

# Climate Justice, Disability Justice and Attitude is Everything

## Disabled artists' guidance and international case studies

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By Sarah Pickthall

Attitude is Everything has always been committed to putting disabled people and their lived experiences at the heart of the music industry's development of access and belonging.

The organisation continues to raise awareness, train and share through their **Live Events Access Charter** reflecting what disabled music creatives and the music industry event circuit need to progress disability equality and inclusive practices.

**Just Ask**, a guidance and training programme launched in 2022 by Attitude is Everything, was designed to support live event promoters to actively engage and Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent music creatives about their access requirements so they are more readily able to access all that the live circuit has to offer.

**Just Ask** was designed in response to an earlier survey in 2019 (before the Covid-19 pandemic). It found that a whopping 70% of disabled music creatives were hiding their health conditions and access requirements for fear of creating negative impact on relationships with promoters, venues or festivals.

Last year the **No Climate Justice Without Us** toolkit was launched to explore ways of including disabled people in live event sustainability.

Developed by Attitude is Everything in partnership with **Julie's Bicycle** and **A Greener Future**, and published with the support of Arts Council England, the toolkit's development began an exploration of disabled music creatives' perspectives on access and environmental sustainability at live events and festivals.

The key findings at that time were that:

- sustainability was a consideration for over two thirds of disabled respondents;
- a third of respondents felt that environmental solutions were not easy to navigate and did not meet their access requirements;
- only 22% of respondents felt included and able to participate in events and festivals that aligned with their own climate values.

As a follow on from the publication of the **No Climate Justice Without Us toolkit**, Attitude is Everything alongside Sarah Pickthall - a coach, consultant and disabled leadership specialist - honed in on the ideas, experiences and values of disabled music creatives around access and climate sustainability through a survey, a set of roundtable discussions and some additional follow up conversations.

The aim of this work is to make those experiences and ideas more central to the climate sustainability debate.

Sarah additionally shaped two international case studies with Lukas Hornby (CAMP) and Kris Yoshie (SLOW LABEL:Earth Pieces) two disabled artists working in music who naturally and strategically are exploring access and sustainability together in their work and practices.

What follows is a reflection on this process surfacing solutions and shaping next steps.

# There is no climate justice without disability justice.

With each climate disaster that occurs in our world we witness the disproportionate negative impact experienced by disabled people because of the inaccessibility of society as currently designed.

This is even more apparent and pressing for disabled people who live in disaster-prone areas and/or where there is more extensive poverty, with inaccessible or non-existent transport systems and systemic infrastructure, and where inclusive disaster-planning is poorly considered.

‘Climate marches have never taken us into account.’

‘The Nothing About Us without Us’ movement, first invoked within the Disability Rights Movement in the early 1990s in South Africa, motivated disabled activists all over the world to overcome systemic oppression. It continues to inspire and empower disabled people to take control over decisions affecting their everyday lives.

In that spirit, our new survey and set of roundtables for **No Climate Justice Without Us** has pursued a more disabled-centred approach where climate sustainability in the music industry might be seen and understood as an equitable rights and leadership issue.

Disabled music creatives can, and should, lead and inform the shaping of best practice climate sustainability measures for themselves, but they cannot do this on their own. The industry must have their backs.

Their lives and experiences need to be respected and understood. They need to be given the access to contribute to and to be part of the debate. They must be able to explore best practice for themselves in collaboration with others, and the industry.

# Listening to the voices of disabled music creatives

Even if climate sustainability is an important part of your values and the way you live your life, it may be harder as a disabled music creative to put sustainability measures in place.

‘We shouldn’t have to choose between what’s best for the planet and what’s best for us.’

For climate justice and disability justice to be upheld together it is crucial that music venues, events and festivals meet disabled music creatives’ access requirements in the first instance.

‘I wish they’d actually read my access rider. They just don’t and so I have often found myself in situations where I have to crawl around or be lifted.’

It is also imperative that they understand and respect the dilemmas and difficulties disabled music creatives encounter in trying to do what is ‘best’.

‘Some of my groups from the global majority have worked to achieve that semblance of comfort, ease and access that using a car or a flight affords and now you want me to **not** do any of that for the sake of carbon footprint? I will take this comfort, thanks! Why is it always on us somehow?’

Disabled music creatives are highly adaptive and often make access adjustments and accommodations of their own. However, there mustn’t be an assumption that they can always just ‘get on with it’ and operate in an ableist ‘where there a will there’s a way’ frame. There is still a pressing need for the industry to act appropriately and equitably, even when resources are thin.

‘Self-managing as a disabled artist – it can feel like the onus is all on you.’

More often than not festivals and live events were largely felt to be concentrating on either climate or access and rarely both:

‘It’s rare that live events are thought about and designed to do both things well.’

Real development in bringing access and climate sustainability where it happens is often led by disabled professionals who are strategically placed to highlight and harness the potential in bringing access and sustainability together.

Andrew Lansley, Innovation Manager for Cheltenham Festivals, works with colleagues to develop both access and environmental best practices. Responding directly to Julie’s Bicycle peer sharing group as part of Arts Council England’s Environmental Programme, he has overseen environmental and accessible changes to the festival. He is also developing an Adaptive Resilience strategy as part of their sustainability strategy.

In summary, the music industry needs to:

- continue to ask about access requirements and respond to access riders as a matter of course in the first instance (as encouraged in Just Ask campaign)
- appreciate why it is difficult sometimes for disabled music creatives to act sustainably, and the feelings of embarrassment, shame and sometimes defensiveness that this may evoke in them
- be part of ensuring that the language of climate sustainability is unpacked and made more accessible across the industry. This is important for all audiences, many of whom are not able to naturally connect with and understand the climate sustainability agenda and the actions within it.

# What is sustainability?

**Sustainable:** of, relating to, or being a method of harvesting or using a resource so that the resource is not depleted or permanently damaged. (dictionary definition)

A commitment to sustainability requires us to use and renew energy and resources with increased awareness and understanding of their intrinsic value - including scarcity, production methods and renewability - and to do this with respect.

Our survey and roundtables in 2024 showed that disabled music creatives' awareness and understanding about climate sustainability was varied. But it also showed that there is a genuine desire to find out more, and do more in response while still sustaining themselves in the process.

## **Sustainable for the planet, sustainability for disabled people**

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'We are much more likely to burn out before the planet does.'

'I think the key to solving climate crisis is intertwined with community care and Disability Rights and Justice.'

'It's not good for anyone to tour back-to-back, it would be better for human welfare as well as the planet to do less and focus less on productivity.'

Disabled music creatives need to start, and to be part of, a debate that seeks to ensure that they are not too depleted or permanently damaged within a music industry culture that is often about working oneself into the ground. Attitude is Everything has initiated this debate.

‘Trying to kind of perform and tour and record music, and all of this stuff - for someone with chronic illness, well - it’s more than enough for me to just sustain myself!’

We know that disabled music creatives face additional barriers. There is still a pressing need to develop and broker understanding as to the of just what these barriers are and how these additionally impact on a professional career:

‘Too often disabled musicians are only thought to have access requirements relating to their physicality, rather than hidden aspects of their disability, their mental health, their energy or need for self-regulation which are often things that are so much more pressing.’

Energy, pain and fatigue, particularly in the aftermath of Covid are becoming more widely acknowledged and understood, yet they are still not always considered within the industry. Disabled music creatives have always known that they have to manage these things:

‘I wouldn’t have any sort of career like I have had if I hadn’t had to pace and sustain myself.’

## **The language of climate change and sustainability**

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‘Get rid of the jargon of climate sustainability – or at least explain it!’

The language of climate change and sustainability is unfamiliar to many disabled communities. This is largely because disabled people have rarely been actively invited into the conversation.

‘How do we process all the information out there and what do we do with it?’



The language and concepts of sustainability were, for many of the disabled music creatives surveyed, seen as inaccessible and unclear. We have identified a need to explain concepts in more succinct ways and through different formats e.g. easy read and sign language. This is something we have ensured was available when launching the **No Climate Justice Without Us** toolkit.

Further unpacking of the language of climate change and sustainability can make it easier for disabled music creatives to consider and attend to the various components of sustainable practice.

With more information and shared solutions surfaced about climate sustainability, disabled music creatives felt it more likely to be able to prioritise minimising the negative impacts of attending gigs and events while ensuring that their access needs were not sidelined in the process.

## **Staying with the conflicts and contradictions**

‘We shouldn’t have to choose between what’s best for the planet and what’s best for us.’

Sustainability and access need to be discussed together in the industry - in the same conversation. This paves the way for a shared commitment between all parties to accessible sustainability measures.

‘Having more advocacy around access and sustainability can take that burden off. It would be so useful to have someone who can fight these battles alongside you.’

## **Ethical conflicts**

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Each choice we make has ethical implications. Being better informed can help disabled music creatives make choices that sit more comfortably with their values.

‘I’ve found it difficult to find information on who is making tech for DJ stuff, and I know it can be made in troubled places, like the Congo. Putting on an event for Black and brown people, and then knowing people are dying to make this equipment – we need more information!’

## **Transportation conflicts**

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Transportation for many of those surveyed and spoken to was still felt to be problematic.

‘If a disabled musician needs to use a car or van for access ease, and to conserve energy for themselves, or to make transporting equipment more manageable, there is often a feeling of being judged.’

Travelling by train or bus is often inaccessible and alienating. For others, who are able to access it and who can’t drive, access or afford a car, it is the only viable way of getting around.

Accessible transport to events is either unavailable or environmentally unsustainable - on top of that, it can also be expensive.

‘Uber Electric I notice is usually cheaper but an accessible electric cab can have a dynamic pricing system which is very irritating!’

For many disabled creatives, travel in itself is anxiety-inducing.

‘So often, it’s the transit or travel that is more challenging for me than the performance itself.’

## **Conflicting climate and dietary choices and requirements**

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‘I often feel embarrassed by not being able to be vegan.’

There were conversations about event and festival catering, especially environmentally-friendly provisions which can often clash with disabled music creatives’ dietary requirements and even be unsafe for people with very specific needs.

‘The whole plastic straws debacle - and feeling criminalised and judged because of it is - is just not right.’

## **Climate sustainability vs accessible dietary and consumption requirements**

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For many disabled people food and catering choices have to be accessible and safe before environmentally sustainable.

Energy is an important part of this. Having the energy and accessibility to prepare food, eat it and clear up often means that disabled music creatives in studios, at festivals or on tour have to rely on easy and fast things to prepare and eat. Or they have to bring their own supplies.

For many, an environmentally sustainable diet, such as a vegan diet is often more difficult to prepare, more costly to achieve, and may not suit some disabled people who have chronic health conditions.

'I often feel embarrassed by not being able to be vegan.'

There were conversations about event and festival catering - when it works and when it doesn't. It's not only the food itself or how much it costs, but how to get to stalls, as well as the use of utensils and cutlery. This gave rise to the ongoing debate around single use plastics and how they're still the only accessible option for many disabled music creatives.

'The whole plastic straws debacle - and feeling criminalised and judged because of it is - is just not right.'

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/jul/09/disabled-person-plastic-straws-baby-wipes>

<https://www.creamcracked.me/post/veganism-ableism-and-a-lack-of-understanding>

# Surfacing solutions for climate change sustainability

## I. Overview

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The roundtables were a useful starting point in allowing disabled music creatives to surface and share:

- where they have been part of sustainable solutions that are also accessible
- where they are already taking climate sustainability action, sometimes unknowingly
- where they might like to shape their own sustainability solutions as part of their professional lives

## II. Climate confidence – education, training and resources

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It was clear from respondents that a way to build confidence around sustainability issues would be to offer bespoke training in sustainability and climate impact - sometimes called **climate literacy**. This would allow disabled music creatives to feel better equipped to balance accessibility needs with environmentally sustainable goals.

Ideally this should:

- be through disabled-led training that appreciates disabled music creatives' lived experiences and points of view
- unpack the language and terminology appreciating different learning styles, energies and preferences
- support disabled music creatives to access regular discussions together on how they can find solutions and act upon them in their professional practices.

‘Often the resources you need are out there, but you need help to find them, and navigate your way through them, to get your hands on the right things when you need them most!’

Podcasts, short online seminars and summative one-pagers were felt to be the most accessible and environmentally friendly learning methods, compared to paper-based materials or in-person training events.

‘Talking together as a very different group of disabled musicians in the Roundtable has been hugely informative in itself. More of this please!’

‘We need videos using BSL for deaf people, to take deaf people onboard and make them more aware. I can help with that!’

There was also interest in discussing how to weave sustainability through a creative process from start to finish. We dive into this further through case studies.

‘It would be great to have help to learn how to integrate sustainability into our creative process from the ground up, and then we could advocate confidently.’

‘Understanding energy efficient systems that also reduce sensory triggers like excessive lighting. It would be great to have more training and examples on how these things come together.’

Respondents also spoke about the need for venues and festivals to have training around access and environmental sustainability as one.

‘I think there needs to be a basic education around both access and sustainability for venues and festivals and all the staff working there too: a basic understanding of everything you

could consider when it comes to considering access and environment together with frameworks and headings that everyone can understand.'

### **III. Transport solutions**

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Transport continues to be a complex area when considering access and climate sustainability for disabled music creatives.

They've said they need to:

- feel that providers and programmers are aware of what's difficult for disabled musicians and to adjust appropriately
- start to share with each other the ways they were harnessing more sustainable transport measures where they could
- explore ways to offset their travel impacts but with event organisers' support.

'I am a solo performer, but I have too much equipment to carry on my own. To have someone there to help with transporting this would be great, and might make a more sustainable option possible.'

'I didn't realise that my new electric Motability van was actually a climate sustainability solution in itself as well as being accessible to me, saving me energy and making everything possible!'

It was felt that car-pooling should be made easier and more widely promoted for live events and festivals, particularly when it can be more accessible for disabled music creatives:

'I have always car-shared. It makes sense financially for me, but it also relieves a lot of the anxiety, and allows me to have more control to stop when I need to along the way. Sustainability. It's good to realise that this sustains me and in turn, the planet.'

## **IV. Communal Catering**

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Awareness around essential dietary needs for disabled music creatives was felt to be poor. The people we surveyed didn't view this as an issue to be tackled by the event provider.

Some of the conversations shared possible solutions to this. One solution could be collective meal making on festival sites. One roundtable participant performing at a festival in Europe (Scandinavia) was delighted by the centrally managed catering so that all those involved in the event could eat together on site.

This was seen as not only sustainable but more readily accessible, conserving vital energy that the participant often had to expend in seeking alternative accessible food options beyond or outside of a festival site.

'It makes a huge difference to not having to go off site for food, to know that you are being catered for.'

Using local produce and involving local people was also a way to be more sustainable, and to accommodate dietary requirements within an inclusive community festival ethic as shared in one of our case studies.

## **V. Resources and Repurposing**

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Purchasing equipment has always been subject to the financial constraints that disabled music creatives face. Often, more environmentally friendly resources are beyond what's financially possible.

'It's fairly easy to find sustainable alternatives but it just always seems to be more expensive.'



‘Buying environmentally friendly stuff on top of the additional costs we face is a tough call.’

‘It would ideal if grant bodies were demonstrably more flexible and published their position on the purchase of secondhand equipment as a logical sustainability measure.’

‘Could Attitude is Everything have a partnership with CeX? Encouraging the use of secondhand equipment?’

‘Could the big beasts of ticketing like Live Nation and Ticketmaster, be charged a sustainability levy to help fund us making our work greener?’

‘Our basic premise is to recycle and repurpose our sets, props and more.’

‘There are ways you can do merchandise DIY if you are creative: I know a band who used plain t shirts from charity shops to put their logo on.’

‘I released my debut album last year. In hindsight, I would’ve liked to have released on more environmentally friendly vinyl, but it wasn’t in my price range. I also wasn’t sure if it’s better to have a bigger or smaller run of vinyl. More info on this would be invaluable.’

‘Even something simple like a social media post of you recycling, or using eco-friendly materials for merch, or showing diffused light panels or waste reduction is a good thing – it shows you are modelling good practice.’

## VI. A Green Rider

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During the consultancy and in follow-up conversations, despite disabled musicians having mixed success with their access riders, the use of a Green Rider was shared as a step towards a mutual agreement that focuses on sustainability.

Perhaps a move towards a Green Access Rider would be the next step. It could be framed and promoted so that disabled music creatives can:

- share their values and actions on climate sustainability and their commitments alongside their access needs and requirements
- indicate where and how they want the provider to support them in their climate sustainability measures and offsets, and how they can work on this together

Disabled music creatives can not only make steps to share their take on environmental sustainability and what they can commit to, but also inspire others in their communities to adopt similar practices as standard.

## **Next Steps: practical actions towards climate change sustainability**

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Every small action disabled music creatives take can contribute to a larger change, amplifying the message and practice of sustainability in the industry.

That said, this needs an organisation like Attitude is Everything to:

- continue to work at the interface of access and climate sustainability for and with disabled music creatives, raising awareness in the industry of disability-led and informed points of view
- encourage stakeholders in the music industry to become more aware of this intersection, and the additional relationship between climate justice and disability justice. And ensure that disabled people are central to the debate through the **No Climate Justice Without Us** toolkit iterations

‘It would be helpful if there was some sort of guide on how to be sustainable as a disabled artist – a checklist or suggestions; and some sort of directory of companies and initiatives we can contact, sorted into different groups for what services they offer – of people who are climate responsible?’

The following suggestions and recommendations have emerged from our surveys, discussions, and research, and are a first set of ideas for disabled music creatives to explore. Additional resourcing will be needed to underpin some of the actions proposed. In particular, regular training and/or meet-ups for disabled music creatives to develop and progress their ideas and find solutions.

# What can I do?

## Commit to:

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(i)

talking openly and candidly about the difficulties that disabled music creatives face when trying to action environmentally sustainable measures and still make commitments to change to climate sustainability however small.

(ii)

exploring climate justice and disability justice together, talking about it through your work and with other disabled music creatives:

- in debates and facilitated conversations
- in your promotional spaces online and across your publicity, including your merchandise
- through shaping a Green Access Rider sharing your access needs and values on climate together in one document. (There is a sample Green Rider available in appendix 5.) The rider is a way to share your environmental values upfront and puts you in partnership with the venue or event, sharing responsibility for sustainability.

## Choose to:

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(i)

**purchase eco-friendly materials** wherever you can and whenever you can afford to do so:

- team up or buy in bulk buy second-hand instruments or equipment and explore ways of prolonging the life of equipment you have through 3D printing or sharing what you have in different ways with others
- align your values with eco-sustainable practices

(ii)

**invest in local and sustainable** business providers and eco-conscious brands, which can strengthen community ties and reduce transport emissions.

(iii)

**eco your merchandise** where you can

- choosing items made from organic, ethically sourced, second hand, or recycled or upcycled materials

**invest in reusable items**

- but use single-use products whenever you need to, as an exception for your access needs

(iv)

**make decisions around catering** that centre your own requirements, but use local, sustainable food sources where possible

- **share food, cook and eat communally** at venues and on tour. This not only reduces food waste but promotes community
- choose **reusable options** for cutlery and crockery. If this isn't possible, seek out compostable or recyclable items, but only if they are accessible to you

(v)

**use digital tools and platforms** providing ways of collaborating that don't require travel and therefore have lower impact.

- **use collaboration apps** to help connect you with other musicians sharing your ideas and solutions.
- **stream your music** reducing the carbon footprint associated with physical products

(vi)

**explore more sustainable eco-friendly transport options:** if it isn't possible to use public transport, is it possible to car-share?

- **carpool** with band members or crew to reduce the number of cars on the road
- **choose low emission options** including electric cars and cabs where you can

(vii)

### **become an advocate and model good practice.**

- **raise awareness** by using your platform to promote environmental issues live and through social media
- **share information about sustainability practices** and solutions, and the importance of protecting the planet
- **collaborate with environmental causes**, partnering with organisations focused on environmental advocacy. Your music can help raise awareness and funds for these causes

(viii)

### **encourage accessible practices**

- be part of developing, shaping and sharing resources on sustainability in the industry that are accessible to other disabled people
- lobby relevant disability interest organisations and partners with more resources to support you.

(ix)

### **engage with your local community**

- **work with local artists, musicians, and community members** on sustainable projects together or events that highlight local issues and solutions.
- **mentor others** by sharing your knowledge and experiences with others about integrating sustainability as a disabled music creative.

(x)

**find your balance:**

- **sustain yourself** whilst also sustaining the planet. Make selfcare a priority to prevent burnout
- **find the 'easy wins' and the actions that work for you** - they may inspire others
- **reflect** on your progress. Find your 'go to people' to learn with and to help you assess and improve your practices



# Case Study 1: CAMP (France)

- Lukas Hornby

**Photo credit: CAMP.**

Lukas Hornby is a disabled sound artist and musician. He performs internationally as GRST and is based in Bradford. He has described his performance work as “personal acts of healing from bereavement”.

Lukas is also director of UK-wide experimental music network and NPO Outlands, and managed performance space and gallery FUSE in Bradford until its closure in 2024. He was also a volunteer for Bradford Producing Hub’s Creativity Council since its foundation in 2019.

Lukas took part in a roundtable discussion for established disabled musicians in autumn 2024. We caught up with him online whilst in an artist residency at CAMP - a project based in the Pyrenees - to talk about the work there, and his thoughts about the relationship between access and environmental sustainability. This is what he said.

## **What is CAMP?**

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**CAMP** is a place for artistic residencies with a focus on music and sound. They run five-day arts, music, writing and arts-activist sessions and courses, led by internationally acclaimed practitioners. The courses combine work in their beautiful facilities with projects carried out in the mountains. It’s in France, close to the Spanish border and miles from anywhere!

Being at CAMP is effectively like being on tour. In considering access and environmental sustainability, we appreciate the

resources needed to get here are at times significant and counter to environmental sustainability -be that flying or coming by train. We know some disabled artists will have to travel in their own vehicles, of course.



## **Cushioning arrivals**

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For myself, my neurodivergence and my anxiety is not so much about whether I can deliver or perform when I'm touring, but whether I can get there in one piece. What is different here is that CAMP works to meet that anxiety. We know this will be something that other disabled musicians also struggle with, so cushioning people's arrival with an offer to meet up in nearby Toulouse at a café can really soften landings. That way, artists on residency get to meet each other and then travel to the venue together.

## **Offsetting through culture**

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Knowing that some people's travel is going to use resources, we create a natural offset culture whereby time spent here illustrates and actions a low-impact way of living. We live very much off the land and locally we cook together. While eating,

we perform and play together for those on residency and also local people. We become a community in this way, and it feels generative and resourceful. We hope to move towards planting a tree for every person who joins us.

## **Local community**

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We see the local people as our guides, respecting their position, their link with the land and its history as a place of refuge where people have travelled to historically to escape persecution. In this way, we see ourselves as temporary custodians of the land alongside the local community, who in turn come to our sharings and showcases. Folks around here hitch rides to get around - it's about trust and saving resources.

It's also important to say that recycling here in France is also so much more responsible than in the UK. We take our waste to a central point - it is not collected.

## **Creative work that reflects and respects the environment**

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Our residencies and opportunities focus on the land and nature. The beautiful setting means that we make work with, about, or influenced by the environment and whilst not always about environmental justice, it naturally goes that way in its shape and form and the work generated.

We do want to encourage activism too. We've programmed a residency online with Guerilla Girls at the end of this year, and we're planning a residency on climate activism next year.

## **Accessibility for Deaf, disabled and neurodivergent music creatives**

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We are aware that what we provide in the locale is not going to be accessible to those with high support needs, because of the restriction of the historic buildings as they are, and the lack of resources to make them fully accessible. Also, some of the opportunities - for example the recent Chris Watson workshop which meant listening to the Red Deer at night - required those taking part to sit still outside for three to four hours which isn't possible for all. We have an online programme to offset and provide alternative provision too.

We always work with individuals to see how we can adjust and adapt the experience and what we do so they can make decisions about what is possible for them and ensure that they have agency. Many artists will still come to work in this space despite difficulty with access because the values of CAMP and the residency focus chimes so well with their own values.

## **Developing access and environmental responsibility**

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I love the ideas of our offset culture and being more explicit about what we do in this respect. For example, we have a 3D printer in a nearby village that we aim to use to replace the music tech parts in a more responsible way. It's the little things we do that we need to talk about more - as well as the access from soft landing, to adapting what we do, and being honest about this. We are also looking to add compostable toilet facilities. One step at a time!

## (ii) Case Study 2 Slow Label \_ Earth Pieces (Japan) – Kris Yoshie

Photo Credit: Slow Label.



**Kris Yoshie** is a disabled artistic director of Slow Label, founded in 2010 in Japan. From 2014 to 2020, Kris produced the Yokohama Paratriennale, enhancing accessibility in creative environments for disabled people. In 2017, she produced Japan's first Social Circus Company, SLOW CIRCUS, supported by Cirque du Soleil, and was the Access Director on the delivery of Tokyo 2020 Paralympics Opening Ceremony.

Based in Tokyo, Japan, Kris is currently developing a music project called 'Earth Pieces'. Alongside other creative partners, she is working to make it accessible to disabled and non-disabled communities whilst exploring environmental sustainability best practice.

Kris was interviewed to explore the developing relationship between access and environmental sustainability within the ongoing project.

‘This programme aims to raise awareness of accessibility (human rights) and sustainability (the environment throughout society, which unfolds through the hosting of a concert. It is a social action initiative aimed at incorporating unique efforts into various elements of the concert.’

<https://ep.slowlabel.info/en/> LINK

Behind the scenes video:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9okmmURS3vs>

## **What is Earth Pieces about and who's involved?**

The work of Slow Label has historically been seen in a disability context, focusing on access, inclusion, and representation. I felt I wanted to expand thinking and practice to raise greater awareness of both access and environmental sustainability through a music project.

I also wanted to make that thinking and practice more mainstream and shift attitudes. Earth<sup>∞</sup>Pieces represents that fusion and that is embodied in the logo.

It felt really important that the focus of this music work - which uses Beethoven's Ode to Joy (the Ninth Symphony) - is on everyone having an equal part to play. Even if you can't play an instrument or read a score, everyone has a right to participate in the ensemble as a vital and irreplaceable piece, which reflects how I see disabled people in particular needing to be seen as vital and irreplaceable too.

I have the pleasure of working with Shuta Hasanuma as musical director for Earth<sup>∞</sup>Pieces. We first worked together as

part of the Paralympic Opening Ceremony in 2021. Shuta works inclusively in sound and music and has a passion for making work in response to the natural world.

I also work alongside Hiroko Oshima as co-partner, who I have known for some time. A scenographer and someone committed to countering climate change, she has explored sustainable working within her involvement in Theatre Green Book. She has brought this perspective to the project with a similar desire to raise awareness and explore environmentally sustainable practice. In particular, she has done this through her recycling of materials integral to the project's design with the aim of reaching more people with our combined messaging.

## **First iterations and awareness raising**

As a team we worked together to produce Earth ∞ Pieces in 2024. This was our first iteration and was a participatory music performance with an ensemble of 28 players -12 of whom were disabled.

What was of vital importance to the team was bringing the different perspectives of accessible music-making and climate sustainability into educational lectures which were shared with all of those taking part - from artists to participants to sponsors. We did this in order to spread an understanding of the different dimensions in the work before the work was created, so that everyone could understand the ethics and the thinking behind it.

In Japan the disproportionate impact of climate change on disabled people is more critical because we have ongoing pressing climate challenge with earthquakes and flooding as a regular feature of our lives. These things present huge concerns for disabled people and their supporters in Japan, and also for other marginalised groups – issues ranging from understanding climate information to accessing safe shelters.

So, the importance of raising awareness on sustainability is even more pressing. This project is a way of developing awareness of the debate about, and development of, inclusive disaster risk reduction.

## Approaches to sponsorship and recycling

We have at every turn tried to work with sponsors who are ethically and environmentally minded. Our accessible **LandLoop** mugs have been made from recycled materials that have become synonymous with the project. And, with the help of a citizens group **Mori no oto** that collects and recycles unused household cloth, we have used materials from the World Premiere to create decorative objects for the venue, such as stools.





Unused **shindo ribbon** stock was re-purposed for performance bow ties that were made by mothers of disabled children who, through working together, were able to connect with each other, improving their health and wellbeing in the process.



## **Touring and beyond**

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We hope to implement this programme as a legacy of the Tokyo Paralympics in different parts of the world.

We want to create opportunities for people with and without disabilities from around the world to interact. We hope to tour various regions until 2030 - the target year for the SDGs - and evolve the ensemble with people from these areas = playing the 'Ode to Joy' of humanity and Mother Earth whilst we combine thinking and practical action on access and climate sustainability.

# Appendix 1

## Climate language unpacked

Here is a starting point for uncovering what common terms and ideas around sustainability means.

### **Biodiversity**

The variety of all life, including animals, plants, fungi, and microorganisms, in the world or in a particular habitat or ecosystem. Climate change poses a significant threat to biodiversity, leading to species extinction and habitat loss.

### **Carbon footprint**

The total amount of greenhouse gases emitted directly or indirectly by an individual, organisation, event, or product, usually measured in CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents.

### **Carbon offsets**

Carbon offsets are a way to compensate for greenhouse gas emissions produced by an individual, organisation, or activity by funding projects that reduce or remove an equivalent amount of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere. \* See below for a fuller explanation.

### **Carbon sequestration**

The process of capturing and storing atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub>, either through natural means (like forests) or technological solutions (like carbon capture and storage technology).

### **Circular economy**

An economic system aimed at eliminating waste and the continual use of resources by rethinking how we produce and consume goods. This concept promotes recycling and reusing.

## **Climate adaptation**

Adjusting practices, processes, and structures to minimise the damage caused by climate change, such as building flood defenses or developing drought-resistant crops.

## **Climate change**

Refers to long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns, primarily due to human activities, especially fossil fuel combustion.

## **Climate emergency**

A situation in which urgent action is required to mitigate climate change impacts, often declared by governments and organisations to emphasize the need for immediate responses.

## **Climate justice**

The ethical approach to climate change that seeks to address the disproportionate impacts on marginalised communities, and ensure equitable distribution of resources and responsibilities across the globe.

## **Climate mitigation**

Efforts to reduce or prevent the emission of greenhouse gases to combat climate change. This includes transitioning to renewable energy, enhancing energy efficiency, and protecting forests.

## **Climate resilience**

The ability of a system or community to prepare for, respond to, and recover from climate impacts, ensuring long-term sustainability and stability.

## **Decarbonisation**

The process of reducing carbon dioxide emissions associated with electricity, industry, and transportation. This often involves a transition to cleaner energy sources.

## **Environmentally-friendly**

Any action that seeks to make a positive change to reduce negative impacts on the environment, or actively improve the environment. Often used to describe how something is made and what it is made from.

## **Fossil fuels**

Natural substances such as coal, oil, and natural gas formed from ancient organic matter. They are the primary source of greenhouse gas emissions and are non-renewable. When they run out, there is no alternative.

## **Green Rider**

Julie's Bicycle has developed a Green Rider in consultation with a range of arts organisations and will update the rider annually in response to user feedback and increased knowledge in the field.

## **Greenhouse Gases (GHGs)**

Gases like carbon dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), methane (CH<sub>4</sub>), and nitrous oxide (N<sub>2</sub>O) that trap heat in the atmosphere, contributing to the greenhouse effect which is warming the earth.

## **IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)**

A scientific body under the UN responsible for providing objective information about climate change, its impacts, and potential adaptation and mitigation strategies.

## **Offsets**

See carbon offsets and below for more information.

## **Net zero**

Achieving a balance between the amount of greenhouse gas emitted and the amount removed from the atmosphere, effectively reducing net emissions to zero.

## **The Paris Agreement**

An international treaty adopted in 2015 that aims to limit global warming to well below 2 degrees Celsius, with efforts to limit it to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

## **Renewable energy**

Energy from sources that are naturally replenished, such as solar, wind, hydroelectric, and geothermal power, rather than from coal or oil which will run out.

## **Sustainable development**

Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, often incorporating economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

## **\*More on Carbon Offsets and Offsetting**

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Carbon offsets are a way to compensate for greenhouse gas emissions produced by an individual, organisation, or activity by funding projects that reduce or remove an equivalent amount of CO<sub>2</sub> from the atmosphere.

**How it works:** When you purchase carbon offsets, you're essentially investing in initiatives that help mitigate climate change. These can include:

- **Reforestation:** Planting trees that absorb CO<sub>2</sub> as they grow.
- **Renewable energy projects:** Supporting wind, solar, or hydroelectric energy projects that displace fossil fuel use.
- **Energy efficiency projects:** Funding improvements in buildings or industrial processes that reduce energy consumption.
- **Methane capture:** Investing in projects that capture methane emissions from landfills or agricultural operations.

While offsets can help finance sustainable projects, they are often criticised for allowing individuals and companies to avoid making substantial changes to their own emissions. The effectiveness of offsets can vary significantly based on the project and its implementation.

When considering offsets, it's essential to choose high-quality projects that are verified by credible standards (like the Verified Carbon Standard or Gold Standard) and focus on reducing emissions at the source whenever possible.

Overall, carbon offsets can be a useful tool in a broader climate strategy, but they should complement, not replace, direct actions to reduce emissions.

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