

The NewBridge Project

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY POLICY & ACTION PLAN

Introduction

The NewBridge Project is an active and vibrant artist-led community supporting the development of artists and curators through the provision of space for creative practice, curatorial opportunities and an ambitious artist-led programme of exhibitions, commissions, artist development and events.

We aim to deliver an outstanding programme of exhibitions, projects, commissions, events and artist development in collaboration with artists and local communities, creating a programme responsive to the social, political and civic environment within which it exists and seeks to be a genuine community resource.

Our activities are split into four core areas:

1. Space

Provision of space for arts practice through studios, production & exhibition spaces

2. Community

Building an engaged and discursive community for exchange and mutual support

3. Artist Development

Developing artistic talent through development programmes, training and events

4. Commissions & Exhibitions

Delivering a socially responsive and active artistic programme of commissions & exhibitions that engages the wider public

Our motivation

We are committed to environmental and sustainability management across delivery of our strategic goals. Environmental sustainability is a key priority for The NewBridge Project, through this environmental policy we attempt to outline our attitudes, ethics & overall ethos and how they inform everything we do; from the operation of our studio buildings; day-to-day office practice; artistic programme & direction; partnerships; and fundraising.

We recognise that environmental sustainability needs to be integrated throughout the culture of our organisation, as much as possible we must align what we believe with what we do – ensuring our ethics, decision-making and actions correspond to reduce our environmental impact and bring about positive environmental change.

We believe the decisions we make and how we operate as an organisation defines us, our actions communicate who we are to the world and our audiences. We do not want to make decisions that undervalue, harm or adversely affect people, our environment and the places we live.

We also need to be realistic, recognising that we are a small artist-led organisation, with limitations to capacity, budgets, relying on 'meanwhile' spaces to operate - but we also have big ambitions.

We fundamentally believe that our world is facing environmental crises and it is everyone's responsibility to act. The significance of statistics stating that if our current level of consumption continues, we will require seven more planets, or that the earth's temperature looks set to increase by more than two degrees leading to catastrophic climate change, can be difficult to grasp. However, these truths (and more) speak of an impending global ecological disaster that we can't afford to ignore.

Whilst there are some serious questions that must be asked with regards to our current norms of behaviour and habits of consumption and production, we also realise that there are opportunities for change, for alternative narratives/visions to emerge. This may offer new hope and new opportunities for living differently and less extractively with our natural habitat.

Like many people, we are not experts in these issues, it is important that we work closely with our many stakeholders; artists, audiences, partners, staff and board to embark on a process of collective learning to deepen our understanding through conversation, action and creativity.

We are keen to move these ideas forward and are asking questions about necessary changes that are required on an individual and local, as well as a national and global, level. We are aware that it isn't only about the obligations we have as an organisation, but also our capacity to reach others, to inform & inspire, and bring about positive environmental change.

Commitment

Through 2021-22 we will measure the following 4 outputs to measure our environmental impact; addressing air and water pollution, waste management, protection and preservation of natural resources and ecosystem management, including a commitment to Health & Safety.

1. Waste
2. Energy use
3. Production (materials)
4. Travel (business)
5. Travel (production)

We provide an annual report on our environmental impact through Julie's Bicycle (partnered with Arts Council England's National Portfolio Organisations). Our reporting to date has provided us with baseline figures which can be used for annual comparison.

Key Environmental Impacts & Objectives

Space & Buildings

Space & Buildings - current

Our activities operate over 2 sites; Carliol House provides studio space to over 90 artists, project spaces, workshop & production facilities and co-work space; 232-240 High Street Gateshead provides additional studio space to 38 artists, houses *The Collective Studio* early-career artist development programme, a co-work space, NewBridge Bookshop and NewBridge Gallery Space.

Our current model is based on meanwhile occupation of buildings, allowing us to benefit from no/low rent options while sites await redevelopment, enabling us to provide affordable rates to the arts community.

Meanwhile space is a complex area and we think carefully before we take on any lease agreement or occupy a space, considering the social and environmental impact. Many of these buildings would otherwise be left empty, abandoned or unused often because of impending redevelopment or non-desirable areas. We re-use the buildings we occupy, selecting sites that require minimum intervention.

Occupying other people's buildings on temporary and short-term leases means we are limited in the improvements we can make, for example; energy suppliers and implementing new energy saving fixtures and fittings.

Space & Buildings – future

We have agreed Heads of Terms for the Shieldfield Centre, a new building which will house all our activities under one roof.

The anticipated tenancy start date is between May – June 2021 (date TBC) for a 5-year lease. This means that there are still limitations on installing new energy saving fixtures and fittings that can be implemented in this space as we are unable to access any capital funds due to the short-term, meanwhile use lease.

However, we see this relocation as an opportunity to strengthen our environmental sustainability regarding the operation of our studios, day-to-day office practice, and pivotally, the day-to-day practices and commitment to sustainability of the artists and creatives who work in our buildings.

Key Objectives:

1. Building Operations – Ensure waste will be managed in a sustainable manner following the approach of 'Prevention, Reuse, Recycling and Disposal', to reduce waste sent to landfill and in the carbon emissions of land filling.

Actions for 2021-22:

- Reduce total volume of waste to landfill against previous years benchmark, increase recycling collections
- Ensure waste is managed in accordance with current legislation
- Ensure all waste collected or stored on site adheres to best environmental practice and is clearly labeled.

- Recycling everything that can be recycled
- Introduce formal reuse and exchange scheme within studios for materials and equipment by Summer 2022 (eg. internal freecycle service).
- Produce a concise green handbook for staff, studio members and commissioned artists on waste and recycling – produce by Summer 2022
- We recognize that Covid19 guidelines have required us to make adaptations to our spaces in order to ensure the Health & Safety of building users. This includes introducing paper towels in bathrooms and providing blue roll for cleaning door handles etc. Where possible we will ensure that these items are recyclable.

Planning & Actions for future / relocation to new site:

- Consider opportunities of relocation to new site and have a waste reduction plan in place that will best support staff and artists members to reduce waste to landfill - plan to be in place by 01.12.20 so it can inform planning and project management.
- We will need to return our current buildings to the state in which we originally found them; this will mean that temporary walls that have been built will need to be removed and will result in a large amount of waste. Where possible we will work with partners (such as Newcastle Wood Recycling) and artists to reuse or recycle materials for use in the new space.
- Beyond relocation to Shieldfield Centre, we will work towards securing a permanent building for our operations and incorporate sustainability into capital activity.

Key actions implemented April 2018 – March 2021:

- *Benchmarked total volume of waste to landfill to establish baseline to improve against*
- *Waste to landfill reduction plan implement, this has included:*
 - *increased collections of main recycling bins*
 - *installation of colour coded recycling bins at key points within the studio buildings for glass, paper/cardboard and plastic (bathrooms, kitchenette)*
- *Reuse / exchange scheme in place for leaving studio members, through sharing of any unwanted items*

2. Building Operations - Reduce our carbon footprint, focusing in particular on the reduction in use of gas and electricity from the national grid.

Actions for 2021-22:

- Continue to measure total energy usage (gas and electric) against previous years benchmark.
- Continue to encourage people to 'switch-off' - encouraging staff and artists to turn off lights when leaving room/building, turn off appliances at plug, check equipment is operating efficiently and don't leave on standby. Despite installing signs at light points this still remains a problem.
- 0% gas usage, no active boilers or central heating system
- Produce a concise green handbook for staff, studio members and commissioned artists on waste and recycling – produce by Summer 2022
- Carloli House utilities are managed by the landlord so it is not always possible for us to see our energy usage.

Planning & Actions for future / relocation to new site:

- Commit to environmental impact research on any new buildings NewBridge takes on with a business case to secure funding to support implementation of carbon reducing projects.
- Work towards securing a permanent building for our operations and incorporate sustainability into capital activity including the divestment from fossil fuels and a commitment to renewable and sustainable energy sources.
- Research cost effective ways to reduce energy usage at new site.

Key actions implemented April 2018 – March 2021:

- *Established a baselines / reporting to benchmark gas and electric to monitor and measure against.*
- *We implemented a 'switch-off' campaign by 01.12.2018 – installed signage around buildings.*
- *Motion sensor lights fitted in corridor/foyer areas*
- *We have installed LED bulbs in areas of building where old fittings were failing and needed replacing.*
- *0% gas usage at Carliol House and Gateshead High Street, no active boilers or central heating system*
- *Water contracts previously managed by landlord, however, now have accurate readings at Gateshead site so can*

Office & Staff

The NewBridge Project is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status governed by a Board of 6 Trustees and a staff team of 9 who oversee day-to-day operations.

Staff currently split their time between our 2 sites; we operate from a small office in Carliol House, Newcastle and another in 232-240 High St, Gateshead which are used for general admin and meetings. The staff team regularly work in the co-work areas alongside other artist members. Staff will all begin work at new building the Shieldfield Centre once tenancy starts. We also support regular working from home for staff.

There is strong leadership support towards environmental sustainability – at board and senior management level – all staff are introduced to our environmental policy and given an overview of what the organisation is working towards when they are inducted into the team.

The environmental policy is reviewed regularly with staff members and the Board of Trustees to ensure targets are being achieved and are realistic, helping inform any policy updates and ensuring ownership across the entire staff team.

Key Objectives:

1. Staff & Artists – Improve awareness of, involvement in and delivery of environmental action plan, embedding it across the organisation

Actions for 2021-22:

- Produce a concise green handbook in consultation with staff, artists and board, incorporating our commitment to reducing our environmental impact and their responsibility. produce by Summer 2022
- Discuss environmental policy & action plan at staff meetings (bi-monthly) and board meetings (quarterly) to raise awareness, gain feedback and encourage ownership of action plan.
- Have ongoing discussions about environmental policy & action plan in relation to programme development (below) – both practically and thematically.
- Raise studio member awareness of environmental sustainability and NewBridge goals by Summer 2022 through:
 - Quarterly artist meetings
 - Increased signage in the building

Planning & Actions for future / relocation to new site:

- Discuss and develop environmental policy & action for new site with staff and board of trustees.
- Host a studio-members planning session by April 2021 in relation to the new building – to include discussion about environmental sustainability, and the commitment of the organisation and members about better practices, and how we can individually and collectively drive forward change around waste and reuse.
- Green recommendations / commitment attached to each tenants tenancy contract – sign to indicate they will adhere to recommendations. This will be included as part of tenancy contract for new building (informed by above meeting).
- New external hires policy developed to attach environmental responsibilities and recommendations for anyone hiring space in building – agreement to be written and in place by Summer 2022.

Key actions implemented April 2018 – March 2021:

- *Environmental sustainability discussed at programme meetings (monthly), staff meetings (bi-monthly) and board meetings (quarterly).*
- *Ongoing thematic and practical discussions about environmental sustainability in relation to programme development*

2. Office – Reduce our environmental impact across waste, travel and carbon usage through implementation of improved administrative systems

Actions for 2021-22:

- Continue to use paperless digital filing system (dropbox)
- Introduce ‘think twice’ printing policy, only printing when absolutely necessary
- Continue paperless Board meetings (only printing for Trustees who require for access)
- Continue paperless staff meetings wherever possible.
- Continue to use recycled paper for all printing
- Think and act sustainably in our marketing by minimising print waste, use recycled paper whenever possible if printing is necessary.
- Laptops and computers to be run on energy efficiency mode and turned off if not in use

- All office equipment/appliances are switched off at plug when not in use
- Produce green handbook by Summer 2022 to include responsibilities of staff
- All staff to be briefed on environmental policy when starting
- Continue to bank with Co-Operative Bank, a bank that is investing environmentally and ethically.

Key actions implemented April 2018 – March 2021:

- *Use of paperless digital filing system (dropbox)*
- *Implement paperless Board and Staff meetings*
- *Use of recycled paper for in house printing*
- *Use of recycled paper for printing of Quarterly programme and other marketing materials.*
- *All office equipment/appliances are switched off at plug when not in use*
- *Switched to Co-Operative Bank, a bank that is investing environmentally and ethically.*

3. Travel – Reduce the use of fossil fuels for personal and business travel in order to decrease the carbon impact.

Actions for 2021-22:

- Monitor travel by staff and for artistic programme and put carbon impact reduction programme in place by Summer 2022.
- Continue to encourage staff, artist tenants and audiences to cycle to venues by supplying internal cycle racks
- Continue to encourage staff, artist tenants and audiences to walk or use public transport – listing walking and public transport routes on our new website launched in 2020.
- Continue to discourage driving to venues through minimizing car parking availability
- Encourage use of public transport (trains, buses) when individual staff travelling to non-local meetings/events
- Staff encouraged to attend conferences/meetings remotely via Zoom
- Continue to encourage staff to walk/cycle between our venues where possible
- Encourage artists we work with through programme to only travel when necessary
- Host meetings over Zoom/phone when working with non-local partners and artists wherever possible
- Only flying when it is the only option available
- Develop home working policy to reduce unnecessary travel to office
- Any required building materials and products are sourced from local suppliers where possible to reduce carbon emissions.

Key actions implemented April 2018 – March 2021:

- *Established travel baseline on 31.03.2019 for future benchmarking of travel by staff and for artistic programme.*
- *Cycle racks installed at all buildings*
- *Walking, cycling and public transport routes on our website*
- *Travel was relatively low with very high carbon activities such as flying taking place very rarely and only when it is the only feasible option.*

Artistic Programme

Through our artistic programme we often tackle and respond to current social, political, environmental and civic issues through the lens of contemporary art. We deliver a programme of commissions, exhibitions, residencies, performances, screenings, educational talks and workshops.

We believe it is important to create art and equip artists with the skills to produce work that is challenging, thought provoking and optimistic to engage audiences and inspire change.

Since 2017 we have been actively addressing environmental sustainability and activism, placing this at the heart of our ongoing work and programme. Through this we aim to inspire audiences and participants to engage with climate change and environmental issues. Building on the work started as part of 2017-2018's *Deep Adaptation* programme and the responses and ideas generated through its final springboard event, we have been developing a new project, *For Solidarity* over the past 18 months.

For Solidarity has grown into an ongoing, long-term project and growing peer-support network of organisations, projects, initiatives and individuals across the North East initiated by NewBridge and the Solidarity Economy Association in 2018. Through it we aim to platform the work of organisations who are supporting social and environmental justice, and challenging mainstream oppressive systems. 2020-21 was a challenging year for many in the network and those that they support – regular socials with the network provided a chance to support one another, and to respond to collective priorities. For example, we collectively produced 2 editions of the *Lockdown Gazette* newspaper alongside 25 community / cultural organisations, working with 61 contributors to produce content for the paper which was distributed to 10,000 households, reaching those who were digitally isolated.

This work is informing our ongoing programme including projects, commissions and events.

We are also working with the current Programme Committee on *Overmorrow*, a 6-month festival that will include a series of commissions, talks, screenings and events which explore our collective futures with audiences, members and communities. Sustainability is a key strand within this programme, and through this we are looking to build on the work we have been doing as part of *Deep Adaptation* and *For Solidarity*.

Key Objectives:

1. Artistic Programme - Develop creative responses to raise awareness of environmental issues, encouraging discussion and shared learning amongst artists, audiences and partners.

Actions for 2021-22

- Continue to address ethical and environmental issues within our programming going forward, as part of our ongoing *For Solidarity Programme* and *Overmorrow* festival;

- 2 x commissions alongside community groups and partners who are part of the solidarity network
- Events / workshops which further explore these subjects
- Use learning from artistic programme to inform business plan, environmental policy and action plan going forward.
- Commit to work with ethical and environmentally aware partners and artists – develop networks within this field, learn from good practice and share our learning.
- Commitment to create work in our local area and work with local communities to reduce travel amongst artists and audiences, aiming to create culture of localism.
- If food is provided at an event, continuing to work with local organisations who work sustainably and look to abolish food waste and raise awareness of this (Eg. Ugly Duckling / Magic Hat Café), and food that is predominantly vegan and always vegetarian.

Key actions implemented / delivered April 2018 – March 2021:

- *We delivered Deep Adaptation, an environmental themed programme which included 4 long-term, collaborative commissions between September 2017 – June 2018, and month-long exhibition and programme of 24 events in May – June 2018, engaging audiences and the creative community in environmental topics that encouraged and inspired action.*
Through this programme we explored topics such as DeGrowth, Circular Economy approaches, intersectionality of climate science, privilege and our ability to respond to the climate crisis, food citizenship through practical workshops and creative responses.
- *Established the For Solidarity map (see above), creating a new network in support of climate and social justice through the map and socials*
- *Worked in partnership with over 10 community partners on major commissions and exhibitions including Rhona Foster – A Sanctimonious Man; Chad McCail – Giants; Lucien Anderson and David Lisser – Last Ditch Attempt; Alex Lockwood – Shift & Signal; Workforce; For Solidarity; For Solidarity – Furniture Making; Ciara Lenihan – Most of it is Sky; Beverley Bennet – Simon Says/Dadda; Global DeGrowth Day – A Good Life for All; Deep Adaptation*
- *All catering solely done in partnership with sustainable organisations who look to abolish food waste, this included 9 communal meals in Autumn / Winter 2019, and a seven-course tasting menu where each course explored a different method of sustainable food production.*

2. Artistic Programme – Improve sustainability and reduce environmental impact across the production of our artistic programme

Actions for 2021-22

- Continue to benchmark one exhibition per year in terms of environmental impact of production to create baseline for exhibition programme; measuring travel, waste/recycling, material usage, energy usage.
- Continue to reuse materials and equipment for exhibitions or where new materials are required use local suppliers or sustainable / recycled materials
- Commit to source sustainable materials for artistic programme.

- Encourage reduction in travel for programmed artists where possible, including hosting remote meetings, use of public transport over driving, and flying only when necessary

Key actions implemented / delivered April 2018 – March 2021:

- *Reported on environmental impact of Deep Adaptation and For Solidarity exhibition (including all commissions and events programme)*
- *Reused materials and equipment for exhibitions or where new materials are required use local suppliers or sustainable / recycled materials – eg. For Solidarity exhibition – artists Oliver Perry and Ross H Frew designed and built furniture for the exhibition through a series of workshops, all materials were upcycled waste from NewBridge and other sources.*
- *on Julie's bicycle to better understand impact and create baseline for annual review*
- *Majority of travel via public transport, minimal flights taken*
- *Hosted meetings with commissioned, non-regional artists remotely*
- *Informal agreement with Newcastle Wood Recycling about material procurement and disposal*

Partnerships

We are small but we like to think and work big so working in partnership is a natural and key part of our approach. We like to collaborate with individuals, small organisations and larger institutions. We see the value of working with others to bring fresh and new perspectives to what we do and new skills and knowledge to our organisation. The foundations of a strong partnership are transparency, respect and trust.

It is essential that partners respect us, our ethos and value what we do and our way of doing it. We feel strongly about the environment and protecting it and we would not work with a company that demonstrates a strong disregard for environmental sustainability such as companies directly involved in fossil fuel production (oil, gas, coal), fracking and pesticides.

We actively engage with other UK arts organisations that work in the area of art, activism and sustainability. This includes Centre for Human Ecology, Project Bind: Ugly Duckling and Magic Hat Café, Seed Cooperative, The Dark Mountain Project, The Climate Minds Initiative, Food Ethics Council, Open Jar Collective and Permaculture Association, The Comfrey Project, Newcastle Wood Recycling, Birkheads Wild CIC, Tyneside Beekeepers Association, Stomping Grounds Forest School, Abundant Earth, Transition Towns movements, Solidarity Economy Association, Collective Impact Agency as well as over 30 organisations as part of the *Solidarity Network*.

Money

We work with very tight and limited budgets from a variety of sources. We want to produce the best programme we can, support as many artists as possible, engage lots of people with our work and create unforgettable creative experiences because of this money is tight and precious!

Our team and artists work very hard to deliver an outstanding and wide-reaching programme on very little money. We raise funds to deliver the work we do through public funding (Arts Council England, Universities, local authorities), private income (private companies, trusts and foundations), earned income (studio rent, ticket sales, membership fees) and in-kind support (such as loan/gifts of equipment/materials, contribution of time and tax/rate relief).

We consider each funder on a case-by-case basis, asking questions about the way they run their organisation and their reasons for funding us. We consider what strings are attached to it, do we have to do something that makes us uncomfortable or does not fit with our organisational ethos.

We like to think of it like a set of balancing scales some issues outweigh others, some instantly tip the scales, it's a case of weighing up the good against the bad.

We do have a moral line and we would not accept funding or sponsorship from sources we deem unethical and those that act with strong disregard for the environment, that make decisions that harm or adversely affect people and the places we live. We are committed to end oil sponsorship of the arts.

We are part way through a 3-year partnership with SHED, a new trust who specifically fund social and environmental justice activity, supporting communities and organisations to strengthen and adapt to ongoing economic and climate challenges.

We do our business banking through The Co-operative Bank, who operate strict ethical policies with regards to human rights, international development, ecological impact and animal welfare. The Co-operative Bank remain in the *Move Your Money* 'top three ethical banks'.

Our full environmental policy and action plan is circulated around staff and board – as highlighted in the policy we want to do more to engage commissioned and studio artists. It is available on request to all.

Engagement with Green activities will be reviewed on a regular basis by senior staff and the board of trustees.

Updated: March 2021

Next Review: March 2022