can help change society for the better. This is the intention of the environmental sustainability programme that Arts Council England runs in collaboration with Julie's Bicycle.

The partnership with Julie's Bicycle goes back to 2007. Together, we have learned how we can support the sector in practical ways and in developing leadership and strategic thinking around sustainability. The Arts Council lays great emphasis on the need to improve the resilience of arts and cultural organisations – on their ability to adapt to environmental, economic, technological and social change, and make the best use of available resources. We see sustainability as being intrinsic to resilience. It's not only environmentally responsible; it makes economic sense.

Our collaboration with Julie's Bicycle is introducing us all to new ways of working. Our funding supports not only the mechanics of

compliance – the environmental reporting tools, help and support – but also thought-leadership. We're proud that we were the first cultural funding body in the world to ask our funded organisations to act on their environmental impact. The efforts of arts organisations across England have been an inspiration to the arts globally. This wouldn't have been possible without the goodwill of the sector and the experience and expertise of Julie's Bicycle. It has become a very effective partnership.

This report explores the findings of the environmental sustainability programme from 2015 to 2016. It shows how the sector has moved forward over the programme's first four years. There are increasing levels of engagement and improved environmental performance, leading to significant financial savings. Moreover, the theme of environmental sustainability is producing some inspired creative programming, which speaks to the unique role of the sector.

All this comes at an important point for the international sustainability agenda. Last December, COP21 and the resulting Paris Agreement – a global agreement by 195

countries to maintain global warming below two degrees Celsius – set a precedent for international co-operation.

So it is wonderful to see arts and cultural organisations leading a constructive and progressive conversation about the effects of climate change, raising awareness and showing through their own management how we can find real solutions to the global challenges of sustainability. There is always more to do – and we know that the sector is up for the challenge. People have a deep passion for this. So let's keep up the good work, and show ourselves to be leaders in our organisation, in our sector – and in society.

We all believe that art and culture can make the world a better place; this programme shows how our actions can make a real difference.



**Darren Henley OBE, Chief Executive,
Arts Council England**

Executive summary

On 10 December 2015, almost 200 countries came together and committed to act on climate change. And less than a year later the resulting Paris Agreement¹ came into force with a commitment to limit global temperature rise to below two degrees Celsius. It was a singular demonstration of political consensus that climate change is urgent and must be collectively addressed.

This international agreement is in no small part down to the efforts of communities campaigning and lobbying for a strong framework, including the arts and culture. And success, especially at the political level, is contingent on the ongoing support and pressure of people on governments to maintain a steady flow of political will and investment which will make achieving the targets of the Paris Agreement possible.

Tackling climate change has never been more urgent: at the time of writing it looks likely that

2016 will be the hottest year on record, setting a new high for the third year running. And 16 of the 17 hottest years will have been during this century.

So it is within this context that **Arts Council England's environmental programme has become an internationally recognised demonstration of successful policy and climate action from the cultural sector.**

Begun in 2012, it is part of the Arts Council's 2010-20 strategic goal of resilient, environmentally sustainable arts, museums and libraries. Over this time it has generated the largest data set of cultural environmental impacts in the world, showing a 4.5% average annual reduction in energy use emissions, corresponding to £8.7 million savings on energy.

The first phase (2012-5) established a critical mass of engaged National Portfolio Organisations

(NPOs)² with common baseline data and environmental policies. It also captured the imagination of many people and new, sustainable arts practices began to take root. In this second phase (2015-8), the programme wants to raise ambition and support leadership, reinforcing national and international climate change targets and building on the great work of many cultural organisations.

1. Reached at the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris, 2015.

2. Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations are regularly funded organisations that play a vital role in helping Arts Council England to meet its mission of great art and culture for everyone. The National Portfolio Organisations in this report include: [National Portfolio Organisations](#), [Major Partner Museums](#), [Bridge Organisations](#) and [National Youth Music Organisations](#).

Delivered by Julie's Bicycle, the programme aims to:

Help Arts Council England's NPOs to meet their funding requirements around impact measurement³ and action-planning

Support and champion the sector's sustainable development

Deepen understanding of the sector's environmental performance

Support the development of Arts Council England's approach to environmental sustainability

Now a year into this phase, we have already seen better policy- and action-planning supporting funding applications; financial savings and innovation; on-site generation and green energy tariffs supporting the clean energy transition, and new networks, partnerships and collaborations strengthening the work of individual organisations as leadership becomes increasingly distributed and diverse. With 98% of current Arts Council England NPOs currently involved with the programme and two-thirds already programming environmentally themed work, a cultural shift which prioritises climate change and sustainability is well under way.

The last 12 months have been critical for climate and for culture. The Sustainable Development Goals⁴ together with the Paris Agreement will accelerate the global shift to clean and affordable energy for everyone, celebrate culture and diversity, and encourage sustainable collaboration across sectors, disciplines and

countries and at all levels. In this systemic context, the arts have specialist and sorely needed leadership capacities: to influence, through creative expression and participation, to shape new narratives, and to craft cultural values commensurate with the scale of this challenge.

“For us sustainability is at the heart of what we do, enshrined in our mission and business plan and embedded in how we think and act.”

Sian Alexander, Executive Director, Lyric Hammersmith

3. Measurement of impacts is done through the IG Tools: www.ig-tools.com. Organisations choose from energy, waste, water, materials, business travel, touring travel and accommodation and audience travel. 2015/16 is the first year of a new approach to environmental reporting, where organisations report on impacts most relevant to their specific activities, rather than focusing on energy and water as in the first phase of this programme (2015-8).

4. www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals

Key findings

The sector continues to reduce its environmental impacts: greenhouse gas emissions from **energy use decreased by 17%** between 2014/15 and 2015/16 despite a growth in cultural activity. Generation of on-site renewable energy also increased by 23% in the same period.

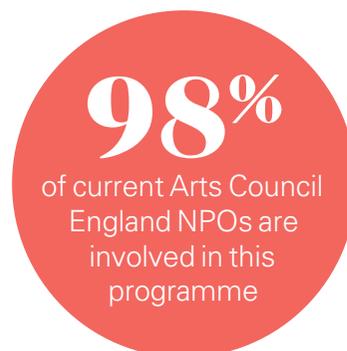
Environmental action is making the sector more resilient including savings of **£5.1 million** during 2015/16 (compared to taking no action) and improved staff wellbeing in 71% of reporting organisations.

The sector is taking action in multiple ways, increasingly engaging audiences and other stakeholders in the process (including through creative programming, sustainable touring and direct campaigning), guided by what is most relevant and meaningful to each organisation. **37% of organisations have produced, programmed or curated work on environmental themes**, with a further 28% planning to do so.

People are working together, with collaborations and partnerships developing across disciplines and expertise, within and beyond the sector, locally and nationally.

45% of reporting organisations found their environmental action plans useful for developing new partnerships.

The sector's work is having an international impact, with more knowledge-sharing taking place between cultural organisations internationally, and other funding bodies considering new policy inspired by Arts Council England.



Conclusion

This report demonstrates the ongoing success of light-touch policy to prompt environmental understanding and meaningful actions that reinforce national and international climate targets. It also has a cultural resonance beyond the technicalities of data and accountability: more engaged than ever before, arts organisations are more literate, more imaginative, more active, more ambitious, and joining the dots across activities, purpose and mission. All of this is contributing to Arts Council England's strategic goal to support sector resilience, demonstrating the inseparability of economic, social, cultural and environmental sustainability. The cultural dimensions of the climate crisis are central to our understanding of the solutions. This programme has already demonstrated a powerful practice of change: real, practical actions which are igniting our creative moral imagination.

Nothing less than that.