

Creative Climate Action Checklist: From Overwhelm to Action



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Introduction



This resource is for small creative SMEs, organisations, collectives, businesses, and freelancers to support their climate action journey. It has an introduction to seven different areas, with a checklist of relevant prompt questions as a springboard for potential action. Each area then has a directory of easy to use tools and resources which can support taking action forward or further learning.

These checklists have been designed as an outcome of consultation workshops with a broad range of small creative practitioners and businesses. Many of the prompts may not be relevant to the way you work – the task at hand is figuring out what might work for you and putting that jigsaw together for yourself.

The prompts are neither prescriptive nor exhaustive, but are a list of general jumping off points that might need to be reworked or adapted to meet your specific needs. Remember to consider what feels relevant, exciting and doable for you within the resource, capacity and power you have.

Everything we do requires some energy, usually sourced from our national grid which is still largely powered by fossil fuels.

Operational carbon emissions of buildings (for example, the day-to-day energy use from lighting, heating and cooling) account for around [28% of annual global carbon emissions](#). It's important to consider how we can reduce our energy usage, but also how we can support the transition to renewable energy within our capacity.

Many creative freelancers, small businesses and organisations don't own

the buildings they work in. While you may not be able to influence building changes directly, centring sustainability as a concern can influence arts buildings, studios and venues to ensure they are acting towards sustainability. It contributes to [increasing pressure](#) on landlords and building owners to prioritise sustainability as essential for longevity of a business, towards collective change.

✓ Building Checklist

Go through the question prompts and consider which action areas may be relevant to you and possible for you to undertake. Note down if this action is possible for you, any barriers you might face in enacting it, or whether this action could be changed or adapted to be relevant to the work you do. If it isn't relevant – skip it!

Action prompt	Does this action relate to your work? How might it be adapted or changed to be embedded in your ways of working?
Do you work from home or own your space of work?	
1. Could you switch to a renewable energy provider?	
2. Can you investigate smart meters to help understand your energy usage better?	
3. Are you able to make your building more energy and heat efficient?	
4. Have you investigated affordable energy and heat efficiency measures?	

Continued >

5. Is the lighting in your workplace LED?

Do you rent your place of work, or work in a shared / studio / collaborative space?

1. Can you ensure you work at times when other people are in the space to minimise hours of heating, cooling and lighting?

2. Do you have a relationship with the landlord or building owner? Can you utilise that relationship to raise concerns around renewable energy providers, energy efficiency and waste management?

3. If not (2), could you collaborate with other users and tenants of the space to raise concerns to landlords or building owners?

Do you tour or use multiple venues in your practice or business?

1. When planning touring, are you able to speak with venues on their approach to sustainability using conversation to influence change? Raising sustainability and energy efficiency as a concern as a partner can prompt others to act.

2. Can you ensure sustainability is integrated into your approach on selecting venues?

3. Have you considered using a green rider?

4. Could you factor in paid time at the beginning of a project to research and select touring venues with an approach to environmental responsibility?

5. Can you speak with venues to figure out where you will have access to sufficient mains power, to avoid using diesel generators?

6. If you use generators for your work, can you ensure they're efficient or powered by renewables?

Resources

[Julies Bicycle: Green Rider](#)

Example of green clauses that can be included in your rider that can be a powerful communications tool and encourage change towards a more sustainable touring sector across the venues and events you play at.

[Reverb: Environmental Rider](#)

Another example of of an environmental rider with various green clauses that can be given to venues when touring.

[Quick Carbon Management Calculator](#)

This spreadsheet helps calculate the emissions of specific actions to reduce your consumption of energy, travel, waste and water. It can help you measure a snapshot of your existing practice & also includes a guide to typical equipment usage.

[Department of Energy and Climate Change: SME Guide to Energy Efficiency](#)

Detailed actions in various areas and checklists to increase energy and heat efficiency in SMEs.

[WECA: Green Business Grants](#)

Green Business Grants help small and medium enterprises (SMEs) make energy-saving improvements to their buildings and business operations. The grants of up to £15,000 pay for 50%-80% of eligible capital costs, depending on the business' size, location, and project.

Notes

- Do any of these actions resonate with you?
- Do they feel doable and actionable within the capacity you have?
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If so, write them here:

In 2019, **UK domestic transport** was the largest emitting sector of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, producing 27% of the UK’s total emissions.

Collaborating with people across the UK and internationally is central to the creative industry and has intangible benefits culturally. Whether you have international partnerships, or touring is central to your practice, travelling to be and work in a space with other people is what makes life fun – and has significant creative benefits.

When thinking about reducing environmental impact from travel, it’s important to remember this is a nuanced subject. The value of being in a space together, seeing new places, and hearing new voices is important for a thriving sector and world. Travel can increase accessibility for

cultural and creative industries for marginalised or underserved groups, for example sometimes using cars is necessary in reaching rural audiences or customers where there is poor public transport infrastructure.

In a post--lockdown world, hybrid and online working offers brilliant ways to collaborate nationally and internationally for a low-carbon alternative. It’s all about minimising impact and finding compromise – asking when travel is necessary and valuable, supporting you connect with those you may not able to otherwise, and when it might not be worth the emissions.

✓ Travel Checklist

Go through the question prompts and consider which action areas may be relevant to you and possible for you to undertake. Note down if this action is possible for you, any barriers you might face in enacting it, or whether this action could be changed or adapted to be relevant to the work you do. If it isn’t relevant – skip it!

Action prompt	Does this action relate to your work? How might it be adapted or changed to be embedded in your ways of working?
Overall Travel	
1. Are you measuring your emissions from travel to support your understanding of where you can reduce your impact?	
2. How do you travel to work? Could you cycle, wheel or walk?	

Continued >

3.	When working with collaborators in different areas, can you build in enough time to ensure public transport tickets are as affordable as possible? (Trains and coaches)	
4.	Do you have directions on public transport options to your place of work on your website and external communications?	
5.	Can you ensure you use taxi firms which provide hybrid or electric options?	

Audience, customer and partner travel

1.	When exhibiting, putting on a show, workshop, or event – could this be done with the same outcomes online?	
2.	When exhibiting, putting on a show, workshop, or event – can you ensure to signpost public transport options on promotional material?	
3.	When exhibiting, putting on a show, workshop or event in hard-to-reach areas – can you support organising car shares, or provide options of electrified taxis or rented vehicles to get people to the venue?	

International Travel

1.	Would both you and your international partners be able to obtain the same value using digital and online communication tools for this work?	
2.	Can you ensure you have budgeted for responsible and accredited offset schemes?	
3.	Can you build in time to co-develop an approach to travel to minimise emissions e.g. ensuring your trips are for longer periods of time, at crucial times during a project or process, to maximise outcomes?	

Continued >

4. Can you build in time to co-develop an approach to travel where you accomplish multiple things on the trip?
5. Do you have a 'saying no' policy? E.g. saying no to international travel where your only engagement is a 15 minute talk, or travelling for 'one-offs'?

Resources

[Creative Carbon Scotland: Easy Guide to measuring travel impacts](#)

Guidelines on getting started on measuring your travel and tools to help you understand your travel data

[Creative Carbon Scotland Quick Carbon Management Calculator](#)

This spreadsheet helps calculate the emissions of specific actions to reduce your consumption of energy, travel, waste and water. It can help you measure a snapshot of your existing practice & also includes a guide to typical equipment usage.

[Julies Bicycle Touring Guide](#)

This guide focuses specifically on the touring aspect of your production. It is divided into before the tour, on the tour, and after the tour and will cover topics including; routing, accommodation and liaising with venues. It is aimed at any decision makers involved in the planning of the tour. It has a list of a range of more detailed practices you could employ.

[Last Night a DJ Took a Flight: Exploring the Carbon Footprint of DJs](#)

An assessment of electronic music industry with recommendations and prompts for promoters, artists, agents and dancers.

[Traveline Scotland Carbon Calculator](#)

Tool to support the calculation of emissions of transport.

[ClaimExpenses Tool](#)

claimexpenses.com is a tool which supports small and medium sized organisations ease the administration of managing expenses claims, and encourages staff and others to complete their expenses claims quickly, conveniently, and accurately while measuring and reducing carbon emissions associated with business travel.

[Example: Creative Carbon Scotland Travel Policy](#)

An example of a simple travel policy which reduces emissions from travel and guide's action.

[Route Zero](#)

A handy and easy-to-use carbon calculator which calculates your emissions to and from any destination, with clear guidance and cost savings.

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Finance

3

Our money matters. The financial institutions you give your business to, whether that is through personal banking, pensions, or investments, have a big impact on the environment.

Making informed financial decisions can have a huge impact on your personal carbon footprint, as well as influencing structural change of our financial systems.

[35 of the world's major banks](#) have provided \$2.7 trillion to fossil fuel companies since the end of 2015 – after the signing of the international treaty on climate change in the Paris Agreement. UK pension funds have an estimated £128 billion invested in fossil fuels, equivalent to nearly £2,000 for every person in the UK. Beyond just fossil fuel companies, your money may be being invested into the arms trade, breaching human rights conventions and labour standards, using or trading threatened

species, or being used in bribery or corruption.

If this money is redirected, it could power a green transition. With a warming planet and a natural environment under threat, the decisions we make on how our money is invested have potential for substantial impact on our financial systems. The actions to circumvent can be small and a one-off – but with a huge impact.

Further, arts and cultural organisations have a history of financial entanglement with the fossil fuel industry – where they are used to legitimise harmful industry through sponsorships and funding. Ensuring your funding is ethical is a great way to decrease the cultural power of destructive industries.

✓ Finance Checklist

Go through the question prompts and consider which action areas may be relevant to you and possible for you to undertake. Note down if this action is possible for you, any barriers you might face in enacting it, or whether this action could be changed or adapted to be relevant to the work you do. If it isn't relevant – skip it!

Action prompt	Does this action relate to your work? How might it be adapted or changed to be embedded in your ways of working?
Do you have a pension?	
1. Have you checked whether your pension provider has an 'ethical funds' option?	
2. Are you willing to move your pension into speciality 'climate positive funds' which have a slightly higher risk profile?	
Do you have a bank account?	
1. Are you aware of your bank's investment profile?	
2. Would you be willing to change bank accounts to a cooperative or more ethical provider?	
Who funds your work?	
1. Do you research who funds your work or the clients that pay you?	
2. Do you have an ethical fundraising policy? Would you be willing to use one?	

Resources

[Make My Money Matter Campaign: Green Pensions Charter](#)

Make My Money Matter is a people-powered campaign fighting for a world where we all know where our pension money goes, and where we can demand it's invested to build a better future. Find analysis on different pension providers climate pledges, ways to green your pension, and opportunities for collective action.

[The Path: Experts in Ethical Investments](#)

Leading ethical financial advisors working to ensure your money is working for people and planet. They go above and beyond ensuring that all companies your money is invested in are actively positive for the planet and people, rather than just 'not terrible'.

[Triodos: Change your bank, change the world](#)

Triodos Bank is a leading expert in sustainable banking. Their mission is to make money work for positive change and are funding things that protect our planet, as opposed to fossil fuels.

[BBCs Smart Guide to Climate Change: Banking Habits](#)

An accessible introduction into managing your money for good.

[Culture Hive: Ethical Fundraising Guide and templates for arts organisations](#)

An updated step-by-step guide and policy template by [Arts Fundraising & Philanthropy](#) to support organisations to create their own ethical fundraising policies.

[Example: ArtsAdmin Ethical Fundraising Policy](#)

Example of simple ethical fundraising policy which links approach to fundraising to values.

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If so, write them here:

Every action online is responsible for increasing global demand for energy.

The digital transformation, and ‘move online’ during the pandemic – the internet, email, video conferences and cloud-based services – have brought many benefits which reduce emissions, cut down on physical waste from paper, and increase accessibility. But the emissions from manufacturing, powering, and cooling computers, smartphones, and data centres can add up.

According to [World Wide Waste](#), 32 billion trees would have to be planted every year

to offset pollution caused by unopened email attachments, unread emails and spam. The large amount of data needed to stream videos also means they make up a significant proportion of global digital emissions.

There are many low-effort solutions to begin to reduce you or your businesses digital footprint. Many of these align with ensuring your digital storage is efficient, organised and GDPR compliant.

✓ Digital Footprint Checklist

Go through the question prompts and consider which action areas may be relevant to you and possible for you to undertake. Note down if this action is possible for you, any barriers you might face in enacting it, or whether this action could be changed or adapted to be relevant to the work you do. If it isn't relevant – skip it!

Action prompt	Does this action relate to your work? How might it be adapted or changed to be embedded in your ways of working?
Tech and reducing electrical waste	
1. When you're buying new tech – ask yourself, do you need a new device?	
2. Could this laptop, phone or another form of tech, be bought second hand or refurbished?	
3. What is this laptop, phone or other piece of tech's life cycle? Is it repairable and designed to last?	

Continued >

Using a device

1. Have you minimised the amount of data your phone is using every day? Are you able to disable location services, removing unused apps, and only have essential notifications turned on?
2. Can you reduce the amount of energy your device is using? Have you lowered the brightness on your screen, kept the battery level between 50-80% and ensure to not leave it plugged in at full charge?
3. Are you turning your devices off when you're not using them? Sleep mode is still draining energy!

Content creation

1. Have you used a website carbon calculator to understand the impact of your website?
2. Does the work you're doing really require a new website to be set up?
3. Is your website hosted by a green website hosting provider?
4. Can you design a communications strategy for your project which minimises unnecessary content creation? Creating less content means lower environmental impact.

The cloud, storage and software

1. What software do you use? Are you aware of its digital impact? Do you have the time to use the resources below to measure your impact?
2. Can you embed practices to reduce energy use from data storage from emails? Could you set time aside to organise your emails and file storage, deleting all emails over two years old, and unused files?

Continued >

<p>3. Can you schedule in regular periods of time to audit your cloud storage to remove unnecessary files, for efficiency and reduction in energy usage?</p>	
<p>4. Could you move file storage onto a hard drive instead of storing on the cloud?</p>	
<p>5. Do you really need that video call, and which provider is hosting it? Zoom and Google meet are far more efficient than providers like Teams. For video calls, only switch your camera on when it truly adds value. If one to one, go retro with a phone call!</p>	

Resources

[Wholegrain Digital: Digital Declutter for Business](#)

A toolkit that can help you measure and reduce the digital carbon emissions of your business, with lists of actions in different areas.

[Wholegrain Digital: Guide to making your website more energy efficient](#)

A handy list of the top things you can do to minimise wasted energy and help ensure that the websites you create are as energy efficient as possible, as well as improving performance and user experience.

[Website Carbon Calculator](#)

A tool for calculating the carbon impact of your website, and detailed explanation of the calculation method.

[The Green Web Foundation: Green Hosting Directory](#)

A directory of green hosting companies by country, listing partner organisations which have provided proof of their environmental claims.

[List of clean email apps](#)

A list of ‘clean email’ applications, to support clearing unnecessary emails, removing junk and removing subscriptions to unnecessary marketing emails clogging up your inbox.

[Climate Care: the impact of the internet](#)

More in-depth accessible description of digital impacts and actions to address it.



Notes

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Procurement, Materials & Waste

5

The extraction and processing of materials, fuels and food contribute half of total global greenhouse gas emissions and over [90% of biodiversity loss and water stress](#). Waste is the fourth largest source sector of emissions, accounting for [3% of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2017 in the EU](#).

When we buy stuff (materials, technology, packaging), it's important to think about the embodied emissions and life cycle of the product.

Embodied emissions are the sum of greenhouse gas emissions required to bring the product to market. So when you buy say, a cheese grater off Amazon, the embodied emission is considering the emissions involved with mining of metal, the factory emissions involved in making it, and the transport of the product to your door. Embodied emissions

also include emissions beyond your use of the cheese grater: where does it go when you are ready to dispose of it? Can it be re-used, re-purposed or recycled? Or will it get burnt or join a landfill?

Asking ourselves these questions are important to reducing the 'value-chain' emissions of the work we do – all the emissions involved in the production and destruction of the things we use in our practice or business. Thinking in this way can help us move from a linear to circular economy.

✓ Procurement, Materials & Waste Checklist

Go through the question prompts and consider which action areas may be relevant to you and possible for you to undertake. Note down if this action is possible for you, any barriers you might face in enacting it, or whether this action could be changed or adapted to be relevant to the work you do. If it isn't relevant – skip it!

Action prompt	Does this action relate to your work? How might it be adapted or changed to be embedded in your ways of working?
Thinking around buying	
1. Can you ask yourself before you buy anything: do we really need this? Can I hire it?	
2. Can you build in time at the beginning of a project or programme to source second hand materials?	
3. Can you build in time at the beginning of a project to consider how you will re-use, give away or recycle the materials you use?	
4. Can you build in time to research the materials you are using or item you are buying to ensure you are making the most sustainable choice? E.g. sourced locally, recyclable materials, manufactured by companies with certified environmental, social and health management systems?	
5. Can you choose suppliers that offer end of life reuse, recycling, recovery or remanufacture (in order of priority)?	
6. Can you choose suppliers which provide safe working conditions and fair pay?	
7. Can you use local green suppliers and contractors wherever possible?	
8. Can you minimise printed promotional materials to reduce waste while keeping your work inclusive and accessible?	

Continued >

Sharing economy

1. Do you have friends, partners, networks, studio spaces with similar practices to yours where you can establish a product or resource-sharing network to encourage re-use? E.g. props and technical equipment.

2. Could you create a group 'object-inventory' to discourage buying things already available within your community or networks?

3. Are you ensuring to knowledge-share with friends, collaborators and like-minded businesses when you find a sustainable product for an area of your business e.g. packaging?

4. Are you able to collaborate for group orders from certain suppliers to minimise emissions from product transport?

5. Can you share food and do group shops to minimise waste?

6. Can you ensure to obtain and list materials, props, sets, costumes, furniture, packaging, equipment from resell sites?

Waste

1. Can you ensure to obtain and list materials, props, sets, costumes, furniture, packaging, equipment from resell sites?

2. Can you think of creative or experimental ways to reduce or re-use it somewhere else in your practice?

3. Can you think of creative or experimental ways to pilot zero-waste work within your practice or business?

4. Can you have conversations with like-minded businesses on their approach to share knowledge?

Continued >

5. Can you use digital or creative marketing materials to cut down on your use of paper?

6. Could you become a supplier on The Props List or The Set Exchange (see below) in order to list and rent out equipment, props, costumes or materials you are not using?

i Resources

[Julies Bicycle Sustainable Procurement Guide](#)

This guide provides more detail in helping become more resource efficient by giving advice on integrating environmental sustainability into the decisions you make when choosing your products and services.

[Creative Carbon Scotland Quick Carbon Management Calculator](#)

This spreadsheet helps calculate the emissions of specific actions to reduce your consumption of energy, travel, waste and water. It can help you measure a snapshot of your existing practice & also includes a guide to typical equipment usage.

[South West Food Hub](#)

Local food map and directory for seasonal, fresh and sustainable food.

[The Prop List](#)

Directory and database for everything and anything related to the entertainment industries in the UK to share, loan or hire.

[Set Exchange](#)

The freecycle style website for Theatre, TV, Film and Event production.

[Circular Arts Network](#)

[CAN \(Circular Arts Network\)](#) is a new online platform and easy to use tool for redistributing spare, used or surplus materials, exchanging skills, labour and coordinating transport for the benefit of your local arts community. [CAN](#) reduces waste and offers a pathway for companies and organisations to support their local arts communities by providing a platform to list materials and resources.

[Big Barn](#)

Big Barn is dedicated to promoting local food producers and independent retailers, and access to fresh, seasonable, accountable food, reducing food miles and boosting rural economies. Their local food map can help you find local, sustainable suppliers that meet your needs.



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Audiences, Customers & Networks

6

This final section asks you to think about where you can influence change formally and informally within the highly interdependent creative sector.

Collective change, empowering others and being transparent is a crucial part of climate action. Many people feel worried to share the barriers they encounter, their successes, and their questions because we don't feel like experts.

But we are much more likely to change if we see it or hear about ways of changing from trusted partners, friends, experts, like-minded businesses or practitioners, and cultural spaces.

Listing out your 'People'

- Who do you collaborate, work with and work for?
- And how might you work with them, or support them to act with you?
- How might you influence change?

Audiences, Customers & Networks Checklist

Go through the question prompts and consider which action areas may be relevant to you and possible for you to undertake. Note down if this action is possible for you, any barriers you might face in enacting it, or whether this action could be changed or adapted to be relevant to the work you do. If it isn't relevant – skip it!

Action prompt	Does this action relate to your work? How might it be adapted or changed to be embedded in your ways of working?
1. Are you already sharing your actions, learnings and successes externally?	
2. Are you celebrating and sharing your wins?	
3. Are you sharing the barriers you face externally and inviting feedback and help?	
4. Have you created space when working collaboratively to raise the question of sustainability and what it might look like for your work together?	

<p>5. Within your creative practice, is there an opportunity to talk about climate change or climate justice? Can you integrate it within your project or programme in a way that will speak to the audiences and customers you work with?</p>	
<p>6. Within your creative programming, are there opportunities to platform marginalised, grassroots and frontline voices and artists on climate change?</p>	
<p>7. Are you having informal conversations with suppliers, partners, venues and networks on how they are responding to the climate crisis?</p>	
<p>8. Are you creating a non-judgemental space for questioning, knowledge-sharing and collaborative action within the work you do?</p>	
<p>9. Are you communicating clearly with partners that climate change is a priority issue, establishing a space for conversation on environmental responsibility might look like for your collaborative work?</p>	
<p>10. When liaising with potential customers, clients or partners in freelance, could you create a form for expressions of interest which clearly states sustainability as a value of your work through your website? This is a way to ensure potential collaborators are aware from early on that you want to centre sustainability before you begin working together.</p>	
<p>11. Are you having conversations with similar businesses and practitioners to share knowledge and problem solve together?</p>	

Resources

[Culture Declares Emergency: Types of creative responses to climate crisis](#)

A list of actions and case studies in a Systems Thinking model to analyse the possible functions and emerging responses of the cultural sector to the current climate and ecological emergency from an intersectional perspective. The proposal is that the most effective change is through work at the deeper levels, transforming mental models and frames, but that all types of action are better than work which perpetuates the current harmful system.

[Julies Bicycle: How to share your environmental story](#)

A webinar looking at different ways of communicating your environmental impacts and celebrating achievements

[Julies Bicycle: Creative Climate Justice Hub](#)

The Creative Climate Justice Hub is for artists and cultural practitioners who want to understand the systemic causes of the climate crisis, how it intersects with issues of social, economic and environmental injustice and how arts and culture is responding creatively.

[Commucations Hub: Climate Justice Narrative](#)

While this a toolkit on communicating climate justice narratives in the US, it has clear and interesting learnings for creative spaces as well – how to clearly communicate and accessibly how climate change intersects with other important social issues.

[Design, Climate, Action: how to help clients set sustainable briefs](#)

A short guide in how to raise sustainability as a priority when liasing with new customers or clients for designers, but with lessons for other practioners. Instructions for how to feel confident talking about sustainability with those who worry about it taking time and money..

[Climate Framework: Building a common language for climate action](#)

In depth guide looking at creating a shared language for communicating intersectional climate issues to those with different knowledge bases.

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Round Up

Hopefully these questions have provided prompts to guide action in various areas. For more in-depth guidance for different areas of the sector, check resources here:

Practicing Artists

[Chrysalis Arts Development Guide to Greening Arts Practice](#)

Music Industry: Agents, Artists, Promoters, Dancers

[Clean Scene Last Night A DJ Took A Flight: Exploring the Carbon Footprint of Touring DJs and looking towards alternative futures](#)

Events and Producers

[Julies Bicycles guide to sustainable production for the arts](#)

Theatre

[Theatre Green Book](#)

Arts Organisations

[Strike A Lights Pocket Guide to Environmental Responsibility](#)

Design

[Terra Movement: A Guide to Sustainable Graphic Design](#)

[Ellen MacArthur Foundation: Circular Design – from Ambition to Action](#)

Exhibitors, Galleries and commercial arts sector

[Gallery Climate Coalition: Resources and guides to facilitate the decarbonisation of the visual art sector and promote zero-waste practices](#)

Gaming and Game design

[Case study: Space Ape Games guide to going zero-carbon](#)

Arts Education and Community Arts

[Helicon Collaborative Report: Father, Faster, Together](#)



Congratulations on working through the checklist and taking the time to think about what climate action might mean for you!

We welcome feedback and thoughts on this resource, so if you have comments, additions or concerns, or have carried out an action and would like to share it with others, do contact zoe.r@watershed.co.uk or fill out the feedback form on the main site.



