

Environment Policy, Strategy, and Action Plan for 2026 – 2027

INTRODUCTION

Open Eye Gallery recognises our responsibility to protect the environment.

Through our exhibitions, workshops, events, and long-term projects with our partners and community collaborators, we use the tremendous power of photography to bring communities together to affect positive social and environmental change.

We often work in partnership with cross-sector organisations, which enable us to work with environmental experts and creative and community activists – providing platforms to champion their work locally, nationally and internationally.

We are committed to reducing our environmental impact and to continually reviewing our environmental performance; embedding sustainable practices across the organisation through our work in-house, in-communities, and in-partnerships. As a learning organisation, we regularly attend staff training sessions with climate focused facilitators to update our knowledge.

We remain active members of [Shift Liverpool](#), the city region sustainability network for cultural organisations; and we support Liverpool City Council and the Liverpool City Region in their actions towards zero carbon emissions.

Our climate declaration can be found at culturedeclares.org/declarers/openeyegallery/

This policy is reviewed annually and updated when necessary, by the Environmental Working Group. An Action Plan supports this policy and is approved by our Board of Trustees each year.

Open Eye Gallery's Operations Managers are responsible for the implementation of the Environmental Action Plan, working alongside the Board of Directors, staff, volunteers, funders and stakeholders to ensure Open Eye Gallery considers, communicates and acts upon its environmental impact.

LEARNING, REPORTING AND MONITORING

We are a responsive, learning organisation, and the Open Eye Gallery team regularly attend relevant training and personal development sessions – such as Carbon Literacy Training, or attending symposiums which focus on the role of the arts and culture sector within the environmental agenda.

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We measure our carbon footprint with the Julie's Bicycle Creative Climate Tools carbon calculator, through which we submit an annual report. We also monitor our waste outputs through our disposal company, who provide us with reports. Through our work at Shift, we are following the Arts Green Book baseline operational measures.

We will soon be trialling the use of the Gallery Climate Coalition's carbon calculator to monitor our touring exhibition programme.

We regularly share organisational updates through the Shift steering and membership meetings, engaging in discussions with other Shift members on best practice which is fed back into the Open Eye Gallery team meetings.

OUR ACTION PLAN 2026-27

Our action plan for 2026-27 is split across **three core areas of influence**. This is our work in-house, in communities and in partnership.

The action plan includes updates on the 2025-26 actions and proposals for 2026-27. It also links the actions to the Arts Council's Investment Principles.

In-House

Open Eye Gallery believes it is important to ensure that its own operations minimise negative environmental impacts and enhance positive environmental impacts, where possible. This enables us to be an advocate for sustainability with our communities and partners.

To embed our Environmental Action Plan, we will:

- Minimise waste by evaluating our operations and ensuring they are as efficient as possible. Repurposing and recycling unused materials held in our store rooms. Borrowing and lending materials and equipment where possible. Creating an economy of reusing and repurposing – for example, through the materials we build our exhibitions from.
- Minimise the environmental impact caused through our running bookshop by working with majority local makers, writers, and creative talents to source a local product range.
- Work with local printing companies, using recycled paper stock, and recycling waste created from our exhibition production through our printer's recycling scheme.
- Minimise the environmental impact of production and distribution of marketing materials by focusing on online promotion.

In-House Highlights to Date

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In 2025, the gallery secured funding from the Low Carbon Eco Innovatory to replace existing lights with low energy LED lighting. This will reduce energy costs and carbon emissions. LED lighting lasts longer than traditional lighting, so maintenance costs will also be reduced.

A staff environmental day was held on 24th March 2025, which included a sustainability in the arts board game, training from Climate Fresk and a discussion about how staff can reduce the environmental impact from the gallery's operations and exhibitions.

The annual carbon emissions calculation showed that visitor travel continues to be the largest part of the gallery's carbon footprint. Work has begun to understand the true impact in more detail. This includes surveying audiences that probably travel to the gallery as their primary purpose. This includes a reading group and board meetings. Survey data from exhibitions was also reviewed, to determine the portion of carbon emissions that can be ascribed to the gallery's exhibitions from visitors that also carry out additional activities during their visit, including shopping or attending other cultural events. This will be ongoing.

In-House Actions and Priorities for 2026-27

Actions discussed at the staff environmental day include:

- Complete LED lighting upgrade
- Liaise with the printing company to understand opportunities for minimising the waste and environmental impact from exhibition notices. This could include calculating the percentage of vinyl printing that is recycled and targeting an increase in exhibition notices being printed on paper rather than vinyl.
- Plan additional time into exhibition preparation to allow for consideration of existing or previous exhibition props that could be re-used or re-imagined, and to consider other ways to reduce environmental impacts.
- Work with waste contractors to identify opportunities to reduce waste overall and increase recycled waste.
- Utilise local and environmentally friendly products in the gallery, whether for staff use or at events such as exhibition launches.
- Continue work to understand the true impact of visitor travel on the gallery's carbon footprint.

In Communities

The gallery's work and focus on socially engaged photography provides strong opportunities to support our communities in all aspects. With relation to sustainability, we have asked:

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- How can we better engage with the public around our strategy, and communicate our efforts more effectively?
- How can photography be useful in bringing about this change?

To embed our Environmental Action Plan, we will:

- Using our exhibition programme to highlight the climate crisis. Highlights include our biennial LOOK Climate Labs and LOOK Photo Biennial programmes in 2026.
- Encourage staff, volunteers and visitors to travel by foot, bicycle or public transport to the gallery and events or exhibitions beyond the gallery.
- Maintain a distributed model of programming to bring photography closer to wider reaching audiences across Liverpool, the city region, and more widely (e.g. across the North West, in Wigan and Salford, nationally and internationally).

In Communities Highlights to Date

The gallery hosts biennial Climate Labs, which raise awareness of the environment and climate change through partnerships, workshops, events and exhibitions.

Another photography programme that supports sustainability is the Tree Story project. This aims to connect people with nature. A new iteration of Tree Story has started in Wigan alongside two photography residencies to work with local school children and residents.

In Communities Actions and Priorities for 2026-27

The Environmental Working Group proposed a series of suggestions to enable the gallery to support our audiences to have a better understanding of the opportunities of sustainability. These include:

- Keep reviewing our strategy of how to engage the public – addressing the gap in understanding of environmental impact, through our programme and by using photography.
- Highlighting the importance of embedding this practice and encouraging crossover into health and wellbeing and artistic practice.
- Encouraging education in Visual Literacy: e.g. Encouraging public ownership of visual spaces, finding connections with them rather than existing within 'neutral' spaces. Sharing learning of how sustainability can translate into health and wellbeing.
- Communicating more transparently to the public what the gallery is already doing in terms of our own carbon emissions (operations) and through our programming.
- Understanding public transport barriers to address audience travel as our biggest factor of carbon emissions.

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- Identifying how to work with disengaged communities – raising awareness of green spaces, local growers, etc. Keeping things local and relevant.
- Work towards providing Carbon Literacy Training for photographers through the photography network Photo Connect (in the North of England). Enabling photographers to deliver on environmental priorities when working with communities.

In Partnership

The role that the gallery plays in the cultural landscape of Liverpool and wider provides opportunities to advocate for sustainability across our partners. With relation to sustainability, we have asked:

- What partnerships could strengthen our strategy?
- Which partnerships have been most successful in addressing the climate crisis?

To embed our Environmental Action Plan, we will:

- Working with Shift Liverpool as a steering group member to push sustainable changes within Liverpool's cultural sector.
- Seek partnerships that promote sustainable practices and ecological learning.

In Partnership Highlights to Date

In 2025, Open Eye Gallery has worked with RHS Bridgewater on three artists' residencies, relating gardening to health, wellbeing, and community – the culmination of these projects will be showcased in the LOOK Climate Lab 2026. With Wigan Council, Open Eye has developed our Tree Story programme to cover Merseyside and Wigan, with two artists' residencies engaging with local communities.

In-Partnership Actions and Priorities 2026-27

The Environmental Working Group discussed options to enhance our partnerships to deliver sustainability across the regions that we work in. These include:

- Continuing to build partnerships which enable us to run programmes with communities to engage with the climate agenda.
- Developing a partnership model/framework or map, reviewing what makes a good partnership.
- Creating a strategy for developing relationships with agencies and programmes on how we engage with the public through photography.