

Dear Clive,

The points highlighted in your letter – that urgent action is required to avert climate change catastrophe, and that the arts have an important part to play in advocating for the change needed in our communities – are ones I fundamentally agree with.

Arts Council England continues to build on a decade of work in this space, which has involved numerous partners and achieved significant policy changes within the arts and cultural sector. With the support of climate change charity Julie's Bicycle, and dedication from the arts and cultural organisations we fund, we have seen measurable results in energy and water usage, with associated financial benefits. Most importantly, we have also seen a widespread change in attitude and an appetite to engage with these issues. Many organisations are programming work that places climate and the environment centre-stage, promoting collaboration between artists and scientists to present meaningful projects that inspire and stimulate their audiences.

Our work with Julie's Bicycle has focused on improving the sector's carbon literacy, providing arts and cultural organisations with the tools and knowledge they need to improve their environmental practice. We now want to stretch ambition and accelerate impact.

Looking forward, the Arts Council will be delivering two new programmes of activity with Julie's Bicycle, Accelerator and Spotlight, which aim to further progress and celebrate best practice and innovation across the sector. These programmes will encourage sustained and collaborative activity, something we are already seeing in city-wide initiatives like the Manchester Arts Sustainability Team. We will also be looking closely at key subjects such as touring and its impact on the environment.

The Arts Council recently appointed its first Senior Manager for Environmental Sustainability, a role that is positioned within the Enterprise and Innovation team – a team that is headed by a member of the Executive Board. It is a clear message that we continue to take climate change and environmental sustainability seriously and are not resting on our past successes.

It is vital that we continue to speak with those within and outside of the sector about these issues, and welcome conversations around this. Our 10-year strategy, which is currently in consultation, will reflect the feedback and voices of our staff, the arts sector and the public. We anticipate that there will be demand from others that we continue to support the principle of environmental sustainability. We are therefore expecting that we shall seek to maintain a leadership role in arts and environmental policy interventions, and to be a supportive and influential voice within the growing arts ecology.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nicholas', written on a light-colored background.

Sir Nicholas Serota CH
Chair
Arts Council England

21 Bloomsbury Street
London
WC1B 3HF

I think #culturematters – do you?