

A woman in a light-colored jacket and jeans is walking from left to right in the foreground, slightly out of focus. Behind her is a grey stone wall. The text 'MEANWHILE SPACES' is written in large, bold, black letters across the wall. The word 'MEANWHILE' is on the top line, and 'SPACES' is on the bottom line. A pink rectangular highlight is behind the word 'SPACES'.

# MEANWHILE SPACES

*A Green Guide*

**CREATIVE**  
CRAWLEY



# Introduction

There's something essentially resourceful about meanwhile spaces.

We work in them because we want the buildings and spaces of our towns and cities to be full of life and creativity, and we're excited by the challenge of inventing something new with what already exists - instead of tearing it down and starting all over again.

Making use of vacant buildings can reduce carbon emissions, and occupying empty spaces lends itself to new ways of thinking about resource use. They have been called 'landscapes of potential'.

Yet meanwhile spaces also come with particular challenges in terms of green practice. Short-term leases, and short lead times before they start, can limit options for resourcing.

Tenants can find themselves with little control over infrastructure and services, limiting their ability to reduce impact.

*Meanwhile Space: A Green Guide* has been created to help. It is a framework for environmental best practice for those working in meanwhile spaces, particularly in the culture sector.

Here, we share what we've learnt about key principles and actions as you take on, manage, and let go of a meanwhile space.

It focuses on the areas where you're likely to have the greatest control and can achieve the biggest impact in your green practice. We hope, as well, that it makes space for the spirit of resourcefulness, innovation and creativity that draw so many of us to work in these sometimes challenging, often inspiring and always unique settings.

Review the Green Guide before you take a new meanwhile space on, and use it to create a measurable action plan, with clear responsibilities and review points to support it throughout your tenancy.

Not all of the Green Guide will be relevant to everyone, but everyone will find relevant recommendations within the framework.

Meanwhile usage presents an opportunity to bring new ways of thinking into the spaces and buildings we occupy: to demonstrate that we already have all the things we need to create a flourishing future. Please join us in ensuring green practice is at the heart of it.

*The Green Guide was commissioned by Creative Crawley, an arts charity working to support, and present high quality arts and cultural activity in Crawley, West Sussex - and who work in meanwhile spaces across the town.*

*It was researched and written by Amber Massie-Blomfield for Fern Culture, a consultancy and production company focussed on empowering the arts community to act on climate.*



# Key Principles

## 1. **Plan ahead (as much as you can)**

You won't always get much notice with a meanwhile space, but give yourself as much time as possible and **embed green practice from the beginning**. Design with the end in mind - what will become of equipment, structures, furniture? **Plan for adaptability to maximise your options.**

## 2. **Embrace the circular**

Circular economy - an approach that eliminates waste by ensuring everything is reused - is central to green practice in meanwhile space. Work with what you have, or what you can source secondhand. **Rather than a limitation, see reuse as a creative challenge.**

## 3. **Identify what you can control**

Some areas may be outside of your immediate control - eg your energy provider or heating/cooling schedules. Focus instead on what is within your control, **celebrate small, quick wins**, and get creative in thinking about ways you can achieve impact.

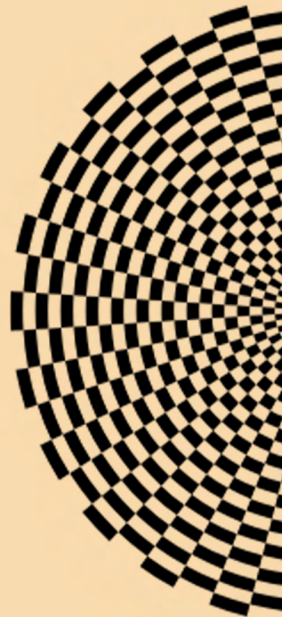
## 4. **Identify what you can influence**

Recognise where you can have influence - you may not control the energy provider, but you could use your influence with the landlord to encourage a change. You may not control how visitors travel to the site, but you can signpost sustainable options.

**Meanwhile use is a great opportunity to inspire wider change.** Approaches to green practice in the cultural sector are often innovative: use your tenancy to share these with audiences and stakeholders outside the sector. **You can leave a green legacy.**

## 5. **Learn by doing**

**Meanwhile spaces offer a chance to experiment and learn quickly.** Don't be afraid to test things out, get things wrong and discover by doing. Then embrace what you learn as you plan next steps.



# Action Plan - Planning

## **Baseline**

- Bring up environmental sustainability when you meet potential landlords, share more about your green practice and explore how you can work together to achieve it.
- Ensure the whole team has seen, and understands, your commitments on the Green Guide

## **Intermediate**

- Ask to see relevant environmental policies & plans the landlords hold - and share yours
- Reflect green responsibilities in contracts and job descriptions of key team members
- Identify a 'green champion' or 'green team' to lead on implementation of green practice
- Budget for green practice - this may mean planning for staff to have more time to source and rehome materials; slow travel; sustainable alternatives to key materials etc

## **Advanced**

- Run through a 'green practice checklist' before taking on a site, evaluating how it will help you meet environmental commitments, as well as any areas that will be harder - are there ways you can mitigate these? Do the environmental costs of working on the site outweigh the potential positive impact?
- Only work with landlords with up-to-date environmental policies & action plans
- Include a 'green rider' in contracts with landlords
- Offer carbon literacy training, or other relevant training, to key staff and regular collaborators

We recommend using this guide as a basis for setting your own action plan at the outset of a new project.

Take the actions that are relevant to your context, and feel free to add new actions that fill any gaps. Attach it to a timeframe and establish check-in points during the project when you can review progress.

This action plan will be most successful if it is held in common by your team, rather than resting on one person. Share it with colleagues and collaborators early on, ensuring everyone understands their role in achieving it.

# Action Plan - Design

## **Baseline**

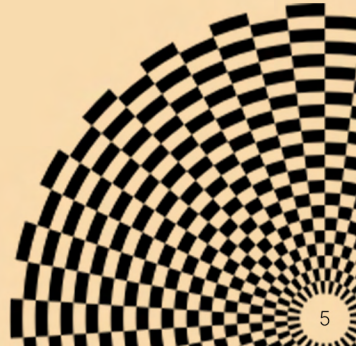
- Begin every design process by looking at what's already available to you - visit your own stores, reuse hubs, or second hand shops, and pay attention to the assets the space already possesses - how can you work with them?
- Design for the full life of the resources used at the outset - how will you ensure their onward life at the end of the process?

## **Intermediate**

- Adopt modular design (walls, seating, stages)
- Design for disassembly, not demolition
- Plan for modular elements to be stored easily (eg flat packed)
- Consider future use: are modular elements suitable for use in different spaces? Can they fit through standard doors? Are they suitable for multiple future uses?
- Design for multiple uses of the space and minimal 'fixed' layout
- Design for 'zoning' to maximise use of space, and allow for zoned heating/cooling

## **Advanced**

- Fully modular design and build



# Action Plan - Equipment, Materials & Construction

## **Baseline**

- Keep an inventory of materials: structures, furniture, equipment, and any other materials
- 50% of structures, furniture and equipment should have been used previously. 65% should be used again after the occupancy finishes
- Source new materials sustainably if possible. Avoid PVC, tropical hardwoods and polystyrene
- Use dry joints, screws and clamps rather than wet construction (glue, concrete) - to ensure structures can be reused
- Avoid permanent fixings
- Source new equipment second-hand where possible
- Ensure new equipment is flexible and can be moved to new settings easily

## **Intermediate**

- Build modular where possible (walls, seating, stages)
- Ensure structures can be flatpacked for future storage
- 60% of structures, furniture and equipment should have been used previously. 70% should be used again after the occupancy finishes
- Give resident artists and companies access to your store and materials available for reuse, or signpost to regional reuse hubs/second hand shops

## **Advanced**

- Fully modular design and build
- Create 'materials passports' for key items and structures recording what they're made of, elements suitable for reuse, and the ways they've been used in the past
- 75% of structures, furniture and equipment should have been used previously. 80% should be used again after occupancy finishes
- Get actively involved in regional reuse schemes - for example by setting up a WhatsApp group for regional creative organisations to share information on materials they have or need to rehome; or supporting physical reuse hubs
- Explore options for hosting repair cafés or swap shops on site

# Action Plan - Energy

## **Baseline**

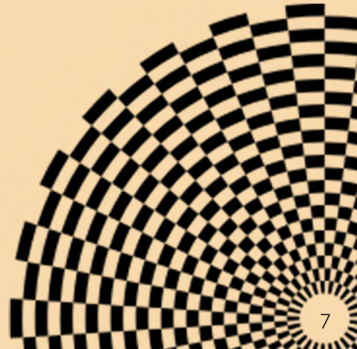
- Identify key data to monitor that will help you to understand your impact and reduce consumption (as a baseline, this is likely to include electricity usage & gas usage as kWh)
- Monitor and record baseline figures on energy consumption. Be clear about whose responsibility this is, and reflect it in their job description/ensure they have time to do it.
- Request meter readings for your unit/shop (daily readings will help you identify spikes and link them to activity)
- Invest in LED lighting stock where required
- Zone heating and cooling, and look at ways to heat/cool people rather than space where appropriate - could you provide blankets in larger areas, allowing you to lower the heating a couple of degrees? Can you ask those using the space to dress for a cooler working environment?

## **Intermediate**

- Use energy consumption baseline figures to set targets on energy use reduction
- Install smart energy monitoring plugs for specific areas - this can help you do more targeted monitoring, for example to monitor event power, or for resident artists and companies to monitor their own usage
- Monitor when the space is in use and set heating/cooling accordingly
- Request that your landlord switch to a renewable energy supplier (if they aren't already using one)
- For outdoor locations, explore temporary solar installations
- Train staff and residents in energy-saving behaviour

## **Advanced**

- Use smart energy readings to develop an advanced energy management plan, implementing targeted interventions to reduce usage
- Publish your carbon footprint and progress on reducing emissions, sharing what you've learnt and celebrating success



# Action Plan - Technical

## **Baseline**

- Prioritise reused or hired equipment (50% minimum at Baseline)
- Prioritise low emissions equipment purchases - for example LED lights
- Ensure equipment purchased is flexible enough to be used in different spaces in future - this could mean ensuring it's light enough to move easily and simple to store
- Store equipment carefully and keep an inventory
- Consolidate deliveries for hired equipment
- Switch off equipment when not in use

## **Intermediate**

- Prioritise reused or hired equipment (60% minimum at Intermediate)
- Choose hire companies that will use electric vehicles or carbon neutral transport
- Repair equipment rather than replacing where possible
- Prioritise long life span and repairability in equipment purchases
- Choose manufacturers with strong sustainability credentials
- Use rechargeable batteries where needed
- Use lower wattage lamps and bulbs where possible

## **Advanced**

- Prioritise reused or hired equipment (75% minimum at Advanced)
- Use the closest hire providers/retailers you can find
- Request the environmental policy of hire providers/retailers
- Reuse, sell or donate old equipment as a priority over recycling, then disposing

# Action Plan - Waste

## **Baseline**

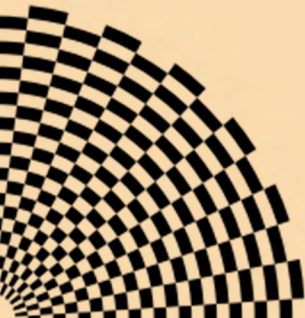
- Separate waste and recycling
- Follow the waste hierarchy: prevent, reuse, recycle, recover, dispose
- Provide reusable cups, plates, cutlery etc for staff, visiting companies and artists

## **Intermediate**

- Measure waste before disposal, using this to establish a baseline for reduction
- Compost food waste where possible
- Conduct a waste audit, using this to identify any problem areas and implement plans to address them
- Where possible, provide cooking and washing up facilities for staff, visiting companies and artists
- If you serve drinks or food to the public, provide reusable cups, plates and cutlery
- Put up signage encouraging waste reduction for staff and public

## **Advanced**

- Reduce waste by 30% of baseline over a six month period
- Evaluate and set new targets after this phase
- If possible, compost and reuse food waste on site
- Offer repair cafes where staff, resident & visiting artists, and community can learn skills for repairing and reusing items, rather than disposing of them



# Action Plan - Procurement

## **Baseline**

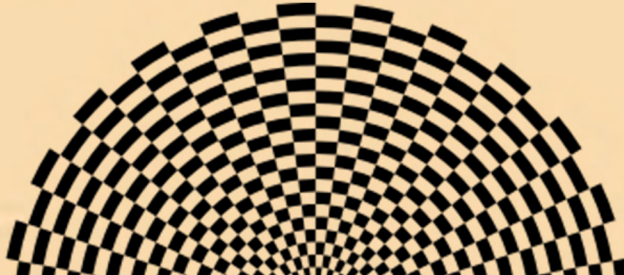
- Prioritise suppliers with environmental credentials
- Consolidate deliveries where possible and avoid last minute orders
- Prioritise suppliers with electric vehicles or carbon neutral delivery
- Prioritise local and independent suppliers over major online retailers

## **Intermediate**

- Create an ethical supplier list with details of the environmental commitments of key regionally-based suppliers. Share this with visiting artists
- Include environmental criteria in major contract

## **Advanced**

- Develop a sustainable procurement policy outlining environmental requirements for your suppliers
- Share ethical supplier list with other tenants and/or meanwhile spaces in the region and initiate a plan to keep it updated collectively



# Action Plan - Travel & Transport

## **Baseline**

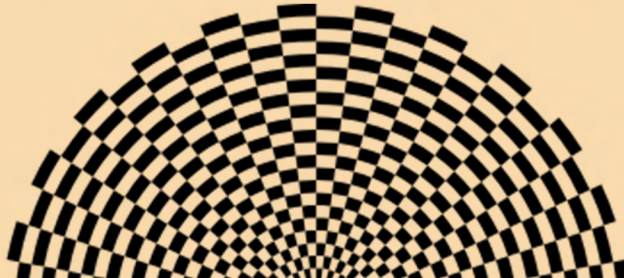
- Wherever possible, prioritise meanwhile spaces close to public transport links and/or accessible by bike or foot
- Encourage staff, resident artists and business visitors to travel to adopt sustainable travel options
- Signpost sustainable transport options to audiences via website - eg nearby public transport links, bike parks etc

## **Intermediate**

- Record staff, resident artist and business visitor travel
- Use this data to set a target for travel emissions reduction
- Where possible, provide bike parking
- For harder-to-reach locations, support carpooling among staff and resident artists where appropriate

## **Advanced**

- Monitor audience travel - ask where they've come from and how they travelled
- Use this data to test new approaches for reducing audience travel
- For harder-to-reach locations, provide a shuttle bus from public transport hubs, as an alternative to driving for events



# Action Plan - Nature/Biodiversity

## **Baseline**

- Identify areas where growing might be possible
- Use second hand planters
- Establish a nature lead/team and provide them with resources to begin planting
- Prioritise fast growing, pollinator friendly planting
- Avoid the use of chemicals
- Use peat-free compost
- Where there is a risk that green spaces may be built over in the near term, use planters that can be transported with you when you vacate the site

## **Intermediate**

- Diversify planting, implement growth for food and/or use in creative projects (eg dye gardens)
- Create nature corridors and safe habitats for birds and wildlife
- 'No net harm' - ensure that ecological projects will not create habitats that are abruptly destroyed/without mitigation measures
- Collect and reuse rainwater
- Build and maintain a compost
- Set up and run a community/volunteer group to manage the garden

## **Advanced**

- Integrate with community growing schemes
- Align with Local Nature Recovery Strategies
- Simple monitoring - eg species presence, seasonal changes
- Run seed and plant swaps with your neighbours
- If you don't have a green space of your own, can you get involved with the restoration of a local natural asset like a river or woodland?

# Action Plan - Influence

## **Baseline**

- Be a 'good guest' - build trusting relationships with other tenants, landlords, maintenance staff to support implementation and gain their insights on green practice
- Make green practice a regular agenda item in key team meetings
- Provide resident artists and companies with a green tip sheet, including clear guidance on how to contribute to reducing environmental impact in the space
- Ensure clear signage around the space on green practice

## **Intermediate**

- Provide visiting artists and companies with a green practice resource pack - including clear guidance on how to contribute to reducing environmental impact in the space; this could also include sustainable travel options, eco-friendly local suppliers, plant-based cafes and restaurants nearby
- Include a green practice clause in contracts with visiting and resident artists and companies
- Green practice briefing for new residents and staff
- Communicate green practice to audiences via signage, newsletters, social media
- Explore ways for green practice to show up in programming

## **Advanced**

- Find ways to develop staff and residents' creative curiosity around green themes - for example a green book/film club or running a gardening club?
- Engage the expertise of resident artists and companies in co-designing green practice interventions
- Set up a network with fellow residents of the building, or hold a community event for local businesses, sharing best green practice and establishing joint initiatives
- Share best practice with other meanwhile space users through networks

# Action Plan - Exit

## **Baseline**

- Plan for your exit strategy, and how you will minimise waste, at the outset of tenancy
- Allocate staff time for the process of rehoming and recycling materials and equipment, and ensure this is a shared responsibility
- Store temporary structures, materials and equipment that will be reused at future sites
- Reuse or rehome at least 65% of the structures, furniture and equipment from the site
- Evaluate the impact of your green practice - what did you learn and what will you do differently next time?

## **Intermediate**

- Reuse or rehome at least 70% of the structures, furniture and equipment from the site
- Invite staff and resident artists to feedback on your green practice - how could it be easier for them to engage? Do you have information to share that can help them with their own green practice?

## **Advanced**

- Reuse or rehome at least 80% of structures, furniture and equipment from the site
- Green practice briefing and info document - as legacy for landlord or future tenants, handover key information on green practice
- Seed harvesting in green spaces / transplanting plants to new homes, or redistribute, where possible (if they are under threat in current location)
- Publish what your evaluation metrics and share what learnt, sharing key takeaways and advice

# Check-list

- Share your environmental policy and action plan with us
- Meet with us to discuss green practice - what does action look like for you in this area?
- Provide us with energy usage data for our building/unit
- Consider switching to renewable energy suppliers if you do not already have them
- Collaborate with us on heating/cooling our space only when it is in use
- Provide recycling and composting facilities where possible, and ensure these are easily accessible
- Please share any information you have on sustainable transport options - what are the local public transport stops? Are there bike parks or electric vehicle charging points nearby?
- Enable us to provide drinking water and washing up facilities on site
- Give access to outside space where it may be possible for our team to garden
- Support us to connect with other tenants, your staff, and visitors, sharing the environmental action we're undertaking together

## Example Green Rider for Landlords

(Insert organisation name) is committed to action on the environmental crisis. We take responsibility for our impact on the planet and seek to embed green practice into everything we do.

We are working with Meanwhile Spaces: A Green Guide (insert link) to achieve this. We ask that you work with us in order to do so, and this 'check list' demonstrates some of the ways you can help.

We recognise that not all steps may be viable, but this list is a starting point for a conversation: we would love to share more about our work in this area. Please share your own environmental commitments with us, and we will do all we can to support you in achieving these too.

Our environmental policy and action plan is available here (insert link).

We look forward to collaborating with you to achieve these goals, demonstrating the role we can all play in ensuring a flourishing future.

**[View a list of resources here](#)**

# Glossary

**Carbon Literacy:** An awareness of the carbon costs and impacts of everyday activities, and the ability and motivation to reduce emissions, on an individual, community and organisational basis. Accredited training is available via the Carbon Literacy Project.

**Circular Economy:** An economic system in which materials never become waste; instead, they are kept in use through processes including maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacture, recycling and composting.

**Environmental Policy & Action Plan:** An environmental policy is an official document stating an organisation's commitments, intentions and compliance obligations in relation to environmental sustainability. This is often supported by an action plan, outlining the measurable steps that will be undertaken to achieve policy commitments.

**Green Champion/Green Team:** The individual or group identified to lead implementation of the action plan. Their responsibilities are likely to be reflected in their job descriptions and KPIs established to guide their work.

**Local Nature Recovery Strategies:** A national, statutory system of 48 nature recovery plans across England, supporting the Government's legally binding commitments on biodiversity and nature restoration.

**Materials Passport:** A digital document (can be as simple as an excel spreadsheet) outlining origins, past usage, material type, components and any other information useful in facilitating reuse.

**Meanwhile Space:** A vacant space used for something other than its original purpose, and available on a temporary basis while awaiting permanent redevelopment. Often used for community and creative projects.

**Modular Design:** Designing structures that break down into interchangeable parts that can be used in a variety of ways

**Repair Café:** Free meeting places where support and tools are available to fix broken items

**Reuse Hub:** Community or sector-focussed facility that collects, repairs and redistributes donated items

**Short-term Leases:** tenancy agreements with an initial period of up to one year

**Waste Audit:** a hands-on review of the type of waste your organisation produces, physically sorting and documenting the categories of rubbish being disposed of in general waste, and identifying any problem areas/opportunities for waste reduction.

**Waste Hierarchy:** A five-step framework prioritising how materials are dealt with to reduce waste. With the following tiers: prevent, reuse, recycle, recover, dispose.

**Zoning:** designing the space in a way that areas can be isolated to allow multiple uses to happen simultaneously, and/or enabling heating to be isolated

# About Us

**Creative Crawley** is an arts charity, bringing arts and culture to life in everyday spaces across Crawley, West Sussex.

At Creative Crawley, we make things with care. And we believe that how something's made - and who gets to be part of the making - matters. Our work is grounded in rigour and collaboration. Whether it's a pop-up performance, a powerful piece of public art or an informal drop-in session, everything we do is shaped with attention, curiosity and imagination. We take time with the details, because we want what we create to be joyful, thoughtful and welcoming for everyone.

Crawley is a place full of voices, stories, and possibilities. We collaborate with local, national and international people, artists, businesses and organisations to shape cultural experiences that truly resonate - experiences that feel rooted and relevant.

Creative Crawley is always learning. We're curious about how creativity and cultural work can shape communities, make lasting impact and change things for the better. We're on a journey - trying new things, listening more deeply, growing together.

Above all, we believe creativity should feel like belonging. The spaces, the projects, the partnerships are open to all - because Crawley's got something to say.

**Fern Culture** empowers the arts community to act on climate. We do this through consultancy, training, and supporting the development of excellent new theatre about the planetary crisis. To date we have worked with partners, collaborators and clients including artful scribe, Climate Spring, Creative Crawley, Havering London, Icon Theatre, Headlong Theatre, Norfolk & Suffolk Culture Board, The Paper Birds, Shakespeare's Globe and tiata fahodzi.

Founded in 2025, Fern Culture is led by Amber Massie-Blomfield. Former executive director of Complicité, interim executive director of Actors Touring Company and joint CEO of Camden People's Theatre, Amber has an extensive background producing outstanding climate theatre, including Actors Touring Company's Bodies of Water, Complicité and Fehinti Balogun's Can I Live?, Complicité's Drive Your Plow Over the Bones of the Dead Hannah Mulder's Unstoppable: A Beginners Guide to Realising an (Im)possibly Glorious Future and Camden People's Theatre's Fog Everywhere. She is also author of Acts of Resistance, a book about the power of the arts to create a better world.

## Thanks

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