

Greening the Museums

May 2022

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Foreword

In the aftermath of COP26 and the agreement of the Glasgow Climate Pact, the UK is more committed than ever to increasing global ambition towards the transition to a zero-carbon economy and to learning from others in this common endeavour.

Cultural organisations will be at the forefront of tackling such questions and actively co-shaping the social debate. Museums in the UK are passionate about serving their local communities and engaging audiences, and the UK is keen to build on the strong cultural ties with Greece to foster the creation of an impactful bilateral cultural network exchanging best practice and developing joint activities – opportunities abound.

The **Greening the Museums** programme is a series of four workshops delivered jointly by the British Council Greece and the British Embassy Athens, with UK government funding, to foster the dialogue on innovative ways to turn museums into leading sustainability hubs. Emerging from the aims and objectives of British Council's [Museums Revisited](#) capacity building programme, the workshops aim in particular at supporting cultural professionals in implementing low or no cost actions to improve the environmental footprint of museums, developing public awareness campaigns around sustainable growth in an urban context and developing bilateral green partnerships in the cultural space.

The [CoMuseum](#) international museum conference in Greece is the flagship programme of the Museums Revisited in the EU initiative. It highlights contemporary challenges and creates a global network of professionals who wish to co-design a 'culture-edge' future for our societies. Comuseum 2021 focused on four strands:

- sustainability and digital strategies.
- the future of collections, curating and storytelling.
- the social impact of museums and cultural organisations.
- the roles of museums in the climate crisis.

The Greening the Museum series kicked off during the 11th CoMuseum International Conference on (Re)Positioning the Museum of Tomorrow” (1-3 December 2021) and was curated by **Iphigenia Taxopoulou**, General Secretary, mitos21, Julie's Bicycle Associate. Julie's Bicycle is a pioneering British not-for-profit organisation mobilising arts and culture to tackle the climate and ecological crisis.

The British Embassy and the British Council would like to warmly thank Iphigenia for her valuable insights and commitment to this work.

Special thanks are also due to **Lucia Pietrojusti**, Founder, General Ecology, Serpentine Galleries, who co-curated the first workshop on “Curating in Times of Climate and Ecological Crisis”. Additionally we would like to thank our workshop leaders **Claire Buckley**, Environmental Sustainability Consultant at Julie's Bicycle, **Caitlin Southwick**, Museum Sustainability Expert and Executive Director at KiCulture, **Sara Kassam**, Sustainability Lead at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A) and **Catherine Bottrill**, Blenheim's Sustainability Consultant, CEO Pilio and Julie's Bicycle Associate.

We further extend our warmest thanks to **Dina Ntziora**, Cultural Manager & Community Engagement Consultant, for preparing this report summary.

Finally, yet importantly, we are most grateful to our wonderful workshop participants for their active engagement and constructive comments.

Quotes of Note

“Culture is now understood as essential to creating resilient and sustainable cities. This is why cultural leadership is now indispensable.”

World Cities Culture Forum, Julie’s Bicycle

“The richest 10% of the global population, about 630 million people, are responsible for about 52% of global emissions. World’s richest 1% cause double CO2 emissions of the poorest 50%.” Oxfam and Stockholm Environment Institute

“Art and culture bridge the gap between what we know and what we feel.”

Selina Nwulu, Write -/Creative Leadership Consultant

“Science, policy and technology alone are not enough - to protect what we love, to survive and to thrive. We need hearts and minds and a shift in our cultural values. No sector is better placed to achieve this than the culture and creative sector.”

Claire Buckley, Environmental Sustainability Consultant, Julie’s Bicycle

“We believe the Horniman has a moral and ethical imperative to act now. As a much-loved and trusted institution and the only museum in London in which nature and culture can be viewed together, we feel we have a unique opportunity and responsibility to use our collections, our indoor and outdoor spaces, and our relationship with our visitors, to create a movement for positive environmental change.”

Nick Merriman, Chief Executive and Director of Content for the Horniman

“There is nothing new under the sun, we are just lifting up all the stones at different times.”

Sara Kassam, Sustainability Lead at the Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A)

“(Sustainability is) Doing good without doing harm.”

Henry McGhie, Consultant - Curating Tomorrow

“Waste is a failure of imagination.”

Dr.. Tanja Beer, Ecoscenographer

“Environment is no one’s property to destroy; it’s everyone’s responsibility to protect.”

Mohith Agadi, Author & Independent Journalist

“We cannot shift and change our organisations without putting in the resources behind it.” Catherine Bottrill, Julie’s Bicycle Associate, Blenheim’s Sustainability Consultant

Summary

The Greening the Museums series of workshops is not simply a response to the growing interest in environmental sustainability. It is also an opportunity to share best practice between field experts in Greece and the UK and provide access to the methodology that informs the work of UK institutions around climate change.

The UK was the first country in the world to adopt climate change legislation in 2007. To this day, the so-called UK Climate Change Act is considered a model of climate change legislation.

The British Council is a global leader in climate change. It was one of the first UK institutions to actively engage in environmental sustainability, making the latter a strategic priority.

Arts Council England was the first cultural body in the world to adopt an Environmental Cultural Policy framework in 2012 and has been building understanding, agency and leadership on climate and the environment across the cultural sector in England ever since.

The workshops seek to introduce participants to a wider systemic framework around sustainability, to underscore the point that tackling the climate crisis is a global challenge calling for joint, concerted action. The workshops further aim at raising awareness around climate change, how the museums address sustainability issues at present and what steps need to be taken in future.

Greening the Museums is also about governance, specific roles and responsibilities, as well as about different areas of expertise, engagement and collaboration to further explore the benefits that environmental action brings to our organisations. Through this series, we are highlighting the trajectory of a sector, which has been in transition for more than 10 years. The goal is to provide inspiration, guidance, and support to create the right conditions, mind frame and framework to ignite change.

The UK's Environmental Cultural Policy framework altered the cultural landscape across the country and contributed to embedding environmental sustainability into the cultural/artistic space. Cultural agents started to reconsider their role in the climate crisis and to take specific action to reduce their carbon footprint and introduce an environmental framework in their institutions.

The below factors were key in making this exemplary policy change possible:

1. The development of the national climate policy framework.
2. The mobilisation of the sector itself and of key cultural institutions, such as the British Council and Arts Council England.
3. The help and support offered by the government to encourage organisations and individuals to expand their sustainable practices.

Sustainable practice is largely about systemic change, about what we can do collectively. Once a cluster of organisations start following this path in an organised way, resources are very likely to become available in support of their efforts to create a framework and encourage public and private stakeholders to back them. Collaboration is therefore key to creating a critical mass of cultural organisations that mobilise the necessary resources around climate initiatives and creates a powerful momentum for museums, cultural organisations and everyone involved to take a step forward.

Championing interdepartmental communication and instilling positive attitudes within cultural organisations across the management chain motivates staff to learn from each other and be open to a climate sustainability plan. Change has to be welcome to last. Organisations must be open and honest about their intentions, clearly stating them in a sustainability programme for museums.

Speakers' Bios

Lucia Pietroiusti, Founder, General Ecology, Serpentine Galleries



Lucia is a curator working at the intersection of art, ecology and systems, usually outside of the gallery format.

At Serpentine, London, Lucia is currently Strategic Consultant for Ecology. There, she founded the General Ecology project – a strategic, cross-organisational effort dedicated to the implementation of ecological principles throughout the Galleries' public-facing programmes, internal infrastructure and networks. Lucia is now working on developing the Institute for General Ecology as a distributed, independent organisation.

She is also the curator of Sun & Sea (Marina) by Rugile Barzdziukaite, Vaiva Grainyte and Lina Lapelyte, at the Lithuanian Pavilion of the 58th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia (and 2020-2022 international tour). In May 2022, Lucia will further curate the 8th Biennale Gherdeina, Persons Persons Personen, together with Filipa Ramos. Lucia is equally a co-curator of Back to Earth – Serpentine's 50th anniversary programme, dedicated to the environment (ongoing), which invites 65+ artists to devise environmental campaigns, prototypes or interventions in artwork form.

In 2021/2022, Lucia curated the second edition of Power Night at E-Werk Luckenwalde, titled Being Mothers. From 2018-2021 she was Curator of General Ecology. General Ecology was involved in live events, radio programmes, publications as well as ongoing research projects. Lucia was also the co-founder and co-curator of the Serpentine Podcast (since 2015, with Eva Jäger, Ben Vickers and Kay Watson).

Claire Buckley, Environmental Sustainability Consultant, Julie's Bicycle



Claire is an environmental management and change expert with over 20 years of experience. Since joining the environmental arts charity Julie's Bicycle in 2012, she has been working with the culture sector – including the V&A, The Whitworth, White Cube, the Onassis Cultural Centre and Studio Olafur Eliasson - to build understanding of environmental impacts and issues and embed environmental thinking and action in planning, processes and activities. Claire is also author of the Julie's Bicycle Museums' Environmental Framework.

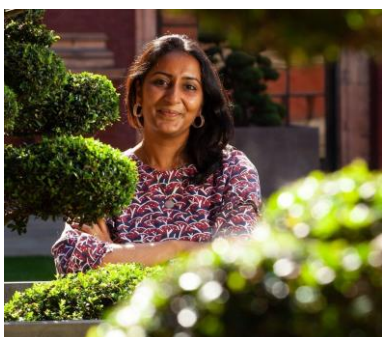
She has been closely involved in the delivery of Arts Council England's Environmental Programme and, for three years, was Lead Expert for C-Change – a network of six European cities developing cultural collaboration on climate. Before joining Julie's Bicycle, Claire worked as in-house environmental manager at the Guardian and as an environmental management consultant for a range of private and public sector organisations in Austria, Germany and Belgium. Originally Irish, she has a European Masters in Environmental Management and is a Practitioner Member of the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment.

Caitlin Southwick, Museums Sustainability Expert and Executive Director of Ki Culture



Caitlin Southwick is the Founder and Executive Director of Ki Culture and Sustainability in Conservation (SiC). She holds a Professional Doctorate in Conservation and Restoration of Cultural Heritage from the University of Amsterdam. Before founding Ki Culture, Caitlin worked in the conservation field for eight years in museums and sites around the world, including the Vatican Museums, The Getty Conservation Institute, The Uffizi Gallery, and Easter Island. She is the Secretary of the Working Group on Sustainability for the International Council of Museums (ICOM) and a former Professional Member of the American Institute of Conservation (AIC) Sustainability Committee.

Sara Kassam, Sustainability Lead, Victoria & Albert Museum



Sara is the first Sustainability Lead at the V&A and works across the organisation to embed sustainability expertise and catalyse systemic change in operations and behaviours.

She is also the Climate Change Trustee for the Museums Association. Sara has worked in sustainability at different levels from strategic planning to practical implementation, in the higher education, local government and charity sectors. She loves connecting people and ideas to make positive change happen.

Catherine Bottrill, Julie's Bicycle Associate, Blenheim's Sustainability Consultant



Catherine has 20 years' experience working in environmental sustainability. As CEO of Pilio, Catherine leads the development of innovative products, services, and business models for business communities to play their part in the necessary transition to create a climate, nature and people positive world. Pilio supports organisations across the economy - including the arts, heritage, fashion, education, retail and land management. Catherine and her team have worked with Blenheim Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage site, to carbon footprint their impact and develop their net zero strategy to achieve net zero by 2027.

Catherine was Director of Strategy until 2019 at Julie's Bicycle, running the Creative Green Programme, which included developing sustainability strategies for the Royal Albert Hall, BRIT Awards, OCC, TATE and V&A. Catherine built up the Creative Green community to 50+ organisations becoming certified per annum in good sustainability practice. Previously, she was a researcher at Oxford University's Environmental Change Institute working on building energy use, sustainability innovation and climate policy. Catherine holds an MSc in Environmental Management from Yale University School of the Environment. In 2016, she was selected as one of 12 women on the 2016 Angel Academy for women in tech, supported by the City of London.

Iphigenia Taxopoulou, General Secretary, mitos21, Julie's Bicycle Associate



Iphigenia Taxopoulou is a founding member and General Secretary of the European theatre network mitos21. She is also an Associate of Julie's Bicycle, the UK based charity, bridging environmental sustainability and the creative sector.

Iphigenia has served as Associate General Secretary of the International Association of Theatre Critics, as cultural advisor to the Speaker of the Hellenic Parliament and has collaborated as a dramaturg, artistic advisor and international projects manager with theatres, festivals and cultural institutions in Greece and abroad. Over the past few years, she has also been working extensively as an expert consultant and lecturer in the field of culture and environmental sustainability.

Iphigenia holds a degree in Philology & Modern Greek Studies, as well as an MA in Cultural Management & Theatre Criticism. She is currently writing a book, *The Practitioner's Handbook of Sustainable Theatre*, which will be published by Methuen Drama (Bloomsbury Publishing).

Participants

The Greening the Museum series attracted more than 350 professionals from Greece, Poland, Sweden, Ireland and Cyprus; academics, researchers, cultural managers, museum professionals from both the private and public sector, representatives from the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports, a number of Greek Universities (National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, Ionian University, Panteion University) environmental organisations and NGOs. The attendees brought different perspectives and examples of case studies into the discussions, turning the workshops into a space for a fruitful exchange of experiences and ideas.

Workshops

Curating in times of climate and ecological crisis

2 December, 14:00 – 15:30

with Lucia Pietroiusti, Founder, General Ecology, Serpentine Galleries and Iphigenia Taxopoulou, General Secretary, mitos21, Julie's Bicycle Associate

This webinar explored the different approaches museums and curators have taken to respond to the climate emergency, as well as the aesthetic, ethical and political questions arising for institutions that engage with environmental sustainability. From commissioning thematic works, to reinterpreting existing collections, to radically revising curatorial trends and priorities, the introductory presentation offered a brief overview of the international landscape through select examples, followed by a discussion and Q&A with Lucia Pietroiusti.

This was the inaugural in a series of four workshops discussing innovative ways to turn museums into leading sustainability hubs.

Iphigenia's presentation sought to offer an overview of how museums and curators across the globe have been responding to the climate and environmental crisis. This analysis would then help inform the discussion with Lucia on the different approaches and practices currently identified in the field. The examples referenced in Iphigenia's presentation range from museums that have positioned the climate emergency at the heart of their overall culture, to those simply joining the conversation by curating sporadic events – including a number of other, ad hoc curatorial initiatives.

The selected material could be broadly put under the below pillars:

1. Science & Natural History Museums
2. Themed Museums
3. Special events – Activist Intent
4. Contextualising the Climate Crisis
5. Mainstreaming the Climate Crisis
6. Revisiting Collections
7. Special Projects

More specifically (all organisations and projects mentioned below are referenced in the Annex page):

Science & Natural History Museums

- Biotopia Museum of Life, Munich
- Glasgow Science Centre
- Natural History Museum, London
- Horniman Museum, London

Science museums are by their very nature well positioned to address climate change and related environmental issues. Some focus at the intersection between life, environmental sciences, culture and the public, and are actively engaged in climate advocacy (e.g. Biotopia Museum of Life, the Glasgow Science Centre). Others curate thematic events and exhibitions and at the same time champion sustainability in every aspect of their management and daily operations (Natural History Museum, Horniman Museum).

Themed Museums

- Climate Museum, New York
- Kunst Haus Wien, The Green Museum, Vienna

Themed museums place environmental issues at the core of their work, as part of their 'brand', reflected in all areas of curatorial or other activity. Dedicated curators or curatorial projects, raise awareness among artists and the public alike to promote and support the creation of thematic, and yet artistically noteworthy artworks and events.

Special events

- ArtCOP21, Paris
- Prado & WWF, COP25, Madrid
- Somerset House – Earth Day Season, London

These are high profile cultural events, promoting the idea of art as both an advocate and catalyst for sustainable transition. Such events seek to intervene in the global climate debate and support the international political agenda by addressing climate change and environmental degradation.

Contextualising the climate crisis

- Berlin Festspiele, Down to Earth, Berlin
- Garage, The Coming World – Ecology as the new politics 2030 – 2100, Moscow

These are curated events, dedicated to climate and environmental issues seen through a political, social, philosophical and historical lens. They bring together artists and thinkers, nurturing a holistic discussion, which extends beyond the boundaries of climate change.

Mainstreaming the Climate Crisis

- Venice Biennale
- Milano Triennale XXII
- MOMA, New York
- The Tate, London

This set of examples refers to renowned institutions that help to mainstream the issue by producing or hosting relevant events, upscaling and offering visibility to the work of 'environmental' artists, and even 'trend-setting' in the contemporary arts world.

Revisiting Collections

- Victoria & Albert V&A – Fashioned from Nature
- Vienna Museum of Art History

Historic institutions revise their collections through the lens of climate and environment, often broadening the discussion to include perspectives on decolonization and climate justice.

Special Projects

- General Ecology, Serpentine Galleries, London

General Ecology is Serpentine's long-term and ongoing project researching complexity, more-than-humanism, climate justice and environmental balance. Founded in 2018, General Ecology is a strategic approach to embed environmental subjects and methods throughout the Galleries' outputs, structures and networks.

General Ecology, initiated and curated by Lucia Pietroiusti, follows a holistic approach, focussing simultaneously on environmental and organisational ecologies. This was an important part of the discussion, as museums often find themselves in a situation of conflicting values: curating the climate crisis calls for a review of organisational structures.

It is not possible to separate 'individual' ethics from the collective nature of a museum's work. Against this background, initiatives such as a thematic event or an exhibition should be undertaken in a collaborative manner and involve everyone in a museum/gallery. This is a challenge, as it requires change to be happening simultaneously on different levels.

More often than not, such ethical contradictions subside, given that curatorial initiatives soon mirror back on the organisations and catalyse an internal transformation process. Naturally, such transitions take time and require collective commitment. It is therefore important to look for agency in curatorial work and beyond through programming and towards wider change.

In the UK, an increasing number of museums/galleries 'join in on the conversation'. It seems that we are indeed witnessing a lasting shift in priorities, rather than a trend. There are indications that the climate debate is being effectively communicated, audiences are responding, and a new field of creative opportunity opens up for both artists and curators.

A framework for environmental change in museums: Embedding sustainability

14 March, 15.00–17.00

Presented by Claire Buckley, Environmental Sustainability Consultant, Julie's Bicycle

As a sector with stewardship and community at its heart and an extraordinary reach, museums have a unique perspective to share and a role to play in their response to the climate and ecological crisis. This session explores that role by sharing examples of how museums are responding and the kind of action they are taking. It looks at how museums can develop their environmental practice and embed environmental thinking and action into their organisation based on Julie's Bicycle's Museums' Environmental Framework.

In 2017, Julie's Bicycle, with the support of Arts Council England, introduced the **Museum Environmental Framework** launched at M Shed Museum in the city of Bristol. Since then, the level of public concern and demand for action on the climate and ecological crisis has risen to the highest it has ever been.

The fundamental principle of the Museum Environmental Framework is as true today as it was four years ago; namely that environmental action is a process - a way of working - not an end destination.

Julie's Bicycle is a non-profit founded by the UK music industry in 2007, now supporting climate action across the international creative and cultural community. Working at the intersection between culture, creativity, environment and climate, Julie's Bicycle's three key objectives are:

1. To support culture to become net-zero carbon and restore nature.
2. To inspire public action in support of climate and ecology.
3. To champion environmental justice and fairness.

The organisation's three main areas of work are:

1. Organisational change through training (leadership training, advocacy, consultancy, certification calculators and energy audits).
2. Sector transition support through sector programmes and collaboration, research, data, evidence, resources and events.
3. Cultural policy on climate action, including cities and climate action programmes (cultural policy, city programmes and international advocacy).

Julie's Bicycle cities' flagship project is the [Manchester Arts Sustainability](#) Team (MAST). MAST was established in 2011 by a group of Manchester-based arts and culture organisations which sought to understand how they could contribute to the delivery of "Manchester: A Certain Future". The network now brings together over 50 cultural organisations across Greater Manchester and meets regularly to share best practice and develop new ways to collaborate. It has helped recognise the role of culture in climate change, working in partnership with the City Council and aligning city climate ambition and cultural vision.

This innovative partnership has been recognised by the EU's URBACT Programme as good practice and the team have worked with the Agency, Manchester City Council and Julie's Bicycle to liaise with 5 other European cities through C-Change Arts and Culture Leading Climate Action in Cities, in order to share what they have learnt and to assist other EU cities to build cultural collaboration for climate action and engagement.

As part of [ROCK](#), Julie's Bicycle worked on specific policy initiatives at the intersection between environmental sustainability and cultural heritage in Bologna, Lisbon and Skopje. Julie's Bicycle also worked with [World Cities Culture Forum \(WCCF\)](#) and the [C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group \(C40\)](#) to produce a handbook for city leaders to inspire and help build environmental sustainability into cultural policies, programmes and solutions.

The key role that cultural institutions play in climate action is reflected in ["Culture: The Missing Link to Climate Action Summary Report"](#). The report is based on extended research that considers how national policies can unlock frameworks and resources and strengthen the creative climate movement.

The climate crisis is a world crisis, and ultimately the biggest challenge we face. The climate and ecological crisis is a systemic issue, rooted in global economic, social, cultural and value systems that disconnect us from nature. It stems from capitalism and colonialism and is built on the fantasy of eternal growth. We are putting unprecedented pressure on our ecosystems, abandoning the 'safe operating space' of humanity and the countless species we share this planet with. Essentially, we are living beyond the Earth's means.

The seven trends across the creative sector, which combined, can achieve a positive response are:

1. Artwork: Connecting people through artists' work and creativity.
2. Activism: People within the sector taking a stance on environmental issues, campaigning and bringing about change.
3. Organisational leadership: Organisations demonstrating best practice with regard to environmental thinking and values.
4. Design and innovation: Introducing new materials and ways of doing things.
5. Collaboration: Working together with our peers, policymakers and transport service providers.
6. Pathfinding: Organisations working at the intersection between culture, creativity and the environment and finding new paths to action.
7. Policy changing: On a city and regional level as well as with regard to national-level change.

Beyond science, technology and investment, we need to capture hearts and minds and see a shift in our cultural values. This is where our cultural and creative sector comes in, bridging the gap between what we know and what we feel and enabling us to imagine a better future.

Several creative climate initiatives across the UK have been campaigns that truly solidified the climate policy, such as the "Culture Declares Emergency" movement, "Music declares emergency" movement across the music sector, "Powerful Thinking" in the festival sector and several art installations aiming at raising awareness around climate change.

Additionally, several European programmes, such as Creative Europe, are adding environmental prerequisites to projects receiving public and European funds in order to align with the [European Green Deal](#).

What do those leading climate change initiatives have in common?

- Passionate and committed individuals.
- Building environmental understanding, skills and confidence.
- Not only taking action on the practical 'bins and lightbulbs', but also introducing environmental thinking and action into their core activities.
- Working to bring people in touch with environmental issues in a meaningful way.
- Ensuring different voices are part of the conversation.
- They are collaborative and resourceful.

From an exhibition and curatorial perspective, a recent example is by the Barbican. Opening in May 2022, it will be a major exhibition that celebrates the power of global creativity to transform the conversation around the climate emergency. Through art, design, science, music and philosophy, the exhibition presents a range of radical visions for the future of all species, looking at the climate emergency and how creativity can help us to reimagine future scenarios.

Greening the Museums: Buildings, operations, collections and exhibitions, conservation issues

15 March, 15.00–17.00

Presented by Caitlin Southwick, Museum Sustainability Expert and Executive Director, Ki Culture, and Sara Kassam, Sustainability Lead, Victoria & Albert Museum (V&A)

The session seeks to inspire impactful change through practical examples and advice to support the planning and implementation of sustainability initiatives in museums. As there is so much potential to affect change at all levels – from people to spaces and programmes – it looks at how to unlock this potential by engaging and empowering others to join a museum’s sustainability journey. Participants will leave with concrete ideas on how to get started with making green changes in their workplace and an affirmed agency for catalysing tangible change.

V&A Museum activities are delivered in cooperation with local authorities and a number of national and international key stakeholders, all of whom have developed climate change action plans. Being part of a worldwide community allows an international effort to be undertaken, involving a sector with a vast audience and buildings where we can create actual change.

It is of utmost importance that we make our museum work meaningful. In this respect, collaboration is key to embedding sustainability into the core mission of the V&A.

Embedding sustainability in our work presupposes systemic thinking as per below:

1. Listening and learning.
2. Lots of research but do not let perfection be the enemy of action, this is a journey.
3. Honesty, transparency, openness and accountability.
4. Levering existing knowledge, expertise and enthusiasm.
5. Connecting people and ideas internally and externally.
6. Prioritising impact.

As a variety of professions are brought into the museum sector, it is important to amplify all voices, connect people and ideas, and ensure that we prioritise impact and influence.

The V&A’s Sustainability Plan was an opportunity to articulate concrete actions in the context of a long term net-zero target and entailed a systematic assessment of the entire institution, spanning material relations to knowledge production practices, object interpretation to visitor engagement and community relations.

The V&A Sustainability Plan focussed on three areas of work:

1. Place

“We will reduce the negative environmental impact of how we deliver our activities and operate our buildings, targeting net zero emissions by 2035 for Scope 1, 2 and 3 emissions.”

- Energy and Carbon
- Materials
- Procurement

- Climate Resilience
- Air and Water
- Biodiversity

2. People

“We will support our people, partners and sector to embed sustainable decision-making and practices, and to share knowledge and skills.”

- Governance and Leadership
- Staff and Volunteers
- Partnerships
- Community

3. Programme

“We will take a bold approach to engaging our audiences on issues of planetary limits and climate justice, focusing on people’s agency to take positive action.”

- Collections
- Learning and Public Programmes
- Research and Higher Education
- Galleries and Exhibitions

Thinking holistically about greening, the V&A Museum dictates a number of operations:

- Collect and measure data to create realistic targets.
- Increase your confidence in your data.
- Commit your stakeholders and partners to support your work.
- Prepare and disseminate quarterly updates to all staff.
- Focus on building new places based on operation efficiency and not design.
- Create and maintain a central internal policy across all works for the institution.
- Set up a network of sustainability coordinators within the institution who produce tailored engagement plans, as well as learning and development programmes, and suggest tangible actions. Include 800 hours of externally certified in-house training, and sessions on circulatory design and intersection sustainability, so that all staff feel empowered to take action and change their behaviour.
- Map all stakeholder templates and processes that can have enhanced sustainability requirements.

Sustainability for Cultural Professionals is built around the following pillars:

1. Making positive change.
2. Being environmentally responsible.
3. Being socially responsible.
4. Creating something that is important for the future.

Benchmarking the climate impact through our activities is not yet a standard procedure for cultural organisations, and there is growing concern amongst cultural professionals over the way that this is affecting our cultural heritage.

How does conservation work contribute to waste?

- Materials we use (composition, amount, toxicity).
- Shipping and packaging of materials we order.
- Amount of waste we produce and how we dispose of it.

Where can we improve?

By knowing what a collection needs, we can source material in alternative ways and be able to survive with less. One should also pay attention to small things around the consumption of materials used.

The following main areas are where we can bring about major changes within the Conservation fieldwork:

Toxic materials

Tackling the idea of reducing the toxicity of materials conservators use through their work.

Waste reduction

Reusing disposable material, re-evaluating the way we talk about materials and becoming more resourceful and creative in the way we reuse our work supplies.

Carbon emissions

LCA (Life Cycle Assessment) measures the carbon footprint of a material, taking into consideration all aspects of its life cycle – from how the raw material was extracted to the transportation and energy consumption of the factory that used it, to its lifetime use and finally its disposal. Always considering the five “Rs”: refuse - reduce - reuse - repurpose - recycle can also offer a more holistic idea on the future of the materials used.

Phantom energy represents a draw of electricity that electronics consume while not being actively used. Simple steps such as reducing the museum’s energy consumption by unplugging devices while they are not being used, can make a huge difference in energy consumption.

Accepting accountability and responsibility for the impact the museums’ emissions have on the environment is an important step towards contributing in a positive way to strategic climate goals.

Case study: Blenheim Palace, a World Heritage Site going carbon neutral

16 March, 15.00–17.00

Presented by Catherine Bottrill, Blenheim’s Sustainability Consultant, CEO Pilio and Julie’s Bicycle Associate

This session shares the sustainability journey of Blenheim Palace, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, which declared a climate emergency in 2019 and is committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2027. The session discusses Blenheim’s roadmap for achieving carbon neutrality through energy saving, renewable energy generation and natural climate solutions, as well as their environmental fund for visitors to offset their travel carbon footprint. For Blenheim, sustainability does not stop at climate action – it is about creating space for nature on its land. Catherine shared the learnings and insights on how heritage organisations can get started in taking climate and environmental action.

The fascinating journey of Blenheim Palace towards a truly advanced level of environmental sustainability focuses on the community and the land they are based upon as well as on the very holistic approach they followed. Blenheim Palace and Estate is a UNESCO World Heritage Site built in the early 18th Century. It is located in Oxfordshire, England, and encompasses two thousand acres of land.

As a UNESCO World Heritage Site and heritage institution, Blenheim Palace is also conscious of its impact on the natural woodland and grounds it is located on. Blenheim Palace best exemplifies the amount of challenges to be overcome when embedding sustainability to an organisation's operations; the sheer size and scale of the endeavour, the type of grounds surrounding the Palace, the heritage conditions around it and the Palace's links to the community around it. The landscaping was designed over a period of years, creating gardens and a lake system that tell a story together with the artefacts, tapestries and furniture inside the premises of the Palace.

The Board of Trustees back in 2017 set themselves very ambitious goals:

1. Triple economic contribution to the local area.
2. Train over 100 new apprentices.
3. Build high quality, affordable homes for 300 families.
4. Achieve annual paying visitor numbers in excess of 750,000.
5. Become a net generator of green energy.
6. Become one of the UK's Top 100 employers.
7. Complete £40 million of vital restoration work.
8. Reacquire key works from the Palace's lost collections.
9. Secure £45 million endowments to conserve Blenheim as a World Heritage Site.
10. Double charitable contributions to the community.

Blenheim is committed to becoming carbon neutral across all operations by 2027. To achieve this, the estate has collaborated with Pilio to measure its carbon footprint, assess its natural capital and implement projects and policies to neutralise Blenheim's environmental impacts across its three business areas: Blenheim Palace, Blenheim Estate Homes and Blenheim Estate Land. Blenheim Estate Homes offers residential lettings and affordable homes, including shared ownership and affordable rent, and a new housing development in 2019. They aim to bring together the long-established local communities and attract a diverse new community. As a heritage site, it hosts a number of events and activities and is a very popular destination for family visits within the UK and beyond. It is also a very popular filming location- film production can have a great impact on the environment.

In 2019, Blenheim measured their carbon footprint in farming, procurement, food & drink and travel. Travel to and from Blenheim Palace has been a major focus area. Total GHG emissions for Blenheim in 2019/20 were 32.4 million kg CO₂e and 63% of these emissions came from visitor travel to the estate. The team set themselves the aforementioned goal to significantly reduce their carbon impact within the Palace walls and their land. To that end, they promoted services such as shuttle buses, bike lanes and sustainable travel for visitors within the UK.

The big three categories of Blenheim footprint are:

1. UK travel
2. Procurement
3. International Travel

The introduction of an internal carbon tax at Blenheim creates incentives for the department heads to make green choices and drive internally responsible and informed decisions, whilst maintaining all staff engaged and invested in this process.

Working with the local community has been a big focus for Blenheim Palace. The team is careful to select and work with local producers and suppliers with green credentials. To note that thousands of rare forest honeybees that appear to be the last wild descendants of Britain's native honey bee population have been discovered in the ancient woodlands of Blenheim Palace.

Some of the reduction projects that came out of the objectives set in 2017, combined with the conditions and local specifications at the Blenheim Estate, were a solar farm project for the Estate, protection of the woodlands, wetlands and the natural habitat around the Estate, and regenerative agriculture practices for the farmers active on the Estate. Also introduced were a cycle path project to connect the local train station to Blenheim, a pollinator project encouraging natural habitats, and the development of wetlands metrics.

Summarising recommendations

The Greening the Museums series of workshops provided an overview of the ecology of cultural organisations working together to combat climate change (by Lucia Pietroiusti), a general framework for change (by Claire Buckley), then moved on to offer practical, hands-on advice on how to green daily operations and organise sustainability actions within an organisation (by Sara Kassam and Caitlin Southwick) and concluded with the Blenheim Palace case study (by Catherine Bottrill), a very inspiring example on how much progress can be achieved over a short period of time (7 years) when the will and commitment are there.

Incorporating sustainability

A green museum is a museum that incorporates concepts of sustainability into its operations, programming and facilities. Many green museums use their collections to produce exhibitions, events, classes and other programming to educate the public about the natural environment. Several, but not all, green museums reside in a building featuring sustainable architecture and technology. Green museums interpret their sustainable practices and green design to -showcase a model of behaviour.

Green museums strive to help people become more conscious of the limitations of their world and how their actions affect it. The goal is to create positive change by encouraging people to make sustainable choices in their daily lives. Green museums use their position as community-centred institutions to try to create a culture of sustainability.

Collecting data

Collecting a large amount of data helps to build a picture of where you are and where you want to be as well as to map out the organisational change you wish to achieve. The overall approach does not need to be overly precise. All the data is important at first to inform the conversation internally. We can then map out where the museum will be putting in the effort.

Gathering the right information is key to: building a business plan, having the right people in place who understand and support this type of work and communicating plans and outcomes effectively.

Improving facilities

Measuring energy consumption, in particular, starts with assessing museum buildings and facilities (e.g. measuring the consumption of lights, electronic appliances, office equipment, water supply and heating)

and aiming at creating correct climate control conditions by balancing temperature, humidity, airflow and condensation of facilities.

Nurturing collaboration

Developing international collaborations and networks as well as horizontal learning and communication amongst various museum departments can mobilise staff and the communities a museum serves.

In this sector, action can take many shapes and forms. Below are some first steps we need to take:

- Commit time, people and resources to achieve the desired change.
- Understand the impact we have and identify the key areas we should focus on to take action.
- Improvement is about doing what we can do best to enhance our environmental performance.
- Communicate with our audiences, visitors, communities, staff and partners.

Acting collectively

Collective action and communication are essential for a successful sustainability plan. Sustainability is a lens through which we can view all aspects of our work and every decision a cultural institution can strategically make.

The evolving responsibility of museum work in a time of climate change has brought together a range of museum experts to assess and rethink the way museums operate today. Museums have inherent capabilities, resources and opportunities that position them to influence public responses to climate change.

Modelling leadership

By modelling climate leadership through the prioritisation of sustainability, museums demonstrate why this work is important and how meaningful change is achievable in this domain. Museums are one of the most trusted institutions in society. Through exhibitions and programming, they can support communities to better understand the threat posed by climate change. They can also steer communities towards actions they can take as individuals to make a difference, thereby adopting more sustainable practices, contributing towards creating a critical mass for action and advocating policy reforming.

Leadership matters. The [National Museum Directors Council](#) has been taking a strong lead in climate change in the UK. The Council has created its own environmental department and, last year, published Greening Museums guides and hosted a conference in response to climate change. Placing climate change amongst the Directors' priorities has been instrumental in acknowledging it as an emergency by everyone in the organisation at all levels.

Raising awareness

A first step towards greening the museum could be the design and delivery of an initial small-scale project. This could result in raising awareness and setting an example for the sector to follow. Mapping out the idea, the people to work with and your vision will assist in articulating what you are trying to achieve and what should be the next steps within the organisation.

Museums have a unique role to play in climate and ecological action. We mentioned earlier that they are trusted places, able to disseminate information and best practice. As a sector with stewarding at their heart, looking after the past and reflecting on the future, can help people to imagine a better future for our planet. Museums are places for debates, for reflection and social action but also work across disciplines. This enables them to respond in diverse ways to climate action.

Changing the narrative

Reimagining museums for climate action offers a range of new, creative ideas in response to the challenges presented by the climate emergency, as well as opportunities to challenge existing operational and leadership traditions and explore partnerships and collaborations through shared learning.

This series of workshops by the British Embassy and the British Council has affirmed that creating a narrative around sustainability (that your museum wishes to promote) and allowing staff the enthusiasm and the permission to put in the time and effort to create healthy ecosystems for people and planet, nature and cultural spaces, is possible.

Change is possible. Be assertive. Be bold.

Glossary

Carbon Footprint

The climate impact of an activity, organisation, person, country, product etc. measured in greenhouse gas emissions generated and in units (kgs or tonnes) of CO₂ (carbon dioxide only) or CO₂ equivalent (if other greenhouse gas emissions are accounted for).

Climate Emergency

Many governments, local authorities, companies and individuals have formally declared a climate emergency - this is an acknowledgement that humanity is in a climate emergency and that urgent and rapid action is required to limit further global temperature rise and its consequences.

Climate Positive

To go beyond achieving net-zero carbon emissions, by removing additional emissions from the atmosphere.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Greenhouse Gases (GHG) trap heat in the atmosphere thereby contributing to global heating and climate change. Carbon dioxide is the GHG most talked about – it makes up about 75% of all GHGs. The other GHGs are methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated or F-gases (such as refrigerants).

Different activities emit different GHGs e.g. deforestation releases carbon dioxide, landfill waste generates methane. Some activities emit more than one GHG. In the case of cars, burning fossil fuel generates carbon dioxide and fuel combustion generates nitrous oxide. Different GHGs trap different levels of heat and last for different lengths of time, e.g. methane is 25 times more impactful than carbon dioxide but less long-lived.

Internal Carbon Tax

An internal carbon fee is a monetary value on each tonne of carbon emissions, which is readily understandable throughout the organisation. The fee creates a dedicated revenue or investment stream to fund the company's emissions reduction efforts.

Net Zero

When greenhouse gas emissions have been reduced to as close to zero as possible and the small amount of remaining emissions are absorbed through natural carbon sinks, like forests, or new technologies, such as carbon capture.

Net Zero Energy

A Zero Energy Building is a building with net-zero energy consumption - the total amount of energy used by the building on an annual basis is equal to the amount of renewable energy created on site.

Science-Based Target

Targets developed in line with decarbonisation required to keep global temperature increase below 2oC (1.5oC) compared to pre-industrial levels.

Additional glossary resources:

[Deciphering Green Gibberish](#)

[Climate FAQs](#)

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Supporters & Partners

The workshop series was co-organised by the British Council Greece and the British Embassy Athens (sponsor) and was curated by Iphigenia Taxopoulou, General Secretary at mitos21 and Julie's Bicycle Associate.

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