

The Fringe Guide to Sustainability

The Edinburgh Festival
fringe
society

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Introduction

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe is the biggest arts festival in the world. It's a unique spectacle with well over 3,000 shows in the programme, representing a whole range of genres. As one of Edinburgh's twelve international festivals year-round, the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society is committed to excelling in environmental sustainability, and in supporting all Fringe participants in running greener shows. This guide is for any company participating in the Fringe, and is packed with information and ideas about how to reduce environmental impacts and inspire audiences with the best in sustainability.

Who are we?

The Participant Services team works as part of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society to offer advice and facilities to everyone taking part in the Fringe. If you have any questions about any aspects of the Fringe, we're only an e-mail or a phone call away, so please get in touch on participants@edfringe.com or 0131 226 0026 (option 2). You can also find a wealth of information and an overview of all our facilities and services at www.edfringe.com/participants.

The Edinburgh Festival Fringe Society is the organisation behind the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. We help everyone make the most of the Fringe, whether you are in the audience or taking part. Our activities including supporting all participants, providing information and ticketing for the public through the Fringe Programme, at edfringe.com and other publications as well as promoting the Fringe all around the world throughout the year.

How can I find out more?

The Festivals' environmental work is supported by the Festivals Edinburgh Environment Officer, whose advice and expertise is also available to Fringe participants on all sustainability issues. If you have queries – or ideas! – about running greener Fringe shows, do get in touch at Environment@festivalsedinburgh.com.

Together with Creative Carbon Scotland, the Edinburgh Festivals have created the Green Arts Portal, an interactive database of ideas, guides and support for all arts organisations pursuing sustainability. The Fringe Guide to Sustainable Practice offers a short introduction for Fringe shows and the Green Arts Portal offers a great way of deepening your engagement. Find out more at www.creativecarbonscotland.com

Six First Steps for Greener Shows

Here are five simple ideas that can really make huge strides for sustainability. Being greener doesn't have to be difficult or more expensive – if you just do each of these five things, you'll already be making a great start.

1. Get a Green Champion

Having a dedicated individual or team really helps drive the environment work forward. If you're a staffed organisation, you want to write the role into a job description. Your Green Champion is likely to be someone who already takes an interest in green issues and has the capacity to spark interest in others. They can lead on making your show greener, but do provide them with support, so their work is seen as positive and important by the whole team.

2. Join the Green Arts Portal

The Green Arts Portal is a database of ideas, resources and tools to help you becoming a greener arts organisation, developed by Creative Carbon Scotland and Festivals Edinburgh. It's free to join and comes with support to help you go green, so join today at www.creativecarbonscotland.com

3. Use Greener Publicity

Of course, it's hugely important that you get the word out about your show in the best ways, but you can also do this greenly. Printing on recycled paper shouldn't come at an extra cost these days, just ask your printer. And can you come up with innovative ways of publicising your show that allow for smaller, cheaper print runs? What about using ink stamps, or smartphone taps, or clever social media tactics?

4. Design Reusable Sets

Sustainable design starts with how you plan your set, props and costumes. The ideal is to make everything reusable – not only for extra dates for your show, but in the future. Build sets and use furniture that can have a future life. When reuse isn't possible, use materials that are recyclable and low impact, like wood and card over polystyrenes.

5. Travel Sustainably

If you are not transporting a large amount of set and props to Edinburgh, try to travel by rail rather than road. If you know you need to travel by road to bring your show, do you have other local Fringe-going shows or audiences you could split travel with? While you're in Edinburgh, get to know our compact city on foot (www.walkit.com) or bike (edinburgh.cyclestreets.net), as well as our cheap and extensive bus network.

6. Apply for the Sustainable Practice Award

The Fringe Sustainable Practice Award celebrates the best in sustainability on the Edinburgh Fringe. Inviting productions to engage their audiences with sustainability, take responsibility for their environmental impacts, and think big about how the arts can help to grow a sustainable world, the Award highlights the different exciting approaches Fringe productions are taking to sustainability. Whether they've just started thinking about recycling or whether they've been bike-powering venues for years, all Fringe productions can apply (www.sustainablepractice.org/programs/fringe).

Why Sustainability?

Our first reason to work for sustainability is often because it's the right thing to do. The climate is changing driven by human action, and humans are consuming the earth's natural resources at an alarming rate, so it's our responsibility to grow a sustainable world. But sometimes that task can seem daunting and it's hard to see how one company's actions can change things. Fortunately, there are many great reasons to go green.

Sustainability Can Save Your Money

Environmental impact is linked to energy use, travel, how much stuff you buy and how much waste you produce. Everything that has an environmental impact costs you money – so that means that reducing your carbon footprint cuts your bills.

Audiences Like Green Companies

Sustainability is an increasing priority for audiences and consumers across all sectors, with more and more people looking to be part of projects and companies with good green credentials. That means that becoming sustainable is a great way to give your Fringe company an edge and a new way to excite audiences.

You'll Get Ahead of Regulations

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 set tough targets for Scotland's carbon reductions, which is leading to new and more stringent regulations. Making changes now will prepare you better for new regulation, saving a lot of stress in the long term.

Being Green is Being Inventive

Finding ways to be sustainable isn't about punishing ourselves – making a show with the environment in mind means being creative and exciting in how you work. Thinking about how to do sustainable practice can make your Fringe company and Fringe show more innovative and help you come up with new artistic ideas.

Because It Matters

Arts organisations are social organisations as well as artistic ones and should be at the heart of the big debates of our time. They are often important spaces for debate and learning. By engaging in the sustainability debate, you're staying socially relevant in a changing society.

Ideas for Sustainable Practice

There are hundreds of ways you can make your Fringe show more sustainable. This Guide includes just some of the best ways for you to make your work greener: the actions that are the simplest and biggest impact. The Green Arts Portal at www.creativecarbonscotland.com contains many more ideas of green actions, so join there now.

Design

1. Plan Materials to Minimise Waste

Sustainable design starts with how you plan your set, props and costumes. The ideal is to make everything reusable – not only for extra dates for your show, but in the future. Build sets and use furniture that can have a future life. When reuse isn't possible, use materials that are recyclable and low impact, like wood and card over polystyrenes.

Case Study Sustainable sets and costumes

Team M&M, Pantry Shelf, Mark Prebble

Team M&Ms 2011 production, The Pantry Shelf, is proof that sustainability can be at the heart of an award winning, well-reviewed theatre production. The set, described in one four star review as 'big, bold and colourful' was primarily constructed from sustainable sources. Cardboard and wood were reclaimed from local businesses, whilst off-cuts of materials and used costumes were sourced and reworked into new costumes. This reuse of materials not only ensured sustainability, but saved Team M&M money.

2. Use Efficient Lighting Design

More lights means more energy, and you don't need to compromise on artistic quality to use fewer lights. Set your lighting designer the challenge of making elegant and efficient lighting plots – and if you're really ambitious, set yourself a lighting energy budget. Use this idea to create innovative lighting schemes.

Case Study Sustainable lighting Puppet State Theatre Company, The Man Who Planted Trees, Elspeth Murray

Puppet State Theatre Company's CSPA award winning show, The Man Who Planted Trees, has made a commendable effort in retaining a low impact, sustainable lighting rig. By ensuring that their set looked great even in daylight, a little lighting went a long way, with early shows utilising only four 100 watt floor lamps. Now playing in larger venues, with large lighting rigs and dedicated technicians, the opportunity to expand the shows lighting has presented itself.

The Company have however, stayed true to their sustainability commitments. Elspeth Murray from Puppet State Theatre Company told the Fringe, 'We try not to get carried away when offered the option of six lamps to achieve a certain effect when two will do. Sometimes this means that the production team are pleased to have less ladder-climbing, light-focusing work to do – on top of the energy saved. Other times, I get the impression that they have a team who are used to rigging huge productions and might feel under-employed if we don't spend all day putting up a massive lighting rig. In those instances I find that getting to know the crew – checking out pictures of their kids and pets on their phones or finding out about cool things to see locally – is a good alternative to wasting energy for the sake of something to do!'

3. Practice Good Reuse and Recycling

A Fringe show will always produce some things that you can't reuse yourself, but there are plenty of ways to deal with this sustainably. The Fringe Society runs a Swap Shop Days at the end of every Fringe for unwanted sets, costumes, props and publicity materials, so ask for this year's dates. You can also use projects like set-exchange.co.uk and freecycle.org to give unwanted materials a good home.

Publicity

1. Use Environmentally-Friendly Materials

There are lots of different paper options depending on your publicity needs, but there should always be a recycled or FSC-certified option, whatever quality you're looking for, usually at little cost difference. Ask your printer what's available and make sure you understand the issues before you make a decision. checkyourpaper.panda.org is a great tool for this.

Case Study

Sustainable media campaign Bedlam Theatre, Adam Alton

During the Fringe, Bedlam Theatre plays hosts to an eclectic mix of theatre, dance and comedy, providing some of the most innovative shows the Fringe has to offer. Several lessons on sustainability in the arts can be learnt from Bedlam's sustainable practice, particularly their media campaign during the 2012 Fringe. Whilst Bedlam's management recognised the environmental impact of the excessive paper use in their printed Fringe programmes, there remained concerns that recycled paper was too expensive and would not provide the glossy finish they were looking for. A compromise was made, creating a brochure comprising a one sheet non-recyclable, glossy front cover, with recyclable paper within. Printing locally, the environmental impact of couriering services was eliminated, as was the cost of delivery. Furthermore, the price for the recyclable brochure was exactly the same as a non-recyclable version.

2. Order Realistic Print Runs

The last thing you want is to be left with loads of flyers left over at the end of your run – that hurts your budget and the environment. It's easy to over-order, so make sure to ask for advice and be realistic about how much you can distribute. The Fringe Society's Participant Services can provide advice on print run sizes (participants@edfringe.com or 0131 226 0026)

3. Come Up With New Ideas

Can you come up with innovative ways of publicising your show that allow for smaller, cheaper print runs? What about using ink stamps, or smartphone taps, or clever social media tactics? If you come up with something that's really bright and really successful, let us know!

Travel

1. Travel to Edinburgh Sustainably

Whenever you can, use railways or car-pool when travelling to Edinburgh. The Fringe Society has facilitated car share options with GoCarShare and Tripshare. Information can be found at www.edfringe.com/planning-your-trip

2. Collaborate on Vehicle Hire

If you need to transport a lot of set and equipment to Edinburgh, find out if there are other companies and shows you can collaborate with. If you're able to share van hire, for example, you'll both save money and carbon emissions.

3. Get to Know Edinburgh's Green Transport

Walkit helps Edinburgh walkers plan routes through the city, providing information of journey time, distance, calories burned and carbon dioxide diverted: www.walkit.com. Cyclestreets helps you plan easy cycle routes through the city: edinburgh.cyclestreets.net. Lothian buses provide a reliable, quick and cheap bus service that reaches most of the city. The company also provides night buses after midnight, although services vary. lothianbuses.com.

Case Study

Sustainable transport and engaging audiences Nutshell Theatre, Allotment. Kate Nelson

Nutshell Theatre's CSPA and Fringe First award winning show, Allotment, is a production with sustainability at its heart, particularly with regards to audience engagement. Having set the production outside of Edinburgh, on a real allotment site in Inverleith Park, Nutshell Theatre could push public transport travel to their audience. Audience car transport was deterred further by high parking rates and poor accessibility. The show was also used as a platform for community education, with the aim of empowering and connecting communities. One such example is the intergenerational planting project held whilst touring the show in Paisley, Scotland, bringing together the area's very elderly population with the participants of a local mothers and toddlers group.

Audiences

1. Show Off Your Sustainability

As you go green, make communicating about your green work a standard part of your marketing. Tell audiences, artists and new staff members both about what you are doing and what they can do to help. Make sure your website has positive stories about what you're doing and include a line about your commitments in print publicity.

2. Promote Public Transport

Provide information on the most sustainable means for your audiences to travel to your organisation. Particularly if you are in a more outlying venue, you might want to include this in print publicity. On websites, make sure to list transport choices in order of sustainability (walk, cycle, bus, car).

3. Get Audiences Recycling

A simple message on publicity like 'Please recycle this flyer' can make a big difference – recycling bins are abundant in Edinburgh at Fringe-time, so you can help make it even easier. Check with your venue about recycling facilities too, so that they know to make them available.

Monitoring

1. Do a Carbon Footprint

Carbon footprinting is a way to describe your environmental impacts (travel, printing, energy and materials use are the big ones) in terms of carbon emissions. It gives you a simple number to describe how you're doing in sustainably. Doing a carbon footprint is a great way to better understand how you can be greener, and it's made it easy for arts organisations through the Industry Green Tools:

www.juliesbicycle.com/industry-green/ig-tools

2. Set a Carbon Budget or Target

Once you understand your footprint, it's time to get serious about reducing it. One thing to do is to set a carbon budget for a future show: what's the maximum environmental impact you're willing to have and how can you use that creatively? Another approach is to set yourself a reduction target, reducing your environmental impact with each new show. Ask us for advice about these ideas if it seems scary – we can help make it easy and creative.

3. Ask Your Venue About Monitoring

You can help spread the idea of monitoring environmental impact by asking your venue if they're doing the same, and their monitoring can help yours be more accurate. There's support available from Festivals Edinburgh to venues through the Green Arts Initiative, so if they're interested you can help them get in touch with us through the contact details in this guide.

Resources

Creative Carbon Scotland is a partnership of arts organisations working to put culture at the heart of a sustainable Scotland. They support organisations in changing their own behaviour, communicating with their audiences and engaging the public's emotions, values and ideas. They also run the hugely valuable Green Arts Portal, full of useful tools and resources for greener shows. www.creativecarbonscotland.com

The Centre for Sustainable Practice in the Arts is a think tank for sustainability in the arts and culture. They publish news, reports and resources about arts and sustainability, and also co-run the annual Fringe Sustainable Practice Award that all Fringe companies working for sustainability are eligible for. www.sustainablepractice.org

Julie's Bicycle is a sustainability consultancy charity for the cultural sector. Their website is packed with resources and support to help you become a greener organisation. www.juliesbicycle.com

The Ashden Directory is a database of companies, performers, storytellers and artists that are working consistently with environmental themes", providing big ideas and an invaluable opportunity to network with sustainably-minded people in the arts. www.ashdendirectory.org.uk

Fringe Central Events

In August there will be a series of events held in Fringe Central (the participants centre run by the Fringe Society). They are all free to attend. You can check them out in the Fringe Central programme under the heading Environmental Sustainability.