

Sustainable Cultural Management and Green Communication workshops

Session report

On 10 December 10:00 – 12:30 CET, European Theatre Convention (ETC) was delighted to welcome representatives from 15 member theatres for simultaneous workshops on Sustainable Cultural Management and Green Communication.

Many thanks to our brilliant facilitators, Iphigenia Taxopoulou and Abbi Knell from environmental charity [Julie's Bicycle](#), for leading the sessions. We hope to see you again soon.

Sustainable Cultural Management

Just do it! Environmental sustainability is a process that can feel overwhelming, as so much change is required. So don't wait to have convinced everyone in your organisation, and start small: first steps and first successes will convince your colleagues to step in as well.

- How do arts and culture relate to sustainability? Julie's Bicycle believes the creative community is uniquely placed to transform the conversation around climate change and turn it into action. The sector offers a space for reflection, experiment and innovation. A meeting place for communities, providing the necessary creativity and imagination for system change.
- Explainer on the creation of the [17 Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) of the United Nations, which are to be achieved by 2030. The [conclusions of the European Theatre Forum 2020](#), the launch of the [European Green Deal](#), and information about environmental elements of EU funding programmes like Creative Europe & Erasmus+
- Case studies and examples of leadership in ecological sustainability in culture and the arts:
 - Arcola Theatre is the [winner of a sustainability award 2018](#)
 - Collaborative programmes like [Broadway Green Alliance](#)
 - Lyric Hammersmith which was the first theatre to [receive 5 stars from the Julie's bicycle Creative Green Certification](#)
 - [National Theatre Environmental Sustainability page](#)
 - [Onassis Stegi Goes Green](#)

- The benefits of implementing environmental policy: You get ahead of regulation, reduce impacts and have financial savings, improve your reputations and community outreach and show your artistic and social commitment
- Arts Council England, the major public funder for arts, works with Julie's Bicycle [on an environmental programme](#) to help large theatres and arts organisations feel confident about reducing their environment impacts. Since it was created, CO2 emissions from these organisations are down 35%, and energy consumption also down 23%.
- Julie's Bicycle's approach: commit to targets, measure, understand, improve, communicate.
- Drafting an action plan::
 - differentiate between AREAS THAT YOU CAN CONTROL (Energy savings / plastic reduction / sustainable food choices), AREAS YOU CAN INFLUENCE (staff and artists' attitudes, audience travel, suppliers invest in sustainable solutions), AREAS YOU CAN EXPRESS CONCERN on (investment into public transport or green infrastructure)
 - Measure impact / Diagnosis (where are the problems, what have we already done, what are the main obstacles)
 - Avoid emissions and bad habits.
 - Reduce emissions.
 - Replace high carbon energy sources.
 - Offset as a last resort
- Key summary points
 - understand the impact of your operation and procedures;
 - adopt a holistic approach;
 - split the overall objective into manageable tasks;
 - focus on creating an internal culture that values sustainability;
 - make sustainability a real Key Performance Indicator;
 - Use communication channels;
 - Engage the full range of stakeholders and lobby for greener policies;
 - Create a core team of engaged colleagues from across the organisation

Green Communication

- Just in the UK, it would take almost 115,000 trees 100 years to absorb the carbon dioxide emitted by the cultural sector in one year (2018/19)
- Top tips for engaging audiences:

- See the climate as a uniting force. An overwhelming majority of people, from all political backgrounds, think it is important to protect the environment. This is not a 'political' point. Climate action is exactly what theatres should be doing.
 - Avoid the obvious, focus on local impacts, think about climate justice. Engage people with stories of individuals. Use the SMART anagram (see the presentation)
 - Use language wisely. Don't be too negative in your campaigns: culture has a unique role to play in making people feel empowered and interconnected. Be honest, and make sure you're not hypocritical. Speak alongside, not for communities.
 - Connect with others. Networking is key: organisations can work together to connect to the audience, which can then connect to policy makers.
 - Don't just leave climate to one-off campaigns
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- We had case studies of artists that had [placed pieces of glacier in London](#), or theatres that [had become entirely energy sufficient by installing a wind turbine on their grounds](#).
 - Some participants expressed concern at appearing as if they were 'showing off', by highlighting their successes in the climate sphere. We heard that this was unnecessary: talking about climate action with audiences and stakeholders is necessary, but we don't have to think about it like a celebration. It is simply a statement of fact.
 - Example of how a small change can add up to a big change. The Lyric Hammersmith in London [changed all of their disposable plastic cups to reusable ones](#), and saved around 100,000 cups from being thrown away.
 - "It's important for the public to see a real-time change from an organisation they relate to."
 - We need audiences to realise that while they are definitely part of the solution, they are also part of the problem, to some extent.
 - Could we have a team of Greta Thunbergs or sustainable ambassadors for theatre?