The Spark Arts for Children

**Environmental Policy and Action Plan 2023-24**

**Updated June 2023**

**Environmental Policy**

Our vision – extraordinary experiences for children, sparking creativity and change – means that today we want our work to help children to thrive. Our mission is to explore the difference culture makes through involvement in the arts, creative interactions and cultural connections, so we enable children’s voices to be heard, their creativity to be supported and their cultural values to be understood.

We are an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and welcome over 20,000 visits to our festival, performances and cultural activities per year. Working closely with artists and partners, we commission, co-commission and programme performance and participatory work for children aged 0 to 13 years. We work in schools, libraries, cultural venues, outside and online. We mainly work in Leicester, Leicestershire and the East Midlands region. Our work is highly collaborative. For example, we work with on average 30 festival partners and tour family theatre to libraries across the region in partnership with local authorities and cultural organisations. Our environmental responsibility is multifaceted.

We are a busy children’s arts organisation based at the LCB Depot, a workspace for creative and cultural industries in the heart of Leicester’s cultural quarter. We support children’s creative potential with an annual children’s festival and year-round cultural programme of theatre, music, dance and combined arts. The voice and agency of children and artists is central to our ambition and quality as a creative organisation – our work with artists, schools, families and festival audiences is collaborative, creative, progressive and playful – these principles underpin our environmental responsibility.

We are in a transition year – a phased remodeling of the festival format and business model in terms of technological, economical, environmental and social outcomes – and stronger integration with year-round cultural programming, notably children’s voice and action, participation and outreach activity. We are in the process of exploring the feasibility of social enterprise, social investment and impact approaches towards diversifying and identifying a more stable and sustainable investment model and dynamic approach to business development. Our dynamism and environmental responsibility are inextricably linked.

Understanding that climate change and environmental sustainability is one of the most significant global challenges. We have prioritised our environmental

responsibility in strategic thinking and planning, approaching this principle holistically to change behaviours and mobilise change. Future success will be our emergent leadership in building a sense of activism and social responsibility. In May 2023 we launched our new website and visual identity, continuing to improve the significant progress we have made in digital and social media marketing. We are in a good position to promote environmental responsibility and sustainable good practice by taking a digital-first approach – we believe that by investing in governance, leadership, staff and artists we can support children’s voice and enable their creativity and action to better understand the sustainability causes that matter in their lived experience and their communities, resulting in a collective impact.

**Environmental Action Plan**

Aligning our work to LLEP Green Economy who plan to be carbon-neutral in Leicester and Leicestershire by 2035, we want to commit to reducing our direct carbon emissions by 50% between 2023-2028 – we need to build our capacity, skills and collective action to do so.

In this policy and action plan we are committing to developing best sustainable policy and practice, improving governance support for environmental sustainability and responsibility and supporting the needs and interests of staff, artists and children to actively participate in environmental decision making, actions and impacts. Because shared power, skills and capacity building are key to making a difference, we will start to work in partnership with other National Portfolio Organisations, cultural organisations, Leicester City Council and local universities, in order to support our grass roots approach.

Initially, we need to meaningfully understand where our main points of leverage and influence are. We will use the next 12 months to analyse existing data and information, including data using Julie’s Bicycle [Creative Climate Tools](https://ig-tools.com/login) and industry resources, festival case studies, guidance and tools. Building on our work to date, we will focus our impact in the following areas: marketing, collaboration and advocacy; office and travel; procurement – suppliers and contractors; programming and production, supported by the following change mechanisms: good leadership, good communication, and better carbon literacy.

Short term, our priority is to build capacity and skill to harness the creativity of our team, children and artist community, by establishing a ‘green team’ approach proportionate to available resources, our strong capability in co-creation and the issues we are ready to tackle. Medium to long term, our environmental responsibility will focus on our digital marketing, engagement and festival, incorporating green guidelines and protocols, introducing carbon calculation and comparable year-on-year data. Environmental Responsibility Investment Principle Ambition:

*Over 5 years, we want to establish our creative programme as a hub of activism and social responsibility,*

*promoting environmental responsibility and sustainable good practice.*

Our Environmental Action Plan is aligned to our strategic business plan, specifically our Arts Council Investment Principles Plan and Activity Plan. Using objectives and targets, we will monitor and evaluate data and insight regularly to understand and share progress and achievements. Our 2023-24 Action Plan builds on our place situation, organisational context and scale, our developing environmental practice, individual confidence and motivation and peer learning. We have simplified data collection to improve usability and value – as a small organisation we need efficiency and flexibility to ensure our plans are achievable, contribute to our goals and make a tangible difference. Where baselines do not exist, they will be set, and we will incrementally build in appropriate benchmarks.

**Impact Areas**

* Marketing, collaboration and advocacy: engagement, experience, attitudes and behaviours
* Office (leased space) and business travel: energy (gas and electricity), water use, waste, carbon footprint
* Procurement - suppliers and contractors: office supplies, programme and production materials, printed materials, merchandise
* Programming and production: awareness raising and engagement, materials, energy use, waste

**Environmental Action Plan 2023-24**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Collaboration and advocacy** | | | | |
| **Objective** | **Actions** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Target and KPI** |
| Understand, monitor and progress impacts | * Raise awareness of environmental responsibility and sustainability by sharing information, engaging in discussion and facilitating development activity * Deliver development session for trustees and staff to explore and test our policy thinking, skills, capacities, approach. Test idea of ‘green team’ and how best to make a difference | Review quarterly  End December 2023 | Executive Director | N/A |
| Understand in detail main areas of leverage and influence | * Nominate environmental responsibility trustee lead * Implement small working group to undertake literature and resource review, present goals and report findings to trustees. Include UN Sustainable development Goals and integrate into Theory of Change and Evaluation Framework * Outline light touch peer learning and development plan for trustees, staff and artists to plan eco-critical themes into cultural programming | June 2023  End December 2023 and end March 2024  End March 2023 | Working Group (good organizational representation) | N/A |
| Improve utility of tools, green guidelines and protocols to maintain good quality data and its use | * Attend Creative Julie’s Bicycle Creative Climate Tools Briefing 8 June 2023 and de-brief internally * Review and update tools, green guidelines and protocols plus industry case studies, shared and discussed with the team | By end June 2023  Review regularly | Interim Executive Director/Executive Director | N/A |
| **Office and business travel** | | | | |
| **Objective** | **Actions** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Target and KPI** |
| Reduce office energy (electricity and gas) use and related emissions | * Manage electricity use in the office by switching off lights when not in office and turning off computers and monitors overnight * Manage gas use in the office by regularly monitoring the heating thermostat and timer | Review September 2023 and April 2024 | Finance and Operations Manager and Executive Director | Reduce office energy+water and sewage impact below 2.3 tonnes CO2e  Electricity 1357 kWh (2021-22)  Gas 6793 kWh (2021-22) |
| Reduce office water use and related emissions | * Turn off taps in shared kitchen and use short flush when using the toilet | Review September 2023 and April 2024 | Operations & Finance Manager and Executive Director | Water used 22.17 m3 (2021-22)  Waste water 22.17 m3 (2021-22) |
| Reduce waste generated through everyday practices by reducing waste to landfill and maximizing recycling and reuse of waste | * Only purchase amount of consumables required, e.g. do not purchase more than needed, print only when necessary using recycled paper, double-sided * Promote and use recycling facilities at LCB Depot for paper, cardboard, plastic bottles, cans, glass and toner cartridges | Review regularly and review April 2023 | Operations & Finance Manager and Company Administrator | Set responsible recycling rate - total volume of paper purchased per year and or volume of total waste recycled per year (baseline to be set) |
| Put sustainability at the centre of our hybrid and dynamic working practices | * Review and implement Hybrid Working Policy in consultation with staff * Actively promote desktop or video conferencing (Microsoft Teams and Zoom) as part of Hybrid Working Policy | End December 2023 | Artistic Director and Executive Director | N/A |
| Conduct a rapid review of everyday good practice in travel for business, festival and touring travel | * Explore the use of local taxi services and van hire that utilize low emissions vehicles for general business, festival and touring travel | Review Q2 | Operations & Finance Manager and Creative Producer: Festival & Programme | N/A |
| **Procurement – suppliers and contractors** | | | | |
| **Objective** | **Actions** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Target and KPI** |
| Review procurement practices and produce Procurement Policy with clear sustainability credentials | * Routinely research and source sustainable procurement businesses and start to build a green business list * Engage with East Midlands Chamber (membership 2023-24) and LLEP Green Economy support, practical advice and funding to improve resource efficiency * Share with team through internal channels and support sustainable procurement | End March 2024 | Executive Director | Procurement Policy implemented |
| Review standard contract conditions and add environmental requirements, as appropriate | * Engage with East Midlands Chamber (membership 2023-24) and LLEP support, practical advice and funding to improve resource efficiency * Include environmental requirements and or objectives in key contracts for products and services, e.g. PR and communications, touring companies and artists * Research and plan to implement a Green Rider of ‘green’ clauses for visiting companies and artists touring work at the festival and year-round cultural programmes | End March 2024 | Executive Director | N/A |
| **Programming & Production** | | | | |
| **Objective** | **Actions** | **Timeline** | **Responsibility** | **Target and KPI** |
| Embed environmental responsibility and sustainability in artistic commissioning and programming | * Include environmental sustainability in artistic/production/participation briefs, open calls and commissions * Include environmental responsibility in the Artist Toolkit supporting artists and creative practitioners at the start, during and end of activity | Review regularly (sequenced agenda item at Team Meetings) | Artistic Director, Associate Company, Associate Director and Creative Producers  Executive Director | N/A |
| Establish collective action partnership with NPOs and cultural organisations to support progress and impact | * Collaborate with other NPOs and cultural organisations on actively finding and sharing solutions to environmental issues through cultural programming | Review regularly | Artistic Director and Executive Director | N/A |
| Reduce waste from festival, events and projects | * Supply reusable water bottle or ask staff, freelancers, volunteers, companies and artists to bring their own * Sell, donate or recycle unwanted materials from performances, events and workshops | Review April-2024 | Operations & Finance Manager | Increase reuse and recycling of materials - % materials reused or recycled per year (baseline to be set) |
| Reduce volume of printed marketing and communications materials | * Review printed materials use for festival and year-round cultural programmes and projects * Change approach according to new criteria, including promotional and evaluative printed materials | Review regularly and April 2024 | Operations & Finance Manager and Digital Marketing & Engagement Officer | Reduce total volume of printed materials - % printed materials produced/used per year (baseline to be set) |
| Maximise environmental responsibility in marketing print | * Consider ink/paper use and supply inc. avoiding glossy and laminated coatings that use plastic * Use non-PVC materials for banners and signage | Review regularly | Digital Marketing & Engagement Manager | N/A |