

Design Museum Commercial Hire & Events

Environmental Impact Roadmap

Progress Report

Introduction

At the Design Museum, we believe that creativity and environmental responsibility go hand in hand. Our Commercial Hire & Events team is proud to lead the way in the unique venues sector when it comes to delivering environmentally friendly events and brand activations that reflect our values and inspire our partners.

In April 2024, we launched our Environmental Impact Roadmap - a strategic initiative to embed environmentally responsible practices into every aspect of our event planning and delivery, while also contributing to the organisation's wider ambition to adopt an environmentally responsible approach across all museum activity.

This report shares our progress over the last year and the impact of our new strategy activation and initiatives, as well as highlighting key partnerships and our plans for the future as we continue to make meaningful progress with our mission to reduce our carbon footprint.

Our Environmental Impact Roadmap

In April 2024, we launched our inaugural Environmental Impact Roadmap, a strategic plan designed to reduce the environmental impact of all events held at our venue.

This roadmap outlines both the measures already in place and a phased programme of new initiatives. Our approach is rooted in collaboration with pre-approved, environmentally conscious suppliers, ensuring that environmental responsibility is embedded into every stage of event planning and delivery.



What We've Already Achieved

We have implemented a series of impactful, immediate changes, including:

✓	Banning single use plastics unless necessary
✓	Banning single use carpet and floor coverings
✓	Banning the use of floral foam
✓	Prioritising reusable or biodegradable equipment
✓	Offering vegetarian and vegan menus for museum hosted events
✓	Requesting all caterers quote with at least 70% vegan and vegetarian options for external events

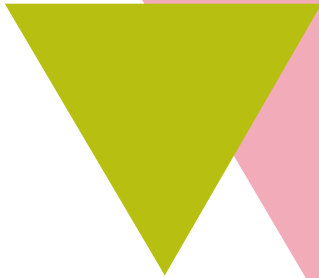
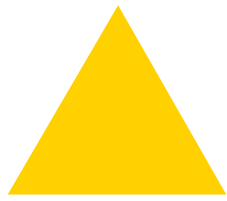


Raising The Bar With New Standards

Building on these foundations, we've introduced new Operational Standards that go deeper into the supply chain. These standards promote environmental responsibility from the outset and help us manage and monitor carbon emissions throughout the event lifecycle.

Key initiatives include:

✓	Requiring our accredited caterers to donate surplus food or recycle food waste
✓	Ensuring suppliers are either zero waste to landfill or actively working towards it, with clear targets in place
✓	Encouraging all suppliers to hold or pursue sustainability accreditations



Our Approach: Prioritising Environmental Responsibility

At the Design Museum, we believe that meaningful environmental impact starts with early and open collaboration. Key to the successful implementation of measures outlined in our Environmental Impact Roadmap has been active engagement with both clients and suppliers from the very beginning of the event planning process - ensuring clarity, alignment, and a shared commitment to reducing environmental impact.

Working With Our Clients

Our Event Managers lead with environmental responsibility in mind. From the first conversation, we introduce environmentally responsible options tailored to each brief - whether that's recommending low-impact materials, plant-based catering, or energy-efficient production solutions.


To support this, we provide a comprehensive Operational Standards document, which outlines our environmentally friendly ethos and expectations. This ensures clients are informed and empowered to make choices that align with our shared values.



Collaborating With Our Suppliers

All of our accredited suppliers are carefully selected for their commitment to:

✓	Net Zero goals
✓	Zero Waste to Landfill
✓	Innovative, environmentally responsible event design



Our catering partners are focused on reducing food waste and sourcing produce with a lower carbon footprint.

Event Managers work closely with suppliers to align on environmentally responsible requirements for each event, identifying any potential challenges early on so that practical and impactful solutions can be agreed in advance.

Bridging The Gap

We recognise that the interface between client vision and supplier delivery is where challenges can arise. Our Event Managers are trained to navigate these conversations with care - championing ethical choices while remaining flexible and solution-focused.



Case Studies: Turning Strategy Into Action

As part of our commitment to transparency and continuous improvement, we use case studies to evaluate the environmental impact of our events.

These real-world examples help us identify best practices, understand common challenges, and refine our approach over time.

Each case study below has been carefully selected to reflect the diverse range of events we host, while also representing a broad spectrum of our accredited suppliers, offering a comprehensive view of how environmentally responsible practices are integrated across different event types.

For every case study, we:

- Summarise the event's key outputs
- Assess the environmental measures implemented
- Gather feedback from suppliers on what worked well and where improvements can be made

These insights not only inform our internal practices but also help guide our clients in making more environmentally friendly choices for their own events.



Barbie®: The Exhibition

Opening Event: 3 July 2024



the
DESIGN
MUSEUM
events



Barbie®: The Exhibition

An evening private view event celebrating the launch of Barbie: The Exhibition



The event was attended by 405 guests.



Catering: By Word of Mouth

By Word of Mouth created a menu of vegetarian and plant-based canapes for the Barbie opening event and pre-judged the volume of canapes required to ensure food waste and environmental impact were minimised. Any micro herbs used as canape garnishes were grown in-house using an Evogro cabinet, which allows for harvesting the exact quantities needed.

In accordance with a zero waste to landfill strategy, By Word of Mouth uses ORBISK and ORCA technology in its kitchens to record any food waste and safely dispose of it using a natural biological process. All service staff, chefs and members of the By Word of Mouth team involved with the event travelled to the Design Museum by public transport or shared electric vehicle.

Notes: some plastic wrap was used to cover food to ensure safe transportation. The plastic wrap will be reused but a sustainable solution must be provided for future events.



Production

All production for the event followed a low carbon footprint brief set by the Design Museum.

Aluvision aluminium modular frames were used to create branded walls and photo opportunities, a more environmentally friendly and reusable option which removed the need for timber frame construction. Lighting was provided using low power LED lights.

The Foamex used for the prints around the drinks bar and DJ booth was recycled, and the decision was made to retain the Barbie Box photo opportunity installed for the event for the duration of the exhibition for visitor use. Other Barbie props were donated to crew members' children, and one wooden item was dismantled and reappropriated into lighting plinths to be used on future events.

Event equipment was delivered by 18T truck and crew travel was mostly on public transport.



Florals: Lavender Green

In line with Design Museum policy, no floral foam or single-use plastic was used for the designs. All packaging from the flowers received was recycled appropriately and all green waste was sent to be composted. All flowers were purchased from FSI 2025 accredited farms, all of whom have Environmental and Social accreditations in accordance with Lavender Green's sourcing standards.

Following the event, all flowers returned were donated to local charities and organisations ensuring that the event floral provision was zero waste. A quantity of the floral arrangements were donated to a local secondary school for reuse at their Prom event, and the rest offered to registered charities for sale at pop-up fundraisers. As a result of this, £35 was raised for the Windsor Brownies pack, £30 raised for Burchetts Green Infant School's PTA, and £95 for Oakfield First School PTA.

Notes: some plastic wrap was used to wrap the cages used to transport arrangements to venue, however the supplier confirmed this will be reused for packaging. Lavender Green are actively looking to source a zero-waste alternative to plastic wrap for cages to better meet the Design Museum's requirements.



Drinks: Nyetimber

Nyetimber supports the Design Museum's environmentally friendly ethos with a sustainable and holistic approach to land, resources, and reduced carbon footprint in all aspects of its wine production.

Vineyard locations are sheep-grazed in many of its locations as an alternative to mechanical mowing, and this reduction in tractor use additionally helps to minimise soil compaction and carbon emissions. Weather stations monitor meteorological events in the vineyards, so vines are only treated according to actual needs, and 'green' waste (prunings, grape marc etc) is often mulched or composted - therefore returned to the vines. In addition, the new pressing centre at West Chilton has been constructed with several environmentally friendly features, such as photovoltaic electricity, ground-sourced heat, and rainwater harvesting.

The most significant reduction in environmental impact has been the weight of Nyetimber bottles, which weigh 835g compared with the industry standard of 905g. This results in a significant 10% saving in the number of journeys, fuel consumption, and emissions. The foil cap on each bottle of Nyetimber is made using a plant-derived laminate between two thin layers of aluminium foil, rather than a synthetic polymer.

Empty Nyetimber bottles and delivery packaging was disposed of by recycling, post-event.



CHANGING SPACES
 an interactive installation

At the Heart of Habitats

With a heart of plastic, concrete, metal, and other recycled materials, we invite you to sit and reflect on the spaces we inhabit. The heart is a symbol of love, but it is also a symbol of change. The heart is a symbol of hope, but it is also a symbol of challenge. The heart is a symbol of life, but it is also a symbol of death. The heart is a symbol of everything, but it is also a symbol of nothing. The heart is a symbol of us, but it is also a symbol of you. The heart is a symbol of the world, but it is also a symbol of the future.

At the Heart of Habitats

At the heart of the installation is a heart-shaped cutout in the backrest of the swing. The heart is made of plastic, concrete, metal, and other recycled materials. The heart is a symbol of love, but it is also a symbol of change. The heart is a symbol of hope, but it is also a symbol of challenge. The heart is a symbol of life, but it is also a symbol of death. The heart is a symbol of everything, but it is also a symbol of nothing. The heart is a symbol of us, but it is also a symbol of you. The heart is a symbol of the world, but it is also a symbol of the future.

This heart will be in situ during our opening days of the exhibition and will be available for you to sit on and reflect on the spaces we inhabit. The heart is a symbol of love, but it is also a symbol of change. The heart is a symbol of hope, but it is also a symbol of challenge. The heart is a symbol of life, but it is also a symbol of death. The heart is a symbol of everything, but it is also a symbol of nothing. The heart is a symbol of us, but it is also a symbol of you. The heart is a symbol of the world, but it is also a symbol of the future.

Habitat Changing Spaces

Late Event: 18 July 2024



Habitat Changing Spaces

A late event with speaker panel and reception, celebrating the launch of the Habitat display.



The event was attended by 80 guests.



Production: Event Concept

Event Concept are committed to reducing their carbon footprint for events and, in addition to achieving NetZero status, are working towards the goal of achieving zero waste to landfill, and the removal of all single use plastics. The Habitat Late Event required a minimal set-up, with the bar constructed from a reusable aluminium frame and recyclable cladding materials. Event components were delivered by 18t truck, with the majority of crew arriving by public transport. As per Event Concept's usual policy, all packaging materials were stacked in cages and returned to the supplier warehouse for reuse where possible, or recycling.



Catering: Design Museum Event Catering

The Design Museum's in-house event catering operation provided the catering delivered from the site kitchens, which eliminated transport, while ingredients were sourced according to the contracted requirement to use sustainable produce from local supply chains.



Conran Lecture:

1 October 2024



Conran Lecture

An evening lecture followed by a reception, part of the annual calendar of events.



The event was attended by 100 guests.



Production: Light Motif

Light Motif provided lighting, sound and production support for the event. They produced a beautiful wooden bar front inspired by the guest speaker's designs, which has been moved into their rotation of stock bars to ensure it has a life post-event.



Catering: Clink Events

For the Conran Lecture, Clink Events used ingredients grown in the prison gardens at HMP High Down and HMP Send and used local suppliers to provide a fully vegetarian and vegan seasonal menu. Alongside this, the event supplier served Toast Lager, which is brewed with surplus bread, and Social Tap IPA – a social enterprise product.

A group of people is gathered in a gallery space. The floor is a black and white checkered pattern. Several large, glowing white rectangular frames are arranged in a perspective, creating a sense of depth. People are dressed in semi-formal attire, and some are looking at the frames. The lighting is dramatic, with the glowing frames providing the primary light source. The overall atmosphere is artistic and modern.

The World of Tim Burton

Launch Event: 23 October 2024

The World of Tim Burton

An evening private reception, celebrating the launch of The World of Tim Burton.



The event was attended by 412 guests.



Production: Event Concept

Event Concept met the brief for this high-profile event with a highly creative production in keeping with its mission for #impactwithoutimpact.

For events such as The World of Tim Burton launch where scenic elements have been built, Event Concept works with the client so the items can be repurposed e.g. the bespoke wooden tree designed as a prop for the evening was kept on site. For the custom monochrome poseur tables, the poseur table tops were removed post-event and stored for future use, while both the bar and DJ booth were hand painted to avoid using vinyl or other plastics

Event Concept also has a partnership with Event Cycle to upcycle some of its bespoke elements and donate them to social impact causes such as schools and charities.



Catering: Jimmy Garcia Catering

Jimmy Garcia Catering produced a vegetarian/vegan only menu, and followed the no single use plastics rule, with reusable glassware and no plastic wrap on foods. Specially made Tim Burton themed canape trays were recycled through usage at numerous other events. No drugget was supplied, and all food waste was returned to Jimmy Garcia Catering's HQ and processed by bio-digester to be recycled as water.



Florals: Veevers Carter

Veevers Carter operates a recycling system that ensures 100% of green waste produced is compostable, and that by-products such as chicken wire and plastic pots are stored and reused time and again.

The fresh foliage used at the event alongside the dried elements was English and locally sourced from the nearby flower market. For the Dutch flowers used, we rely on trusted suppliers who prioritise eco-conscious practices.

The glass cloches were filled with preserved flower heads and dried foliage from previous events, designed for repeated use, while the tentacles from the bespoke wooden tree designed as a prop for the evening, were crafted entirely from repurposed materials such as copper piping and papier-mâché.

The candles were rechargeable and reusable and any waste from the event was meticulously separated and appropriately recycled. Organic waste, including flower stems and unused greenery was composted.

After the event, floral arrangements were managed via the Second Chance to Bloom initiative where arrangements are repurposed into smaller posies for Royal Trinity Hospice and Age UK.



Key Learnings And Next Steps

Our ongoing evaluation of environmentally responsible event practices has revealed valuable insights that continue to shape how we work with our clients and suppliers.

Below is a summary of the key conclusions drawn from our recent initiatives:

- **Bridging The Gap Between Policy And Practice**

While many suppliers and clients have strong environmentally responsible policies, these are not always fully implemented across the supply chain. The most common barriers are cost and timing - for example, low-impact materials like non-PVC vinyl can be more expensive, leading to compromises during planning.

In some cases, the difficulties arose from late-stage changes which, whilst not always avoidable, may be mitigated by a more detailed sign-off process during the development phase.

We have identified two key areas where further progress is needed:

- **Event production:** Greater attention is needed in material selection and early-stage design to align with our carbon reduction goals. We also encourage suppliers to monitor their subcontractors more closely to ensure compliance with agreed standards.
- **Catering & floral deliveries:** Single-use plastic packaging occasionally appears in transport materials. We're reinforcing our no single-use plastic policy with suppliers and reminding them of this requirement ahead of deliveries.

barbie

• **Plant-Based Catering: A Proven Success**

Our shift to vegetarian and vegan menus for internal events has been met with overwhelmingly positive feedback. Our catering partners have demonstrated that environmentally friendly menus can be just as delicious, diverse, and high-quality. We aim to extend this success to external events as a standard offering.

• **The Need For Measurable Carbon Data**

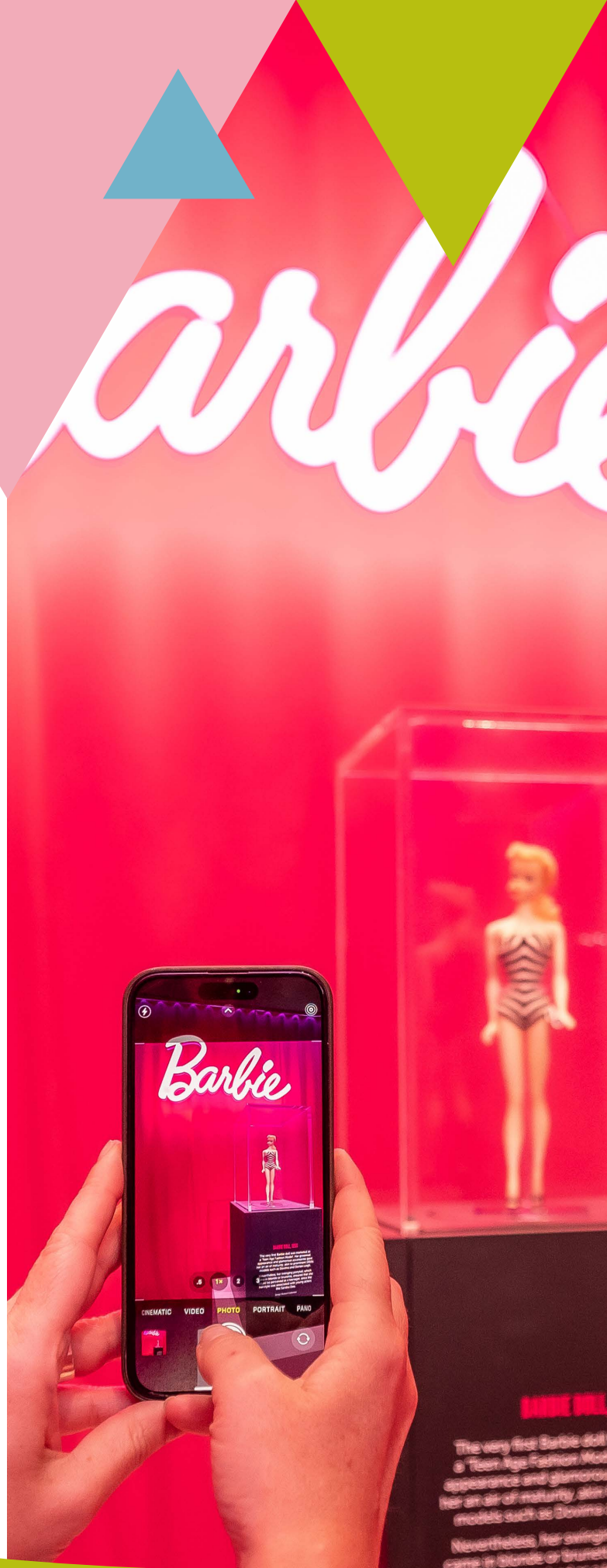
Many suppliers are not yet equipped to track carbon emissions. To address this, we're exploring the introduction of carbon emission goals at the outset of event planning. This would allow us to collect meaningful data post-event and set Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for our accredited suppliers, supported by tools like our Carbon Footprint Decision Tree.

• **Rethinking Event Design**

Just as our exhibitions aim to embrace material-conscious design, we're encouraging a similar shift in event production. By collaborating with suppliers to develop eco-friendly design solutions early on, we can reduce the likelihood of issues arising later in the process.

• **Setting The Tone From The Start**

Our Event Managers have found that discussing the Design Museum's environmental goals in person during the initial site visit is the most effective way to ensure clients understand and embrace our environmentally responsible requirements. This personal approach reinforces our commitment and helps build a shared vision from the outset.



Next Steps: Building On Our Progress

Our next steps are focused on formalising our approach, deepening supplier accountability, and expanding our environmental ambitions.

Medium-Term Goals

(by the end of March 2026):

- **Policy development:** We are developing an innovative policy document that will formalise our current practices within the Operations Standards and clearly outline expectations for clients, suppliers, and internal teams. This policy will ensure all stakeholders understand the information and actions required to meet our environmental standards.
- **Feedback integration:** Environmental performance will be incorporated into our event wash-up process, helping us identify recurring challenges and advancing solutions for subsequent events.
- **Progress reporting:** A follow-up report will be published in 2026, sharing our journey, insights, and progress to our colleagues in the sector.
- **Plant-based future:** We will evaluate the commercial viability of a permanent meat-free catering offer based on data from this summer's vegetarian/vegan menu trial.

Catering Goals:

With the appointment of Restaurant Associates (RA) as our in-house catering partner, we've gained greater control over sustainable decision-making across both events and public catering.

Together, we have:

- Shifted public catering menus to 70% vegetarian and vegan
- Eliminated vinyl signage to advertise offers
- Adopted recycled paper-only printing, only when necessary
- Created a fully plant-based menu across all catering outlets during the More than Human exhibition run this summer.
- Launched biodegradable takeaway cups and a keep-cup incentive scheme

RA's sector-leading [Sustainability Policy](#) makes them a valuable partner in achieving our environmental impact ambitions.

Long-Term Vision

- **Purpose beyond profit:** We aim to explore the broader societal benefits of reducing our carbon footprint, particularly in ways that positively impact our local community.
- **Water stewardship:** Recognising the growing importance of water conservation, we plan to expand our environmental accountability to include water usage.



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