



# EDINBURGH FESTIVALS TAKING ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

# Why are the Edinburgh Festivals taking action on Climate Change?

**What is the problem?** Our global climate is changing, causing devastating impacts on many around the world, particularly those who have the fewest resources and are the most vulnerable. Without decisive changes, the situation will become far worse over coming decades, with mass migration, more pandemics and conflicts over resources deemed 'inevitable' unless urgent action is taken.

**What is the context?** The global response to climate change means it is essential for festivals to evolve their current form of operating. The historic Paris Agreement commits the world's nations to limiting global heating through carbon emissions reductions. The UK has committed to reducing emissions by the fastest rate of any major economy, and Scotland has legislated to reduce emissions by 75% in under 10 years. This will be achieved through changes in law, policy and financial incentives, which will prohibit or discourage carbon-intensive activities. Public opinion and behaviour is also shifting quickly, with young people citing climate change as the most important issue of our time, 70% of people in Scotland desiring stronger action on climate, and environmental action becoming increasingly important to Festival-goers.

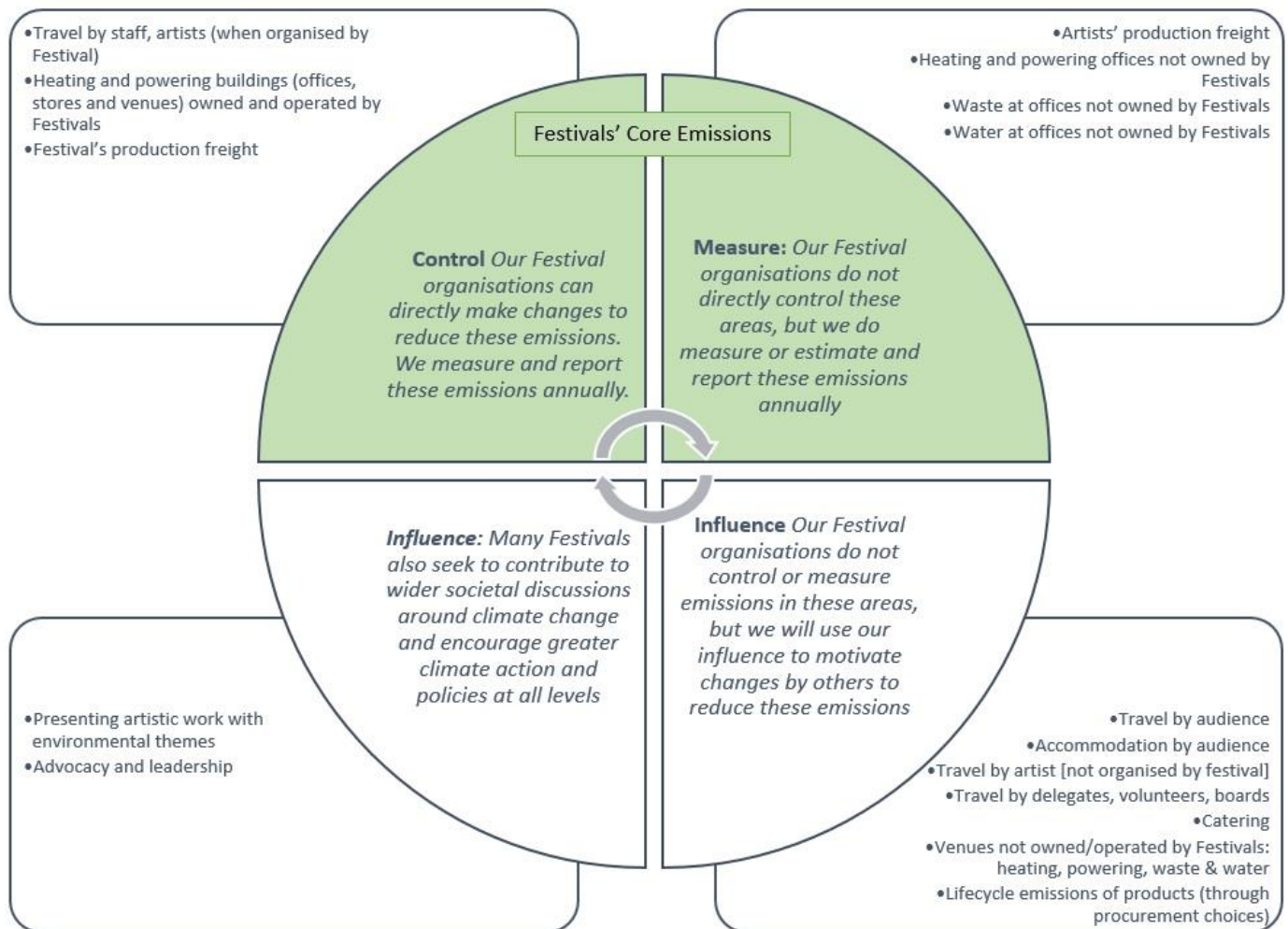
**Why do we want to take action?** If our Festivals are to flourish in a net-zero carbon future, we need to find innovative, sustainable ways of operating and fulfilling the function of festivals: providing time and space for people to exchange ideas and celebrate our common humanity.

1. *Creative desire:* Throughout the ages creatives of all genres have been responsive to the great debates and concerns of their day, seeking locations and partnerships which allow them to freely create their response, and this desire is clearly evident in today's creative world, with the Festivals keen to nurture such thinking.
2. *Ethical responsibility:* We know that as established, successful organisations in a wealthy country, we are emitters and are more able than many to reduce such emissions. Further, by reducing our emissions, we will help reduce the impact on those in our own country and around the world who are more vulnerable due to geography, health, lack of resources or other factors.
3. *Audience and funder expectation:* Cultural audiences, sponsors and funders are increasingly supporting organisations that perform highly against Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) criteria, a trend which we not only welcome but are keen to encourage and evolve especially amongst younger audience groups.
4. *Business interest:* As responsible businesses, the Festivals are planning for a managed transition to carbon neutrality. We want to change according to our own design, rather than wait until we are forced to change by necessity. Acting now will help to preserve and futureproof our reputations, our visions and our finances.
5. *Unique ability to help find solutions and bring about change:* The challenge of climate change calls for the spirit of global solidarity, understanding and empathy which was evident in the birth of the Festivals in 1947. While reducing our own emissions won't save the planet alone, our influence extends through the work we programme and the events we hold, through our venues, our funders, our city and our global audiences, amplifying imaginative responses and promoting exchange and debate, with the potential to inform policy and motivate demonstrable change.

**Why are we positive about the future?** We know that the global mission of addressing climate change is possible: through existing technology, and cultural and behavioural changes, we can actively reduce the concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere. And at a local level, we are encouraged by the City of Edinburgh's commitment to work towards net-zero emissions by 2030 (translating to an 80% reduction supplemented by carbon sequestration) which will bring less air pollution and waste in our immediate environment, more green space and wildlife, safer roads for cycling, walking and wheeling, and stronger communities. Within this context the Festivals are accelerating their own response to climate change - in this year when the eyes of the world turn to Scotland's hosting of the UN Climate Change Conference COP26 - playing our part in ensuring a world in which people, nature and culture can flourish sustainably for the benefit of future generations.

# Where can the Edinburgh Festivals make change?

In accelerating our own response to climate change, it is first important to understand our carbon footprints and what is both in and out of our direct control. The Festivals' carbon footprints can be broken down into 4 categories:



Each Festivals' *core emissions* consist of those in the Control and Measure categories. We are collectively working towards measuring more elements in the Influence category.

Planned changes are intended to reduce not only the emissions within our direct control, but also emissions that can only be addressed through partnership working and influencing those who hold the levers of power in each area.

For example, many of our Festival teams work in rented offices, and many Festivals present artistic work at hired venues, so changes to those buildings or sites, and the utilities, amenities and operations within them, are not within our direct control. However, we are committed to working with our landlords and with venue owners and operators to bring about the necessary changes to move towards our carbon reduction targets and those of the City of Edinburgh.

Several Festivals are exploring carbon sequestration (offsetting) schemes, which reduce carbon dioxide emissions (such as through the creation and upkeep of woodland or peat bogs) in order to compensate for emissions produced elsewhere. While contributing to carbon sequestration is not a substitute for directly reducing emissions, it is an additional measure that some Festivals will take to contribute to the national and global response to climate change. The Festivals will ensure that any sequestration schemes to which they contribute comply with the BSI standard for carbon neutrality, are managed ethically and will primarily be based in Scotland.

In 2019, we published a shared [Carbon Reduction Route Map](#) as a framework for our individual carbon reduction planning, to help us contribute to the city's goal of reducing carbon emissions to net zero by 2030. This further illustrates the emissions areas where Festivals have control vs influence, and outlines our shared aims in these areas.

# What are the Edinburgh Festivals going to do?

Each of the Edinburgh Festivals has set out, or is in the process of setting out, its own action plan for reducing carbon over the next five to ten years [see appendix at the end of this document]. These plans are unique to each Festival - given the difference of each Festivals' structure, size and situation - and so, not all Festivals will be undertaking the same actions. However there is a degree of commonality across certain action areas, with the following being the ten most popular areas where two or more of the Festivals will take action:

## 1. Participant and production travel

- Encourage participants to travel by land where possible, engage them for longer periods so they can make fewer journeys, enable their digital participation, reduce the carbon intensity of freight transport, and build sets locally

## 2. Staff travel

- Avoid domestic flights, set carbon budgets for staff travel which decrease year on year, attend more meetings digitally, programme more work from video or livestream rather than flying to see it, and use electric vehicles

## 3. Building heat and power

- Switch to fully renewable electricity suppliers (as verified by Energy Savings Trust), and increase efficiency of heating and lighting systems in buildings the Festivals own or rent, while ensuring that any new venues have net zero operational impact - the venues included in this area of focus are the 3 that are operated by Festivals (the Filmhouse, Scottish Storytelling Centre and the Hub)

## 4. Audience travel

- Motivate audiences to choose lower impact travel options and expand our digital offers to enable a portion of international audiences to enjoy the Festivals without attending in-person

## 5. Waste, paper and print

- Shift from paper-based systems towards fully digital systems, and strengthen sustainable procurement policies to reduce the amount of material which would eventually become waste or recycling

## 6. Production, events and venues

- This is a wide area of focus, encompassing zero-carbon power solutions for outdoor events; building sustainability into production design and reducing emissions from production freight; ensuring that more materials can be repurposed post-Festival; and working with venue partners to improve the sustainability of venue operations and facilities

## 7. Catering

- Work with local catering businesses that procure local, seasonal food and drink and that minimise packaging and carbon in the supply chain, and ask them to increase plant-based options

## 8. Influencing through artistic programmes and leadership

- Motivate others to reduce their own carbon footprint through our creative programmes and management actions, and advocate for greater climate action by businesses, governments and throughout society

## 9. Accommodation

- Book greener accommodation for staff and guests, as well as encouraging audiences and participants to choose accommodation providers that can demonstrate their environmental credentials

## 10. Digital activity:

- Establish a methodology to measure 'digital emissions' and find ways to make digital activity as green as possible – in the knowledge that although the carbon footprint of digital performances is usually lower than the alternative, it still carries a small carbon cost

## Examples of carbon reduction measures in the Shared Action Areas

### 1. Artist and production travel

- ✓ Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival will introduce a policy of no flights within the UK for performing companies, as artist air travel is responsible for the greatest portion of the Festival's footprint
- ✓ Scottish International Storytelling Festival will continue increasing their engagement with local performers in Scotland, whose travel produces fewer emissions, while continuing to enable international artist participation through digital
- ✓ Edinburgh International Children's Festival will continue their policy of no artists' flights within the UK and support those coming from Western Europe to travel by land

### 2. Staff travel

- ✓ Edinburgh Science Festival will reduce the need for staff to travel overseas through business model innovation, such as training more local staff and modifying event delivery for its international projects
- ✓ Edinburgh Art Festival will cut their long haul flights by 50% by 2023

### 3. Building heat and power

- ✓ Scottish International Storytelling Festival work closely with the Scottish Storytelling Centre as the main venue, and by 2025 they plan to upgrade lighting, heating and ventilations systems to provide sustainable venue infrastructure
- ✓ Filmhouse, home of Edinburgh International Film Festival, will be run on 100% renewable electricity by 2023, transferring to a 100% renewable energy supplier when current contracts expire

### 4. Audience travel

- ✓ Edinburgh International Book Festival will increase opportunities for audiences to enjoy their events from afar, through new technologies and the expansion of their digital festival
- ✓ Edinburgh's Hogmanay will build guidance on travel into their box office system to encourage audience members to choose low carbon options
- ✓ Edinburgh International Children's Festival will develop their digital Delegate Programme, allowing delegates to engage deeply with the artistic work, and make valuable international peer connections, without travelling

### 5. Waste, Paper and Print

- ✓ Edinburgh International Festival are developing an enhanced sustainable procurement policy, including promotion of circular economy initiatives and more sourcing from local suppliers
- ✓ Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society are working towards a fully integrated digital solution for ticketing, and aim to cut their paper usage by a third by 2022 with a focus on reducing their print programme

### 6. Production, events and venues

- ✓ A group of Festivals [Hogmanay, International, Book, Science and Jazz] are piloting the use of zero-carbon hydrogen (produced using surplus renewable electricity) for powering outdoor events, and are encouraging the installation of power sockets at key outdoor sites to allow events to be powered by electricity (set to be fully decarbonised by 2035)
- ✓ A group of Festivals [Storytelling, Film and International] are working with Edinburgh Council to have key venues assessed by Green Tourism or a similar scheme, and to align these venues with recognised sustainability standards

### 7. Catering

- ✓ Festivals Edinburgh commissioned Zero Waste Scotland to design a deposit return scheme for reusable cups at the festivals. The pilot was postponed due to Covid-19, but we aim to launch the scheme at one of the Festivals in 2022
- ✓ Edinburgh Science Festival is switching to vegan catering for its own operations and Edinburgh Art Festival will serve all vegetarian food at its meetings and events

### 8. Influencing through artistic programmes and leadership

- ✓ Edinburgh International Film Festival will develop artistic programming which explores themes around climate change and environmental sustainability, encouraging audiences to think creatively about such topics
- ✓ Edinburgh Science Festival are running the [Climate Opportunity Ideas Factory](#) round table meetings for Scottish industry leaders and have developed a [Net Zero Toolkit](#) to support businesses to take 8 clear steps towards net zero

### 9. Accommodation

- ✓ A group of Festivals [Science, Children's, Fringe, International & Hogmanay] is exploring how to help Festival-goers identify low carbon options including accommodation through a mobile app, and reward sustainable behaviour
- ✓ Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival will only book staff and artists into hotels with strong green policies

### 10. Digital activity

- ✓ Edinburgh International Book Festival are participating in a research project which aims to establish a methodology to measure the carbon footprint of digital festival events, with a view to making them as energy efficient as possible
- ✓ Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society have developed a full digital platform to give arts industry, artists and audiences the opportunity to experience the Fringe digitally through Fringe Connect for professional learning and development, Fringe Marketplace for the arts industry and Fringe Player for audiences

# How will the Edinburgh Festivals' progress be measured & reported?

The Festivals have devised a two phased approach to verify our progress to reduce our emissions:

Phase 1 Verification of Emissions	Phase 2 Verification of Reduction Targets
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Obtain an independent assessment of the reported baseline emissions figures, and underlying data and calculation methodology, to ensure that data reported for core emission categories is accurate</li><li>• Each Festivals' <i>core emissions</i> consist of those in the Control and Measure categories, outlined in the earlier diagram. From 2021/22 onwards, we will also start measuring emissions from the performances and events that we operate ourselves, at sites we do not own</li><li>• Eight of the Festivals are piloting this step - International, Science, Book, Film, Jazz &amp; Blues, Childrens, Storytelling and Art - with the opportunity for the remaining three Festivals to join in the following year. The eight pilot festivals will publish their verified baseline emissions by the end of March 2022</li><li>• In 2025 and 2030, participating Festivals will have their emissions verified and published again, to demonstrate the carbon savings made. Further, all Festivals will continue to report their core emissions annually to Festivals Edinburgh and their funders</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Following Phase 1 Verification of Emissions, we will request an independent assessment of the Festivals' initial carbon reduction plans and determine whether or not the key targets are likely to be fully met with the planned carbon reduction measures. If not, further actions will be recommended.</li><li>• Festivals will incorporate the results of this process into strengthened plans with verified targets, which will be published within a reasonable timeframe</li><li>• This part of the process is still being arranged, but we expect that eight or more Festivals will take part in this stage in 2022/23</li></ul>

In order to ensure the robustness of our plans, we have engaged a local team of independent sustainability consultants [Beyond Green](#). They specialise in resource efficiency and carbon reduction, and have conducted over 800 carbon reduction projects with various organisations, including those in the cultural sector, saving around 32,600 tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent to date. We have engaged them to deliver Phase 1, verifying the core emission categories [electricity, gas, fuels, water, travel and freight] and plan to work with them to conduct Phase 2.

It should be noted that this process will not include emissions from venues that are not operated by the Festivals, in the knowledge that the majority of our regular venues report their emissions separately, either to Creative Scotland or under the Public Bodies Duties section of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009. It should be further noted that for logistical reasons this process does not currently include many spaces which are repurposed into venues for the Edinburgh Festival Fringe, but the Fringe Society encourages and supports venues to measure and reduce their emissions.

We will continue to update and strengthen our carbon reduction plans as opportunities become available. However we are aware that our ability to meet our targets is partially limited by a lack of readily available alternatives, e.g. fully renewable electricity and access to it for outdoor event operators, electric vans available to hire for transporting freight, or venues heated by heat pumps instead of gas boilers. As such, we will continue to use the influence we have to encourage the accelerated roll out of zero carbon technologies, infrastructure and services in Edinburgh and beyond.

## Appendix: Individual Festivals' Policies & Plans

As noted earlier, each of the Edinburgh Festivals has set out, or is in the process of setting out, its own action plan for reducing carbon over the next five to ten years. These plans are unique to each Festival - given the difference of each Festivals' structure, size and situation - and so, not all Festivals will be undertaking the same actions. Information on the specific policy and plan of each individual Festival is available by following these links:

- [Edinburgh International Children's Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh Science Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh Jazz & Blues Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh Art Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society](#)
- [Edinburgh International Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh International Book Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh International Film Festival](#)
- [Scottish International Storytelling Festival](#)
- [Edinburgh's Hogmanay](#)

Note: Following the cancellation of both their 2020 and 2021 editions , the Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo has not been in a position to finalise its' carbon reduction policy and plan - but remains committed to the ethos and principles contained in this document, with the intention being to publish its' plans in the coming months.

### Acknowledgements

The Directors of the Edinburgh festivals would like to thank the members of the Environment Working Group, being a representative staff body from across all eleven festivals, for their work in developing the plans outlined in this publication – and in particular Amanda Grimm, who worked tirelessly with the festivals and through Creative Carbon Scotland to help us arrive at this collective point.



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Scottish Enterprise



Festivals Edinburgh, Waverley Court, 4 East Market Street, Edinburgh EH8 8BG

🌐 [www.edinburghfestivalcity.com](http://www.edinburghfestivalcity.com)

✉ [info@festivalsedinburgh.com](mailto:info@festivalsedinburgh.com)

☎ +44 131 529 7970

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