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### **Fields of Green**

Towards sustainable Scottish music festivals

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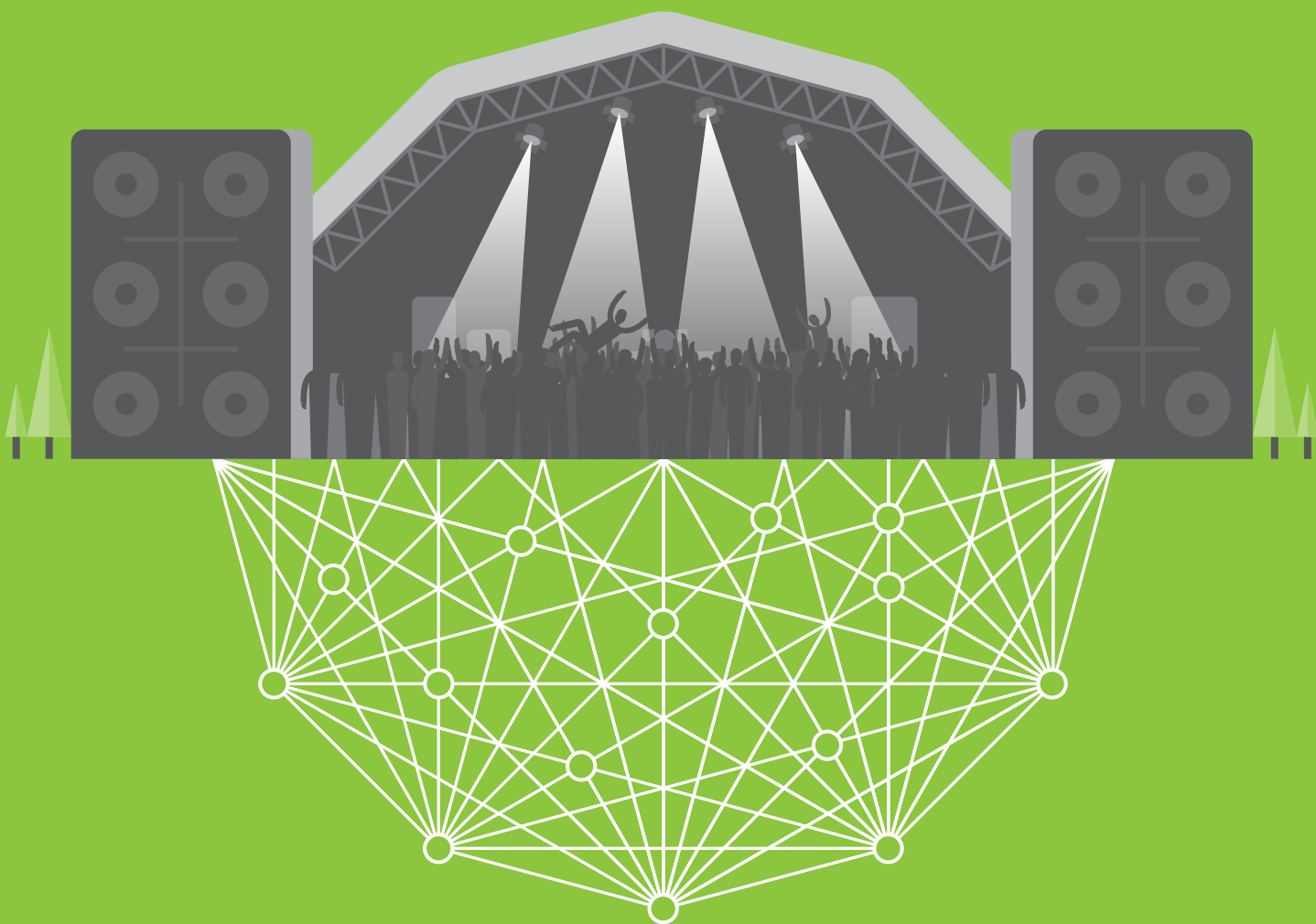
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# Fields of Green:

## Towards sustainable Scottish music festivals



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Arts & Humanities  
Research Council

*“As festival organisers we know how to create unforgettable experiences and how to inspire people. We know how to get things done in challenging circumstances, and we are accomplished at communicating with audiences. The Earth is literally on the verge of ecological collapse, and it is well within our reach to turn our industry into an exemplar of environmental responsibility. If we can create space in our busy lives, and pull together as an industry, we can make a vital and significant contribution to a future we want our children to inherit. Festival organisers, working with their many and diverse partners, from concessions to the supply chain, contractors, charities and brands, can provide leadership for what is perhaps the most important conversation of our time. The show must go on...”*

**Chris Johnson, Chair, Powerful Thinking<sup>1</sup>**

**Fields of Green** aims to build a network for Scottish music festivals to enhance environmentally sustainable practices.<sup>2</sup>

Scotland is host to over forty music festivals each year, and many of them are already committed to minimising their environmental impact. However, there is no forum in which Scottish music festival organisers and suppliers can come together to learn from and support one another on this challenging aspect of running a festival.

Initiated by Creative Carbon Scotland and academic partners<sup>3</sup>, Fields of Green supports the sharing of relevant knowledge, ideas and experiences to enhance sustainability competencies in music festivals across Scotland.

Over the past year, Fields of Green has conducted roundtables, interviews, and surveys to learn how Scottish festival organisers, audiences, and musicians are engaging with the challenge of environmental sustainability. Musicians came together too through a songwriter’s circle and accompanying EP.<sup>4</sup>

Organisations outside of Scotland, such as Julie’s Bicycle, Glastonbury Festival, and A Greener Festival, have enabled us to gather information on current issues and best practice on enhancing environmental sustainability within the wider European music festival sector.

Different festivals will approach these issues in their own way – no two festivals are alike! We want more people to get involved in Fields of Green to share their best practice and concerns. This guide is the first step in showing what Scottish festivals are already doing as well as drawing together some useful resources and a call to action.



1. **'The Show Must Go On' report, 2015.**
2. The word “sustainable” can be interpreted in many different ways. We seek to be encompassing: mainly it means having a minimal impact on the environment in terms of waste, energy and water use, respecting habitats, sourcing ethical produce, and contributing to and supporting local businesses and communities.
3. Academic partners for Fields of Green include the University of Edinburgh, University of the West of Scotland and Lancaster University.
4. The EP *Wrack Lines* by Jo Mango & Friends (2016, Olive Grove Records) features songs by Louis Abbott from Admiral Fallow, RM Hubbert, Rachel Sermanni, The Pictish Trail, and Jo Mango. All proceeds from the EP (which you can purchase at [www.olivegroverecords.com](http://www.olivegroverecords.com)) go to Creative Carbon Scotland as a registered charity.

# What have we learned...

## From previous UK-wide research on music festivals and sustainability



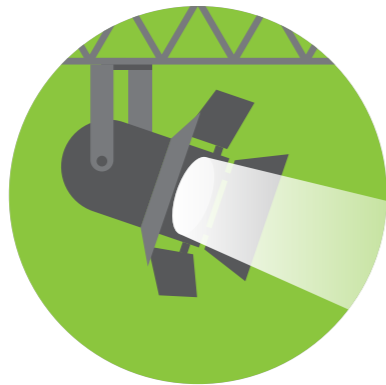
**Total UK festival industry emissions (excluding travel) amount to 19,778 Tonnes CO2e per year**



**Audience travel to music festivals produces 68% of the festival sector's total emissions, and 24% of all music audience travel emissions.**



**The average carbon footprint of a single festival constitutes 80% audience travel, 13% energy and 7% water.**



**80% of onsite emissions are from energy, whilst 20% is from waste.**



**The equivalent of 2.8KG waste is produced per person per day and 0.6 litres of diesel per person per day is used at UK music festivals.**

## From our survey research

We spoke to 89 festival goers at a green-field festival in Scotland during 2015. We asked people about their travel, food consumption, and attitudes to various environmental issues. Here's what they said:

### WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?

Virtually all regarded festival organisers as responsible for ensuring the sustainability of festivals... but 80% of respondents also thought that festival goers shared responsibility.

### TRAVEL

Around 60% of festival goers travelled in a private car or van. The average was 2.42 people per car BUT around 50% of those travelling by car or van travelled alone or with one other person.

Around 60% of festival goers were from large urban areas (cities such as Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen).

### IMPORTANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Both reducing and recycling waste were thought to be very important or fairly important by over 95% of respondents. Sustainable food also ranked highly with a total of 85.3% of respondents considering it to be very or fairly important.

Sustainable transport was the option that a higher proportion of respondents thought was 'not that important' or 'not important at all' (26.2%)

Festivals aren't wholly detrimental to the environment, around a third of festival goers who were camping said that they conserved water more at a festival than at home.

### MOTIVATIONS (OR NOT...)

"At a festival, I am taking a 'responsibility' holiday."

"In all instances, I have gotten used to approaching festivals with a sort of 'weekend away' mentality, meaning that I don't always live to my means."

"[Environmental issues] should be emphasised more strongly in the programming and messages".

### WHAT CAN BE DONE

Top 5 things that festival goers suggested to help them to be more environmentally responsible:

- More and better signed recycling
- Shuttle bus service / raise awareness of the travel options
- Publicise the environmental initiatives that are already taking place
- Build environmental education into the programme
- Have a car pooling site

# Good practices and challenges across Scottish festivals

We spoke to Scottish music festival organisers to get a picture of key successes, challenges and opportunities that they face in introducing environmental sustainability into their festival operations.

## ENERGY AND FESTIVAL ENVIRONMENT

### Best practices

**HebCelt Fest:** As a semi-urban festival, we try to use mains electricity rather than generators and over time we've replaced old lighting with LEDs.

**Knockengorroch World Ceilidh:** Our stage is built from sustainably grown, locally sourced timber and turf roofed so it is entirely in harmony with the environment of which it is part, creating little disruption to the habitats of resident animals, birds and plant life. Both the Longhouse and the Greenstage are home to nesting migratory swallows during the festival event itself.

### Challenges

**Mela Festival:** One challenge we have yet to address is that of the use of diesel generators for our stages and other infrastructure. Can we reduce our fuel consumption in this area while still maintaining a reliable supply of power? What are the realistic alternatives? We can't risk a stage going down with the sun...

### Suggestions for improvement

**T in the Park:** Research and financial support for viable outdoor event renewable energy generation.

**Knockengorroch World Ceilidh:** We would really love to be able to run our Longhouse venue off a water turbine. We have investigated this option but have not yet had time nor resources to properly explore.

## TRAVEL

### Best practices

**Xpo North:** We always refund travel at a public transport rate which incentivises musicians and audiences to travel to us by more sustainable means.

**Big Tent Festival:** Over a number of years we worked with Stagecoach and Fife Council to introduce a Park and Ride system for audience members. It took some time but after a while it became a really successful way of reducing individual car use travelling to and from the festival.

**HebCelt Fest:** As an island-based festival, we've tried hard to rationalise the amount of haulage of equipment to Stornoway by working closely with local companies and minimising the number of lorries travelling to us.

**Knockengorroch World Ceilidh:** We run the 'Knock bus' a return service to the site leaving on Thursday and Friday from Edinburgh, Glasgow, Carlisle and Dumfries at cost price (and sometimes a loss) to enable festival goers to come to our rural festival without having to have a car.

### Challenges

**Mela Festival:** As our international ambition increases so does the dilemma we face. This is a difficult 'circle to square' as some international air travel is unavoidable but we do encourage all UK based artists to travel by train where possible.

### Suggestions for improvement

**Howlin' Fling:** A really good car sharing website and app for audiences to coordinate travel plans.

## WASTE

### Best practices

**Mela Festival:** We've introduced a compulsory compostables-only policy applying to all food packaging sold on site.

**HebCelt Fest:** Last year we moved to reusable, durable HebCelt branded beer cups which are distributed to audience members for a £1 deposit. At the end of each festival audience members can either take them away as a memento or they are washed and stored on the mainland and used again the next year.

## WATER

### Challenge

**Big Tent Festival:** It would have been great to do more with compostable toilets but it was what you do with the compost that was the challenge. There didn't seem to be any suppliers in Scotland who could help with this.

## PROCUREMENT

### Best practices

**Howlin' Fling:** We're working with local beer suppliers and some local caterers, some of which is vegetarian and grown on the island. We didn't necessarily choose to do this for environmental reasons but it makes sense and it's a good way of involving the local community in the event.

**HebCelt Fest:** We encourage and support catering companies to work with local suppliers. For example, the burger meat comes from local butchers and fish comes from Stornoway. Last year a high proportion of our food and drink was sourced locally as a result. These are things you can do fairly easily if you want to and there's a real benefit there to the wider community.

## Suggestions for improvement

**T in the Park:** There is an opportunity to involve more local partners and suppliers in the event. We've done this a bit already through our *Healthy T* service which provides better quality and often locally sourced food.

**Big Tent Festival:** Our festival became a place for convergence for alternative thinking about food and sustainability in Fife. Early conversations about the *Fife Diet* took place during the first year of the festival and the owner of *Buffalo Burgers* says he learnt his trade at the Big Tent as the first larger scale event he'd catered to.



# A call to action!

We recognise that everyone will be at different places in their journey towards making festivals more environmentally sustainable. Depending on the time of year, festival location, and size, each music festival will face its own particular issues and approach addressing sustainability in the way that works best for them.

Sharing learning can be really important – knowing what others have been doing can help to inspire ideas and actions.

## FIRST STEPS: SOME SIMPLE IDEAS TO TRY OUT

It's not all about consultants in clipboards coming to check how much waste there is. The following places give some creative ways of approaching the issue:

### Keen to reduce your fuel consumption?

Try: [Smart Power Plan approach](#)

### Problems with festival-goers leaving their tents?

Try: [Love your tent \('tent' commandments\)](#)

### Concerned about the amount of food waste?

Try: ['The Eighth Plate'](#)

### Want to off-set the carbon emissions?

Try: [Building a forest in the Highlands: Festival Wood \(Trees for Life\)](#)

## NEXT STEPS:

### Join the [Green Arts Initiative](#)

The Green Arts Initiative is a proactive network which aims to build and support a Scottish green arts community. Members get a range of free resources and support services to help them monitor and manage their environmental impact including: invitation to free annual conference for sector sharing of best practices; contact time via phone and email to answer your questions; a supply of Green Arts Initiative printed and digital branding.

## BIGGER STEPS:

### Take the [2025 Pledge](#)

This report outlines the key sectors in which festivals have major environmental impacts – energy, waste, travel, water and food – and makes suggestions as to the variety of options that festival organisers can take to reduce the environmental impact. Straightforward and clear, the call to action sets out a vision and rationale for achieving 50 per cent carbon reductions in festival related activities by 2025.

Festivals can take the pledge [here](#).

# Resources

## PLANNING YOUR EVENT

### [Resource Efficient Scotland: How to Plan and Deliver Environmentally Sustainable Events, 2015](#)

Resource Efficient Scotland has taken the learning from the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow and turned it into a handy guidance document that relates sustainable event planning to Scottish regulation and issues. Various checklists and best practice are provided for different aspects of event planning such as supply chain and procurement, choosing a venue, catering and energy efficiency. Though not specifically aimed at small-to-medium music festivals, there are useful learning points.

### [The Power Behind Festivals: A Guide to Sustainable Power at Outdoor Events, 2013](#)

This guide outlines the key issues and opportunities surrounding energy supply and usage at outdoor music festivals. The areas covered include: reducing fuel consumption, festival and equipment case studies, engaging your audience in energy identifying how staff roles can change energy culture, myth busters and FAQs.

## MEASURING PERFORMANCE

### [Julie's Bicycle: Creative Industry Green \(IG\) Tools](#)

These are a free set of online carbon calculators to help those in the creative industries to easily measure environmental impacts over time.

### [Creative Carbon Scotland: Claim Expenses tool](#)

By signing up to a free account, Creative Carbon Scotland provides a tool that:

- encourages staff and freelancers to generate expenses claims by making it easy to do
- automatically calculates and collates the carbon emissions related to travel
- sends the data to whoever needs it centrally
- provides reports to the individuals as a way of influencing travel decisions.

### [A Greener Festival Award](#)

You can also apply for 'A Greener Festival Award'. Although there is a cost involved, you will be able to access an assessor to come and see all of the good work that you have been doing.

To find out more about what festival goers think visit A Greener Festival's website to read their [Summary of Research](#), or to find out more [about the company](#).



# Next steps for enhancing a sustainable Scottish music festival sector

Looking for ways to improve the environmental sustainability of your festival but don't know where to start?

Or are you already addressing such challenges but would be interested in attending a forum in which to exchange ideas and learn from experts in the field?

Creative Carbon Scotland and the Fields of Green team are in the early stages of planning a workshop on the theme of music festivals and environmental sustainability in Scotland. The workshop will aim to bring together festival organisers, suppliers, sustainability experts, and other stakeholders to share ideas, knowledge, and examples of best practice.

If you might be interested in participating in such an event, please let us know!

Get in touch with Gemma Lawrence at Creative Carbon Scotland: [gemma.lawrence@creativecarbonscotland.com](mailto:gemma.lawrence@creativecarbonscotland.com)

Or find us on Facebook at [Creative Carbon Scotland](https://www.facebook.com/CreativeCarbonScotland) or on Twitter [@CCScotland](https://twitter.com/CCScotland)

## OUR CONTRIBUTORS

Thanks to the following music festivals who shared their data and initiatives with us. We are keen to hear from as many festivals as possible. Please get in touch to be featured in future Fields of Green resources.

HebCelt Fest / Knockengoroch World Ceilidh  
Mela Festival / T in the Park / Xpo North  
Big Tent Festival / Howlin' Fling

## OUR PARTNERS



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Creative Carbon Scotland is a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered charity No. SC042687.  
A project initiated by Edinburgh's Festivals with key partners the Federation of Scottish Theatre and Scottish Contemporary Art Network